The Enemy Within: Division and Betrayal in Literature of the Second World War

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Abstract

Although descriptions of civilian experience during the Second World War tend to stress concepts of unity and the nation 'pulling together', much literature of the period repeatedly suggests division and distrust, and fears of an 'enemy within' that can be seen directly in the numerous fifth columnist plotlines and more indirectly through stories of personal treachery and duplicity. Here the work of a number of authors writing during World War II is examined, with close comparison of how themes of betrayal and mistrust are woven into their texts. This is placed in context through consideration both of government propaganda warning citizens of the dangers of spies and fifth columnists during the war and social fracturings along gender, class and political lines that were already in existence when war began. The 'enemy within' motif exists in a number of forms and discussion of this is extended to consider, for example, contemporary concerns that the increasing authoritarianism of the British government meant the country was moving towards the fascism it had gone to war to defeat, presentations of the home as an enemy space, and repeated depictions of fragmented identity and trauma that suggest the enemy also exists within the individual psyche.

Dedication and Acknowledgements

My children, Henry and Teya, were both born during the completion of this monograph – their growth and development has run in parallel with that of my research, and it is to them that I dedicate this thesis. Their presence has meant I have been even more reliant on my wife Tamara than would have been the case anyway – without her unwavering support the task of completing my studies would have been absolutely impossible, and I would like to express my deepest gratitude to her; as I would, too, to my supervisor Steve Ellie, for his uncomplaining support of a student whose commitments away from his studies seemed to guarantee an inability to quite meet agreed deadlines: thank you both.

James Phillips

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Introduction: Division and Betrayal in WWII Literature

> During the war I lived, both as a civilian and as a writer, with every pore open; I lived so many lives, and, still more, lived among the packed repercussions of so many thousands of other lives, all under stress, that I see now it would have been impossible to have been writing only one book […] I do not say I 'invented' anything written here. It seems to me that during the war in England the overcharged sub-consciousnesses of everybody overflowed and merged. It is because the general subconsciousness saturates these stories that they have an authority nothing to do with me.[1]

So wrote Elizabeth Bowen in 1945 in the Preface to the American edition of her short story collection *The Demon Lover and Other Stories*.[2] Bowen was explaining why writing each of the stories in this collection was a 'release', for although the main focus of her work during the last years of the war, when most of the stories were written, was the novel that she would eventually publish in 1948 as *The Heat of the Day*, the need to 'make relentless exclusions' for the sake of the novel's form meant that '[e]ach time I sat down to write a story I opened a door, and the pressure against the other side of the door must, I found, have been very great' (Bowen 1950: 47). What interests me here is Bowen's explanation of why the pressure against the door, the 'ideas, images, emotions' clamouring to find their way into her fictions, was so great in wartime. Her explanation focuses not on the extremity of emotions and events that she must have experienced, although doubtless these played their part, but rather the fact that, as Bowen puts it, 'the overcharged sub-consciousnesses of everybody overflowed and merged', meaning the pressure against the door came not from the weight of ideas and emotions of Bowen alone, but of the population as a whole. The implication of this is that if the experience of war impacted on other writers as it did Bowen, their literary output would be equally saturated with the general subconsciousness that she describes. One might expect, should this be the case, that while wartime literary

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[1] I use square brackets throughout when adding my own ellipses – when not in square brackets the use of ellipsis is as in the original. Similarly, any emphasis is as in the original, unless otherwise stated.

[2] Quoted here from Elizabeth Bowen, *Collected Impressions* (1950: 47).

production might take various forms and on the surface at least appear disparate, the latent content of the texts should prove much more uniform.

Can any such uniformity be detected, and if so, what form can it be seen to take? What I will argue in this thesis is that when one looks at the Second World War fictions of Bowen alongside those of Graham Greene and Daphne du Maurier, Patrick Hamilton and Henry Green, one can indeed detect common themes and concerns running through what is otherwise a disparate set of texts. What I will chart in the work of all these writers is an anxiety, paranoia even, that if it were directed at the German enemy across the seas might not be unexpected, but is in fact targeted more at potential enemies much closer to home. This is something suggested by R. W. Maslen in his essay 'Fantasies of Complicity in the Second World War', in which he examines 'four now little known fantasies of the late 1930s' (Maslan 2012: 520) in order to reveal the way 'anti-fascist writers of the Western Archipelago were prepared to figure fascism as emerging from the dark recesses of their own brains' (516): '[o]nce one has noticed this theme of complicity running through the obscurer fantastic novels of the 1930s and 1940s, one begins to see it everywhere in the work of better-known fantasy writers of the period', Maslen comments, and goes on to offer as examples the works of major fantasy writers such as T. H. White and J. R. R. Tolkien. Although Maslan is discussing texts that I only briefly mention here, his comment resonates particularly with me, for once the motif of the 'enemy within' is detected, a motif closely connected with Maslen's 'complicity', running through novels such as Greene's *The Ministry of Fear* (1943) and Bowen's *The Heat of the Day*, one begins to see paranoid anxieties regarding the potential traitor next door or, more commonly, living in the same house, in text after Second World War text.

Perhaps this should not be surprising. In his introduction to Greene's 1939 novel *The Confidential Agent*, Ian Rankin argues that times of turmoil and approaching conflict 'bring about overwhelming feelings of urgency, despair and paranoia. The rumour mill runs riot, nobody is to be trusted, and conspiracy theories abound' (Rankin 2006: v). It is part of the logic of such times, Rankin suggests, that an internal enemy, a traitor within the ranks, becomes as widely feared as any external threat. It is interesting, given Rankin's belief that all times of approaching conflict are likely to result in such paranoia, that Petra Rau finds in *English Modernism, National Identity and the Germans, 1890-1950* that while 'the Beastly

Hun was an omnipotent threat' in 'espionage thrillers and invasion novels published before or during the First World War', '[i]n the novels of the Second World War the Germans are conspicuous by their absence. They seem a mere abstraction, sometimes realised as a *projection* of a home-grown malaise' (Rau 2009: 186) – in other words, it is the enemy across the seas that is the focus of fear in the First World War, but an enemy within in the Second. Rau's development of this argument in her chapter on *The Ministry of Fear* and *The Heat of the Day* is, I feel, both interesting and provocative and I will turn to some of her ideas in later chapters, but she retains a narrow focus on Greene and Bowen whereas what I do here, following Leo Mellor's suggestion that the 'literature that emerged at the close of the 1930s […] is now worth reading as a coherent corpus, and it is instructive to make interlocking comparisons' (Mellor 2011: 31), is provide a comparative study of a much broader range of novelists. While a number of revisionist histories of the Second World War have problematised 'mythologised' views of the period and coined such phrases as the 'myth of the Blitz', the 'myth of Dunkirk', and so forth,[3] the literary critical equivalent of this revisionism is Adam Piette's *Imagination at War*, in which he juxtaposes the public and private stories of the war:

> [t]he public stories stressed vital resistance, public heroism, stoic good humour; the private stories are stories about broken minds, unaesthetized feelings, deep depression and loss of any sense of value. The public stories were about a just war against an evil enemy; the private stories worry about being manipulated by propaganda, hardly think about Germany at all, conceive of the war as a drudge and an incomprehensible duty. (Piette 1995: 5)

In many ways, what I want to argue in this thesis builds on Piette's analysis, for while he does not explicitly deal with the motif of the 'enemy within', this is an implicit concept that underpins his work.

[3] See, in particular, Angus Calder's *The Myth of the Blitz* (1991) and Nicholas Harman's *Dunkirk: The Necessary Myth* (1980), but also Rose 2004, Gardiner 2005, Grayzel 2012.

One critic who has argued that for 'many writers of the time, the essential enemy is seen as lying within' is Steve Ellis (Ellis 2014: 4),[4] but while he does identify a number of ways in which this impacts on writing of what Mellor terms the 'long 1939' (Mellor 2011: 31) – the period from the Munich crisis of September 1938 to the end of the 'phoney war' in May 1940[5] – Ellis's focus is not directly on the recurring motif of the enemy within and, moreover, the scope of his study extends only until 'the ending of the "twilight war"' (Ellis 2014: 234). Although, as Ellis notes, May 1940 marked for writers such as J. B. Priestley and H. G. Wells a 'national awakening – "the quickened nation pulled itself together under Winston Churchill", a sense that is widely shared at the time, especially on the Left' (2014: 234; Ellis is citing here Wells' *Babes in the Darkling Wood* (Wells 1940: 397)), it did not mark an end to anxieties regarding a potential internal enemy. Indeed, such anxieties can be seen as intensifying during and after what Angus Calder describes as the 'paranoid summer of 1940' (Calder 1991: 66) partly owing to government campaigns warning citizens of the dangers of enemy spies and newspaper reports of the key role played in Europe by fifth columns that were thought to have helped Hitler achieve such rapid victories in France and elsewhere.

Such fears of fifth columnist treachery form the focus of my first chapter, which opens with a fuller consideration of the historical contexts for such fears before turning to the ways in which such anxieties are presented in fiction of the period, directly through fifth columnist plotlines but also indirectly through plotlines that mix themes of ideological and personal betrayal. Although the traitors in these texts are often male (for example Willi Hilfe in *The Ministry of Fear* and Robert Kelway in *The Heat of the Day*), one notable aspect of

[4] One example offered is that of Woolf, who 'suggests and acknowledges the irrepressibility not only of the enemy without but of that within' (Ellis 2014: 219).

[5] To give one example of an aspect of the enemy within that I do not explore in this thesis, Ellis describes the Moral Rearmament movement led by tennis player Bunny Austin and its concerns with addressing what could be described, using Rau's words cited above, as a 'home grown malaise'. Ellis notes that Daphne du Maurier was one prominent supporter of the movement and cites du Maurier's 1940 selection of real-life stories *Come Wind, Come Weather*, which shows 'the transformation of people's lives through adopting "Christ's absolute standards of honesty, purity, selflessness and love". Here the militaristic vocabulary is again prominent, as in the need to turn "the searchlight of truth" upon ourselves, combat "the enemy from within"' (Ellis 2014: 29; Ellis is citing du Maurier 1940: 57-9).

the presentation of treachery in fiction of the time, which is something found too in the government's poster campaigns, is how often it seems to be presented as a more 'feminine' attribute, and I explore this in the third section of chapter 1 before turning in the final section to related themes of theatricality and performance. In the thesis as a whole I focus on the work of five writers – Greene, Hamilton, Bowen, du Maurier, Green – and in this chapter I only discuss their novels; in later chapters, however, I broaden the scope of study by also considering the work of a number of other writers – Anna Kavan, Evelyn Waugh, Katharine Burdekin, Rex Warner, Nicholas Blake, T. S. Eliot, George Orwell and so forth – occasionally turning to literary genres other than the novel, the short stories of Kavan and Bowen in particular but also plays and poetry. In terms of the period under study, I examine a number of texts published in the eighteen months before war broke out on 3 September 1939, when war was increasingly inevitable and Britain was already experiencing what Ellis describes as a 'war of nerves' (2014: 6).[6] I also explore several texts published after the war ended, though because I am seeking to consider how the experience of war filtered into literature at the time, rather than was remembered afterwards, attention is limited to texts begun very soon after the war had finished (the latest published novel considered is *The Heat of the Day*, much of which was completed in London before the end of the war).

Chapter 2 deals with a number of ways in which fascism was seen by many to be as much something to be fought at home as on the Continent. The extent of and reasons for British enthusiasm for fascism more generally and the German Nazi regime in particular have been extensively considered by historians such as Richard Griffiths in his seminal *Fellow Travellers of the Right: British Enthusiasts for Nazi Germany 1933-9* and in the first section I consider novels such as Blake's *The Smiler with the Knife* (1939) and Warner's *The*

[6] Deciding on the temporal parameters of the literature of the Second World War is obviously not without its difficulties. Gill Plain observes that the 'exact shape of the "prelude" to the Second World War is […] difficult to define' and suggests January 1933 – when Hitler became Chancellor of Germany – or possibly even the 1919 Treaty of Versailles as possible early start dates (Plain 1996: 35). While there is doubtless some justification to her claim 'that the air of the 1930s was thick with a sense of uncertainty' (39), I feel justified in drawing a line sometime in 1938, when the storm-clouds were so clearly massing and the prospect of war can be sensed in a number of texts, although I do make one exception in chapter 2, shifting the line back so as to allow for discussion of Burdekin's 1937 imagining of a Britain under Nazi control, *Swastika Night*.

Aerodrome (1941) that provide fictional representations of the sympathy for fascism that Griffiths describes and the desire to set up a fascist regime in Britain along similar lines to those in Germany and Italy.[7] A number of writers of the time were concerned, however, that if home-grown fascism was something that had to be fought, it was not only a matter of dealing with a minority of Britons consciously sympathetic to fascism. Virginia Woolf, in linking fascism with patriarchy most famously in her 1938 book *Three Guineas*, clearly argued precisely that – for the existence of fascist thinking at the very heart of British society. The connection between fascism and what Burdekin called 'the cult of masculinity' (see Burdekin 1937: v) is the focus of the second section of chapter 2. E. M. Forster, meanwhile, voiced widely held concerns in his June 1939 essay 'The 1939 State' regarding the authoritarian measures that the British government would have to take on, and indeed was well underway in doing so, if fascism was to be defeated: 'if Fascism wins we are done for [but] we must become Fascist to win' (Forster 1951: 34). I explore these widespread fears of another 'enemy within', namely the British government itself, in the third section of chapter 2, and close with a consideration of the ways in which Germany and Britain were figured as resembling each other by several writers of the time.

It was not only fears of the potential treachery of Nazi sympathisers and fifth columnists that led many Britons to view their neighbours with suspicion, however, for anxieties regarding an internal enemy could be seen as resulting from the fracturings that existed along political, class and gender lines: indeed, historians such as Angus Calder and Stuart Hylton have argued persuasively that, in Hylton's words, 'Britain entered the war a deeply divided nation' (2010: 53). Such divisions are explored and reflected in a number of wartime texts, and in chapter 3 I provide a consideration of why so many texts of the time have civil war settings, and how internal divisions are presented in works by writers as disparate as du Maurier, Greene, Waugh, Eliot and Hamilton, with a particular focus on the sustained critique of the hierarchical class and gender system found in the novels of du Maurier, something that has received relatively little critical attention, and the ways in

[7] Such enthusiasm was identified among writers at the time by George Orwell In *The Road to Wigan Pier* (1937). As Suh notes, Orwell observed that 'in the throes of the Slump, literary writers were assembling an "underlying feeling of fascism" more subtly and effectively than the British Union of Fascists' (Suh 2009: 1).

which Hamilton's *Hangover Square* can be seen as metaphorically representing divisions within Britain through its dramatization of a very different kind of civil war within the character of its schizophrenic protagonist George Harvey Bone. What is repeatedly presented is a conflict for the future of Britain between reactionary forces who desired a future Britain that would largely resemble nostalgic rememberings of a Britain lost or fast vanishing, and progressives who saw the Second World War as a real opportunity to break completely with the hierarchical systems of the past.

While chapter 3 deals with country-wide divisions and distrust, chapters 4 and 5 narrow the focus on anxieties regarding the 'enemy within' first to the black-out city, then the home and finally the individual. Chapter 4 – 'Home Front' – deals first with the presentation by writers such as Kavan, Bowen and Greene of the city, London in particular, as a place of danger, but again where the threat posed seems to come more from fellow citizens than the Luftwaffe, before turning to the ways in which the home ceases to be presented as a place of safety and privacy, but becomes instead a place where one is most under surveillance and in greatest danger. The final section of this chapter extends the discussion to the temporary or alternative homes of friends' apartments, hotels and boarding houses. Chapter 5 narrows this focus still further by exploring issues regarding the 'enemy within' from the perspective of individual psychology through a consideration of the repression of unwanted memories that is common to so many of the characters considered here as well as the blackouts – lapses into unconsciousness causing loss of memory and certainty regarding one's identity – experienced by, for example, Arthur Rowe in *The Ministry of Fear* and Mrs Drover in Bowen's 'The Demon Lover'. Examples of individual characters being haunted by their past are manifold and seem in some way to act as a metaphor for a wider, societal repression of memories of the First World War brought uncannily back by the Second.

If what seems to unite these writers is their presentation of distrust, it is perhaps unsurprising to find that this extends to the art of narrative itself, and that writers of the 1940s tend to problematise narrative voice and highlight their own artifice in ways that anticipate later writing. In the Conclusion I briefly look at the problematizing of narrative voice and other metafictional aspects of the literature considered that can be said to anticipate postmodernist concerns.

This thesis proceeds via a series of snapshots that, out of the mass of novels and stories produced in WWII, samples a proportion of these as representative of much more pervasive concerns, and where the works featured are returned to throughout the thesis under a number of different headings. Although I am indebted to previous critics like Petra Rau, Gill Plain and Steve Ellis, whose work overlaps at times with my concerns, the extensive literary resources available mean that the bulk of my analysis in undertaking this 'sampling' has not been pre-empted by their discussions, although another function in part of this thesis is to coordinate their insights and those of other critics under the theme of the 'enemy within'. Because my primary concern here is to highlight anxieties that pervade literature of the period in general, the key organising principle is that of comparison, and it is for this reason that I return to individual texts often several times during the course of the thesis, from different perspectives, rather than offer single extended analyses of texts or devote chapters to individual authors. It is this comparative approach that allows me to go beyond the work of many other critics. To give one example, Rod Mengham in his excellent chapter on Henry Green's 1945 novel *Loving* (Mengham 1982: 109-56) identifies the mistrust of all the characters of that novel towards each other, the fact each character is watched by each, that each seeks to use any knowledge gained through such surveillance for their own ends, and that this causes different characters to seek to hide their true thoughts and feelings, and so forth, but what he does not do, as this is not within the scope of his study, is show how typical this is of literature of the time. While moving between texts, I do nonetheless offer close readings of these because the 'enemy within' motif is staged through an intricate pattern of the themes of watching, betrayal and mistrust, and this therefore requires detailed attention to and lengthy scrutiny of the texts considered, as will be evident in what follows.

One: Fears of Wartime Duplicity and Treachery

1. The Threat of the Fifth Column

> 'You've read in the newspapers of the Fifth Column? You know, roughly at any rate, just what that term implies?'
>
> Tommy murmured:
>
> 'The enemy within.'
>
> […] 'The danger of losing comes, not from outside – not from the might of Germany's bombers, not from her seizure of neutral countries and fresh vantage points from which to attack – but from within. Our danger is the danger of Troy – the wooden horse within our walls. Call it the Fifth Column if you like. It is here, among us. (Christie 1941: 13-14)

This assertion that the 'Fifth Column […] is here, among us' comes from Agatha Christie's 1941 espionage thriller *N or M?,* which sees her detectives Tommy and Tuppence trying to uncover fifth columnists in an entirely typical British boarding house on the coast, where conversations between guests can be thought to reflect actual discussion that was widespread at the time:

> [t]he conversation during the meal turned on the absorbing subject of spies. Well-known hoary chestnuts were retold. The nun with the muscular arm, the clergyman descending from his parachute and using unclergymanlike language as he landed with a bump, the Austrian cook who secreted a wireless in her bedroom chimney, and all the things that had happened or nearly happened to aunts and second cousins of those present. That led easily to Fifth Columnist activities. The denunciation of the British Fascists, of the Communists, of the Peace Party, of conscientious objectors. It was a very normal conversation of the kind that may be heard every day. (Christie 1941: 75)

If Christie's fictional conversation is indeed typical of its time, as 'a very normal conversation of the kind that may be heard every day', then it is indicative of many of the fears prevalent in Britain over the eighteen months prior to the novel's publication. Such fears start with

the threat posed by foreigners currently in Britain – both spies parachuted in from Germany such as the 'clergyman' and those already in place, presumably, before the war started, such as the Austrian cook. Attention quickly turns to the potential treachery of Britons, however, of 'British fascists' first but then 'the Communists' and finally the 'Peace Party' and 'conscientious objectors', the suggestion being that pacifists and appeasers alike are not to be trusted.

The plot of *N or M?*, which revolves around the attempt to uncover a network of fifth columnists co-ordinated by two Germans pretending to be British, but made up otherwise of Britons sympathetic to the Nazi cause, goes on to suggest that although stories of 'muscular' nuns and so on may be no more than 'hoary chestnuts', the threat posed by 'the wooden horse within our walls' is entirely real. The full extent of this treachery and the threat it poses is summarised at the very beginning of the novel when Grant seeks out Tommy's help in uncovering the identities of the two German agents heading the operation known only to exist under the codenames N. and M.. Their network of supporters, Grant asserts, must include

> at least two highly placed in the Admiralty [...] one must be a member of General G—'s staff […] three or more in the Air Force […] two, at least, are members of the Intelligence, and have access to Cabinet secrets. We know that from the way things have happened. The leakage – a leakage from the top – of information to the enemy, shows us that. (15)

A later conversation between Grant and Tommy reflects the hatred felt for these duplicitous traitors:

> 'But there are those for whom we've neither respect nor liking – and those are the traitors within our own ranks – the ones who are willing to betray their country and accept office and promotion from the foreigner who has conquered it.'
>
> Tommy said with feeling:
>
> 'My God, I'm with you, sir. That's a skunk's trick.'
>
> 'And deserves a skunk's end.'
>
> Tommy said incredulously:

> ‘And there really are these – these swine?’
>
> ‘Everywhere. As I told you. In our service. In our fighting forces. On Parliamentary benches. High up in the Ministries.’ (63-4)

That literally anyone, including the last person you would suspect, could be working for the enemy is made clear at the end of the novel when N. and M. are revealed to be ‘retired naval wallah’ and ‘local ARP warden’ Commander Haydock, a ‘big hearty man’ and ‘most genial host’ (56-7, 95), and British-born, softly-spoken mother Mrs Sprot, who turns out to have adopted her ‘daughter’ Betty in order to divert attention from herself, a ploy that proves highly effective as virtually every one of the typical residents of the boarding-house comes under suspicion at some stage or other ‘except Mrs Sprot’ (288), who evades attention precisely because of the ‘psychological camouflage’ of having her daughter with her – ‘You just can’t conceive of a master spy dragging her kid into the business. That’s the main reason why I never considered Mrs Sprot seriously’, Tuppence says (292).[8] Equally, while many of the ‘men and women’ working with the enemy are ‘obscure’, many prove, too, to be ‘highly placed’, as Grant asserted at the very beginning (14). For when Tommy and Tuppence finally succeed in identifying and capturing N. and M., they find

> a full list of all prominent personages who are pledged to assist an invasion of this country. Amongst them were two Chief Constables, an Air Chief Marshall, two Generals, the Head of an Armaments Works, a Cabinet Minister, many Police Superintendents, Commanders of Local Voluntary Defence Organisations, and various military and naval lesser fry, as well as members of our own Intelligence Force […] You can realise that, with such persons to issue contradictory orders and confuse operations, how the threatened invasion would have had every chance to succeed. (294-5)

[8] Describing Mrs Sprot as a ‘symbol of all the nation is fighting for’, Gill Plain has suggested that Christie’s decision to make her the enemy spy rather than ‘an easy scapegoat’ such as ‘the refugee and the Irishwoman’ suggests that ‘the cancer of betrayal lies at the very heart of Britishness’, adding that, in doing so, Christie was in fact ‘exploit[ing] the worst fears of [a] misogynistic nation’ (Plain 1996: 24).

Of course, Christie is exaggerating the threat here – the crime novel, which Alison Light suggests works 'more to relieve generalized anxiety than to generate strong emotion' (Light 1991: 71), is a kind of fantasy genre, and such exaggeration is perhaps an expected element – but she is reflecting genuine anxieties of the time. In *Living Through the Blitz*, Tom Harrisson, who co-founded and coordinated Mass Observation, notes that fears of fifth columnists were widespread and rumours of enemy agents rife. Harrisson notes, for example, the rumours in Coventry following the devastating raids on the city in November 1940 of signalling between German planes and enemy agents on the ground:

> [one rumour] had a man shot while signalling with a night light. 'There were signals. No doubt about that,' said a woman voicing one of the many rumours which attributed the whole disaster to guidance from the ground. On the same theme:
>
> Woman: 'There was a swastika in the sky before the raid – not long before the bombs began to drop. To warn fifth-columnists to clear out.'
>
> Man: 'How do you mean, there was a swastika in the sky?'
>
> Woman: 'Made in smoke. I've seen aeroplanes make question-marks myself.'
>
> (Harrisson 1976: 138)

Such fears were particularly rife during what historian Angus Calder calls the 'paranoid summer of 1940' (1991: 66) when, 'with France falling in conditions which suggested general collapse of morale and widespread treachery, people in Britain looked at their neighbours suspiciously' (77) and 'Fifth Column mania' was 'widespread' (110).

Newspapers at the time certainly contributed to this mania. As Hylton notes, 'no rumour was too wild to be denied circulation' and, '[a]s Hitler made his way across Europe, the media eagerly reported the activities of Nazis, real or imagined, in the countries that were overrun' (2010: 4-5). As an example, Hylton cites a *Daily Express* account of the invasion of the Low Countries (5):

> [a]s machine-guns came out of the sky like unnatural lightning, peppering the streets below, the Fifth Column crept out of their homes in their German uniforms, heavily armed. Holland had combed out the Fifth Column for weeks before but as

> the doors opened at 3a.m. the men who had been proclaimed anti-Nazis and refugees from Germany held rifles.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, reports that fifth columns abroad were strengthened by the presence of 'refugees from Germany' led to demands for enemy aliens, especially those of German and Austrian nationality, to be rounded up, and some 27,200 were interned by June 1940 (Hylton 2010: 19) and removed to camps on the Isle of Man and elsewhere or else, in the case of over 11,000 interns, shipped off to Canada and Australia. This process was halted late in 1940 and eventually reversed, with many being released from early 1941 onwards, when it became clear that the vast majority of those interned were in fact entirely harmless, but in the first twelve months especially, the question raised again and again was that of the character Major Bletchley in *N or M?* – 'Why don't we intern all these refugees?' (Christie 1941: 98). Interning all enemy aliens would only solve part of the problem, however, for fears of treachery extended to fascist sympathizers of native stock. The Nazi policy of recruiting such traitors, in other countries and presumably by extension Britain too, was summarised by the *Yorkshire Post* in an April 1940 piece:

> [b]efore attacking a country, Hitler always tries to undermine it from within. How does he enlist his sympathisers, ready to work for him when the hour strikes? Partly […] by spreading fears of invasion, which tempt the unscrupulous and timorous to ensure their good standing with the invaders in advance. Local adventurers and ne'er-do-wells are attracted to the promise of fat jobs when the Nazis arrive. (Cited in Hylton 2010: 7)

As Angus Calder writes, it was widely reported that Hitler's fifth column strategy extended to Britain, the *Sunday Dispatch* reporting on 14 April 1940, for example, that Hitler had a 'Fifth Column […] made up of Fascists, Communists, peace fanatics and alien refugees in league with Berlin and Moscow', and other newspapers then taking up the *Dispatch*'s theme (Calder 1991: 111).

These fears were both reflected and reinforced by numerous popular novels and films of the period, such as Christie's discussed above. Calder argues that 'British readers and film watchers were predisposed by their taste for detective stories and spy thrillers to

enjoy tales about traitors at work in Britain' (1991: 259) but such stories also tapped into commonplace anxieties. A good example is Alberto Cavalcanti's *Went the Day Well?* (1942), a film loosely based on the Graham Greene short story 'The Lieutenant Died Last' (published in June 1940), which sees sixty German parachutists dropped behind enemy lines who head disguised as English Tommies to an idyllic English village where they meet up with local fifth columnists led by the squire, who is also the organizer of the local Home Guard. Over dinner early in the film, conversation turns to the fall of France and the supposition that this must have been at least partly due to the work of fifth columnists:

> Wilsford: Absent-minded fellows, the French …
> The Vicar: You mean the Fifth Column?
> Mrs Fraser: That must have been the most unpleasant thing of all, never knowing who was working for the enemy.
> Nora: I can't understand what the Fifth Column hopes to gain in the long run.
> Wilsford: Power, I suppose.
> Mrs Fraser: Well, that's one thing we don't have to worry about. No-one can tell me there's a potential Fifth Column in England. (*Went the Day Well?* (1942))

Mrs Fraser's confident assertion is, of course, immediately undermined by the events that follow, and so the film as a whole works to bolster belief in widespread treachery at home. Similarly, the 1941 film *Cottage to Let*, directed by Anthony Asquith and based on the 1940 play of the same name by Geoffrey Kerr, portrays the activities of a group of fifth columnists in Scotland during the war. The plot focuses on an eccentric inventor, John Barrington, who is shown to be indispensable to the British war machine owing to his development of technology such as a self-sealing fuel-tank and, most recently, a new bombsight. The government has become worried about the security surrounding Banks, not least because the exact details of the fuel-tank appear to have reached German intelligence within days of its invention. Unbeknown to them, however, plans are now afoot to abduct Barrington and smuggle him to Germany where he will be forced to put his brilliant mind at the disposal of the Nazi regime. In a late plot-twist, the leader of the would-be kidnappers is revealed to

be an heroic flight lieutenant, who has been recuperating in a cottage in the grounds of Barrington's house after his plane was apparently shot down.

Such a plotline would have rung true for many because it was assumed that it was precisely the treachery of fifth columnists that explained the rapidity with which German forces had succeeded in defeating France, the Low Countries and Scandinavia. This belief extended to the government, which was extremely concerned by the possibilities of an active and efficient fifth column within the country:

> after all, the Joint Intelligence Committee, the senior body of British military and civilian intelligence meeting on 2 May [1940] to consider the implications of the Scandinavian débâcle, concluded that German success in Norway and Denmark had been due to the subversive activities of a well-organised 'Fifth Column' and suggested that, besides enemy aliens, Fascist and IRA supporters, the [Communist Party …] was a possible source of recruits for such a 'Fifth Column' in Britain. (Calder 1991: 77)

Such conclusions were, according to Hylton, actively pursued by government officials eager to deflect attention from their own failings:

> [t]he rapid invasion of Norway and Denmark took British Intelligence completely by surprise, despite a wealth of evidence about Hitler's intentions, which they chose to ignore or misinterpret. Rather than admit their mistakes, intelligence sources preferred to blame a well-developed Fifth Column for the speed of Norway's collapse. (2010: 7)

Nicholas Harman argues along similar lines when he states that the British government's public explanation of the speed with which France had been overcome by German forces as largely owing to the activities of a French fifth column, as well as more general suggestions of French cowardice and lack of discipline, was a way of diverting attention from British failings. As Harman notes in *Dunkirk: The Necessary Myth*, the British Press were told that

> [i]t is now no secret that on several fronts the French failed to withstand the assault […] In fairness to the British Army, and its commanders, it cannot be too highly emphasised that it is the Allied High Command that has been outmanoeuvred and the armies of the French that have been outfought – not the BEF. (1980: 243)

This fed into numerous accounts of the British Expeditionary Force's defeats in France and Belgium and eventual withdrawal at Dunkirk, one example of which is Gun Buster's *Return via Dunkirk* (1940), which Tom Harrisson described in *Horizon* as 'a straight account of an artillery unit retreating from the Germans, absorbing in its graphic detail' (Harrisson 1941: 416) but which Alan Munton in his *English Fiction of the Second World War* describes as 'inaugurat[ing] the strategies subsequently used in most accounts of Dunkirk: diminish the significance of the military defeat, confuse what happened during the rearguard action around Dunkirk, denigrate the French contribution, and define the final evacuation as heroic' (Munton 1989: 38). Buster's account, Munton argues, 'is consistent with official policy' in showing 'the French as having no discipline in retreat' and being 'panic-stricken', in focusing on a British battery 'going into action as the main forces depart' so as to '[deflect] attention from the retreat itself', and in presenting the rearguard actions of this battery in such a way as to '[conceal] the fact it was the French forces who formed the true rearguard' (38-9). Munton notes further that for Gun Buster

> French looters are thieves, but British looting is treated with tolerant amusement. The blonde daughters of a French farmer, who look like 'typical Saxon Gretchens' (p. 162), are assumed, on no evidence whatever, to be Fifth Columnists. The French are worse than unreliable, they are a threat. (39)

Although such 'myths of Dunkirk' may be an understandable response both in terms of covering up Britain's own failings and seeking to ensure that confidence in those running the war and morale more generally were upheld, belief in the effectiveness of Hitler's fifth columns in other European countries within government and passed on through the British media and popular film and fiction to the wider population undoubtedly contributed to a country-wide sense of paranoia and distrust that one would have thought detrimental to the war effort. Indeed, Hylton argues that

> [a]ll this hysteria delighted the Germans, who, learning of this new and unexpected source of 'support' within Britain, wasted no time in getting Lord Haw-Haw to broadcast bogus instructions to his non-existent army of Fifth Columnists. This in turn increased the paranoia among the British population, and so the spiral of hysteria went on. (Hylton 2010: 11-12)

Hylton goes on to argue that the situation was worsened by the Ministry of Information, citing a leaflet on the subject published by the ministry 'guaranteed to set neighbour against neighbour' (12), which read:

> [t]here is a Fifth Column in Britain. Anyone who thinks there isn't, that 'it can't happen here', has simply fallen into the trap laid by the Fifth Column itself. For the first job of the Fifth Column is to make people believe that it does not exist. In other countries, the most respectable and neighbourly citizens turned out to be Fifth Columnists. (12)

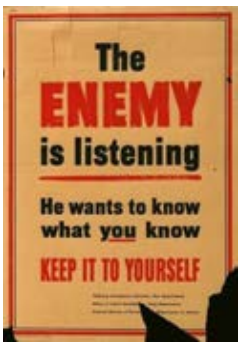
In fact, it has been argued that proven Nazi sympathisers were 'few, and uniformly petty' and German intelligence regarding Britain 'particularly bad', but, as Calder adds, 'these facts were not clear at the time' (Calder 1991: 110). The lack of actual evidence of widespread treachery was doubtless frustrating for the British authorities, General Ironside complaining, for example, that

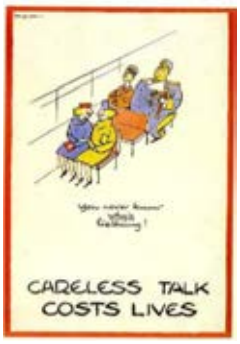
> [i]t is extraordinary that we get circumstantial reports of Fifth Columnists and yet we have never been able to get anything worth having. One is persuaded that it hardly exists. And yet there is signalling going on all over the place and we cannot get any evidence. (Cited in Hylton 2010: 4)

Certain belief in this fifth column combined with the lack of concrete evidence or arrests of proven traitors can only have added to the sense of paranoia, suggesting as it must have done the apparent invincibility of this underground enemy owing to its invisibility.

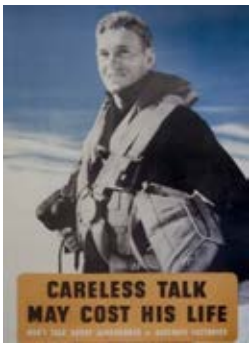
It was to curtail the activities of this fifth column that the government launched its famous 'Careless Talk Costs Lives' poster campaign in February 1940 with the aim of raising

awareness of the danger of important information being passed to the enemy. Memorable aphorisms such as 'Loose Lips Sink Ships' and 'Tittle Tattle Lost the Battle' were coined in an attempt to prevent key information falling into German hands.









[9]

The government's poster campaign was supported by propaganda films such as Ealing Studios' *The Next of Kin*, directed by Thorold Dickinson, and *The Foreman Went to France*, directed by Charles Frend, both released in 1942. While the latter, based on a story by J. B. Priestley, itself inspired by a true event, charts the efforts of a factory foreman to prevent fifth columnists from allowing vital machinery on loan to a French factory to fall into enemy hands, *The Next of Kin*, which was originally commissioned as a military training film by the War Office, concerns a supposedly secret British plot to attack a relatively unguarded German U-boat in occupied Northern France. The element of surprise is lost, however, thanks to a series of reckless comments by soldiers and civilians to, or within earshot of, German spies. Although the raid is ultimately a success, the British suffer very heavy losses, and responsibility for these is placed squarely on the film's audience in both the pre-title announcement which states, 'This is the story of how YOU unwittingly worked for the enemy', and opening voiceover, spoken as the camera pans across dead soldiers:

> [t]he object of the raid has been achieved. Locked gates, oil storage tanks, harbour equipment were destroyed. One enemy submarine was put out of action. Our own losses, both in men and craft, were very heavy. The enemy had been warned. He was waiting for us. And although our troops fought throughout with great skill and gallantry, they were not able to effect the surprise that had been hoped for. They

[9] All posters in the Imperial War Museum, London; see Rau 2009: 189-193 for an analysis of some of these.

> paid the price for bad security. The next of kin of causalities have been informed. (*The Next of Kin* (1942))

It is thus hardly surprising that Britons in the summer of 1940 and after were suspicious of their fellow citizens, nor that such anxieties should find their way into the literary productions of the time.

2. Fears of Betrayal

Given this milieu of distrust and paranoia, and fear of the threat posed by an enemy within, it is perhaps unsurprising that so much fiction of the war, from its outset, is marked by a profound sense of anxiety that seems channelled particularly at those closest to us, nor that this seems to be intensified in fiction written in the aftermath of the 'paranoid summer of 1940'. An example of this intensification of anxiety can be seen in the work of Graham Greene. *The Confidential Agent*, published in the month war began, charts the efforts of D. to secure shipments of British coal to his side in an unnamed civil war, presumably the Spanish, shipments that are vital for the war effort. Working against him is L., an agent for the opposing side who is determined not only to stop D. securing the contract he seeks but also to agree a similar contract for his own side. The story starts with D. and L. on the same boat arriving in Dover and the novel sees this foreign war fought out in miniature, so to speak, on British soil. In the conflict that follows L. proves himself a ruthless adversary but from the first it is clear that while D. seems to exist in a permanent state of fear (as early as the fifth paragraph we are told that he 'had no sense of safety […] Danger was part of him (Greene 1939: 4)); he is in fact more wary of those on his own side and is continually looking over his shoulder, fearful of when betrayal will suddenly come. D.'s worries prove all too well founded as the language teacher K. whom D. is told to report to and the manageress of the hotel D. is instructed to stay at make the decision to accept money from L. and switch sides at the first opportunity. The irony is that while K. and the manageress do not trust D. and this is part of the reason why they search his room and later join L., because they assume D. will sell out and don't want to be left out when he does, D. is equally suspicious

of them (thinking for example that his side 'were probably right not to trust Mr K. on the salary they paid him' (50)) and none of them is trusted by their superiors back home: K. and the manageress have only been 'chosen so that his own people could keep an eye on him' (17) but are then themselves not trusted sufficiently to be given details of D.'s mission, a situation that causes D. to be 'haunted […] by the vision of an endless distrust' (4-5).[10] D. is saddened but not surprised by this. 'You could trust nobody but yourself, and sometimes you were uncertain whether after all you could trust *yourself*. *They* didn't trust you' (5), he thinks early in the novel, and later that

> [n]o amount of service would ever convince them that he hadn't got, at some level, a price. After all, he recognised sadly, they had their price: the people had been sold out over and over again by their leaders (26).

K. and the manageress's treachery, however, and the distrust directed at them and by them, is presented against a background of numerous betrayals that are unconnected with the war. Thus K. is employed by a Dr Bellows to teach Entrenatione, an international language of his own devising not unlike Esperanto, but Bellows clearly distrusts enough those in his employ to stick rigorously to his rule that they never stray from using Entrenatione that he patrols silently about the building, spying on the work of his teaching staff and fining anyone caught lapsing into English or another language: '[o]nce D. thought he heard Dr Bellows pass down the passage on rubber-soled shoes. There wasn't much trust even in the centre of internationalism' (51). Then there is the example of Forbes, who Miss Cullen tells D. is 'dishonest about his name – he was a Jew called Furtstein. And he's dishonest in love. He wants to marry me. That's how I know. He keeps a mistress in Shepherd's Market' (71-72). D.'s experiences in the novel, especially because everything takes place in England, a country at peace that he had thus expected to be relatively free of cases of betrayal, force D. to recognise 'that the suspicion which was the atmosphere of his own life [which he had imagined] due to civil war [actually …] existed everywhere: it was part of human life' (72).

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[10] Greene's description of this 'endless distrust' has much in common with Maud Ellmann's description of distrust in Bowen's *The Heat of the Day*: 'Caught in these (Jamesian) wheels of surveillance – watching the watched watch the watchers – Stella has no choice but to become a spy herself' (Ellmann 2004: 154).

Written in the shadow of the forthcoming war, *The Confidential Agent* is thus a novel about treachery, and Ian Rankin, who wrote the Introduction to the Vintage edition, is right to stress the context of its writing and to state, as quoted in my Introduction, that times of approaching conflict 'bring about overwhelming feelings of urgency, despair and paranoia' (Rankin 2006: v), a sentiment echoed by Steve Ellis, who describes the '1939 state' as constituting a 'climate of anxiety, suspense and speculation' (2014: 1). Nonetheless, one can imagine that to its English readership at the time the plotline of *The Confidential Agent* would have seemed both far-fetched and distant – distant in the sense that though D. and L. fight out their conflict on English soil and English lives are lost in the process, it is still a foreign war. While the plotline of *The Ministry of Fear* is equally fantastic, however, it seems reasonable to assume that, written in the aftermath of the fall of France and Scandinavia and the reports of the effectiveness of fifth columns in those countries, and after the government's *Careless Talk* poster campaign and other efforts to alert Britons to the threat posed by an enemy within, its presentation of a group of fifth columnists made up of seemingly respectable and harmless individuals, including a psychiatrist, a priest and a spinster with an interest in séances, and all led by an Austrian refugee, would have seemed not without plausibility. It is because they seem so harmless and respectable that the various members of Hilfe's spy ring attract so little suspicion, but this is, in the context of the government's propaganda campaign about the need to 'Keep Mum', what is so scary, the fact that anyone might be a fifth columnist. Rowe remarks, 'That little man with the books was in it too. What a lot of them there are', and Anna replies, 'An awful lot. More everyday' (101). In the case of Hilfe himself, Rowe views him throughout much of the novel as the one character on whom he can depend: it is for this reason that '[i]n his account [to the police] he left out Hilfe's name – you never knew what false ideas the police might get, and he didn't want his only ally put behind bars' (71). It is telling here that his trust in Hilfe is matched by an opposing distrust of the British police. 'My dear, you have everything mixed up in your head, your poor head. You don't know who are your friends and who are your enemies' (199), Anna says to him at one point, but in his distrust of policemen whose job it is to protect him, Rowe is hardly alone. In fact, the policemen presented in the novel seem just as suspicious of each other: the counter-espionage agent Prentice, for example, comments regarding another policeman, someone whom he works alongside, that 'he

distrusts us – really distrusts us' (161). The milieu of the novel is best summarised by Major Stone, who tells Rowe, 'We'd manage all right if it wasn't for all the treachery' (124). Stone's apparent paranoia regarding traitors within the walls of the asylum he inhabits seems the most obvious sign of his own mental instability, but his suspicions prove well founded – indeed, he is killed because of them – forcing Rowe to admit towards the end of the novel, '[h]e had always believed in treachery. He hadn't been so mad after all' (181).

A similar intensification of distrust can be seen in the fiction of Elizabeth Bowen, who published *The Death of the Heart* in 1938 as the shadows of war lengthened, a novel that explores surveillance, duplicity and betrayal, and then revisited such themes in her next novel, *The Heat of the Day*, but here, as with Greene in *The Ministry of Fear*, within a plotline explicitly about fifth columnist treachery. *The Death of the Heart* presents a number of acts of betrayal that result from what Maud Ellmann has described as a 'process of displacement [that] pervades this text, whereby desire ricochets from object to substitutive object' (Ellmann 2004: 134) – in allowing a substitutive object to stand in for the real object of desire, characters end up, inevitably, sacrificing those substitutive objects, who are unaware that they are only desired insofar as they represent someone else. Thus, as Ellmann continues,

> Anna sacrifices Portia to Eddie, thus letting herself off the hook while sustaining her relationship with him vicariously. Eddie, on the other hand, uses Portia as a substitute for Anna but also as the vehicle of revenge against the woman who has passed him on. The chain of substitution does not stop here, however, but reaches back into the past. Anna also uses Eddie as a surrogate for her faithless lover, Robert Pidgeon, a veteran of World War I. By letting Eddie loose on Portia, Anna re-enacts by proxy her own betrayal at the hands of Pidgeon. (137)

This goes some way to explaining why Anna laughs at Major Brutt, too, for as Ellmann adds, '[a]nother surrogate for Pidgeon is Major Brutt, once Pidgeon's comrade-in-arms' (137) – Anna's contempt for Brunt could be seen as a way of venting her long-suppressed feelings of anger at Pidgeon for his leaving her. It is because characters are unable to deal openly with wounds from the past, in other words, that they take revenge for what has happened

to them on other characters who are unaware both of these past injuries that lie hidden and that they are being used in this way.

The Heat of the Day is not dissimilar but here personal treachery is blended with ideological treachery, its fifth columnist plotline revolving around the efforts of a spy, Robert Kelway, to smuggle government secrets to Berlin. As with *The Ministry of Fear*, this takes place against a background of other treacheries, the most obvious of which is the counter-spy Harrison's determination to use the information he has gained regarding Kelway to blackmail Kelway's partner Stella Rodney into having an affair with him in return for keeping his information regarding Kelway secret. As a result of being told her partner is an enemy agent, Stella, as she complains to Harrison later, is herself forced to become a spy as she seeks to find out whether what Harrison has said might be true, without alerting Kelway to her suspicions; and just as both Kelway and Harrison have chosen to betray their country, Kelway by passing on government secrets, Harrison by not passing on the evidence he has gathered against Kelway, so Stella is put in a position where she must betray either her country or her partner by agreeing or not to Harrison's proposal. We learn, furthermore, that Stella has been living a lie of sorts that long predates the war, by allowing it to be believed when her husband left her years before that it was she who left him, because she preferred to be viewed as a kind of femme fatale than pitied as a woman spurned. Louie, meanwhile, the other major character of the novel, who touches tangentially on the main plotline at several moments in the story, is herself a traitor because of the number of affairs she has while her husband is abroad on active duty. As is suggested by this brief synopsis, the story is riddled with treacheries and betrayals: what is noteworthy about this novel, not least because of its similarity to other fictions of the time, is the way that fears of fifth columnist betrayal – of betrayal of the country – seem to be mapped onto, or explored through, more personal, more universally experienced, stories of betrayal. This is something that, Rau has argued, allows Bowen, and also Greene in *The Ministry of Fea*r, to 'pose a range of uncomfortable questions about national identity and the nature of subjectivity' (Rau 2010: 186):

> [i]n *The Ministry of Fear* and *The Heat of the Day* the protagonists get involved with spies and traitors, and therefore become liable to blackmail and manipulation: their

> loyalties are divided between their country and their lovers. Most importantly, however, in both novels the main plot of ideological betrayal is grafted onto an earlier story of (self-)deception, which accounts for peculiar instabilities of character: if the self is so unstable as to require fictions of subjectivity, how can any sense of alterity (whether amorous or inimical) be 'real'? (186)

Rau goes on to argue that, '[f]or Greene and Bowen, love and war happen on the same battlefield of fictitious selves and others […] spies beget spies out of those who love them; both [Stella and Rowe] are amorous traitors themselves […] Love is like war' (208-9). Perhaps the most obvious example of this is the ending of *The Ministry of Fear*, where Rowe and Anna commit themselves to what Rau describes as 'an insane life of marital espionage' (210).[11]

Bennett and Royle's description of 'Kelway's treachery and deception' as characterised by an 'inextricable knitting together of the individual and the national, the personal and politic' (Bennett and Royle 1994: 92) applies equally to du Maurier's blending of ideological and personal treachery in *Frenchman's Creek* (1941). Set in the 1660s, the action revolves around the conflict between the French pirate Jean-Benoit Aubéry and the Cornish landowners whose property and ships he targets. Despite the historical setting, his sudden strikes on the Cornish coast and rapid retreats bear something in common with the German attacks from the air that Britain was experiencing at the time du Maurier was writing, and so her decision to have the heroine of the novel, a character presented in an entirely sympathetic light with whom the reader is invited to fully side, not only shelter the French pirate and his ship but even join him on some of his attacks on her fellow countryman seems more than a little provocative given the context. It is for this reason that although *Frenchman's Creek* has been described by critics such as Ina Habermann as an 'escapist tale' and that this can be explained by its being written during a particularly 'bleak

[11] Rau goes on to wonder whether in both Greene and Bowen's case this could be seen as a 'guilt-ridden overcompensation' for their 'own intelligence and extramarital activities during the war, which involved a considerable amount of duplicity' (Rau 2009: 208 (and see also 195)) – this is possible of course, and it is certainly interesting to note the ways in which the subject matter of their novels overlaps with their real-life experience of both intelligence work and extramarital affairs.

phase in the war' (Habermann 2010: 161) – Haberman's suggestion that '[t]here are echoes of Shakespeare; the story is cast as a midsummer night's dream' (162) is persuasive too – it is worth noting, and not enough attention has been paid to this, that this particular 'dream' seems to play out current fantasies of siding with the enemy. This arguably suggests similarities between *Frenchman's Creek* and texts such as Louis MacNeice's 'Brother Fire' with its, to quote Adam Piette, 'strange complicity of Londoners in the destruction of their city' (Piette 1995: 39) and William Sansom's story 'In the Morning' in which Eliot the fireman, to again quote Piette, 'acknowledges dangerous desires': 'Eliot remembers his own perversely wishful thought that the tank would go up, hardly a conscious wish, but nevertheless a shadow for a moment perceptible in the obscurity of his deeper desires' (45). Dona St Columb thus emerges as a kind of seventeenth-century fifth columnist, as can be seen in one description of her landing on Cornish land as an enemy:

> [t]his country and these cliffs, which were another part of her own coast, must be for her, this night at any rate, a hostile place. She had come to enemy territory, and the townsfolk of Fowey Haven, who at this moment were sleeping in their beds, were alien too. (du Maurier 1941: 112)

As with Kelway in *The Heat of the Day*, Dona's betrayal of her country is presented as secondary to her betrayal of individuals close to her – her husband, her would-be lover and her neighbours. In fact, it is the constrictive nature of these personal relationships rather than any lack of patriotism that leads her to side with the enemy against her kinsmen. The response of Rockingham, the man who would have Dona as his mistress and the only person to realise her relationship with Aubéry and her treachery, is similarly motivated not by patriotic indignation but rather personal outrage at the perceived betrayal of himself. 'It might have been me […] it would have been me', Rockingham whines as he realises the fullness of her feelings for the Frenchman: 'No, Rockingham … Never', Dona replies, and it is the simple truthfulness of her words that causes him to decide to murder her then and there. It could be that du Maurier here is suggesting, perhaps rightly, that personal feelings are likely to have a greater impact on our actions than more impersonal concepts associated with patriotism such as duty, country, and so on. Equally, however, it could be that du

Maurier is exploring fifth columnist betrayal through the more accessible domain of personal treachery.

Henry Green's 1943 novel *Caught* does something similar although here there are no spies or traitors like in *The Heat of the Day* or *Frenchman's Creek* – rather, this novel born of Green's personal experience of being an auxiliary fireman in London, set largely between early-1939 and late-1940, charts repeated acts of dishonesty, espionage and betrayal, but always on a personal level between characters who are often unaware of major political events, several of whom are presented as serial liars. Regarding Pye the fire station sub-officer, for example, the narrator comments at one moment in the book that '[i]t was one of the few true stories he told' (50); later, talking to Prudence, Pye 'knew that she knew he lied' (120) while Hilly lies to herself – 'but not even then, she concluded, knowing she probably lied again' (99). Espionage and treachery seem equally rife: at several moments the firemen worry who might be spying on them and betraying their secrets, Pye believing Roe to be the traitor in the ranks, only to switch his suspicion to Piper: 'you know who really must have told the DO, why, the old Pied Piper. Now that he's got this job redecorating Trant's quarters up at Number Fifteen, I'm sure he repeats everything' (102). Roe is adamant that no-one in the station would actually report what they found back to their superior officer, but the narrator intervenes to tell us that 'he was wrong. There were already men who, for no apparent advantage, were more than willing to talk' (104). At another moment Pye tries to remember '[w]hat's 'is name, that spy Trant has up at Number Fifteen?' (87), while back at their sub-station Eileen wonders if Pye 'meant to trap one of us into telling' (60), suggesting that he might have done so 'to judge of us, to see what we're like' (60). No wonder the protagonist Richard Roe asks at one stage, 'Why is everything so secret in our place, I can't see why?' to which Hilly replies, 'Don't ask me […] but the more you get to know them, the Fire Brigade I mean, the more terrified they are of letting things out. They seem to be every minute spying on each other, and telling' (104). There are several moments of petty betrayal, such as when Mary Howells goes to see her son-in-law Ted in Doncaster and he tells her the two cups of tea he has bought them cost three pence each rather than two: when she hands him sixpence, '[h]e pocketed it without comment. He had made tuppence out of her' (113). Mary at this stage has gone to visit Ted to force him to behave better to her daughter Brid and their new-born child, whom he has

reportedly abused, but in the end does not have the courage to raise the issue; but back in London her narrative of the visit is very different:

> 'I told 'im, Arthur, you should've been there to 'ear. I said to 'im, I says,' she went on, imagining every word, 'You're no good to no one, and I got a daughter, I 'ave, 'oo you took, an' when you'd used what you wanted you sent 'er back,' I says, 'more shame to yer, call yerself a man,' I said. ''E went white.' (116)

Pye feels Mary has 'stabbed [him] in the back' (88) by going on this trip without asking him, while Mary feels betrayed by her daughter Brid on arriving back to find that a number of her things have disappeared from her house and, later, that Brid has taken them and locked them up in a box. This is nothing compared with what Brid, psychologically damaged by post-natal trauma, believes her mother to be doing to her: she 'realised, it was proved to her, that she was being poisoned, no less' (128).

Caught is a war novel, then, that is saturated with treachery and conflict, where the various skirmishes are played out against the background of the Europe-wide conflict. An example of this is when Eileen loses her temper with Pye and shrieks at him to '"get out of 'ere [the kitchen]". Upon which Pye left. Eileen burst out sobbing. And that same day she gave notice. The news from Norway was worse' (136). The way Green follows his simple description of the results of the argument between Pye and Eileen with the equally short and simple reference to broader events highlights the pettiness of the conflict within the station while also perhaps suggesting that the invasion of Norway and Pye's invasion of Eileen's kitchen are somehow connected. The connection between conflict between countries and conflict between individuals is stressed when Prudence compares the way Pye looks at her and the way she imagines a former lover, a pilot, would look at his target:

> Of course Bert was looking at her, and always did like that, for bed, sitting up, begging. It was different, but John would want his target so much it would really be the same. War, she thought, was sex. (118-9)

The connection between war and sex is reinforced structurally through the two major set-pieces that open and close the novel, 'two blocks of narration [that] are typographically and

stylistically equivalent' (Stonebridge 2001: 63), both of which focus on Roe remembering some important recent event. The first concerns the abduction of Roe's son Christopher by Pye's sister, like Brid psychologically damaged, but in this case it would seem from the brutality of an early sexual encounter; the second concerns Roe's presence at a major fire caused by bombing at the very beginning of the Blitz, a fire that caused the deaths of several of the main characters of the novel. That Roe's description of this fire is punctuated by Christopher's playing at being a German bomber suggests a connection between Christopher's abduction described at the beginning of the book and, to use Mengham's words, 'the avidity with which he fantasizes scenarios of violence', lending weight to Mengham's belief that the 'roots of this behaviour are almost certainly in Christopher's experience of abduction', his 'constant imaginative resort to the roles of bully and tyrant […] effectively a refusal of the role of victim that has so traumatized him' (Mengham 2009: 30). While Roe's traumatized condition at the end of the novel may be due to the bombing raids of an external enemy, Christopher's is certainly due to an internal one, while Pye's sister's abduction of him seems likely to be a consequence of her own experience of trauma, possibly at the hands of Pye himself, and so *Caught*, with its focus away from these set pieces on the infighting, deception and treachery between the various characters at the station, is another novel preoccupied with home-grown threats.

As the war progressed, the Blitz came to an end, the Soviet Union and the United States both entered on Britain's side and the tide began to turn, one might expect that the paranoia that fed into plotlines of treachery and deception in the early years of the war would have lessened. Turning to three novels begun towards the end of the war though not finished until after its conclusion, however, du Maurier's *The King's General* and Green's *Back*, both published in 1946, and Hamilton's *The Slaves of Solitude*, published the following year, one finds plotlines that continue to revolve around themes of duplicity and betrayal. *The King's General*, for example, an historical novel set in the English Civil War of the 1640s that I will discuss more fully later, culminates with a Royalist landing force under the command of the eponymous king's general being forced to turn back from the Cornish coast after the planned landing is leaked to the Parliamentarian opposition by the general's own son, although it is unclear what motivates him to do so – probably not any strongly felt

ideological or political reason, perhaps personal animosity against his father, perhaps simply a desire to prevent further loss of life.

Fears of national treachery are mapped explicitly onto the personal in *The Slaves of Solitude*, in which the Rosamund Tea Rooms setting comes to work as a metaphor for English society in wartime more generally. The blurring of national and personal betrayal is particularly obvious late in the novel when Miss Roach considers the treachery of Vicki Kugelmann, 'the poor lonely German girl whom Miss Roach had once befriended' (Hamilton 1947: 123) and introduced to the Tea Rooms. By the latter part of the novel, however, Kugelmann's relations with Lieutenant Pike, the American who seemingly wants to marry Miss Roach, imply one type of betrayal, while another is suggested by her apparent reverence for Hitler and contempt for England, which lead Miss Roach to think that '[p]erhaps, after all, she *was* a spy?' (178):

> [i]t occurred to her she might be meeting him in secret. But she did not really believe this, any more than she really believed that Vicki was in fact a German spy. But she wouldn't put either of these things beyond her. (201)

While Miss Roach does not 'really believe' in either of these treacheries, what is of interest here is her linking of the two. As in other novels, it seems that Miss Roach is making sense of the idea of national betrayal through mapping it onto a more universal form of personal betrayal, although arguably it is the other way around – that the more likely possibility of personal betrayal (Miss Roach has seen Kugelmann kiss Pike on the bench where he has previously kissed Roach herself) is being displaced onto the arguably less likely and perhaps less personally hurtful possibility of espionage. Despite the threat posed by the German Vicki Kugelmann, however, it is the wholly English Mr Thwaites who leads the attack against the mild and terrified Miss Roach. His fascist sympathies are laid bare by the narrator from the first: 'Thwaites had since 1939 slowly learned to swallow the disgrace of Hitler, of whom he had been from the beginning, and still secretly remained, a hot disciple' (17). That he remains a hot disciple but in secret suggests Thwaites' talent for duplicity, and indeed, although he is presented throughout as a wholly dislikeable character, it is clear that he is more than capable of hiding his true nature and 'could make himself agreeable when he

wished, and had frequently been known to charm old ladies in the early stages of his acquaintance with them, going out of his way to do small services for them' (16).

Turning to Green's *Back*, what is perhaps particularly notable about this novel is the way the perception or fear of betrayal is dramatized more fully than the act itself, perhaps reflecting increased awareness that many of the fears of an enemy within from earlier in the war had proved by the war's end to be largely unfounded. Green's novel is focused on the return from a German prisoner-of-war camp after several years internment of Charley Summers, and the relationship he forms with Nancy Whitmore, the half-sister and seemingly identical double of Rose Phillips, the woman he had an affair with before the war who died at around the time he was captured. By the end of the novel Nancy has 'realized the war had injured him' (Green 1946: 200) but it takes her some time to see that he has been injured not only physically – he has lost a leg – but also psychologically: 'she saw he must be a shell shock case, and dangerous' (91). In fact, the two injuries seem connected: we are told several times that people fail to realise that Summers is physically injured because his trouser leg effectively hides the wooden leg within, and he has to draw attention to the fact to make others realise the truth of his injury, just as most of the characters he encounters seem wholly unaware of the psychological scarring he carries, though there is a general assumption that he must have suffered in the prisoner-of-war camp and that he must have found it strange returning home only to find it so different. In both cases, the physical and the psychological, his injuries are seemingly the result of a deception of sorts: he lost his leg, we are told on the first page, 'for not noticing the gun behind a rose' (5), and it is his relationship with the Rose he has lost that seems perhaps as much as his actual war experience to account for his psychological injuries, and certainly he seems to suffer more the longer he is back in England, rather than less. What brings about the mental crisis that Charley is forced to experience is his encounter with Nancy, a woman whose physical appearance is apparently so absolutely similar to Rose's – with the exception of her hair colour – that he faints on first meeting and spends much of the remainder of the novel convinced that Nancy is in fact Rose. Because she claims to be someone else, however, Charley is forced to explain the events that follow by assuming he is the victim of some deep deception that involves not only Nancy but a number of other characters, including Rose's widower James, whom Charley takes to see Nancy midway through the

novel and whom he assumes, when he finds out that Nancy married during the war – a pilot who was killed in action shortly after their marriage – to be party to Nancy/Rose's apparent bigamy.

In fact, Charley becomes so certain that he is surrounded by duplicitous traitors that he begins to see treachery everywhere. Thus when he receives a letter from Blundells, one of the companies he deals with at work, demanding that promised goods be sent on to them, he is quick to assume that 'this letter's a try on, doesn't mean what it says' (108) before beginning to suspect that 'someone may have forged it' (110). While it is his belief that he has been tricked by Nancy in his personal life that causes him to be more suspicious in his professional, so it works in reverse and '[h]e grew more and more sure this whole thing was a plot, like the affair with Blundells' (112). Thus when Nancy writes to him and her handwriting is clearly very different from Rose's, '[h]e could think of nothing but his own girl disguising her hand', and it is this suspicion that prompts him to cut extracts from letters Rose once sent him to send off to a handwriting expert, only to then lament the letters' destruction: 'he mourned the fact that Rose's treachery had destroyed the last there was left to him, the letters which, for all the months and years in Germany, had been what he was most afraid to find mislaid, or lost, when he got back' (122). Although Charley is doubtless traumatised by the events of the past few years – I discuss Green's presentation of trauma more fully in chapter 5 – he is clearly not alone in being highly suspicious of others. As noted above, for example, Nancy assumes that because he is shell-shocked Charley is 'dangerous', and she is also quick to assume he has ulterior motives when they first meet, even asking herself at one stage whether his fainting might not have been a ruse to gain admittance to her apartment. Her choice of language when describing the 'queer customers' that have 'been around lately' to her neighbour Arthur Middlewitch, by which she means Charley – 'I'm in a state of siege now, I promise' (117) – seems particularly telling.

3. Fears of Female Betrayal

Charley's suspicions take on what could be described as a misogynistic tone when he becomes convinced that Nancy is Rose in disguise, and that people like her husband James

have been persuaded for whatever reason to support her pretence. As early as their first meeting he comes to the conclusion that '[s]he was an enemy' (49). Not long afterwards, 'one afternoon, while Dot was doing her best to keep him straight with the correspondence, he again saw this whole thing as a whole. What he saw was that, somehow or other, Rose had, in fact, become a tart, gone on the streets' (67). 'Once he realised everything seemed to fit' (67), and problems such as Nancy having, apparently, a mother she has lived with until recently who is not Mrs Grant, Rose's mother, can be explained: Charley 'remembered he had been informed that whores had old women who took the money and who carried the police, got help if need be' (71-2). Charley's suspicions make sense, too, in the context of Arthur Middlewitch's comment early in the novel that 'war [… m]akes brutes out of women' (28) and later that, as a result, 'they're capable of anything' (115). Perhaps it is Charley's belief about women generally that explains his response to his assistant Dot's sexual encounter with James: when he goes to visit her room he finds it empty, and 'then he heard noises next door in James' room. They were in the act. Of course he felt cheated' (139). He thinks several times after this of 'Dot's treachery with Phillips' (139), and indeed it is his jealousy regarding their relationship that causes his own, more clear-cut betrayal of Dot: asked by his boss whether Dot is suitably committed to her work, 'only because she had not gone to bed with him, Charley came right out with it. "She's not," he said' (149), and this leads immediately to Dot's losing her job. The narrator's comment regarding Charley's feelings towards Nancy at this stage in the novel – '[h]e began to hate. He saw her, yet again, as a tart' – seem to apply just as much to his feelings regarding Dot.

It is difficult in fact to view Dot's relations with James as in any way treacherous – after all, she had hoped to form a relationship with Charley and only entered into one with James after becoming convinced that this would never happen. Charley's beliefs regarding both her and Nancy seem unfounded, but it is notable that women are in fact presented as not wholly trustworthy. Charley's landlady, for example, a Mrs. Frazier, makes a great deal of the fact she has lit a fire for Charley on the night of his arrival using the last scuttleful of coal. 'Let Mr Summers have it', she recounts telling Mary – 'We owe him that for all the poor man's been through' – but we are then told by the narrator that '[s]he said this with an easy mind, who had a ton and a half stowed safe in the other cellar' (31). Equally, although Charley's belief in Dot's 'treachery' seems unfair, she does not behave uniformly

well with him and when he asks her at one stage to leave the room so he can make a personal call she is happy to acquiesce, '[b]ut she remembered the cupboard outside, from which you could hear anything in this room' (66). Ironically, it is the one woman against whom Charley can accept no criticism, namely Rose, his Rose from before the war, the woman who continued her relationship with Charley even after choosing to marry James, who emerges as the least savoury character in the novel. Rose's letters to Charley – those that he has treasured with such passion – reveal a selfish, mercenary character who seems driven by her material and sexual desires. To give one example:

> Dear Stinker. I must say I think it's a bit lop-sided your simply making up your mind you'd forget when I asked you especially to get me those mules we saw in the advert. Don't be a meanie darling. From Rose. (120)

When Charley reads letters such as this one – one demanding he send on the things she has asked for, one conveying her desire he was there in bed with her at that moment while James is away, one asking that he visit her parents because she 'didn't half get a moan from dad yesterday in our letter box' (120) but clearly does not want to visit them herself, another explaining why she won't visit him, and so on – he is put 'in agony, they made him love her so' and 'his eyes [fill] with tears. These letters were sacred' (121). It is unlikely, however, that readers will share his idealised view.

In fact, one could argue that Rose's portrayal has something in common with that of Netta in *Hangover Square* and Rebecca in du Maurier's novel of the same name. If there is a suspicion in *Back* that Rose was far from as lovely as Charley remembers her, but was in fact self-serving, manipulative and materialistic, then this is altogether more clear cut with Netta and Rebecca. Netta is more than capable of being wholly charming whenever she is short of money and finds herself dependent on George and her behaviour towards him transforms at such moments so as to persuade him that his affection for her is returned:

> [t]he time had come when she had to get some money out of him, and because of all that Brighton chatter last night, when he had talked himself into a money throwing mood, the time was ripe. (Hamilton 1941: 125-6)

Rebecca, meanwhile, is presented as cruel and manipulative, a dominatrix who enjoys the power she has over others, men especially. Indeed, while few readers of *Hangover Square* are likely to disagree with Johnnie Littlejohn's description of Netta as '*that* bitch' (251), Rebecca emerges as worse, for while Netta manipulates and deceives George to get money from him, Rebecca's prime motivation seems to be to inflict suffering. Netta seems largely indifferent to the suffering she causes; Rebecca relishes it. Certainly, Maxim describes her as such, as 'vicious, damnable, rotten through and through', but then he admits to having 'hated her' (du Maurier 1938: 304) and so his description does not seem particularly reliable, but it is at least partly validated by Mrs Danvers who, quite the opposite, clearly loved Rebecca:

> I remember her at sixteen getting up on one of her father's horses, a big brute of an animal too, that the groom said was too hot for her to ride. She stuck to him all right. I can see her now with her hair flying out behind her, slashing at him, drawing blood, digging her spurs into his side, and when she got off his back he was trembling all over, full of froth and blood. 'That will teach him, won't it, Danny?' she said and walked off to wash her hands as cool as you please. (273)

Remembering this description while Maxim walks back and forth painting a picture of Rebecca as cruel and duplicitous, the narrator, the second Mrs. de Winter, sees it as corroborating Maxim's account. 'The real Rebecca took shape before me, stepping from her shadow world like a living figure from a picture frame. Rebecca slashing at her horse […]' (304), she tells the reader, while Maxim tells her that

> Rebecca was incapable of love, of tenderness, of decency […] She was clever of course. No one would guess meeting her that she was not the kindest, most generous, most gifted person in the world. She knew exactly what to say to different people. (304)

Rebecca's greatest skill, Maxim explains, was her ability to deceive, to hide her true nature, and, hiding behind this mask, to manipulate others for her own ends.

Hamilton and du Maurier's presentation of Netta and Rebecca respectively as the absolute villains of the piece – and I would argue that, although more subtle, Green's presentation of Rose in *Back* is not dissimilar – is fairly typical of literature of the time where betrayal, manipulation and duplicity are often presented as female attributes. Although there are many examples of male treachery in fiction of the period, some of which were discussed in the previous section, one only has to think of Vicki Kugelmann in *The Slaves of Solitude*, Gartred in du Maurier's *The King's General*, the hotel manageress in *The Confidential Agent*, and so forth, to identify examples of the treacherous woman as a particular feature, though not necessarily a predominant one, of literature of the time. Such distrust of women is strongly suggested by the government's 'Keep Mum' series of posters from late 1940, which like the earlier 'Careless Talk Costs Lives' series discussed earlier sought to highlight the dangers of careless talk by exhorting servicemen (at whom this campaign was aimed) to 'Keep Mum': in doing so the campaign identified the spy listening in as female.









[12]

Perhaps the most famous 'Keep Mum' poster is that pictured above left, in which the agent is clearly deploying her sexual allure to entrap the male servicemen around her (and, given her outward gaze, the admiring poster-viewer too). Here the image suggests a partial role-reversal of the sexes – while it is precisely because the agent so successfully fulfils the role of woman as object of desire that she is, it is implied, able to persuade the servicemen to reveal key information, she is no passive female to be viewed only, but an active agent with her eyes, and ears, very much on the men surrounding her. Susan Gubar argues with regard to the 'Keep Mum' poster campaign and similar campaigns in other allied countries that

[12] All posters are in the Imperial War Museum, London

> [a]llied propaganda spoke directly about and to servicemen's fear of their women's betrayal. Posters enjoining silence as a protection against spies implied that women's talk would kill fighting men. (Cited in Plain 1996: 23)[13]

In this sense, the posters conform to fears identified by Gill Plain that in requiring women to take on a public role that would normally be filled by men were it not for the needs of the armed forces, the country might be permanently breaking down traditional boundaries between men and women. As a result, she argues,

> [t]he public discourses surrounding women during the war were riddled with contradictions. Women were told to 'be truly feminine' while at the same time their sexuality was understood as a potential threat to the security of the nation. Women were the symbolic representatives of the home front, but at the same time they were needed in the public sphere, and magazines, posters, and advertisements struggled to reconcile women's agency with their traditional roles. Irrespective of her wartime utility, woman remains a foreign body within patriarchal concepts of nationhood. While not actually the absolute other of the enemy, she remains a potential other, a suspect figure within a structure of national homogeneity that distrusts and fears the feminine. (Plain 2009: 167)

All of this leads Plain to argue that beneath the 'superficial togetherness', the 'veneer of national unity', 'the problematic relationship between war and women was repressed and disguised' (Plain 1996: 20). 'The awesome potency of the bad woman', she argues, 'was established as a spiritual Fifth Column, perpetually threatening destruction from within'

[13] Servicemen's 'fear of their women's betrayal' perhaps escalated in the second half of the war owing to the presence of American GIs, who, as Hylton argues, 'were held to be a major cause of sexual delinquency among young British girls. A US Army private was paid about £750 per annum, compared with £100 for their British counterpart, and many of them had nothing to spend it on but a local female population suffering from shortages of all sorts of material goods. All too often, pairs of nylons came with metaphorical strings attached – "one before and one after" was the popular formula. The joke of the day about Utility knickers was "One Yank and they're off"' (Hylton 2010: 151).

(23), and one could argue that Netta and Rebecca, and Rose too perhaps, are all fictional representations of this.[14]

In all three novels, however, especially in *Back* and *Hangover Square*, such a presentation is partly problematised by the fact that none of the female protagonists is presented as quite the master manipulator that they first seem. To take the example of *Back*, it may strike readers as curious that Charley is able to believe Rose and Nancy to be one and the same person, while at the same time being able to see Rose in angelic terms and Nancy as a prostitute (a classic example of the Madonna-whore dichotomy in fact), and even more curious that Charley has got it the wrong way round – that Nancy seems altogether more worthy of his devotion than the dead Rose. If Charley is deceived in both their characters, however, this hardly seems the result of female duplicity. It is true that Rose appears able to use her sexuality to her own advantage, and it is certainly possible that she suggests to Charley the possibility the child she is carrying is his, when the narrator states emphatically that it was not and it seems likely she knows the father to be her husband, in order to increase her control over him. However, the fact her letters seem so clearly to betray to the reader her true nature implies she is far from being a master deceiver and manipulator, a femme fatale. Equally, Nancy tries at every opportunity to disillusion Charley regarding his false beliefs about her. If Charley is deceived, in other words, it appears this is a result of his own desire or need to believe that Rose was a kind and loving person, and that she lives on as Nancy, rather than resulting from either woman's abilities as a deceiver.

[14] Petra Rau argues something similar with regard to *The Ministry of Fear* and *The Heat of the Day*, that 'in each narrative it is the woman who is willing to favour romantic love over political loyalty. Stella eventually offers herself to Harrison in exchange for her lover's freedom and Anna Hilfe begins to subvert her brother's plans to save Arthur Rowe. As in the propaganda posters of gossiping careless talkers, women are the weakest link in the fight against an enemy at home and abroad. They become a perilously ambivalent entity during the war, objects to fight for *and* against' (Rau 2009: 208). Plain too notes that 'in the "spy" novels of Margery Allingham and Elizabeth Bowen, women must choose between private desires and public good. In a patriarchal society that tells women they have no remit beyond the private, there can be no easy assumption that they will "do the right thing"' (Plain 1996: 24).

Netta's deceptions, meanwhile, might be intended as such but they are far from convincing, and there is certainly some irony that she is an actress who aspires to play parts convincingly as a profession, yet others such as Eddie Carstairs and Johnnie Littlejohn see straight through her ('*that* bitch', Johnnie says when he finds George crying because of her betrayal of him (251), while Eddie believes 'there's something absolutely sinister about that woman. She's sort of scheming' (255)).[15] There are any number of moments in the book when George sees through her too, but his overwhelming desire to be with her means he is all too ready to persuade himself that she is different from the reality, at any moment that she gives him the opportunity to do so. Although, for example, she allows the 'true' Netta to be revealed once she realises that he is not the wealthy man she first thought him, and from 'that moment his charming friend […] the solitary and friendless actress of his imagination, the "fireside girl", became Netta, the Netta he knew' (52), at moments when she replaces the mask, always when seeking some monetary support from him, George is always willing to be deceived, and so can be seen as complicit in his own deception. 'You're not fooling me, are you, Netta?' George asks at one stage. 'No. I'm not fooling you,' she says, adding softly, 'You know, George, don't you, that you'll have to help me out?' (230). At such moments he creates a narrative for Netta that allows him to believe her, telling himself in this case that 'Netta, the shrewd, cruel Netta who scorned him, could never resort to so vulgar and obvious a ruse as that – she would be too proud' (139). Although he goes on to ponder '[o]r would she not be too proud?', any doubts are quickly put aside, and George allows himself to again believe that 'the appearance reflected the reality' (37), only for Netta to again, once she has achieved her goal – '[a]nnexed him without an effort!' (243) as George himself puts it in tellingly militaristic terms – tear off the mask and destroy his illusions. 'My God,' Netta says to him on arriving in Brighton with Peter and a stranger George hasn't seen before, when he was expecting to spend time alone with her, 'You didn't

[15] It is perhaps owing to such comments that Geoff Ward has described *Hangover Square* as 'profoundly misogynistic – in marked contrast to other male-authored fictions of the time, for example those of Henry Green' (Ward 2001: 28). I would argue, however, that if the existence of misogynistic characters in *Hangover Square* – and such a term seems certainly applicable to the novel's narrator – is read as evidence of the author's attitudes to women, then Green too seems affected by the war-inspired 'misogyny' of the time.

think I could stand you alone, my sweet Bone, did you?' (152). The narrator goes on to state that

> [h]e had never seen her, had never expected to see her, as bad as this, and yet he was seeing nothing new, making no fresh discoveries about her character. He was seeing only what he normally saw beneath her normal composure. (153)

While deception is a theme running through *Hangover Square*, self-deception seems the real reason for George's misery, something we will see in other novels of the period, suggesting that if the enemy within is truly to be feared, that enemy is primarily the one within ourselves.

Just as Netta has something in common with du Maurier's Rebecca, so George has much in common, superficially at least, with Maxim. Like George, Maxim is taken in, and used; like George he thinks about killing Rebecca but for a long time doesn't (he tells the narrator that he 'nearly killed her' on the fifth day of their marriage when they were honeymooning in Monte Carlo (305)); like George, eventually Maxim does kill her and the reader, viewing his actions through the eyes of a narrator who idolises him, understands and perhaps even condones his killing. If self-deception is more central to both novels than deception of others, though, it is the narrator of *Rebecca* who has more in common with George. She is apparently totally deceived by the dead Rebecca, imagining her 'confidence, grace, beauty, intelligence, wit', qualities she believes herself to 'lack' (du Maurier 1938: 148), and so is completely taken aback by Maxim's revelation that far from being besotted with Rebecca, he in fact 'hated her' (304). Like George, it is easy to see that the narrator is wrong not because of Rebecca's ability to deceive but her own readiness to be deceived, a readiness that is clearly due to her low self-esteem, inexperience, lower social class than her husband, and so forth. So while Netta and Rebecca seem to be presented in remarkably similar ways to the femme fatale in the 'Keep Mum' poster above left, using their sexual attraction to manipulate the men that come into their orbit,[16] traitors both, on the other hand both Hamilton and du Maurier, and this would be true of Green in *Back* too, seem to

[16] Netta's orbit, in particular, is described in tangible terms as a kind of force field that Bone finds harder and harder to escape the closer he gets to her.

suggest that it is the gullibility and low self-esteem of those deceived that is the problem. These novels may, as Gubar feels regarding the government's 'Keep Mum' posters, quoted above, speak 'directly about and to servicemen's fear of their women's betrayal' and so they may also contribute, to again quote Plain, to the establishment of the 'awesome potency of the bad woman […] as a spiritual Fifth Column, perpetually threatening destruction from within' (Plain 1996: 23), but it could equally be argued that a more dangerous 'enemy within' here is the enemy 'within' the narrator of *Rebecca*, Charley Summers, and George Harvey Bone – their weakness, gullibility, difficulties arising from past trauma, and so forth, something that I will explore in greater detail in chapter 5.

4. The Theatre of War

My use of phrases connected with the theatre such as 'suspending disbelief' and 'putting on a mask' in my discussion of Netta and George in the previous section suggests one obvious consequence of anxieties regarding the existence of fifth columnists and traitors more generally – namely that such conspirators, to evade suspicion, must be putting on an act, filling a part. The theatre of war is a phrase that literally refers to the place where military events are 'acted out' and suggests the action of war, versus, presumably, the passivity of peace, and in his chapter entitled 'Virginia Woolf and the Theatre of War' Steve Ellis explores the ways in which Woolf presents the action of the pageant as analogous in some way to the action of war, and relates both to masculine action versus feminine passivity (Ellis 2014: 188-233). Given, however, my focus in this chapter on recurring themes of duplicity and betrayal, it is perhaps unsurprising to find that many novels about war are also novels about theatre, but more in the sense of performance, of putting on an act, than action, and that many writers stress not so much that the action of the pageant is analogous to the action of war but rather that the theatricality of war is analogous to the theatricality of the stage. Indeed, in his enlightening study of literature of World War 2, *Imagination at War*, Adam Piette argues that the 'literary record crystallised around two areas of fearful concern. The first was the concern about war's theatricality. The second voiced alarm about the ways in which the war invaded one's privacy' (Piette 1995: 1-2). I explore this second

concern in chapter 4; here I want to discuss the presentation of 'war's theatricality', and will start with Piette's connecting this concern with the prevalence of war propaganda. That propaganda caused many in Britain at the time to question the veracity of everything they were told is something that has been noted by several writers, including Paul Fussell:

> [e]ven more than today, in wartime everything you might hear and read during the day might be false, planted to be passed on to deceive either you or the enemy. Living in wartime thus resembled living in a play with nothing real or certain. You literally did not know for sure what was going on and you had to take on faith the public appearance of things, costly as this might prove for perceptual and intellectual life. (Fussell 1989: 47)

George Orwell voices exactly this in a diary entry for 27 April 1942 cited by Piette: '[n]owadays, whatever is said, one looks instantly for hidden motives and assumes that words mean anything except what they appear to mean' (Piette 1995: 160), while Henry Green's character Raunce in *Loving* opines that there's 'nothing but propaganda these days' (Green 1945: 95). Nonetheless, the multiple references to performance, acting and the theatre that are threaded through so many novels of the time seem prompted first and foremost by fears of betrayal rather than concerns regarding government control of the media (although these concerns clearly did exist and are discussed in chapter 2).

To take one example, *Hangover Square* revolves around the world of the theatre: Netta is a would-be actress, Eddie Carstairs, the man she is at pains throughout the text to attract, is a theatre manager and Johnnie Littlejohn, George's boyhood friend, accountant to Eddie's company. Everyone in Netta's world, we are told, is putting on an act: after meeting Netta, Johnnie compares her with the many would-be actresses he has met and notes that 'some were charming and simple beneath their masks, and some were complex and arrogant' (104) – but all, presumably, wear metaphorical masks.[17] The men of this world

[17] Metaphorical masks appear with some frequency in literature of the period. In *Rebecca*, for example, the narrator comments that 'all expression' will die away from Maxim's face whenever he remembers the past and 'in its place a mask will form, a sculptured thing, formal and cold' (du Maurier 1938: 5) while in Eric Ambler's *Epitaph for a Spy* (1938), the narrator muses: 'masks? A man's account of his own actions was, like

seem little different: when considering his dream of 'a cottage in the country […] and to live with her quietly ever afterwards', George realises that others may well desire the same thing, but act as if they don't:

> they would all jeer at him […] And yet he wouldn't mind betting that half the men who were, or had been, in love with Netta wanted very little else – the trouble was they wouldn't admit it. But they could hide it successfully – which was what, apparently, he couldn't do. (28)

There are moments, however, when he too seems able to hide his feelings for Netta. He is able to talk 'casually and easily' with Peter in Netta's flat, for example, 'skilfully emptying from his eyes and brain the anxiety and perturbation caused in his brain by every movement and sound he heard from her bedroom' (42), rightly surmising that to reveal the extent to which Netta's presence affects him would be to reveal a weakness that Peter would use to his advantage. Similarly, when he discovers the true nature of Netta's relationship with Peter, George decides that for the sake of his pride, the only thing he can do is pretend he hasn't: 'He had got to act, pretend – so that she never guessed. He had got to throw himself into a part' (87). And later again, after another humiliation at her hands, he 'pretended he was the complete fool she thought him. It was better that way' (159).

While Netta's world is that of the theatre, George's could be seen as that of film. He is described more than once as like a camera, one whose shutter is open when he is not experiencing one of his dead moods. When he switches from the dead moods of his second self to his normal personality, 'he heard the shutter go up in his head, and everything came flooding back' (21), while the reverse process is described as involving the 'Click' of the shutter coming down (15), although the film does not in fact stop. 'The figures on the screen continued to move' but 'the sound-track had failed […] Life […] had all at once become a silent film. And there was no music' (15). It doesn't take George long to adjust to this new state of affairs and 'soon enough he was watching the silent film' (17). There are two key

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the look he habitually wore on his face, no more than the expression, the statement of an attitude. You could never get at the whole man any more than you could see four faces of a cube' (Ambler 1938: 186).

implications of such an analogy. The first is the suggestion that everyone is under surveillance, being 'spied on' by those around them: this is suggested by George's taking comfort that though others 'thought him silly',

> [h]e saw much more than they thought he saw. They would get the shock of their lives if they knew how he could see through them at times – how transparent they were, for all their saloon-bar nonchalance and sophistication. (29)

The second implication is that all those 'figures on the screen' (15) that George watches with his camera gaze (and he is not alone in this – so too, for example, does the minor character John Halliwell) are in fact actors. It seems fitting that the climactic scene in the novel that leads to George's permanent switch to his second personality and his murder of Netta and Peter takes place in a theatre. There George 'couldn't make out what they [the actors on stage] were saying, or what everybody was laughing about, because he wasn't listening to what they were saying', as his focus is on the performance taking place in the stalls beneath him, where Netta is seeking to charm Eddie Carstairs. 'He went down to the edge of the circle and looked down at the stalls' at the '"successful" people, people of the smart world, of the theatre' and thinks that, in contrast, 'he was a battered boozer from Earl's Court, now a lonely eavesdropper, a spy' (248-9).

The culminating moment of betrayal in *The Death of the Heart* is remarkably similar, though it takes place in a cinema rather than a theatre. Eddie, with whom Portia has fallen in love, humiliates her by holding hands with Daphne:

> Portia sat with eyes fixed on the screen – once or twice, Eddie changed his position, she felt his knee touch hers. When this made her glance his way, she saw light from the comic flickering on his eyeballs […] She felt some tense extra presence, here in their row of six seats. Wanting to know, she turned to look full at Eddie – who at once countered her look with a bold blank smile glittering from the screen. The smile was diverted to her from someone else […] The light, with malicious accuracy, ran around a cuff, a steel bangle, and made a thumb-nail flash. Not deep enough in the cleft between their *fauteuils* Eddie and Daphne were, with emphasis, holding

> hands. Eddie's fingers kept up a kneading movement: her thumb alertly twitched at the joint. (Bowen 1938: 194-5)

Here that sense of people being both under surveillance while also surveying others is captured by Eddie's returning her gaze 'with a bold blank smile', and perhaps more memorably by the way the shimmering screen seems to be observing Eddie – the light flickers on his eyeballs – as much as he is watching the screen; not only is the light observing Eddie, it is maliciously drawing the attention of Portia to the fact that their hands are clasped.

Back at Windsor Terrace, where late in the novel St. Quentin wonders '[i]f the world's a big stage', Anna is described as 'pos[ing] at being more indolent than she felt' (38) and Thomas as 'lik[ing], at this time in the evening, to allow his face to drop into blank lines' (31) in the privacy of his study. Their home, meanwhile, is described repeatedly in theatrical terms, Matchett complaining that '[n]othing does down here that isn't here for the look' (25). In being described as like a theatre-set, where even the fire is a prop ('a painted, not a burning, fire, at which you tried in vain to warm your hands' (149)), Windsor Terrace anticipates Bowen's description of Holme Dene in *The Heat of the Day*, the 'breeding ground of a traitor' as Hermione Lee describes it (cited in Suh 2009: 149). Judy Suh has noted that Holme Dene 'self-consciously imitates the appearance of a country estate' (2009: 152), something acknowledged by Kelway's sister Ernestina when she admits to Stella that 'the house, though unique in appearance, was not actually old. The oak beams, to be perfectly honest, were imitations' (Bowen 1948: 126). It may well be that such a house, which can offer only, as Suh puts it, the 'simulacrum of historical origins' (Suh 2009: 152),[18] helps contribute to Kelway's development into a traitor because it fails to provide a connection with the past, a grounding ('[t]he ungrounded condition and ennui potentially lead to fascism', Suh suggests (150)). Kelway himself comments bitterly on the fact that everything in the house 'was brought here from somewhere else, with the intention of being moved

[18] Suh continues: 'Bowen […] invokes country house literature to indict modernity's simulacra of memory and experience […] Bowen places under question [a bourgeois-led public discourse's] mid-century characterization of England as an imagined community immune to fascism, and of English nationalism as a force against it. She therefore equally targets the national myths created by war propaganda' (Suh 2009: 152-3).

again – like touring scenery from theatre to theatre. Reassemble it anywhere, you get the same illusion' (121). Holme Dene arguably not only provides motivation but also a model for his treachery, for in putting on an act, in creating an 'illusion', Kelway is only behaving in a way that he has learnt from childhood. Again, then, we see an intensification of the themes of duplicity and betrayal, where Windsor Terrace in the immediately pre-war *The Death of the Heart* is a 'breeding ground of traitors' of sorts, but Holme Dene is the breeding ground of a fifth columnist. More than in Bowen's earlier novel, *The Heat of the Day* is threaded with theatrical references, opening as it does in an open-air theatre where Harrison is seen 'to act the thinker' (Bowen 1948: 15) and Louie, dressed in an 'imitation camel-hair coat' with the intention of seeming 'the Soviet comrade type' (11), wants 'someone to imitate' (15). Then in the second chapter, Harrison's making 'his entrance' to Stella's flat makes it sound like it too is a kind of stage, something reinforced by the fact it is here that Roderick's 'ineptness to play any other part would have distressed him had there been any other part to play' (49) and that Stella and Harrison in the alcove are 'depersonalised speakers in a drama' (140). Harrison, meanwhile, asks Stella of Robert, 'How much of an actor would you, now, take him to be?' to which Stella replies, 'Actor? […] He has never had any reason to act, with me' (38). Harrison himself goes 'into abeyance […] between appearances' like a 'ghost or actor' (141), while Stella gives a 'command performance' in the grill-bar (227) where, Plain argues, 'the aching brightness of its lighting and its population of "born extras" turn it into the ultimate unreality of the film-set' (Plain 1996: 170-1).

Greene's *The Ministry of Fear* also seems to highlight theatrical behaviour, with a number of characters explicitly described as filling 'a part'. Thus, for example, Prentice 'had stylised himself – life was easier that way. He had chosen a physical mould just as a writer chooses a technical form' (164), while '[w]ith his umbrella and moustache and black hat [Prentice's assistant Brothers] had obviously modelled himself upon Mr. Prentice. Perhaps in twenty years the portrait would have been adequately copied' (187). Similarly, when Rowe meets Anna Hilfe away from the office where she works, he thinks that 'now taken out of the office frame she no longer looked efficient – as though efficiency were an imitative game she could only play with adult properties, a desk, a telephone, a black suit. Without them she looked just decorative and breakable' (Greene 1943: 97-98). While Rowe

thinks that without her props she looks 'decorative and breakable', what he doesn't realise is that she is indeed both, even with her props – her presence in the office was an act of decoration (along with the desk, chairs and so on it was intended to give the appearance of normality and legitimacy) while her presence on this second occasion in a hotel room where her brother is about to try to kill anyone present through the detonation of a bomb is clear evidence that she is expendable. This particular assassination attempt is just one twist in the plot where its convoluted nature – Rowe is himself persuaded to transport the suitcase with the bomb by an associate of Hilfe who pretends he has to make a delivery of books to a particular hotel room, and then persuades Rowe to make the delivery himself – foregrounds its own theatricality. The novel opens with Rowe entering a charity fête that proves to be an extraordinarily elaborate charade where a cast of many is involved in creating the illusion of a real fête while actually providing the opportunity for a microfilm to be passed on from one fifth columnist to another. The over-elaborateness of the operation seems almost farcical – as in fact does each of Hilfe's staged attempts to deal with Arthur Rowe that follow. First the malevolent cripple Poole tries to poison him in a scene comic in its absurdity, where Poole is forced to sit and watch Rowe as he cuts into the cake in which the microfilm is hidden and offers him a slice to go with his tea while they listen to the news on the radio; then Hilfe's band of fifth columnists stage a murder in the blackout of a séance that they arrange so as to persuade Rowe into believing he will be charged by the police and thus to go underground; then comes the bomb in the hotel room and, when the explosion causes Rowe to lose his memory, a new plan follows to keep him out the way by transporting him to an asylum and pretending to him that he is called Digby. What is clear is that the mastermind spy Willi Hilfe has a passion for the dramatic, and launches himself into his own role 'enthusiastically' and with 'glee' when he first meets Rowe (46-7). Indeed, his enjoyment of his own performance is not unlike that of Mr Manningham in Patrick Hamilton's late 1938 play *Gaslight*, where Manningham's promise to take his wife, whom he is slowly but surely driving insane, to the theatre provides him with the opportunity to remind the audience, and himself, that he is an actor, someone pretending to be a person he isn't, namely a gentleman called Jack Manningham, when his real name is Sydney Power:

> Mr Manningham: You know, Bella, that must be a very superb sensation. To take a part and lose yourself entirely in the character of someone else. I flatter myself I could have made an actor.
>
> Mrs Manningham: Why, of course, my dear. You were cut out for it. Anyone can see that. (Hamilton 1938: 8)

There is certainly a metatheatrical element to this, or at least an irony that Manningham is both aware of and taking great pleasure in, that is similar to the situation in *The Ministry of Fear*. While this foregrounding of the gap between appearance and reality, between character and actor, could be seen as typical of modernist anxieties more generally, it seems specifically, too, a response to wartime anxieties regarding betrayal. In both texts, as in so many texts of the time, it is the duplicitous enemy within whose performance is being highlighted.

Two – Fighting Fascism at Home

1. The Threat Posed by Fascist Sympathisers

> Skilfully, Georgia turned the conversation to the subject of Nazi Germany, speaking with feigned admiration of the things she had seen there. She was rewarded by a gleam in the girl's eyes, a quickened breathing.
>
> 'Yes,' she said, 'it's wonderful. I've never been there, but I can imagine it all – the spirit of youth, and confidence, and hero-worship. Sometimes I wish we could have something like that in England – not Fascism of course, but something adapted to our national character. Get rid of all those doddering old politicians and the greedy Jews and the agitators.' (Blake 1939: 95)

This is Miss Mayfield, a minor character in the 1939 thriller *The Smiler with the Knife* by Nicholas Blake, the pen-name of Cecil Day Lewis, voicing views that are clearly not those of a fifth columnist, someone prepared to work with Britain's enemies to bring about her defeat, but someone, whatever her 'not Fascism of course' disclaimer, nonetheless highly sympathetic to fascism. The novel, written and set in a late-1930s Europe not as yet at war, imagines an attempt to overthrow the British government in order to set up a totalitarian state run along parallel lines with Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy – a plot by duplicitous traitors that must be stopped, not dissimilar to that of Agatha Christie's *N or M?* discussed in chapter 1, but while Christie's mid-war thriller charts the efforts of British fifth columnists to bring about Britain's defeat and thus rule from Berlin, Blake's charts the efforts of British fascists to set up a British totalitarian state doubtless sympathetic to, but not under the control of, Nazi Germany.

Blake based the premise of *The Smiler with the Knife* on real-life events in France, where French fascists had in late 1937 plotted to overthrow the government and set up a totalitarian dictatorship. Blake's character Sir John Strangeways refers directly to this recent event when he asks Georgia, who is charged with uncovering the identities of the leaders behind the plot in Britain,

> ‘Do you remember the Cagoulards in France? […] It was a conspiracy to overthrow the Popular Front Government and set up a fascist dictatorship in France, aided, it was alleged, by arms and money from two European powers. Arms dumps were discovered in Paris and other big cities, plans for kidnapping ministers, and occupying strategic points.’
>
> ‘But – but you’re not suggesting? – not in England?’
>
> ‘That’s what they all say,’ Sir John remarked dryly. (46)

Sir John’s summary of Cagoulard activities in France is an accurate one, historically.[19] Blake’s novel fictionally transplants those activities to Britain, utilising most of the attributes of the Cagoulard plot such as arms dumps, sabotage and ‘a conspiracy organised by the friends of Fascism in the country to discredit the government and overthrow it by armed force’ (47). And just as in France, the leaders of the fictional British movement are shown to be from wealthy families of high status: ‘There’s any amount of money behind it – just as the rich families in France were behind the Cagoulards’, Sir John comments (48). Their aim is to prevent a ‘popular front’ government opposed to the policy of appeasement from being re-elected at the forthcoming General Election and to mount a political coup headed by a charismatic leader with popular appeal, Lord Chilton Canteloe, a peer with mining interests. In order to undermine the elected government and prepare the ground for his coup, Canteloe and his financial backers seek first to garner public support by providing solutions to three key areas of public concern – mass-unemployment, the threat to food supply in time of war and security from air-raids – by proposing a scheme to set up a national network of cooperatives to provide work for the unemployed, increase the supply of domestically produced food and build deep underground shelters against the threat of large-scale bombing of civilians. It is the reasonableness of the scheme, a scheme that the

[19] ‘La Cagoule’ was the name coined for the Comité secret d'action révolutionnaire, a French fascist-leaning and anti-communist group founded and bankrolled by Eugène Schueller, who founded the cosmetics company L'Oréal. The group performed assassinations, bombings, sabotage of armaments, and other violent activities, some intended to cast suspicion on communists and add to political instability, between 1935 and 1937. Planning in November 1937 to overthrow the government, La Cagoule was infiltrated by the police, and the national government arrested and imprisoned about seventy men (see Brunelle and Finley-Croswhite 2010; Bourdrel 1992).

leaders of the plot know cannot be pushed through parliament, which enables Canteloe to increase his public visibility and popularity while undermining support for parliamentary government. Indeed, so effective is his speech announcing the project that Georgia, despite her awareness of what Canteloe is plotting, admits that 'I found a sort of disillusionment and discontent with parliamentary government creeping over myself'. 'That's his genius', she adds – 'It doesn't look like Fascism: it doesn't sound like Fascism: it doesn't smell like Fascism. But —' (154). As the year progresses, the efficacy of the plan becomes increasingly apparent:

> [a]s the year turned towards Autumn […] Canteloe's campaign for his unemployment plan alternated with European crisis and rumours of crisis […] public opinion was bewildered and growing resentful. The European dictators continued on their triumphal path. Our own government, thought the man in the street, seemed to have lost its nerve entirely: it made concession after concession abroad, while at home it was dilly-dallying over the Chilton plan that had so kindled public enthusiasm. (190)

While courting public opinion through these well-publicised plans Canteloe Chilton and the other leaders of the plot are busy preparing for their coup by secretly bringing arms into the country and in this they employ the services of members of an organisation called the English Banner, the majority of whose members, including Miss Mayfield quoted above, are in fact ignorant of the inner leadership's ambition to impose an authoritarian state loosely based on the Continental models of Mussolini and Hitler.

The English Banner bears a close resemblance to the real-life Link, described by Richard Griffiths as 'a movement of considerable complexity, whose membership ranged from the most innocent of provincial pro-Germanists to convinced pro-Nazis of a fairly disquieting kind' (Griffiths 1979: 307). The Link was just one of several organisations with fascist tendencies active in Britain in the 1930s, the most prominent of which was Sir Oswald Mosley's British Union of Fascists. There was also the Nordic League, which shared the Nazi belief in an Aryan master race, and the Right Club, an exclusive group of MPs, aristocrats and leaders of society who shared a virulent anti-Semitism and whose founder, Captain Maule Ramsey, was implicated in the case of Tyler Kent and Anna Wolkoff, who were

arrested and charged with espionage in May 1940 and convicted later that year.[20] Although many at the time may well have shared the belief of contemporary observer Elwyn Jones, who wrote in June 1939 that 'the Nazi and Fascist aggressors collaborate directly' with 'the indigenous Fascist parties' (Jones 1939: 16), Griffiths argues that support for such groups tailed off in 1938-9:

> [i]t is true to say that most of those who had been in favour of Anglo-German friendship, or had even had admiration for the Nazi regime, in the years 1936-8, now rallied to their country's cause […] Pro-German attitudes had never implied a lack of patriotism.
>
> It was only the most extreme remaining enthusiasts who continued to attack British policies in relation to Germany. [Furthermore, to …] many of those who saw the Bolshevik menace as the greatest danger to Europe, Hitler had ceased to be a bulwark [following the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of August 1939], and had instead joined those who menaced. (307-8)

This was, however, not true of the Link, whose numbers grew throughout 1938 and 1939:

> [i]n its growing popularity, right up to the Second World War, we can find evidence of a continuing pro-Germanism in certain areas of the general public, unaffected by the growing awareness of the reality of Nazi policies to be found in people closer to the centres of information.
>
> In 1938, the Link went from strength to strength. Its membership rose regularly as the months went by, apparently unaffected by any of the events of the year. In March it was nearly 1,800, in July 2,400 […]and by June 1939 it was over 4,300. (Griffiths 1979: 307-8)

The Smiler with the Knife can thus be seen as tapping into genuine concerns regarding fascist sympathisers in Britain through its utilisation of a recent historical event in France and a thinly disguised pro-German organisation. As war loomed the loyalties of fascist

[20] For a fuller discussion of British 'enthusiasm' for fascism and Nazi Germany, including the Kent-Wolkoff affair, see Suh 2009: 2-8; Hylton 2010: 88-92; Calder 1991: 112; Griffiths 1980: 307-330.

sympathisers were, unsurprisingly, questioned, for while Griffiths is doubtless right to suggest that '[p]ro-German attitudes had never implied a lack of patriotism' (307), whether such distinctions would have been clear to a deeply anxious population is less certain. Although it may well be that the majority of fascist sympathisers 'rallied to their country's cause' (307), for the purpose of this thesis it matters less how extensive support for Germany was after the outbreak of war, something that would in any event be difficult to measure, for as Arthur Calder-Marshall wrote in 1949, '[e]very country in this last war had its Fifth Column: how large it was in Britain was never revealed because the country was never occupied' (cited in Munton 1989: 12). More important in terms of explaining the enemy within motif so prevalent in fiction of the time is the extent to which fears of a fascist-leaning clique within British society continued, and it seems reasonable to imagine that such anxieties would outlast any actual dropping off of support.

Certainly Blake was not alone in producing fiction that explored the possibilities of Britain becoming a totalitarian regime. While the attempt to bring about such a regime from within fails in Blake's novel, both Storm Jameson in her 1936 novel *In the Second Year* and Clemence Dane in her 1939 novel *The Arrogant History of White Ben* imagine a Britain of the near future (five years later in the case of Jameson's novel; twenty or so, and following a long drawn-out war that has ravaged the country, in Dane's) under a fascist dictatorship of its own creation, while in *Land Under England* (1935) the Irish writer Joseph O'Neill envisions fascism existing beneath the very soil of England. 'The Dark Tower', meanwhile, a fragment of a novel attributed to C. S. Lewis[21] that he is said to have worked on between 1938 and 1940, published posthumously in the 1970s, imagines a parallel world of 'Othertime', a world where 'unicorns', revered leaders who have grown 'stings' on their foreheads, brainwash their goose-stepping followers by injecting them with their stings, and reside in a tower which is an exact replica of the new library building at the University of Cambridge.[22] That fears of home-grown fascism endured beyond the beginning of the war is indicated by Rex Warner's 1941 novel *The Aerodrome*, which charts the efforts to achieve

[21] Although 'The Dark Tower' was published along with a number of other pieces under Lewis's name by his estate in the 1977 volume *The Dark Tower and Other Stories*, his authorship of the text has been challenged by Katherine Lindskoog (see Lindskoog 1988).

[22] For further discussion of these texts, see Maslan 2012: 516-523.

a fascist regime within Britain from within the Air Force.[23] While the focus of much of the novel is the Air Force's occupation of the village that lies a kilometre from the aerodrome, in the final quarter of the novel it emerges that the Air Vice-Marshal who heads the base has altogether grander plans – 'we had an aim which was nothing less than to assume ourselves the whole authority by which men lived […] to take over the direction of the country whose servants we nominally were' (Warner 1941: 224-5). The Air Vice-Marshal is fanatically committed to the changes he intends to bring about through his planned military coup. From his perspective, the conditions existing in the village – and by implication all such rural communities – 'before it was taken over by the Air Force [approximated] to those of the age of feudalism', while 'in the cities you will see even worse things' (179). 'Those who exist under such a régime must be slaves', he states (179), whereas once the coup has succeeded people will lead lives of 'clarity, independence, and beauty' (295). He says this, the narrator comments, 'with great emphasis and in a louder voice than usual. In his eyes there was a look almost of frenzy' (295). It is this fanaticism that aligns the Air Vice-Marshal with Chilton Canteloe, and indeed the two characters are depicted in notably similar ways – their strategic abilities, the grandeur of their plans, their personal charisma that inspires those around them. The narrator comments, for example, that only the Air Vice-Marshal

> could exercise complete and unquestioned control over others who, without him, would certainly have disputed among themselves for precedence […] None of them [possessed] that seeming certain vision of the future that made the Air Vice-Marshal so uniquely able to inspire confidence' (225).

This is something that infects the narrator, Roy, as much as anyone:

> I would wonder with a kind of joyful trepidation how much longer we would have to wait before the word was given to us to seize into our own hands all the resources and all the power. (224-5)

[23] Mark Rawlinson offers a thoughtful analysis of the association between RAF airmen and fascism in his chapter 'The Figure of the Airman' in *British Writing of the Second World War* (Rawlinson 2000: 19-67).

Published in the same year, Margery Allingham's *Traitor's Purse* provides further evidence that anxieties regarding fascism at home continued into the early years of the war at least. The characterisation of the fascist sympathiser Lee Aubrey has much in common with that of the Air Vice Marshal and Chilton Canteloe and, according to Phyllis Lassner,

> recalls the historical reality of Oswald Mosley's imprisonment in 1940, when this novel was written. In their similarities, both Aubrey and Mosley represent the moment when belief in the old social order is radicalised by political treachery (Lassner 2011: 120).

Noting that in a novel where 'the enemy turns out to be totally committed to a British ideal based on the nation's triumphalist imperial history', '[m]ost disorienting are the vexed definitions of loyalty', Lassner argues that at 'a time of tumultuous geo-politics, when European fascism is the muse of Oswald Mosley, his aristocratic wife Diana and his Blackshirts, this novel investigates the dangers within the nation's deeply entrenched privileged "one per cent"' (119).

Perhaps the most disturbing**,** albeit fleeting**,** depiction of enthusiasm for fascism at home, however, for the violence and militarism associated with Nazism, can be found in Henry Green's *Caught*, in which Christopher, the son of the protagonist Richard Roe, whom Roe is only able to see every few months while on leave, plays at being a Nazi:

> 'Look,' Christopher said, another snowball in his hand. 'I'm a German airman, I'm bombing.' […]
>
> 'Look,' his father interrupted, 'haven't you knocked those branches about enough? There's hardly a bird left in the garden since you've been out. You'd do better to put food for them. They starve in this weather, you know.'
>
> 'They're Polish people,' Christopher said, 'and I'm a German policeman rootling them about.' (Green 1943: 174, 188)

It is notable that Christopher's fantasies of violence are juxtaposed with his father's efforts to put into words, in conversation with his sister-in-law Dy, the profound impact the night of his first fire had on him nine weeks earlier, at the beginning of the Blitz. As Holmesland

suggests, '[i]t is his profound recognition of human community that Richard now feels has made him a new person' (Holmesland 1986: 89): 'In some fantastic way I'm sure you only get in war, we were suddenly alone and forced to rely on one another entirely. And that after twelve months' bickering', Richard tells Dy (Green 1943: 184). It would seem that Green is suggesting that the end of the phoney war brought an end to 'bickering' more generally – that he shared the belief of H. G. Wells quoted in my Introduction that 'the quickened nation pulled itself together under Winston Churchill' (Wells 1940: 397) and put internal divisions behind it – but Green undermines this first by having Dy so unimpressed by what Richard is telling her ('It sounds grim,' is her offhand response to his description of community quoted above (184)) and second, and more significantly, by having Richard say this while in the background Christopher is playing at being a German bomber and policeman. Although this is the first time we have seen Christopher refer to the German enemy – it comes in the closing pages of the novel – it is not the first time we have seen this propensity to violence: much earlier in the novel, when Richard first visits him two months after the outbreak of war, he sits with his son one evening to 'put up a harbour':

> [w]hen his father had finished the lightship it was Christopher's bedtime, but the next morning Dy added a custom's house. She gave it a Carolean front. Then he bombed the whole thing down. (26)

Shortly after this, we learn that '[t]he stud groom, on his last visit, had let him kill with a spoon nine immature mice they had uncovered beneath a pile of horse blankets' (29). (Christopher's presentation anticipates that of Albert in Green's next novel, *Loving*, whose tendency to violence leads his aunt to describe him as a 'little storm trooper' and compare him with Hitler: 'Children is all little 'Itlers these days,' Mrs Welch says. 'D'you know what 'e done. Up and throttled one of them peacocks with 'is bare hands not 'alf an hour after he got in' (Green 1945: 53).) It is because Christopher is portrayed as so attracted to violence that I question Holmesland's reading of the novel that it conveys 'Green's insistence on the value of "living" and his underlying faith in the potential for vitality of his characters' and does so through 'the affinity of perception revealed by Richard and his son, Christopher' (Holmesland 1986: 98). Holmesland argues that 'Richard's revitalization clearly corresponds with Christopher's liveliness, [his …] natural sprightliness, unthwarted by the forces of

socialization or by the stasis caused by too much introspection' and that this constitutes 'common, healthy instincts' (98). Christopher's instinctive desire to inflict suffering, however, suggests that if this is indeed man in his natural state, 'unthwarted by the forces of socialization', then if fascism, militarism and a propensity to violence are indeed an enemy to be fought and defeated, they must be fought on home soil and not just on the continent.

2. Fascism and the Cult of Masculinity

Had she lived to read *Caught*, Virginia Woolf would, I feel, have seen Green's portrayal of the boy Christopher as an accurate portrayal of institutionalised masculinity more generally. For while many Britons in the late 1930s were concerned by the level of conscious sympathy for fascist regimes and ideology within the country, a number of writers of the time, Woolf being the most prominent, argued that fascist tendencies in fact ran altogether deeper. In *Three Guineas*, Woolf expressed her belief that fascism and patriarchy were closely interlinked – 'that dictatorship begins at home', as Ellis puts it (Ellis 2014: 202) – and that tackling fascist thinking therefore meant tackling gender divisions in our own society. Considering how war can be prevented, Woolf argues that it is difficult for women to offer an opinion on this because they struggle to understand the attraction war has for men: '[o]bviously there is for you some glory, some necessity, some satisfaction in fighting which we have never felt or enjoyed' (Woolf 1938: 92), suggesting through her use of first and second person pronouns an absolute divide between the sexes, and that war and violence and killing are uniquely associated with male behaviour:

> [f]or though many instincts are held more or less in common by both sexes, to fight has always been the man's habit, not the woman's. Law and practice have developed that difference, whether innate or accidental. Scarcely a human being in the course of history has fallen to a woman's rifle; the vast majority of birds and beasts have been killed by you, not by us […] how to prevent war? The answer based upon our experience and our psychology – Why fight? – is not an answer of any value. (92)

It is because manliness, and manly virtues, are so closely linked with militarism that fascism can, implies Woolf, be seen as existing within the hearts of British men generally, not just those openly or consciously attracted to fascist ideology. She develops this idea in 'Thoughts on Peace in an Air Raid', written during the Blitz in October 1940: that war and violence are specifically male pursuits is stressed in the opening paragraphs when she writes that '[u]p there in the sky young Englishmen and young German men are fighting each other. The defenders are men, the attackers are men' (Woolf 1940: 81). In order to win freedom, she states, we are told that we must defeat Hitler, but '[w]ho is Hitler? What is he? Aggressiveness, tyranny, the insane love of power made manifest' (81).[24] To defeat 'Hitler', then, does not mean to win the war with Germany, or not only that, because in 'the treatment of women' there is a 'similarity between authoritarian structures in England and Germany' (Rau 2009: 197), but rather to root out aggression and desire for power everywhere, and that means helping men to overcome their natural instincts, because there exists a 'subconscious Hitlerism in the hearts of men' (Woolf 1940: 82).

This is an argument made explicitly by Katharine Burdekin in her dystopian novel of 1937, *Swastika Night*, in which she imagines a second world war that lasts for twenty years and results in a German victory. Over seven hundred years later the world is divided into two blocs, one controlled by the Germans, one by the Japanese, and the German hemisphere is kept subdued partly through military force, but perhaps more importantly through what is described as 'psychic subjection' (Burdekin 1937: 15), whereby only one view of history and society is permitted (in this Burdekin clearly pre-empts George Orwell's much better known *Nineteen Eighty-Four*), one that venerates the German Nazis as genetically and in all other ways superior to other ethnicities and nationalities, and men as in all ways superior to women. In her introduction to the 1985 re-issue of the novel, Daphne Patai suggests that the importance of *Swastika Night* lies in Burdekin's 'transcendence of the specifics of Nazi ideology and its location of Nazism, and militarism in general, within

[24] Canadian diplomat Charles Ritchie, who was in a relationship with Elizabeth Bowen during much of the war, suggested something similar in a diary entry in which he described Hitler as 'the incarnation of our own sense of guilt. When he attacks our civilisation, we find him saying things that we have thought or said […] he is all the hatred, the envy, the guile which is in us – a surrealist figure sprung out of the depths of our subconscious' (cited in Rau 2009: 187).

the broader spectrum of the "cult of masculinity"' (Patai 1985: vii). This cult of masculinity is satirised in the novel through, amongst other things, the exaggerated description of masculine, 'soldierly' virtues that are enshrined in a creed spoken in Church: 'I believe in pride, in courage, in violence, in brutality, in bloodshed, in ruthlessness, and all other soldierly and heroic virtues. Heil Hitler' (Burdekin 1937: 6). While Burdekin equates the misogyny at the very heart of the society of the novel with fascism, she equates both with militarism, with 'soldierly', masculine virtues. Fighting fascism is thus not just about fighting 'the Nazis on land, at sea, in the air', as Victor Gollancz, the original publisher of *Swastika Night*, wrote in a note to the edition of the novel issued in July 1940 as a Left Book Club selection, but also fighting it 'in ourselves' (cited in Patai 1985: vii).

Running parallel with this exaltation of masculine virtues is a corresponding 'Reduction of Women' (Burdekin 1937: 70), something that is part of a wider affirmation of the 'natural' hierarchies existing within society that are avowed in the Hitlerian creed:

> *As a woman is above a worm,*
> *So is a man above a woman […]*
> *As a man is above a woman,*
> *So is a Nazi above a foreign Hitlerian […]* (7)

In the novel it falls to an Englishman, Alfred, to begin the fight against these inequalities (that it is a man to whom this job falls is suggestive of the impact of power-structures), although even he takes a long time to realise that inequalities within society run not just along ethnic and class lines but gender too. This is something his mentor, the German knight Von Hess, has never been able to do, believing that

> [w]omen will always be exactly what men want them to be. They have no will, no character, and no souls; they are only a reflection of men […] If men want them to be beautiful they will be beautiful. If men want them to appear to have wills and characters they will develop something that looks like a will and a character though it is really only a sham. (70)

It is because of this, he believes, that they so readily 'acquiesced in the Reduction of Women, which was a deliberate thing deliberately planned by German men' (71) and why 'they gave up their baby sons with the same heroism with which they had been used to give their grown sons to war' (82). While Alfred considers initially that '[i]t must be right for women to submit to men. Anything else would be unnatural' (70), later he comes up with an alternative theory, that women have never been able to take pride in being female and in their feminine attributes and characteristics because they have always been brought up in a world that values masculine attributes more highly:

> [t]he human values of this world are masculine. There are no feminine values because there are no women. Nobody could tell what we should admire or what we should do, or how we should behave if there were women [who take pride in their womanhood] instead of half-women [who admire masculine values over feminine]. (108)

This applies to the period before the Reduction of Women just as fully as it does in Alfred's dystopian world, he contends, because '[t]hey were living an imposed masculine pattern just as ours do now. They were no more *women* than ours, they were only in a better position to become so' (109). Alfred's understanding of this informs not only his determination to bring about change, but also his view on how such change should be instigated: by the end of the novel, 'Alfred had reacted so strongly and logically against the Hitlerian virtues of bloodshed and brutality and ruthlessness that he was already developing shoots of their opposites' (173), and it is made clear that only through this can fascism be truly defeated. The knight pleads with Alfred to teach just this:

> warn them, warn them, Alfred, with all the soul-force you have, against violence […] warn them against accepting violence as a noble, manly thing. We Germans have done that, we have brought force to its highest power, and we have failed to make life good, or even, now, possible. So for God's sake warn them against all our bodily, soldierly virtues. (131)

It is not just, then, that fascism needs to be fought in the social and psychological spheres as well as the political and military (not just 'on land, at sea, in the air', to quote again Victor Gollancz, but 'in ourselves'). It needs to be fought, and here Burdekin anticipates Forster's concerns that perhaps fascism can only be defeated through fascist means, concerns that I turn to in the following section, without resort to such masculine values as brutality and ruthlessness.

Rex Warner suggests something very similar in *The Aerodrome*. Just as the 'masculine virtues' and militaristic ideology that structure Burdekin's dystopian world can be seen as, as Patai puts it, 'only quantitatively different from the everyday reality of male dominance' (Patai 1985: iv) in the real world of the 1930s, as an exaggeration of belief systems existing in reality, in other words, so Warner suggests that the manly, soldierly virtues that structure life at the aerodrome are merely a logical extension or exaggeration of the behaviour to be seen in the 'real world' of the village. Although Warner presents the conflict between village and aerodrome as a kind of civil war, it is apparent at certain moments in the novel that the two are not totally opposed, that, as the narrator realises at the end of the novel, 'the two worlds were not exclusive' (Warner 1941: 295). Mac's 'battle cry' before releasing his third dart at the dart board in the village inn (103), for example, is just one of several moments where the actions of the men of the village are described in militaristic terms. This is particularly apparent at the agricultural show: the narrator notes that this year the traditional agricultural focus of the show is being supplemented by a new military focus – 'the authorities of the aerodrome were giving an exhibition of stunt flying and there would also be some demonstrations of the latest type of machine-guns' (46) – but when people arrive at the show the first thing they hear is 'the sound of shots from the shooting alley' (51), not in this case a new, aerodrome-run demonstration but a traditional part of the show from long before the arrival of the airmen. From the first, Roy's experience of the show revolves around drunkenness and violence, and although the shooting of the Rector by the Flight-Lieutenant later on is presented as the culmination of aerodrome irresponsibility and violence within and against the village, this is set against earlier acts of violence that have already been recorded at the show involving villagers, the most vivid example of which is that of the village rat-catcher, who 'with his long white teeth bit off the

rat's head' (62) for the price of half a pint of beer.[25] This casual violence extends to male treatment of women. Roy notes at one stage the acrimony felt by the villagers towards the men of the aerodrome owing to 'certain events [that] had taken place which could leave no one indifferent' but having listed some of these he goes on to note that '[t]here had been, too, some cases of the rape or abduction of young girls carried out by aircraftmen or junior officers; but as these occurrences were common enough amongst ourselves, no great importance was attached to them' (18).

Alfred in *Swastika Night* suggests that women living before the twenty years war – in the 1930s of Burdekin herself that is – were 'living an imposed masculine pattern' and this is suggested in *The Aerodrome* by the attraction felt by women and men alike for the exaggerated masculinity of the airmen and the ideology of the aerodrome. 'Most of the ladies pronounced the Air Vice-Marshal handsome, distinguished, or impressive', we are told (91), while Bess, with whom Roy falls in love, enthuses about how 'marvellous' he is. 'How wonderful it would be […] if you were an airman', she effuses to Roy (105). 'Would you marry me then?' Roy asks: 'Oh yes!' comes the reply. Roy's mother is equally excited at the prospects of her son becoming an airman: looking back with regret at her encouragement of him, she comments late in the novel, 'I was really as foolish as a young girl might be when I thought that I should like to see you in the Air Force. I thought it was romantic, I suppose, and manly' (270). The men are equally impressed, Roy included: when describing the Flight-Lieutenant, Roy cannot seem to help commenting repeatedly how 'remarkably handsome' (20) he is, as well as mentioning his 'extraordinary charm of manner' (20), the way 'the candlelight was caught and twisted in the tight curls of his yellow hair' (22), his uniform and boots, and so forth. What seems to particularly attract the villagers to the Flight-Lieutenant and other airmen, however, is their arrogance, their propensity to violence, the danger associated with them – not traits one might necessarily expect to generate attraction, but in a world where masculine, soldierly values are the pattern, this is perhaps to be expected. Commenting on the Flight-Lieutenant, for example,

[25] This is similar to Green's *Loving*, where Albert tells Moira that 'I'll bite 'is little 'ead off'n. […] Like they did in the local where I was evacuated. […] In the pub down in the country. There was a man there bit the 'eads off of mice for a pint' (Green 1945: 61).

Roy states, 'I disliked the complete assurance of his look, but at the same time felt attracted to the apparent power and confidence of the man' (88). The villagers are 'excited' (56) by his reckless freeing of Slazenger, the prize bull, while when aircraft flying overhead dive so low over the Rector's car on the way to the agricultural show 'it seemed as though we were the object of a concerted attack', the Rector's wife responds with 'something very like pride or pleasure in her eyes' (50). Nevertheless, as the true nature of the aerodrome and its residents becomes apparent, the villagers' attitude towards it changes from 'excitement' to 'hostility' (226), and it is unsurprising, perhaps, given the apparent misogyny of many of the airmen, that it is the women who become most antagonistic – 'It appeared to me that the hostility towards us of the village women was more bitter and more homogenous than was that of the men', Roy, by now an Air Force officer, muses (227).

In his characterisation of the Nazi sympathiser Netta in *Hangover Square*, Patrick Hamilton goes perhaps even further than Warner in arguing for the sexual attraction of fascism and militarism:

> [Netta] was supposed to dislike fascism, to laugh at it, but actually she liked it enormously. In secret she liked pictures of marching, regimented men, in secret she was physically attracted to Hitler […] She liked the uniforms, the guns, the breeches, the swastikas, the shirts. She was, probably, sexually stimulated by these things […] It might be said that this feeling for violence and brutality, for the pageant and panorama of fascism on the Continent, formed her principal disinterested aesthetic pleasure. (Hamilton 1941: 129-130)

Hence Netta's attraction to Peter, an avowed fascist, as well as a young man she brings to Brighton and sleeps with, who believes 'there's a lot in this fascist business', adding on the subject of 'good old Adolf' that 'he did something for his country anyway'. Netta is enthused by this: 'That's what I say! I'm all for my Adolf' (154). Just like Roy and many of the other villagers are by the Flight-Lieutenant and other airmen in *The Aerodrome* so George Harvey Bone is repulsed yet fascinated by Netta, but equally he is repulsed yet jealous of Peter, who demonstrates many of the 'other soldierly and heroic virtues' venerated in the Hitlerian Creed in *Swastika Night* quoted above and is attractive to Netta for precisely that reason:

> [s]he liked Peter […] because of her knowledge, possessed by few others, of his past – the fact that he had twice been in jail. He had been in jail on one occasion for assaulting and wounding a man at a political meeting, and on another for killing a pedestrian with his car while drunk, and this she liked, this stimulated her. She liked the whole atmosphere: she liked the deeds themselves, and she liked the jail. Both provided something bloody, brutal, and unusual which gave him a halo of originality. (128)

While Warner and Hamilton's presentation of female attraction to the exaggerated masculinity of fascism could perhaps be linked to the authors' own possible misogyny, their analysis is remarkably similar to Woolf's in 'Thoughts on Peace in an Air Raid', where she describes 'women gazing; painted women; dressed-up women; women with crimson lips and crimson fingernails' and asserts that '[t]hey are slaves who are trying to enslave. If we could free ourselves from slavery we should free men from tyranny. Hitlers are bred by slaves' (Woolf 1940: 82). Woolf's description of women's complicity in their own enslavement, something suggested by Burdekin in the knight's description of how women 'acquiesced in the Reduction of Women' (Burdekin 1937: 72), and Warner in his description of the initial enthusiasm for the airmen of Bess, Roy's mother and other women of the village, can certainly be applied to Netta.[26] The result of this veneration of manly virtues is that it encourages men like George and Roy to want to be more like Peter and the Flight Lieutenant, to rue what they perceive as their own lack of manliness while at the same remaining repulsed by what they desire. It is telling that when George asks himself '[c]ouldn't he be a man?' he considers this to involve 'having' Netta (120). 'If Peter had had her, why couldn't he? She was to be had, after all', he muses (120). It would be easy enough to condemn George for his apparent misogyny here, except that it is something he has learned from his environment, and in 'Thoughts on Peace in an Air Raid', Woolf suggests

[26] Mrs Drover in Bowen's 'The Demon Lover' seems similar: Corcoran suggests that her 'promise [to her lover of the title] has been extracted as the consequence of her attraction to, precisely, this kind of sadism' (2004: 162). Similarly, Mrs. Nicholson in Bowen's pre-World War 1-set story 'Ivy Gripped the Steps' 'anticipate[s] the argument of Woolf's *Three Guineas*', Ellmann suggests, and I would add that of *Swastika Night*, when she suggests that Admiral Concannon needs a war to prove his masculinity: 'That's why he's so anxious to have that war', she tells Gavin. 'One would have thought a man could just be a man' (Ellmann 2004: 149).

that it is difficult to *blame* men for such attitudes. She imagines the airmen flying overhead as driven by 'the desire for aggression; the desire to dominate and enslave' that she sees as the 'subconscious Hitlerism in the hearts of men' that is the reason women 'are held down', but goes on to argue that '[t]he young airman up in the sky is driven not only by the voices of loudspeakers; he is driven by voices in himself—ancient instincts, instincts fostered and cherished by education and tradition. Is he to be blamed for those instincts?' Rather than blame him, Woolf argues, we

> must help the young Englishmen to root out from themselves the love of medals and decorations. We must create more honourable activities for those who try to conquer in themselves their fighting instinct, their subconscious Hitlerism. We must compensate the man for the loss of his gun. (Woolf 1940: 82-83)

Daphne du Maurier explores similar ideas in *The King's General*, where the exaggerated masculinity of the eponymous figure Richard Grenvile is contrasted with the effeminacy of his son. Richard's rejection of his son (he tells Honor, 'All these lads I have affection for because they hold themselves like men. But Dick, my son and heir, shudders when I speak to him, and whimpers at the sight of blood. It does not make for pride in his father' (du Maurier 1946: 229)) and 'the flood of resentment' (229) this provokes is perhaps the main reason for Dick's betrayal of his father and the Royalist cause at the end of the novel, something which leads directly to Dick's own death. Although Richard is presented sympathetically by the narrator Honor, she describes his 'faults' in a coolly unromantic light – 'his pride, his arrogance, his contempt for anyone's opinion but his own'; he is 'callous', with a 'streak of cruelty' and a 'deliberate want of understanding that was almost vile' – faults that align him with Peter in *Hangover Square* and the Flight-Lieutenant in *The Aerodrome*. The main difference between Richard and certainly Peter, however, is that Richard is capable of gentleness and kindness, and moreover, unlike Netta, Honor remains attracted to him throughout the novel despite his faults, rather than because of them, something that is arguably also true of Stella's attraction to Robert in *The Heat of the Day.*

In this novel it is Robert's attraction to the exaggerated masculinity of German Nazism and his repulsion from what he perceives as the opposing effeminacy of British democracy that prompts him to betray his country and pass information to Berlin. Having previously been wounded at Dunkirk, Robert tells Stella that 'I was born wounded; my father's son. Dunkirk was waiting in us – what a race! […] Unwhole' (Bowen 1948: 272). Robert suggests here that his decision to betray his country to the Germans was owing to some fundamental failure within the British, a failure of spirit or personality that led to the withdrawal at Dunkirk, something that he clearly views as an act of weakness and cowardice. What exactly is missing from British men is hinted at by Robert's claim to be wounded by being his father's son, for he presents his father as having been an emasculated figure, certainly in his final years living at Holme Dene, a 'man-eating house […] conceived to please and appease middle-class ladies', the many twists of whose 'swastika-arms of passage' hide 'repressions, doubts, fears, subterfuges and fibs', and where Robert's father played out a 'fiction of dominance' but in fact suffered 'unstated indignities' (256, 258) and 'let himself be buckled into his marriage like Ernie's labrador used to let itself be knuckled into its collar' (119). When asked by Stella if he was ever frightened while carrying out his espionage work, Robert replies, 'I? – no, the opposite: it utterly undid fear. It bred my father out of me, gave me a new heredity' (273), suggesting that what attracted him to fascism and to the action of espionage was a desire for a masculinity that he lacked owing to being born his father's son (he comments later of the female members of his family, '[i]t never suited them that I should be a man' (278), adding that his espionage work meant he became 'a man in secret' (272)). So while the government's 'Keep Mum' poster campaign, discussed in chapter 1, pointed to the unreliability of women in times of war, Bowen in her characterisation of Robert suggests that men were more likely to turn traitor owing to a crisis of masculinity that might be seen as rectified by fascism and its apparent machismo.[27] Robert remains vague on why exactly he has chosen one side over another, as Stella notes

[27] Having said that, several critics have identified Bowen's own espionage work in Ireland as a likely source for Robert's treachery, Maud Ellmann, for example, noting that 'Bowen struggled to stay loyal to both [the UK and Ireland,] defending Ireland's neutrality as ardently as she supported Britain's war-effort. "Heart-cloven and split-minded" with regard to her two nations Bowen found herself in the position of the shadowy third' (Ellmann 2001: 15).

– 'You know, Robert, for anybody doing anything so definite you talk vaguely' (282).[28] What Robert does seem certain about though is that what traditionally gave meaning to a man's life has now been lost – was lost, specifically, in the last war in which Stella's brothers were killed: '[y]ou're thinking of your brothers? Thinking what was good enough for them, honour, ought to be good enough for me? I love your laughing photographs. They were lucky to die before the illusion had broken down' (276). Only the ideology of fascism can fill the void left by the collapse of this illusion, Robert thinks – presumably because only fascism offers a new vision of masculinity that can allow him to take a pride in himself that his father could not. Although to the end precisely what he sees in fascism remains unclear, what is certain is that he sees something:

> [t]hey have something. This war's just so much quibbling about something that's predecided itself. Either side's winning would stop the war; only their side's winning would stop the quibbling. I want the cackle cut – Well, what have I not said? (282)

The choice of word 'cackle' seems to suggest that the chatter, the quibbling, is for Robert an essentially feminine thing, and that the silence that would presumably replace it would be innately masculine.

Approaching the subject from a different angle, then, through the largely sympathetic presentation of a character, Robert, who becomes a traitor because of his own

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[28] Rau comments that 'Bowen leaves Kelway's ideology rather oblique, affiliating him to neither communism nor fascism, and this significantly shifts the focus of treason from a specific totalitarian ideology to the imperialist element all totalitarian regimes incorporate. Kelway's fascination with totalitarianism is uncanny precisely because his betrayal is motivated by a foreign ideology that utilises *familiar* forms of imperialism' (Rau 2009: 201). The suggestion that Robert is seeking a return to a past, now lost English masculinity through embracing a present foreign one – hence its uncanny familiarity – is I feel a persuasive reading. Equally persuasive is Allan Hepburn's suggestion that 'Bowen's decision to make Robert a Nazi sympathiser is motivated by her critique of middle-class British complacency. In Bowen's view, the war heightens the sense of treachery implicit within complacency' (Hepburn 2011: 137). Hepburn supports his assertion by quoting Bowen's 'Britain in Autumn', in which she wrote, 'Nazis make a name and front for the Enemy, but we have bred our own, and deadlier, enemies. These are waiting, these may try to come back: laissez faire, subservience, smugness, habit-of-mind' (138).

perceived failure to measure up against the 'masculine pattern' dominant at the time, Bowen seems to be suggesting, like Burdekin and Woolf, the connection between masculine values and fascism. The irony of all this, from Alfred's perspective in *Swastika Night*, is that there is nothing inherently manly about the soldierly values venerated by Hitlerian society. 'Soldiers cannot be men of character, of course,' he says. 'They can't be *men*. They must always be boys. I've always seen that' (147). What Alfred is suggesting here is that being a man involves thinking and behaving independently, and that the hierarchical power structures and homogenised ideology of the armed forces mean that of all people soldiers are the least able to behave In such a way. Totally contrary to Robert's belief, in other words, it is in fact militarism and fascism that emasculate, Alfred argues, and this is what the men of the world need to learn for humanity to progress. Woolf seems to be saying something very similar in 'Thoughts on Peace in an Air Raid' when she asserts at the end that '[w]e must free him from the machine. We must bring him out of his prison into the open air' (1940: 83).

Woolf offers her suggestions regarding how to tackle the problem of 'subconscious Hitlerism' at least in hope, but in her fictional exploration of the same ideas, *Between the Acts* (1941), Woolf seems to offer little hope that such change could ever in fact be achieved. That the novel is concerned again with the theme of the enemy within is suggested by Gill Plain, who notes its

> concern with the issues of invasion, rape and colonization, but primarily the absolute Englishness of the community is established to enable Woolf to explode and disrupt the cosy image of a benevolent village England cruelly under siege from external forces. (Plain 1996: 125)

If '[i]t is not the barbarian at the gate, but in the citadel and in the heart who is the real danger', as Leonard Woolf suggested in his *Barbarians at the Gate* (Woolf, L. 1939: 160), then from almost the first this barbarism is presented as masculine in *Between the Acts*. This can be seen in the juxtaposition of two early scenes – that of Mrs Swithin reading her 'Outline of History' and thinking of a time when

> the entire continent, not then, she understood, divided by a channel, was all one; populated, she understood, by elephant-bodied, seal-necked, heaving, surging, slowly writhing, and, she supposed, barking monsters; the iguanodon, the mammoth, and the mastodon; from whom presumably, she thought, jerking the window open, we descend (Woolf 1941: 4)

– and, just a couple of pages later, Mr. Oliver appearing to his grandson as 'a terrible peaked eyeless monster moving on legs, brandishing arms' (6). There are a number of things to say about these episodes: first, there is the ambiguity of 'brandishing arms' and the idea that this is meant militaristically; second, that his being described as an 'eyeless monster' not only suggests his proximity to, and descent from, the primeval monsters of the past but also a myopia that prevents him from understanding his grandson's frightened reaction; third, that this links him with a time when Britain was not divided from the rest of the continent, and binary them-and-us divisions therefore did not exist. The reaction of his grandson, George, to Oliver's springing 'upon him from his hiding-place behind a tree' and booming at him in a hollow voice from 'a beak of paper' is to spring up, 'toppling in his fright', to gape and gaze and, finally, after looking at the dog which accompanies him ('[t]he hairy flanks were sucked in and out; there was a blob of foam on its nostrils'), to 'burst out crying' (6)). Oliver's response is very similar to Richard Grenvile's to the apparent lack of masculine qualities of Dick in *The King's General* – 'Old Oliver raised himself, his veins swollen, his cheeks flushed; he was angry. His little game with the paper hadn't worked. The boy was a cry-baby' (6). His physical description bears comparison with the dog's, suggesting Oliver's animalistic, 'barbaric' nature, something suggested too by the description of the newspaper rolled to resemble a 'beak'. That the newspaper contains news of violence – as Gill Plain comments, 'Isa's reading of the newspaper [elsewhere in the novel] reinforces the conviction that a substratum of violence exists beneath the precarious veneer of civilisation' (Plain 1996: 127) – suggests a link too between Oliver's barbarism and barbarism abroad, while his authoritarianism is also stressed in his bawling 'Heel!' at his dog 'as if he were

commanding a regiment. It was impressive, to the nurses, the way an old boy of his age could still bawl and make a brute like that obey him' (Woolf 1941: 6).[29]

If the day of the pageant begins with this description of male authoritarianism and monstrosity, then the day, and the novel as a whole, ends similarly, with Mrs Swithin again reading from her 'Outline of History' as, ominously, the 'darkness increased' and Mrs Swithin 'shivered': '"Prehistoric man," she read, "half-human, half-ape, roused himself from his semi-crouching position and raised great stones"' (130). Old Oliver has only just 'stalked from the room' but he has significantly passed the newspaper to his son Giles not long before, passing on the baton, suggesting that Giles has inherited the role of patriarch, something that is apparently understood by Isa: '"Our representative, our spokesman," she sneered. Yet he was extraordinarily handsome' (129). There has been a good deal of discussion regarding the ending of *Between the Acts*, but for me its cyclical nature – the symmetry of its beginning at dawn with an image of ancient England with its monsters followed by the authoritarian old Oliver brandishing his newspaper and arms and reducing George to tears, and its ending with an image of primeval man followed by 'Giles crumpl[ing] the newspaper and turn[ing] out the light' – suggests not only that nothing has changed, but pessimistically that nothing can change.[30] The novel ends as follows:

> Before they slept, they must fight; after they had fought, they would embrace. From that embrace another life might be born. But first they must fight, as the dog fox fights with the vixen, in the heart of darkness, in the fields of night.
>
> The window was all sky without colour. The house had lost 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.

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[29] This is an image we have already seen more than once – Robert's effeminate father letting 'himself be buckled into his marriage like Ernie's labrador used to let itself be knuckled into its collar' (Bowen 1948: 116), for example, or Rebecca's 'slashing at [her horse], drawing blood, digging her spurs into his side' (du Maurier 1938: 304).

[30] Noting the allusion here to the ending of *Othello* and Othello's 'putting out the light' – a potential reference to the blackout that suggests a connection between wartime experience and the descent to savagery depicted in Shakespeare's play – Steve Ellis has argued that 'group mentality, patriarchy and savagery are emphatically in the ascendant' (Ellis 2014: 191).

> Then the curtain rose. They spoke. (Woolf 1941: 131)

3. Becoming Fascist to Defeat Fascism

While a number of writers expressed the need to fight fascism at home as well as abroad, many were concerned as the inevitability of war became apparent that there was an inescapable contradiction expressed by E. M. Forster in his essay 'The 1939 State':[31] 'if Fascism wins we are done for [but] we must become Fascist to win' (Forster 1951: 34). 'There seems no escape from this hideous dilemma',[32] Forster wrote, suggesting a catch-22 situation where only by suppressing freedoms could the threat posed to freedom by a Nazi victory be averted, that only through Britain's embracing a form of military totalitarianism that went with 'total war' could totalitarianism on the Continent be defeated.

> We are urged […] to face facts, and we ought to. But we can only face them by being double-faced. The facts lie in opposite directions, and no exhortations will group them into a single field. No slogan works. All is lost if the totalitarians destroy us. But all is equally lost if we have nothing left to lose. (Forster 1951: 33)

Forster's use of language here is revealing. His use of 'double-faced', in particular, is reminiscent of George Orwell's concept of 'doublethink' that he would coin a decade later

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[31] I am quoting here from the slightly revised version of this essay, re-titled 'Post-Munich', that Forster included in his 1951 collection *Two Cheers for Democracy*.

[32] Ellis has suggested a similarity between Forster's thinking here and Woolf's in *Between the Acts*, arguing that 'a whole series of divisions [is] present in the novel […] between town and country, drama and fiction, men and women and the primitive and civilised. The sense of being straddled between irreconcilable divisions is […] precisely what makes *Between the Acts* the fictional embodiment in many ways of the Forsterian paralysis and impasse that characterise his '1939 state' (Ellis 2014: 189). I would add that something similar could be argued of *Hangover Square* – not only is what Ellis describes as 'irreconcilable division' embodied in George's schizophrenia, but just as Woolf's novel ends with the statement that first 'they must fight' before they can sleep, so at the end of Hamilton's, George must kill Netta and Peter before he can achieve a kind of peace through suicide.

in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949), a novel that imagines a state where individual rights have been totally eroded. Double-faced suggests, too, a schizophrenic fragmenting of consciousness that is particularly interesting given the number of novels of the time that deal with schizophrenia, something discussed at greater length in chapter 5. The question posed by Forster through this Janusian image, however, is if one were literally to face facts, in what direction would one be looking? The answer seems clearly to be on the one hand the external threat to the east of Continental totalitarian states, and on the other the internal threat posed by a government that might in order to defeat fascism abroad have to adopt fascist measures itself.

What might Britons have to lose in order to avoid being destroyed by the totalitarians? Freedom of speech and of the press, perhaps; the right, perhaps, not to be imprisoned without charge or fair trial. If so, then Forster was right to be worried. In immediate response to the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of 23 August 1939, the UK Parliament passed the Emergency Powers (Defence) Act 1939 giving the government wide powers to create Defence Regulations which regulated almost every aspect of everyday life in the country: as Gill Plain observes, '[i]n order to win the war, Britain established a regime of unprecedented regimentation' (Plain 1996: 8).[33] One of the most significant Regulations, which could be seen as moving Britain towards an autocratic state, was 18B, which allowed the internment of British nationals acting in a manner 'prejudicial to the public safety or the defence of the realm' or of 'hostile origin or associations' and was revised following the Wolkoff spy scandal of May 1940 to give the Home Secretary the power to detain anyone 'likely to endanger the public safety or the defence of the realm'. The power to intern any individual not because of what they might have done but might do was presumably precisely the power of a totalitarian state that Britain had gone to war to prevent. Under this new Revised Regulation, over a thousand people were detained by the end of 1940 (see Hylton 2010: 1-35; Calder 1991: 65-89).[34] It might have seemed to some in the early months

[33] Plain argues that this 'enforced unity […] was to a large extent accepted rather than resented as a repression of personal liberty' (Plain 1996: 8).

[34] In fact, Britain had for some time been moving towards an increasingly autocratic state. The Emergency Powers Act 1938 empowered the government to take measures to secure public safety, the defence of the realm and the maintenance of public order while the Military Training Act 1939 introduced compulsory

of the war, then, that Britain was already an authoritarian country of sorts, and certainly Forster was by no means alone in his concerns. Petra Rau has suggested that 'many civilians indeed felt that the wartime government's way of ensuring equality and discipline increasingly resembled the tyrannical measures of Continental fascism' (Rau 2009: 189), adding that

> [c]ompartmentalization was the politically expedient means by which one could ignore the ethical problematics of beating a book-burning, mendacious and totalitarian regime with some of its own weapons; weapons that might also undermine the liberal democracies they were meant to defend. (189)

Steve Ellis, meanwhile, cites C. E. M. Joad as arguing in *Why War?* that 'the war to save democracy would kill democracy within twenty-four hours of its declaration' owing to the need for 'a military dictatorship which imposes upon the country an iron discipline' in order to prevent the total breakdown of civilian society that Joad envisaged resulting from bombing raids (cited in Ellis 2014: 98), and the *Spectator's* concern in June 1939 that there was

> a real danger that Germany, by driving Great Britain to conscription, authoritarianism and other typical characteristics of German militarism, may be gradually robbing Englishmen of the freedom which Germans have long since had to surrender (cited in Ellis 2014: 3).

Turning to literary production of the period, du Maurier transfers contemporary concerns of autocratic government to the Civil War of three hundred years earlier in *The King's General*, where she charts the real historical impositions of the Parliamentarian regime once Royalist Cornwall came under its control:

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conscription for all twenty- and twenty-one year old men (see Calder 1969: 501-2 and 1991: 123, 220; Thomas 2003: 18, 32).

> [t]he Parliament decrees that produce shall be brought to market only upon a Tuesday … The Parliament has ordered that all fairs shall henceforth be discontinued … The Parliament warns every inhabitant within the above-prescribed area that no one, save by permission, shall walk abroad one hour after sunset … The Parliament warns each householder that every dwelling will be searched each week for concealed firearms, weapons and ammunition, from this day forward, and any holder of the same shall be immediately imprisoned … (du Maurier 1946: 285)

Hamilton's listing of all the things not permitted in the public park in Thames Lockdon in *The Slaves of Solitude* creates a similar impression:

> more was forbidden – Cycling, Spitting, walking on the grass, picking flowers, defacing the Corporation's property, removing the chairs, using the bowling green, putting-green or tennis-court without asking its permission, etc.. etc. – these ordinances being proclaimed in white lettering on green boards here, there and everywhere, and a reward of forty shillings being in some cases offered to amateur detectives of culprits. (Hamilton 1947: 93)

The effort to turn citizens into informers on each other anticipates Orwell's dystopian vision of totalitarianism in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Katherine Burdekin, meanwhile, explores in *Swastika Night* why authoritarianism becomes acceptable, even desirable, in times of war. Alfred and Von Hess discuss the times before totalitarian government, when countries had experimented with democratic forms of governing, and the knight expresses his belief that it was the continual 'menace of war' that undermined confidence in such a system and pushed nations towards authoritarian alternatives:

> [s]oldiers cannot be democrats, and armies, even the armies of democratic countries, were always authoritarian […] And again an authoritarian government behind the authoritarian army gives a nation enormous advantage in times of war. The democratic countries, when war was threatening, were panicked by their severe handicap, and loss of faith in the forms of government was inevitable. (147)

This is one reason why Alfred is convinced that the militaristic regime that controls Britain and most of Europe and Africa in the novel cannot ultimately be defeated through militaristic revolt. While part of the rationale for this is undoubtedly practical – if challenged militaristically, the regime's access to military hardware should enable it to win out – at the same time Alfred seems to see, as Forster did, that to embrace such militaristic methods is to embrace what one is fighting to defeat.

Another writer who explored similar concerns is Anna Kavan, whose work, for Sara Wasson, 'can be read as an hallucinatory refraction of some of the authoritarianism that convulsed the home front' (Wasson 2010: 61). Kavan spent a good deal of time in the middle of the war working at a psychiatric institution for shell-shocked soldiers and this experience informed the writing of her short story collection *I am Lazarus* (1945). I explore this collection more fully in chapter 5 but want to discuss here the first two stories of the collection, 'I am Lazarus' and 'Palace of Sleep', which both critique the 'authoritarianism that convulsed the home front'. In 'Palace of Sleep', a cheerful physician shows a young doctor from the north of England around the London mental hospital he superintends, confident and complacent about the treatment they carry out there, especially on those in the 'paying block' ('We're very proud of our private wards') or 'palace of sleep', as the superintendent calls it, where all the patients are 'having partial or prolonged narcosis' (Kavan 1945: 18), a treatment Kavan herself experienced on a number of occasions (see Wasson 2010: 61). His visitor, however, is disturbed by what he witnesses, first a patient being helped to walk along the corridor whose 'wide-open eyes, at once distracted and dull like the eyes of a drunken person, stared out of her pale face, the sick woman stumbling and reeling, and gazing desperately, blankly ahead' (19), and then a patient who is described as a living corpse:

> [u]nder the white bedspread pulled straight and symmetrical, like the covering of a bier, a young woman was lying quite motionless with closed eyes. Her fair hair was spread on the pillow, her pale face was absolutely lifeless, void, with the peculiar glazed smoothness and eye-sockets darkly circled. The superintendent stood at the bedside looking down at this shape which already seemed to have forfeited humanity and given itself over prematurely to death. His face wore a complacent

> expression, gratified, approving; the look of a man well satisfied with his work. (19-20)

His visitor, however, is appalled by what he perceives as 'the aura of inexpressible suffering' (20) surrounding the patient (it is unclear who is unable to express the suffering he perceives – the doctor himself, or the patient whose voice has been taken from her by the forced narcosis). He watches,

> fascinated, almost appalled, as, slowly, with intolerable, incalculable effort, the drugged eyes opened and stared straight into his. Was it imagination, or did he perceive in their clouded greyness a look of terror, of wild supplication, of frantic, abysmal appeal? (20)

The superintendent seeks to reassure him that the patient is 'not conscious of course' and is unable to see or hear anything happening around her, the opening of her eyes 'purely a reflex', but the story ends with the visitor feeling 'uneasy and almost ashamed, and wish[ing] that he had not come to visit the hospital' (20). What Kavan seems to be stressing here is the disconnect between the complacent authority figure who imposes what he feels is in the interests of the apparently terrified patient, just as the Air Vice-Marshall does on the villagers in *The Aerodrome*. The hospital location, meanwhile, and the assumptions that doctors know best and the treatments carried out are absolutely in the interests of the patient, enables Kavan to suggest, like Forster, the potential costs of concentrating power in the hands of a minority on the grounds that the treatments they then authorise are necessarily going to benefit the rest of the population. This is made more explicit by the character Williams in 'Face of my People' in the same collection, who attacks the '[d]amned gestapo methods' employed in another, similar hospital:

> [b]loody racket to get sick men back into the army. Cannon fodder, that's all they care about. Taking advantage of poor mugs like us. Pep talks. Pills to pep you up. Dope to make you talk. Putting chaps to sleep and giving them electric shocks and Christ knows what. Lot of bloody guinea pigs, that's what we are. Bloody, isn't it? (Kavan 1945: 59-60)

Kavan Is not alone in using the setting of a mental asylum to indict home front authoritarianism during World War II – Arthur Rowe ends up incarcerated in a similar institution in *The Ministry of Fear*, something I will return to in chapter 4, while in Henry Green's *Caught*, Pye complains that his sister has been 'imprisoned' in an asylum against his, and presumably her, wishes ('any system that can send an unfortunate woman into what is jail really, is vile, a filthy system', he states (Green 1943: 35)).

'I am Lazarus', similarly, describes the visit of a doctor to a mental hospital, this time a hospital abroad, though both visiting doctor and the patient he has sent for treatment whose progress he is checking on are English. Again the visitor is 'not at ease' and concerned by what he witnesses; again the superintendent is smugly complacent ('We're very proud of Mr. Bow […] He's an outstanding example of the success of the treatment' (8)). In this story, however, the focus on a patient who has more or less completed his treatment allows for less uncertainty regarding both the supposed painlessness of the treatment and its efficacy. 'Mr. Bow was afraid of the doctor who for many months had put him into a hideous sleep with his poisoned needle' (13), we are told, suggesting that the assumption that patients treated with enforced narcosis did not suffer and were totally unconscious throughout was unfounded.[35] And although a doctor at the end of the story states, 'He doesn't know how lucky he is […] We've pulled him back literally from a living death' (16), one of the nurse's comments from earlier in the story suggests the very opposite:

> 'He gives me the creeps,' said the other girl. 'Like an automaton walking about. Like a robot. When you think what he was like when he first came it's uncanny. And he always looks so worried.' (13)

He has clearly gone through a process of transformation ('it's uncanny' to compare him with the Mr Bow who arrived) but the comments suggest the change brought about is for the worse, not better. Kavan's choice of words here is highly suggestive – just as the patient in

[2] Sara Wasson discusses the assumption among psychiatrists in the 1930s and 40s that patients were entirely unconscious throughout, and the evidence that was to counter such assumptions, in her discussion of 'Palace of Sleep' (2010: 61-2).

'Palace of Sleep' is described as seeming to have 'forfeited humanity and given *itself* over prematurely to death' (my italics), so Mr Bow is an 'automaton', a 'robot'. If this can be read as allegorical, then Kavan seems to be suggesting that authoritarianism reduces its subjects to robots, just as Alfred suggests of soldiers in *Swastika Night* and as implied by Woolf in her call quoted above for airmen to be freed 'from the machine' in 'Thoughts on Peace in an Air Raid' (1940: 83). Orwell's 'gramophone mind' metaphor in 'Freedom of the Press', his planned preface to *Animal Farm*, employs a different image to suggest the same thing when he states that the 'enemy is the gramophone mind, whether or not one agrees with the record that is being played at the moment' (Orwell 1945b).

Graham Greene explores precisely this concern regarding Britain becoming increasingly authoritarian in his fictions of the first years of the war. Thus in *The Confidential Agent*, Greene undermines the idea conveyed by D. at the beginning of the novel that, arriving in Britain as he is from an unnamed civil war, he is arriving in a place that is peaceful and civilised and where law and order reign. In fact, the similarities between England and his own country are stressed by Else when she asks him if she can go with him when he returns home and he warns her, 'you don't know what it's like there', to which she replies, 'You don't know what it's like here' (Greene 1939: 79). Although within hours of arrival D. is attacked first in a lavatory in a restaurant, then on the road to London, where he is beaten up and has two teeth knocked out, he assumes that war and violence are an 'infection' that he carries (40): '[i]f he had found himself on a desert island, he would have expected to infect even the loneliness somehow with violence' (39). This belief is brought into question as the novel progresses, however. For example, he is told by Forbes, 'Drop that gun, you fool. This is London' (126), but this comes just pages after he has been shot at and almost killed while walking through a quiet London mews in the middle of the day. Similarly, when he says to Captain Currie, 'I thought in England people are supposed to be innocent until they are proved guilty,' Currie replies, 'that's right. But of course the police don't arrest a man unless they've got the right dope' (240), suggesting that as far as he is concerned, people are in fact guilty the moment they are arrested. The danger of assuming the police will only arrest the guilty is demonstrated by the fact that the only person arrested during the course of *The Confidential Agent* is D. himself, and he is innocent of the crimes he is accused of. One is reminded of Orwell's concern in 'The Freedom of the Press' regarding

'the present slide towards Fascist ways of thought' and his warning that 'if you encourage totalitarian methods, the time may come when they will be used against you instead of for you. Make a habit of imprisoning Fascists without trial, and perhaps the process won't stop at Fascists' (Orwell 1945b).

This is explored more fully in *The Ministry of Fear*, where the protagonist spends much of the novel on the run from the police after being persuaded by the master spy Willi Hilfe that they want to arrest him for the killing of Cost. That the police, represented at the end of the novel by the master sleuth Prentice, are not in fact seeking to arrest Rowe should be reassuring, except that Greene collapses divisions between spy and sleuth by underlining that both are equally capable of resorting to violence and illegality to promote their cause. It is for this reason that I find it difficult to agree with Sara Wasson, who argues that

> Greene's *Ministry of Fear* displays the Gothic mode with a conservative agenda. While Kavan uses the Gothic to depict threats to the individual in the form of state and psychiatric cruelties, Greene deploys Gothic tropes to depict threats to the state from fifth columnists. As such it illustrates that the Gothic mode is not invariably subversive. (Wasson 2010: 74)

The problem with Wasson's analysis is that in linking British xenophobia during the Second World War and the incarceration of enemy aliens with the fact that in Greene's novel the villain plotting to bring Britain down from within is an Austrian refugee, she glosses over the fact that his sister Anna, the only other enemy alien in the novel, plays a crucial role in preventing her brother from succeeding. More important, though, is the fact that in the character of Prentice, who as the leader of those trying to prevent Hilfe from smuggling secrets out of the country would presumably be the hero of a truly 'conservative' novel, Greene does in fact create a genuine threat to the individual by representatives of the state. As Brian Diemert argues, Prentice is revealed to be 'a tyrant whose power stems from his capacity to punish rather than the rule of law' (Diemert 1996: 171). He threatens Rowe and Davis with jail despite neither having broken any law, saying, 'Nobody's got a right to life these days' (168), while later he threatens Mrs Bellairs with hanging, and responds to her retort that '[t]hey don't hang women' by saying, 'We may hang more people ma'am […] than the papers tell you about' (176). As Diemert argues,

> [t]he suggestion that women are also hanged and that hanging occurs more often than one might realize – two things which imply the use of measures outside the law's prescriptions – seemingly confirm Hilfe's judgment that there is no difference between the two societies he and Prentice serve. (Diemert 1996: 171)

There thus seems some truth in Greene's assertion that in the modern world the simplicities of the past have been lost: 'we cannot recognise the villain and we suspect the hero' (Greene 1943: 89). This is not just a result of the treacherous deceits of a villain who hides his villainy, however, but also of the fact that hero and villain are difficult to tell apart, particularly in their single-mindedness and ruthlessness. Thus Deer states that 'Greene's novel suggests that the British secret state may also be haunted by a dehumanizing authoritarianism [… Is] the British secret state […] so different from the Nazi "Ministry of Fear"?' he wonders (Deer 2009: 166). Diemert, similarly, notes that Prentice 'participates in a legally sanctioned brand of authoritarianism that […] sharply undercuts distinctions between England, representative of an ideological good, and Nazi Germany, representative of an ideological evil' (Diemert 1996: 170). What Diemert doesn't do, however – it is not within the remit of his study – is to place Greene's characterisation of Prentice within the context of contemporary concerns regarding authoritarianism,[36] nor note the number of other fictions of the time that similarly highlight, as Rau says of Bowen's *The Heat of the Day*, 'the proximity between wartime England and fascist Germany' (Rau 2009: 189). To give just one example, there is the fleeting episode in Green's *Caught*, when '[t]wo police brought past a looter, most of his clothes torn off, heels dragging, drooling blood at the mouth, out on his feet from the bashing he had been given' (96).

Greene presents the main authority figure in *The Power and the Glory* (1940) in a similarly ambiguous way. Here, of course, one would expect the Catholic Greene to present

[36] These are concerns that Greene may well have been aware of given the experience of his cousin: Brennan believes that '[t]he dark sense of conspiracy pervading this entertainment is indebted to both Greene's own espionage work for MI6 and the traumatic experience of his cousin, Ben Greene, who was briefly imprisoned as a fifth columnist […] the straightjacketing of Major Stone in the novel probably reflects Ben's harsh treatment while detained' (Brennan 2010: 73).

the fascist lieutenant whose job is to hunt down for execution any remaining priests in an unnamed Mexican state in the 1920s as the 'representative of an ideological evil' and the priest he is hunting as 'representative of an ideological good', so it is unsurprising, unlike perhaps with Prentice, to find the lieutenant resorting to violence and brutality while ignoring the legal framework within which he should be operating. What perhaps is surprising, however, and goes some way to again undermining any simple set of them-and-us, good-and-evil binary opposites, is the sympathy with which the lieutenant is presented and the fact that, like the Air Vice Marshall in *The Aerodrome*, he is depicted as motivated by a passionate desire to improve the lot of others:

> [i]t was for these he was fighting. He would eliminate from their childhood everything that had made him miserable, all that was poor, superstitious and corrupt. They deserved nothing less than the truth – a vacant universe and a cooling world, the right to be happy in any way they chose. He was quite prepared to make a massacre for their sakes. (Greene 1940: 54)

The lieutenant's altruistic fervour, which aligns him with D. in *The Confidential Agent*, who is 'fighting for' the poor and under-privileged (Greene 1939: 198), contrasts with the priest's altogether more selfish motivations in joining the priesthood – to lift himself out of poverty without really considering the suffering of others. Equally, in a world of duplicity and dishonesty the lieutenant is admirably honest and truthful. It is, rather, his fanaticism, his determination to resort to any means, even 'to make a massacre', to bring about the changes in society he believes so passionately in, that makes the lieutenant the villain of the piece. Just as Forster wrote that '[a]ll is lost if the totalitarians destroy us. But all is equally lost if we have nothing left to lose', so Greene seems to be warning that the ends do not always justify the means, and in fact certain means might make certain ends impossible to achieve.

At least the authority figures Prentice and the lieutenant are acting in what each believes to be the best interests of their country. In Bowen's *The Heat of the Day*, however, Harrison, whose job it is, like Prentice, to hunt down spies working for the Germans, chooses to use for his own gain his knowledge that Stella's partner Robert Kelway is one such spy. 'I am, for instance, holding quite a bit of stuff on him that I haven't turned in yet. It ought to

go in – I can't quite make my mind up. Perhaps you could help me to?' (Bowen 1948: 36) Harrison tells Stella early in the novel. Although he is a little vague here about precisely what he wants, when he asks her if she has understood his intentions, Stella states, 'Perfectly. I'm to form a disagreeable association in order that a man be left free to go on selling his country' (36). Harrison feels this is 'putting it a bit crudely' (36), but Stella's blunt summary may seem an accurate one to the reader. Although Harrison has little in common with either Prentice or the lieutenant – neither of whom are driven by personal gain – Bowen is, like Greene, presenting an authority figure willing to, as he puts it, 'use my judgment. I *could* use my judgment a bit more' (35-6), rather than make decisions based on the rules and regulations set down to guide the actions of figures in authority like himself. As a result, Bowen creates a great deal of ambiguity as to which of the two Roberts – Stella's partner, Robert Kelway, the spy working to bring down Britain from within, and Robert Harrison, the counter-espionage agent whose job it is to ensure fifth columnists like Kelway are prevented from achieving their aims – we should sympathise with more. Although at the end of the novel '[i]t seemed to [Stella] that it was Robert that had been the Harrison' (275), meaning presumably that she had thought throughout Harrison to be the unsound Robert and only now realises the reverse to be true, many readers will feel the opposite, that it should be the master spy who is the enemy, but it turns out to be the master sleuth.

While Greene and Bowen both suggest through their presentation of authority figures the possibility that Britain was moving towards becoming an authoritarian state, in his 1939 novel *Coming Up for Air* – a novel that Ellis has described as 'centrally concerned with fears of totalitarianism taking root in England' (Ellis 2014: 88) – George Orwell offers a prophecy of the future in which Britain has become just that. Convinced as he is that war is coming, the narrator-protagonist George Bowling admits that what really terrifies him is what will come after:

> [b]ut who's afraid of war? That's to say, who's afraid of the bombs and the machine-guns? 'You are,' you say. Yes, I am, and so's anybody who's ever seen them. But it isn't the war that matters, it's the after-war. The world we're going down into, the kind of hate-world, slogan-world. The coloured shirts, the barbed wire, the rubber truncheons. The secret cells where the electric light burns night and day, and the detectives watching you while you sleep. (Orwell 1939: 157)

The interesting thing about this is that although Bowling's rhetorical question later on in the novel – 'what'll happen to chaps like me when we get Fascism in England?' (158) – connotes his belief that fascism is undoubtedly coming, at no point does he suggest that Germany will win the coming war. That is not to say, of course, that he believes Germany won't win the war, but it is left uncertain whether Bowling believes fascism will be imposed from abroad or within. What might be seen as suggesting the latter to be more likely is the fact Bowling seems to be pursued by bombers throughout the novel, from the 'bombing plane flying low overhead [that] seemed to be keeping pace with the train' (16) at the beginning of the novel to the 'fleet of black bombing planes [that] came over the hill and zoomed across the town' (189) when he returns to Lower Binfield in the last third.[37] Indeed, it is while Bowling is in Lower Binfield that war appears to have begun when one such plane drops a bomb on the town, killing three people. This is no German bomber, however: it has come from 'the big military aerodrome near Walton – that accounted for the bombing planes I kept seeing' (206). This vision of war to come is entirely home-grown, in other words, which leaves open the possibility that Bowling's vision of a fascist 'after-war' ('The barbed wire! The slogans! The enormous faces! The cork-lined cellars where the executioner plugs you from behind!' (174)) is home-grown too. The fact that following the dropping of the bomb we learn of no apology being issued but rather that 'the Air Ministry sent a chap to inspect the damage, and issued a report saying that the effects of the bomb were "disappointing"' (236) only serves to reinforce this suspicion.[38]

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[37] Ellis suggests that '[Bowling's efforts to "escape" are] a kind of comic anticipation of Winston Smith's […] there is no escape from the surveillance apparatus of modernity […] the elements of totalitarianism are already in place in the England of the 1920s and 1930s. This situation may be intensified by the approaching war, but again this is seen as the fruition of developments from the previous one' (Ellis 2014: 153). This offers another way in which *Coming Up for Air* suggests totalitarianism was as likely to be imposed from within as without.

[38] Ellis has usefully linked *Coming Up for Air* with the concerns of other, disparate, writers such as Christopher Isherwood (in *Down There on a Visit*, '[a]s it is for Orwell's George Bowling, it is not so much 'being bombed or even … a Nazi invasion' that the narrator dreads so much as "*English* authority", "the state of being *under orders*"' (Ellis 2014: 8)) and T. S. Eliot (who stated in *The Idea of a Christian Society* that 'in our loathing of totalitarianism … there is infused a good deal of admiration for its efficiency' (cited in Ellis 2014: 27) and

Imagining the coming war, Bowling says,

> I can hear the air-raid sirens blowing and the loudspeakers bellowing that our glorious troops have taken a hundred thousand prisoners. I see a top-floor-back in Birmingham and a child of five howling and howling for a bit of bread […]' (26).

Aside from the preciseness of Bowling's vision, what is striking here is that when imagining the horrors of war to come, Bowling thinks of the hunger faced by children and the threat of aerial bombardment, but also of 'the loudspeakers bellowing that our glorious troops have taken a hundred thousand prisoners'. Why would such a victory, involving the taking of so many prisoners, be a bad thing? The implication, of course, is that what Bowling is foreseeing is the government's use of propaganda, the reporting of victories that are hugely exaggerated or, worse, haven't happened at all. This fear of the government taking full control of the media and of the information it chooses to have conveyed to the population at large is another example of how, in Forster's words, the government might have to embrace totalitarianism in order to defeat totalitarian states abroad.

In fact, it seems clear that Neville Chamberlain's government had asserted tight control over the press long before war became a reality. As Stuart Hylton states:

> [o]ne of the freedoms the British were no doubt fighting to defend was an independent press. Britons looked with a mixture of pity and contempt at Dr Goebbels' efforts to tell the German people what to think. Had they but known it, the government of Neville Chamberlain that led Britain through appeasement into the war exercised a degree of control over the press that modern spin doctors could only dream about. (Hylton 2010: 163)

Hylton provides a number of examples of the Chamberlain administration's efforts to control information, among which two seem exemplary: the tapping of phones of Anthony Eden and his fellow anti-appeasers from within Chamberlain's own party, and the

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suggested that '[l]iberalism … is something … which leads … to modern totalitarianism' (cited in Ellis 2014: 36)).

withdrawal of a BBC talk by Harold Nicolson on the Czechoslovakia crisis on the insistence of the Foreign Secretary: 'the sound engineer stood ready to fade Nicolson out, should he depart from the content of his innocuous alternative script' (166). Hylton goes on to describe the increased control of the media following the outbreak of war and the replacement of Chamberlain with Churchill as prime minister: again, one example will suffice – that of the BBC's not playing the Russian national anthem following Russia's entering the war against Germany as part of its radio programme in which it played all the national anthems of Britain's allies, and in the end its cancelling the programme rather than do so, as a result of Ministry of Information pressure after Churchill wrote to the Ministry asking that it 'consider what action is required to counter the present tendency of the British people to forget the dangers of communism in their enthusiasm over the resistance of Russia' (177).

It is precisely this kind of media control that Orwell was warning against in *Coming Up for Air* and his late-war satire *Animal Farm* (1945), where the pigs re-write 'The Seven Commandments' on the end wall of the big barn, 'All animals are equal' (14) being replaced with 'All animals are equal but some are more equal than others' (69), and 'Four legs good, two legs bad' (34) with 'Four legs good, two legs *better*' (69). Orwell suggests the power of propaganda, for as the principles of the animals' revolution are gradually corrupted and the pigs set themselves up as new tyrants to replace the old, the pigs' rewriting of history has the desired effect of dampening down opposition to the changes they bring in. Although obviously a fable that allegorises the events of the Russian Revolution and after, Orwell makes it clear from the beginning that *Animal Farm* is set in England, and so the novella seems to express home-grown anxieties. Burdekin offers the same explanation of how a totalitarian regime could exist not just for the years of Animal Farm but hundreds of years without ever being seriously threatened from internal dissidence, coming up in *Swastika Night* with what she calls 'psychic subjection' (Burdekin 1937: 15). Just as Bowling's nightmare vision of the future includes 'loudspeakers telling you what to think' (Orwell 1939: 166), so in *Swastika Night* the controlling regime has gone to extraordinary lengths to achieve precisely that, enforcing the regular attendance of church services where knights repeat the catechisms of Hitlerian faith, rewriting history and scripture in its entirety, and destroying all books so as to ensure there is no competing narrative, something which of

course anticipates the work of Winston Smith in the Ministry of Truth in Orwell's later *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

4. The Fascist in the Mirror

What is similar about Bowling's mistaking the British plane above Lower Binfield at the end of *Coming Up for Air* for a German one and the interchangeability of the two Roberts in *The Heat of the Day*, aside from the similar point being made regarding Britain's 'sliding', to use Orwell's word, towards a fascist authoritarianism, is that in both cases it is difficult to tell who is the enemy and who the friend. Woolf suggests a similar proximity between the English and German airmen overhead in 'Thoughts on Peace in an Air-raid'; Warner implies a similar interchangeability between Roy and the Flight Lieutenant in *The Aerodrome* through the structuring of the novel and the way each moves to take up the other's opposing position during its course; Greene conveys a similar sense of similitude through having Hilfe challenge Rowe's confidence at the end of *The Ministry of Fear* that '[w]e don't beat up prisoners here' by asking, 'Do you think you are so different from us?' (Greene 1943: 215). Given that it *is* a British plane above Lower Binfield, but that doesn't stop the town from being bombed, while although Harrison's claim to be a counter-spy turns out to be true, that doesn't stop him from seeking to betray his country for personal gain, one wonders whether it makes any difference that spies and counter-spies, German planes and British planes are so difficult to distinguish from each other. Rau's comment that *The Heat of the Day* 'undermines any easy them-and-us dichotomy [making …] distinctions between "the Germans" and "the British" harder to maintain' (205) thus seems equally applicable to any number of other novels of the time.[39] The collapsing of such distinctions is perhaps most

[39] Rau adds that imperialism made such a dichotomy even more difficult to maintain, arguing that '[o]utside official propaganda […] in the 1940s imperial nostalgia gave way to imperialist critique, which made it even harder to be clear about who and what the actual enemy was' (Rau 2009: 187). Rau proposes Woolf as an example: 'Woolf saw the beginnings of totalitarianism as firmly rooted in the complacency of superiority upon which the Empire rested […] Continental fascism was merely an aggravation, an evolutionary higher stage of the same evil' (Rau 2009: 198). Marina Mackay, similarly, has argued that 'late modernist writers' attitudes

memorably suggested, however, at the end of du Maurier's *Rebecca*, when the narrator, the second Mrs de Winter, is asleep in the car and dreams that she has become her enemy Rebecca, the first Mrs de Winter:

> I got up and went to the looking-glass. A face stared at me that was not my own. It was very pale, very lovely, framed in a cloud of dark hair. The eyes narrowed and smiled. The lips parted. The face in the glass stared back at me and laughed. (du Maurier 1938: 426).

This is a quotation I will revisit, but it is worth considering here as a metaphor for one important way in which the 'enemy within' motif plays out in literature of the time – namely, that the German other is in a number of ways and for a number of writers figured as a mirror image of the British self.

towards Englishness were often conflicted […] not least because they were mindful of some of the similarities between the British and the Nazi empires' (Mackay 2007: 7).

Three – Division and Distrust in Wartime Britain

1. Visions of Civil War

> He wasn't certain that he wasn't watched at this moment […] And the watcher – was he watched? He was haunted for a moment by the vision of an endless distrust [...] it would be just like the people at home to send him on a confidential mission and set other people whom they didn't trust with a knowledge of his object to watch him. Distrust in civil war went to fantastic lengths. (Greene 1939: 5, 50)

> [He] was sorry that he had spoken. There were so many spies about, in the pay both of the Royalists and the parliamentary grandees. He was sure that the friendly farrier wasn't a spy; but one had to be careful. Even if the man wasn't a spy himself, he might be unwary enough to say something which would reach a spy's ears. (Lindsay 1938: 7)

Both of the extracts above come from texts published shortly before war broke out; both are set against the background of civil war. In the first, Greene's *The Confidential Agent*, D. has been sent to England to represent his side in an unnamed civil war, presumably, as suggested in chapter 1, the Spanish Civil War of 1936-9, in negotiations to import coal vital to the war effort. As he is reminded by L., however, the confidential agent representing the other side in the war, '[t]hey'll never trust you – you are a bourgeois – I don't suppose they even trust you now. And you don't trust them' (Greene 1939: 28). As the novel moves forward it becomes clear that L. is entirely right in what he says, and also that D. is correct in supposing that not only do they not trust him, they don't trust those they have instructed to watch him either. Indeed, D.'s wondering whether the watchers might themselves be being watched does not seem out of place, although we never learn whether this is or is not the case. As we saw in chapter 1, wars in general are likely to generate such anxieties regarding potential traitors within one's own ranks, but as D. states, distrust in civil war is liable to go to 'fantastic lengths', something also suggested by the second quotation, from Jack Lindsay's 1938 novel *1649: A Novel of a Year*, which is set during the English Civil War of three hundred years earlier. The novel opens with the execution of Charles I in January

1649 and conveys from the first a strong sense of the distrust and paranoia that a country at war with itself must necessarily experience. Civil wars are also more likely to divide friends and families, and we see this in *The Confidential Agent* when D. is conversing with L. and thinks that 'if there had not been a war on he might have been friends with this man' (29). Conversely, it is the manageress of the hotel and the language teacher named K., both of whom are meant to be on D.'s side, who commit the one act of real brutality in the novel in murdering Else Crole. Similarly, when later he finds himself in a deprived, poverty-stricken Midlands mining town where the mines have closed and, looking at the hopeless unemployed there, thinks that they 'were the people he was fighting for', we are told that 'he had a frightening sense now that they were his enemies' (198). Just as the war in D.'s homeland forces him to associate with people he neither likes nor trusts and make an enemy of a man with whom he might have been friends if the situation were different, so *1649: A Novel of a Year* reminds the reader of the way civil wars can divide friend from friend and father from son.

These divisions are strongly conveyed in another Civil War-set novel, du Maurier's *The King's General*, in which the protagonist Honor Harris describes how the prospect of civil war meant '[f]riends who had supped with me the week before became of a sudden suspect, and long-forgotten scandals were brought forth to blacken their names, merely because of the present opposition of their views' (du Maurier 1946: 59) – as a result, 'an unpleasing spirit of distrust walk[ed] abroad […] in a few months we had changed from neighbours into wolves at one another's throats' (58-9). 'Both victor and loser pay the penalty in civil war', Honor comments later in the novel (181) and this is borne out by her description of how '[c]ruelty begat cruelty, betrayal gave birth to treachery' (209):

> [t]he aftermath of war was not a pleasant sight to the beholder. The country was laid waste, for one thing and that was the fault of the enemy. The corn was ruined, the orchards devastated, the houses smoking. And in return for this the Cornish people had taken toll upon the rebel prisoners. There were many of them still lying in the ditches, with the dust and flies upon them […] We had, each one of us, because of the civil war, streaked back two centuries in time, and were become like those half savages of the fourteen hundreds who, during the Wars of the Roses, slit each other's throats without compunction. (192)

While *1649* and *The King's General* are both set during the English Civil War, a clutch of other texts written immediately prior to or during World War II were set against the background of some other civil war, whether real, such as the Jacobite Uprising of 1745 in Naomi Mitchison's *The Bull Calves* (1947), the French Wars of Religion of the sixteenth century in Hamilton's *The Duke in Darkness* (1942), or the aftermath of the civil war in Mexico in Greene's *The Power and the Glory*, or fictitious, such as T. H. White's Arthurian fantasy sequence *The Once and Future King*, which although not published until 1958 was mostly written in the 1930s and early 1940s and which, in R. W. Maslan's words, reconfigures 'the global conflict as a civil war in his heart's homeland, medieval Britain' (Maslan 2012: 521-22). Similarly, J. R. R. Tolkien's seminal work of fantasy *The Lord of the Rings* was not published until the 1950s but begun in the late 1930s, mostly written during World War II, and completed by 1949. The threat posed by the forces of Mordor to the East seems an obvious metaphor for the threat posed by Nazi Germany, but interestingly the 'last stroke' (Tolkien 1955: 352) of the war in fact takes place some months and around a hundred pages after the hobbit Frodo has managed to bring the war proper to an end by destroying the ring of power in the volcano where it was forged – in the Shire, the homeland of the hobbits that seems clearly to represent England. When Frodo and his companions finally return to the Shire, they find it transformed into a totalitarian state where civil liberties have been curtailed and new laws are enforced by a quasi-police force of ruffians from beyond the Shire's borders and collaborators from within backed up by a network of spies that report on the words and actions of any potential enemy to the new state. Although by the time Frodo returns the 'real Chief' (355) turns out to be the deposed wizard Saruman and his most trusted enforcers men from beyond the Shire, Saruman arrived only 'last Harvest' (355) and other men 'last winter' (354); the new state was originally set up by hobbits from within led by Lotho Sackville-Baggins. That none of the returning hobbits seems surprised by the identities of the hobbit leaders of the quasi-fascist state rather goes against Frodo's claim that he 'never expected' anything like this and Pippin's to be 'staggered' (346), and suggests that the potential for some hobbits to betray their own kind is recognised. It is only now, 'when confronted by Saruman on his [Frodo's] doorstep', Maslen suggests, that the invisibility conferred by the ring of power whose destruction was Frodo's mission 'stands exposed as (in part) a metaphor for the secret workings of

complicity that can transform even the neighbourly Shire […] into productive ground for totalitarianism' (Maslen 2012: 522).

One explanation for the choice of civil war settings by a number of writers of the time was the sense that the coming war in Europe represented a kind of Continent-wide civil war. Although *The Lord of the Rings*, for example, ends with conflict in the Shire, the focus of the novel is very much the threat posed to the whole of Middle Earth, which I take to stand for Europe, while Steve Ellis argues that Eliot's *Four Quartets*, first published in its entirety in 1943, is best understood in the context of his 'understanding of **"**The Unity of European Culture**"**' (Ellis 2009: 127), as expounded in essays such as 'What is a Classic?', in which, Ellis argues, Eliot 'reminds a war-torn Europe of its common cultural inheritances, and *Four Quartets* nourishes itself in that **"**blood-stream**"**', and *Notes Towards the Definition of a Culture,* where Eliot 'resumes the argument […] on the importance of Europe's unifying heritage' (127). The view that the forthcoming war would be a European civil war of sorts can be found in Eric Ambler's 1939 thriller *The Mask of Dimitrios*, in which Piette argues that Ambler 'succeeded in translating the conservative [thriller] genre into a left-wing mode of cultural history, an antifascist analytic tool' (Piette 2016: 179). That Dimitrios's story is in some way the story of conflict and division within Europe is suggested by Latimer's thoughts at the moment he sees what he believes to be Dimitrios's body early in the novel, which immediately turn to the trials and tribulations of Europe during the period of Dimitrios's criminal career:

> Latimer stared at the corpse. So this was Dimitrios. […] Europe in labour had through its pain seen for an instant a new glory, and then had collapsed to welter again in the agonies of war and fear […] Hope had come and gone, a fugitive in the scented bosom of illusion. Men had learned to sniff the heady dreamstuff of the soul and wait impassively while the lathes turned the guns for their destruction. (Ambler 1939: 19)

Written and set in 1938, the novel shows a clear sense that war is pending – but what is made clear is that it is 'Europe', rather than any individual nation, that has 'collapsed to welter again in the agonies of war and fear' and Europeans that now 'wait impassively while the lathes turned the guns for their destruction'. Equally, while Dimitrios's criminal career

begins in the aftermath of one European war and ends on the cusp of a second, so the novel begins with Latimer's viewing what is thought to be the corpse of Dimitrios and ends with his encountering the real Dimitrios, risen from the dead as it must seem, only to watch him again die violently.

The sense of the coming war being a pan-European catastrophe is implied too through Ambler's choice of (civil) conflicts in which Dimitrios has been involved. The first takes place in Smyrna, a city where Greeks, Turks and Armenians had lived for centuries in relative peace before it was ceded from the Ottoman Empire to Greece in the 1920 Treaty of Sevres and then invaded by Turkey in 1922. Ambler sets Dimitrios's fictional murder of Sholem the Jew against the background of the Turkish invasion and takes extended time out from the fictional events of the novel to chart the real-life atrocities (Greek against Turk, Turk against Greek, and Turk against Armenian) that took place:

> [u]nable to destroy the Turkish army, the Greeks turned with frantic savagery to the business of destroying the Turkish population in the path of their flight. [Turkish soldiers …] took their revenge on the Greeks they were able to overtake [...] Their lust for infidel blood still unsatisfied, the Turks swept on. On the ninth of September, they occupied Smyrna […] The holocaust began […] Smyrna was changed from a city into a charnel-house […] over one hundred and twenty thousand persons had perished. (22-3)

That Ambler's description of these events is so much longer than that quoted here is perhaps surprising as in narrative terms it seems unnecessary – it adds little to either the development of character or plot – but coming only three pages after the description above of Europe in late 1938 standing on the brink of conflict, 'collapsing to welter again in the agonies of war and fear', this passage seems particularly resonant and, to readers after World War II, especially in the choice of word 'holocaust', prophetic.

The following year sees Dimitrios involved in an assassination attempt on then Bulgarian Prime Minister Alexander Stambolisky organised by fellow Bulgarians. 'Stambulisky', as Ambler spells his name, was the leader of the Bulgarian Peasant Agrarian Party, a liberal party committed to closer ties with other Slavic countries, which caused it to come into conflict with Macedonian autonomists who carried out a number of terrorist

attacks and assassination attempts intended to create instability and, through their efforts to suggest Serbs were behind the attacks on Bulgarians and vice versa, tension between Bulgaria and Yugoslavia. As with the previous conflict in Smyrna, ethnic tensions among peoples who had lived together for centuries were at the heart of the conflict, but as Marukakis explains to Latimer, funding for the Macedonian Autonomists actually came from elsewhere and their activities were 'merely the smoke-screen behind which the reactionary parties had been steadily making their preparations for an offensive' (55). Had the Agrarian Party perceived that the real enemy was not the Serbs or even Macedonians but actually fellow Bulgarians, Marukakis states, they could have prevented the military coup that led to the imprisonment of all of Stambulisky's ministers and later his own capture, torture and execution, but they 'played politics among themselves' (54) and the party 'was immobilized, rendered powerless by its own internal conflicts' (53). Here we have civil wars within civil wars – the Agrarian Party at war with itself and so unable to perceive the threat from fellow Bulgarians, and beyond that a Balkans-wide civil war between Serbs, Bulgarians and Macedonians.

After this comes a whistle-stop tour of other, similar conflicts, including Dimitrios's involvement in two other assassination attempts – one in Turkey to kill Kemal Ataturk, organised by fellow Turks unhappy with his leadership, the second back in Yugoslavia, again organised from within the country. Dimitrios's later involvement in espionage, human-trafficking and drug-smuggling serves to widen his activities to encompass the whole of Continental Europe (for example, he traffics women from Poland and other Eastern European countries to France, equipping them with false passports produced in Belgium, Switzerland and Holland with the help of the Dane Peterson) and also to move them westward until, through Latimer's involvement, they finally spread to include Britain in 1938. That this parallels the broader, Continental trajectory towards another Europe-wide conflict is reinforced by Latimer's apparent reasons for spending so much time and money traversing Europe himself to find out more about Dimitrios. In conversation with Marukakis, Latimer explains that he wants to account for Dimitrios 'not as an isolate, a phenomenon, but as a unit in a disintegrating social system', to which Marukakis replies, 'You hope *au fond* that by rationalizing Dimitrios, by explaining him, you will also explain that

disintegrating social system you spoke about' (57). Having finally reached the end of his journey, and considering what he now knows about Dimitrios, Latimer decides that

> Dimitrios was not evil. He was logical and consistent; as logical and consistent in the European jungle as the poison gas called Lewisite and the shattered bodies of children killed in the bombardment of an open town. The logic of Michelangelo's *David*, Beethoven's quartets and Einstein's physics had been replaced by that of the *Stock Exchange Year Book* and Hitler's *Mein Kampf*. (187)

On the eve of World War II, in other words, Latimer considers the state of Europe and the character of Dimitrios to be irretrievably intertwined.

While Ambler was not alone in seeing the coming war as a European civil war, it seems that writers of the time tend to have used civil war settings more to explore contemporary anxieties regarding divisions within Britain than Europe. To give one example, *Hangover Square* is a novel that dramatises the ravages of civil war through Hamilton's presentation of his schizophrenic protagonist, George Harvey Bone, whose dual personalities war against each other throughout the novel. I discuss George's schizophrenia at some length in chapter 5 but think it worth considering here how his split character is used by Hamilton to represent a Britain divided in the months before the outbreak of war, his dual personality symbolic of Britain's uncertainty regarding how to deal with Nazi Germany in the final months of peace, whether to continue a policy of appeasement or to stand up to Germany militarily. While the 'real' George is weak-willed in the face of his ill-treatment at the hands of the Nazi-sympathizing Netta and Peter, who in this reading of the novel can be seen as representative of Nazi Germany, in his 'dead' moods he plots their murders, something that he does in fact carry out at the exact moment that Britain enters into a state of war with Germany. If George's divided response to the aggression of Netta and 'the blond Fascist' Peter (Hamilton 1941: 273) can be seen as representative of Britain's divided response to the aggression of Nazi Germany in Europe, then this seems quite carefully mapped out in the novel so that events correspond to actual historical events. Thus George comes to realise the true nature of Netta and Peter's treachery – their sexual relationship that Netta has concealed in order to suggest to George the possibility of his entering into a relationship with her – in March 1939, the month that Britain arguably

recognised the true nature of Hitler's treachery as Germany occupied the Czech regions of Bohemia and Moravia. His murder of Netta and Peter on the morning of 3 September 1939 is even more precise – indeed, Chamberlain's words at the failure of appeasement, '*You can imagine what a bitter blow this is to me*' (274), come at precisely the moment that George delivers the fatal blow to Peter. It is interesting, thinking through this reading to its logical conclusion, to note that the normal George is extremely worried by his dead moods, not least because once he emerges from them he has no recollection of what he has said and done and thought: 'he ought to do something about it' (25), he thinks, an echo of the repeated phrase of his dead moods that 'there was something to be done' (84), but while for his second self what needs to be done is Netta and Peter need to be killed, perhaps representing the need to go to war with Germany, what needs to be destroyed for the normal George is his second self, suggesting that for the appeasers in 1938-9 the real enemy was not Hitler and German Nazism but opponents of Chamberlain's appeasement policy.

There is an alternative way of reading the allegorical meaning of the novel, however, namely that George could be seen as standing for those in Britain who had felt for some time that Britain needed to turn away from appeasing Germany, even if that meant going to war, while Netta and Peter and their group stand for those who supported Chamberlain and his appeasement policy. This might better explain why Chamberlain's words '*what a bitter blow this is to me*' come at the exact moment George delivers the fatal blow to Peter. Even in his normal self, the self that is continually seeking to appease Netta and is used and duped by her, he 'just couldn't stand Munich. Somewhere at the back of his mind it was weighing on him: it had become part of his general feeling of disgrace, of the shame in which he in particular, and the world generally, was steeped' (58). In contrast, Netta's response to Munich is one of 'glorious joy […] when, at one stroke, war was averted and the thing which she was supposed to dislike and laugh at, but to which she was so drawn in reality, was allowed to proceed with renewed power upon its way' (129). Equally, while George feels 'there is something indecent about […] Adolf, and Musso and Neville all grinning together' (58), he 'knew [Netta and her group] all loved Chamberlain and fascism and Hitler' (154) – the syntax, with Chamberlain and Hitler joined by the linking keyword of fascism, connotes the view of Chamberlain's most vehement opponents that his appeasement policy was best seen not as passive weakness in the face of the enemy abroad but active collusion with

fascism. Such a reading suggests further division within Britain, however, for if George represents those Britons opposed to appeasement, his dual personality suggests they were themselves divided between those who, like George in his normal self, felt disquiet at Munich but were silent on the subject, and those like the George of his dead moods formed an altogether more proactive group determined to put an end to the appeasement policy. What complicates things further, suggesting even more subtle fracturings across British society, is the fact that in both his selves George vacillates. In his normal moods, for example, he isn't entirely passive, and there are moments when he is decisive and stands up to Netta, as well as moments when he forcibly reminds himself that he must not be fooled by her again: '[n]o. Stop that. Not that again. He knew her now for what she was' (183). His feelings for Netta, we learn early in the novel, are equally divided, for although he loves her, he 'hated Netta too – he had known that for a long time. He hated Netta, perhaps, most of all' (29). In his dead moods, meanwhile, although George knows 'something had to be done', he regularly comes up with reasons for putting this off, including persuading himself that he cannot kill Netta while it is winter. '[W]as all this shilly-shallying on his part?' (19) he sometimes wonders to himself, caught as he is between the apparent need to do what has to be done and his tendency to inactiveness, while at other times he has to take himself in hand: 'No! – there he was shilly-shallying again – trying to put it off […] vacillating, delaying' (169, 182). If George Bone does stand for Great Britain, as his initials might confirm, then he stands for a Britain deeply divided and conflicted – a Britain, metaphorically at least, at war with itself.

2. Political and Class Divisions

While I have argued that what Hamilton seems to be offering in his creation of a schizophrenic protagonist in *Hangover Square* is a vision of a Britain divided regarding how to respond to German aggression, Stuart Hylton has argued that Britain was, on the eve of war, a nation divided by other equally fundamental issues:

> Britain entered the war a deeply divided nation. The depression of the 1930s had seen hunger marches and other demonstrations on the streets of London […] The idea that party political differences were shelved for the duration of the war is some way from the truth. Entrenched political divisions were maintained throughout the conflict, at times threatening the wartime coalition and, at one point, actually bringing down the Conservative government that had led the nation into war. Part of the problem lay in the personalities of the wartime prime ministers. Taking Neville Chamberlain first, there can rarely have been a prime minister less capable of uniting the parliamentary parties against a common enemy. Chamberlain had utter contempt for socialism and took little trouble to hide it. As Attlee put it: 'He always treated us like dirt.' (Hylton 2010: 63)

Indeed, it was widely felt that it was, if not contempt for, then fear of socialism that had led Chamberlain's government to make 'any concessions […] rather than run the risk of war against Hitler, since such a war might result in social revolution'.[40] So wrote Elwyn Jones in June 1939, a political commentator and later Labour MP and Lord Chancellor, in his provocatively titled *The Attack from Within* (1939: 13). While '[a]s it appeared from the Right, "appeasement" avoided alienating Germany as a potential ally against the greater menace of communist influence in the West' (Morgan and Evans 1993: 19), from the perspective of Jones and others, such a policy meant that 'class interests ha[d] opened the door to the aggressor' (12):

> [t]he present attempt to create a bloc of states prepared to resist aggression is being sabotaged by men in high places who are so obsessed by fear of Bolshevism that they are prepared to sacrifice national safety by conniving at the advance of their country's enemies rather than run the risk of co-operating with the forces of peace which in some cases – particularly the U.S.S.R. – stand politically on the Left. So strong is their influence that Ribbentrop, who prides himself on his numerous

[40] A Cabinet Office report of 1936 regarding the number of soldiers based in London that would be needed in the event of war seems to support Jones' belief: as Mellor notes, 'they were required not to defeat an invader but to deal with the social collapse, and especially the potential for revolutionary insurrection it was feared would accompany sustained bombing' (Mellor 2011: 37).

> friends 'within the gate' in London, is still persuading Hitler that the British 'Fifth Column' is powerful enough even today to cause a new Munich […] In some cases the reactionaries have actually been instrumental in collaborating with the aggressor. (Jones 1939: 15)

Chamberlain's opponents did not need to look far to identify who Ribbentrop's friends 'within the gate' might be. Speaking at the 1939 Labour Party Conference, then leader of the Transport and General Workers' Union, Ernest Bevin, stated categorically that '[b]ehind Chamberlain are the bankers: they are the principal supporters of appeasement for Germany' (cited in Hylton 2010: 64). Interestingly, in *The Mask of Dimitrios*, which was written immediately after the Munich agreement, it turns out that it is a bank which is behind two different assassination attempts, in Bulgaria and Turkey, involving Dimitrios. The character Marukakis's comment that '[i]nternational big business has made revolutions before now to safeguard its interests' (Ambler 1939: 64) seems highly topical.

Bevin was far from alone in seeing Chamberlain's appeasement policy as placing the interests of a small group of moneyed businessmen above those of 'ordinary Britons' and the country as a whole.[41] Indeed, such a view was shared by some within Chamberlain's own party. Writing some three years earlier, the Conservative MP and diarist Harold Nicolson had made virtually the same point as Jones and Bevin in a diary entry of June 1936:

> [w]e have lost our will-power, since our will-power is divided. People of the governing classes think only of their fortunes, which means hatred of the Reds. This creates a perfectly artificial but at present secret bond between ourselves and Hitler. Our class interests, on both sides, cut across our national interests. (Nicolson 2005: 127)

[41] Steve Ellis offers several examples: he cites, for example, Wells' 'A Forecast of 1939' in which he 'suggest[ed] Chamberlain's complicity with the fascist regime in putting commercial interests before "the national honour"', something Ellis describes as a 'widespread interpretation of Chamberlain's policy'; he also cites G. E. R. Gedye's description of 'Chamberlain as "Führer" leading a "pre-Fascist regime towards totalitarianism"' and Geoffrey T. Garratt's warning of a 'gradual infiltration of fascist ideas into a Government of the rich' in *The Shadow of the Swastika* (Ellis 2014: 92-93).

Nicolson's diary entry for 3 September 1939, the day Britain declared war on Germany, is equally telling. Having listened to Chamberlain's broadcast to the nation at 11.15, Nicolson first went to Parliament, and then drove to his country home outside London. En route, 'an elderly woman […] shakes her fist at us and shouts that it is all the fault of the rich. The Labour Party will be hard put to it to prevent this war degenerating into class warfare' (160).

Mary Howells expresses a similar sentiment in Green's *Caught*, commenting bitterly that '[t]his dreadful war, really. It's all on account of the rich, they started it for their own ends. Now everything's topsy turvy' (Green 1943: 114). Although her relationship with sub-station officer Pye is fraught, this is doubtless a view Pye would share, although in his case it is not only inter-class conflict but intra-class conflict that seems to preoccupy him more than the war itself, and especially the threat posed to professional firemen like himself by auxiliaries:

> [h]e was too disturbed to notice the invasion of Norway. In any case he had not read a newspaper for years. As a disillusioned trades unionist he had given the Press up as corrupt. To his mind, in politics, he had been betrayed even by his own people. Now his own class was putting his job in peril, his own cloth, or so it seemed to him.
>
> He began to blame everything on the AFS. He would still admit the new Service was necessary but he came, in that first interview with Trant at which they had not been mentioned, to recognise cut-price firemen, the Auxiliaries, as an evil. He cracked hard down on his. He would show who was running the substation. (133)

Roe's upper-middle class background means Pye is particularly suspicious of him, but again divisions within as well as between classes are suggested through Roe, especially his observing when he passes through Oxford on the train 'young men of military age, elegantly dressed in last year's Austrian outfits, skat[ing] on each pond. He wondered how they had the time' (21). What divides Roe from those he observes is not class but what he perceives as his different wartime experience, and this applies to 'his fellow travellers [who] did not seem to be fellow beings in the war with him, but an odd lot of unpleasant individuals who did not have to go through that which he endured' (21). Like in *Hangover Square*, society in *Caught* is presented as fractured along several fault lines, not only class, political and gender, but also between professional and auxiliary, those actively involved in Home Front activities and those only indirectly so, and so forth.

While Green presents divisions within British society through the novel's fire station setting, so too does Patrick Hamilton in *The Slaves of Solitude* through the setting of a boarding house in a commuter town outside London in 1943, a setting that can be seen like Green's as a microcosm of British society as a whole. Although we learn in the first chapter that the protagonist, Miss Roach, arrived at the boarding house from her home in London after being bombed out, a reminder of the external threat posed by German bombers, the fact that '[s]he would have gone back to London if she had known where to go', suggests that she would prefer to face the 'guns and bombs at night' than the 'hell' of the boarding house, and in particular the misery inflicted by Thwaites, whom she sees as 'president in hell' (Hamilton 1947: 16). As noted in a previous chapter, Thwaites is a socialism-hating fascist sympathiser, whose conflict with Miss Roach dramatises a much broader conflict between different social classes and political viewpoints within Britain:

> Miss Roach's 'friends' – according to Mr. Thwaites – were the Russian people, and Mr. Thwaites did not like or approve of these people at all. Indeed, it would not be exaggerating to say that the resistance and victories of the Russian people in the last year had practically ruined this man's peace of mind – a state of affairs which was aggravated bitterly by the fact he was unable fully to vent his mind upon the matter in public […]
>
> He could now even force himself to speak disparagingly of Hitler: but to speak well of the Russians was too much for him […]
>
> 'Oh, well,' said Mr. Thwaites […] 'we'll all be equal soon, no doubt.'
>
> This clearly was another stab at the Russians. (17, 22)

Thwaites here represents a not uncommon British viewpoint. While his active support for Hitler, something that even in late 1943 he has been unable to fully throw off, might have been a minority viewpoint, the belief in the late 1930s that Hitler's Germany should not be antagonised owing to its being a bulwark against the threat of Soviet communism was much more widely held. How widely held were anti-Soviet and anti-communist sentiments by late 1943 is difficult to measure, for as Thwaites finds, he 'was unable fully to vent his mind upon the matter in public', but it seems reasonable to believe that Thwaites would not have been alone in having very mixed feelings about the Russian victories on the East Front. As the

novel progresses, Thwaites joins forces against Miss Roach with the German refugee Vicki Kugelmann. Miss Roach has her allies, too, in the form of Miss Steele and Miss Bartlett and, later, the American GI she forms a relationship with, Lieutenant Pike, though interestingly Pike proves of little help to her in her battles with Thwaites, his interest in her all too fleeting, suggesting possible divisions not only within Britain but between Britain and her allies too.

Like *Hangover Square*, I read *The Slaves of Solitude* as broadly allegorical, and Hamilton at times makes the representative nature of his characters explicit. We see this in the case of Kugelmann, when Miss Roach considers the way in which she ingratiated herself into the community of the Tea Rooms as similar to that of Joachim von Ribbentrop, who was the German Ambassador to Britain from 1936-8 before becoming Hitler's Foreign Minister:

> [w]hat about the early Vicki – the timid, the ingratiating one? […] Was not the period when she was sucking up to her, trying to get into the Rosamund Tea Rooms, posing as a delightful friend – was not this period the Ribbentrop one, nauseatingly Ribbentropish through and through? […] And was not this Teutonic arrogance precisely the one which, flowering in the world conditions of the nineteen twenties and thirties, had developed into plain, good-old, familiar, Jew-exterminating, torturing, jack-booted, whip-carrying, concentration-camp Nazidom? Were not all the odours of Vicki's spirit – her slyness, her insensitiveness […] the spiritual odours which had prevailed in Germany since 1933, and still prevailed? (176-7)

If the treacherous Kugelmann's relations with Miss Roach can be seen as representative of an early stage of Nazi Germany's with Britain – 'sucking up to her' at first, 'posing as a delightful friend', only to then reveal its true nature – the fact that at the end of the novel the boarding house's owner Mrs Payne sees through Kugelmann's façade of charm and asks her to leave perhaps represents Britain's uniting in the face of the realisation of the threat posed by Nazi Germany. Such a reading seems supported by the fact that the Nazi-sympathising Thwaites, who falls for Vicki Kugelmann so fully he proposes marriage to her, dies at this very moment, suggesting as it does the end of Chamberlain-led appeasement of Nazi Germany. If this is the case, however, one wonders what Hamilton was trying to

suggest about British-American relations in his presentation of the 'inconsequent' Lieutenant Pike, who, in his relations with Vicki, is equally culpable in the betrayal of Miss Roach (Hamilton's choice of language when describing how the 'Americans had stormed the town' (35) raises similar questions). Indeed, his treachery runs much deeper, for at the end of the novel Miss Roach learns that she is one of many women to whom he has proposed marriage: 'it isn't the amount of them that matters so much. The trouble is he asks them all to marry him', Prest tells her (275). Even before this confirmation, however, when he has disappeared for days on end, only to explain his absence by stressing the awful time he has been having, 'she quickly realised that he had not really been having an awful time, but was throwing out a mist of vague awfulness to conceal his real activities' (147). It is easy to imagine that Hamilton is here channelling his socialist views and rejection of American capitalism, no matter the importance of the United States to Britain as an ally. Kavan conveys similar anxieties, and another strand of the 'enemy within' motif, in 'Our City', the final story in her *I am Lazarus* collection:

> [o]ur city is full of the troops of a foreign army. When I first arrived here from the other side of the world I couldn't tell whether these soldiers were friends or invaders, and even now I'm equally at a loss. […] Are they, in fact, allies or enemies? Often enough one hears bitter remarks which suggest the latter alternative. But if that were the case wouldn't the hostility of the citizens take some more dynamic form than mere acrimonious grumbling?' (Kavan 1945: 134-5)

If the divisions captured in *The Slaves of Solitude* are primarily along political lines, Henry Green's *Party Going*, published as the war began in September 1939, can be seen as offering 'an allegory of social division', as Jeremy Treglown puts it in his introduction to the novel (Treglown 1996: v), through its presentation of a small group of rich, upper class 'bright young things' who wait for the fog to dissipate and trains to start running in a suite of hotel rooms, while several floors beneath them the hotel puts up 'steel shutters over the main entrance' to keep out less privileged commuters (415). Upper-class fears of the possibility of social revolution are conveyed, in particular, though the character of Julia, who exclaims, 'we're shut in now, what shall we do, isn't it awful?' (416) when the steel door is closed, adding 'we are simply in a state of siege' (451). Julia's prejudice against those less

fortunate is suggested by her concern that their luggage is 'to be left out there to be looted, for their porters would not protect it' (416). While their luggage has been left at the apparent mercy of 'those frantic drinking hordes of awful people' (520), Julia is relieved that she and the other members of her party are at least safe:

> she felt encouraged and felt safe because they could not by any chance get up from below; she had seen those doors bolted, and through being above them by reason of Max having bought their room and by having money, she saw in what lay below her an example of her own way of living because they were underneath and kept there. (468)

Later, however, when Julia believes that the 'hordes' may have broken through the barricade – the truth of which, like much else in the novel, is left uncertain to the end – she is terrified that 'they'll come up here and be dirty and violent' and, worse still, will 'probably try and kiss us or something' (516). Alex is quick to try to reassure her that 'you aren't in Marseilles or Singapore. You know an English crowd is the best behaved in the world. You'll be quite all right here' (517). Julia feels nonetheless that 'we must have a man about in case those sorts of things happen' (519) and Claire clearly agrees as she sends Alex immediately to fetch her husband.[42]

While Julia conveys upper-class fears of those of lower class, Peter in *Hangover Square* represents lower-class envy of those higher than themselves in the class system:

> [Netta] knew of the horror, the diseased fury, he harboured in his heart against his own upbringing, the fact that he had not been to a mentionable public school […] his political activities, his practical 'fascism' in the past, were derived from this sickly envy and passion. Banished, by reason of his birth and lack of money, from the class of which he had so fanatical a secret desire to be a member, he had not turned in anger against that class, or thrown in his lot with any other. That would have been

[42] In his chapter on the threat of bombing raids, Leo Mellor suggests the divide between the two social groups in *Party Going*, commenting that its 'crowd of mutually uncomprehending idle rich […] are closer, in some ways, to bomb aimers than to potential fellow sufferers or casualties'. 'What targets', one observer remarks (Mellor 2011: 37-8).

> an admission of defeat. On the contrary he sought to glorify it, to buttress it, to romanticize it. (Hamilton 1941: 128)

Peter's fascist sympathies, Hamilton suggests, are due to his frustration regarding his inability to move up the rungs of the British class system. Petra Rau has suggested, rightly I think, that Robert's treachery in *The Heat of the Day* is similarly motivated: '[l]ike many soldiers evacuated from Dunkirk who believed themselves abandoned and let down by the government and socially superior officer class, he links this defeat to a generational and, implicitly, a class problem' (Rau 2009: 201). Noting that '[p]ropaganda about Dunkirk, the lies told in the interest of protecting people against the reality of their own vulnerability and defeat, is […] the crucial impetus to Robert's treachery', Neil Corcoran also proposes generational divisions as a key factor in Robert's 'political realignment', arguing that this 'is more than a politics; it is a refusal of a genetic heritage', although he does not then go on as Rau does to identify this as not only a generational but also a class issue (Corcoran 2004: 176).

George Bowling, the protagonist of Orwell's *Coming Up for Air,* is an altogether more affable and easy-going character than Peter, and any envy he experiences of those of higher class certainly does not lead to any fascist sympathy on his part, but he is presented as being acutely aware of the subtle gradations of class hierarchy, suggesting the continuing importance of the class system in late 1930s Britain and the veracity of Virginia Woolf's statement in *Three Guineas* that 'classes still remain fixed' (Woolf 1938: 7). Bowling seems preoccupied with class throughout the novel, commenting on the 'rot talked about the suffering of the working class' ('I'm not so sorry for the proles myself', he states (Orwell 1939: 11)), on the impact of public school education on 'chaps from the upper classes' in comparison with 'boys of our class, the sons of shopkeepers and farmers' (12), that '[b]oys in our class aren't such complete babies as public schoolboys, they know that work is work and sixpence is sixpence' (95), that 'the children of the middle classes […] know all about Mudie's and the Times Book Club when they're in their cradles' (125), and so on. The precision with which Bowling describes specific classes – the 'office employee class' (137), 'middling professional class' (137), 'officer-rentier-clergyman class' (139) – reinforces just how important class seems to be to him, impacting as it does on his interaction with others

and major decisions, such as his decision to marry Hilda, a member of a class he 'only knew by hearsay, the poverty-stricken officer class' (137). 'Say what you will, there's a kind of snob-appeal in that, if you belong as I do to the God-fearing shopkeeper class, the low-church and high-tea class', he says, adding that although he didn't marry Hilda '*because* she belonged to the class I'd once served across the counter, with some notion of jockeying myself up in the social scale' (138), it was a factor in his decision nonetheless.

This all-enveloping class system was undoubtedly a cause of tension and conflict that did not go away once war began (Rau argues, for example, that '[c]lass divisions remained visible and palpable throughout the war (Rau 2016: 6)), and one could examine any number of novels of the 1930s and 1940s which expose the tensions resulting from such a system, but here I want to focus on those of Daphne du Maurier. Class is an important theme in *Rebecca*, not least in the first chapter where Mrs Van Hopper, an unashamed snob, gazes on other diners in the hotel restaurant through her lorgnette before uttering a 'little exclamation of disgust':

> [n]ot a single well-known personality. I shall tell the management they must make a reduction on my bill. What do they think I come here for? To gaze at the page-boys? (du Maurier 1938: 10)

People laugh at her behind her back, the narrator reports, but it is clear that Mrs Van Hopper's snobbishness is hardly limited to her, and at the end of the novel the consequences of a class system built on hierarchy and inequality are revealed through the suggestion that Colonel Julyan, the local authority figure charged with unearthing the truth of Rebecca's death, has chosen to turn a blind eye to his suspicion that Maxim may have killed his wife. Certainly Maxim believes this to be the case: asked by his wife, 'How much of the truth […] do you think Julyan guessed?', Maxim replies, 'He knew […] of course he knew' (420). Why Colonel Julyan might not have acted on his suspicions is not made clear, but it is strongly suggested that what is important is Maxim's position in society and the fact that the de Winter family has been the most important in the area for centuries. Favell implies this collusion when he says to Julyan:

> You've got nothing to worry about anymore. Max is on a good wicket now, isn't he? You've got your motive, and Baker will supply it in black and white free of cost, whenever you send the word. You can dine at Manderley once a week on the strength of it and feel proud of yourself. No doubt Max will ask you to be godfather of his first child. (416)

Although Favell is presented as the villain of the piece and most readers will doubtless be delighted that Maxim has escaped justice, Favell's outburst is discomforting because we suspect he is right.

Du Maurier returns to the issue of class, but perhaps less ambivalently, in *The King's General*, in which Richard Grenvile alienates the vast majority of all whom he meets, friends and enemies alike, yet what seems to alienate the landed gentry of Cornwall, Royalists like himself, more than anything is his determination to treat his soldiers with respect and, most damnably of all, pay them a salary. Paying the soldiers of course requires raising taxes, taxes the gentry themselves are required to pay, so it is perhaps unsurprising this modernising impetus to fight the enemy with a disciplined, professional army goes down so badly with them. Rather, the landed gentry prefer that the lower classes carry the cost, for it is made clear that if the soldiers are not paid they must find food by demanding it, at sword-point if necessary, from farmers and townsfolk:

> 'The trouble with Grenvile,' said Robin, 'is that he insists upon his fellows being paid. The men in his command are like hired mercenaries. No free quarter, no looting, no foraging as they please, and all this comes very hard upon the pockets of people like yourself, who must provide the money.'
>
> 'Do you know,' continued Jo, 'that the Commissioners of Devon have been obliged to allot him one thousand pounds a week for the maintenance of his troops? I tell you, it hits us very hard.'
>
> 'It would hit you harder,' I said, 'if your house was burnt down by the Parliament.'
>
> They stared at me in surprise, and I saw young Phillipa look at me in wonder for my boldness. Women's talk was not encouraged at Radford. 'That, my dear Honor,' said Jo coldly, 'is not likely to happen.'

> […] said Percy, 'but in fairness to him I must say that all the country people tell me they would rather have Grenvile's men in their villages than Goring's. If Grenvile finds one of his men looting he is shot upon the instant. But Goring's men are quite out of control and drunk from dawn to dusk.'
>
> 'Oh, come,' frowned Robin, 'Goring and his cavalry are entitled to a little relaxation.' (du Maurier 1946: 196-7)

At the heart of the problem is the fact that war comes at a cost: as Honor puts it so bluntly, without an army to defend them the houses of Royalist supporters like her brother would be 'burnt to the ground'. The question is who should bear that cost, the families who have lived lives of luxury for generations or those at the bottom of society who have little to give. That Grenvile comes down so strongly on taxing those who can afford the most, and that this is clearly supported by both narrator and novel as a whole, is telling given that du Maurier wrote the novel in 1945, the year that Labour was swept to power on a platform to transform the social and economic organisation of the country.

I would argue that *The King's General* constitutes a sustained attack on the class system. Of particular pertinence, given that in the 1940s whether one was suitable officer material in the armed forces was largely a matter of whether one was sufficiently high-born or not, is du Maurier's suggestion in the novel that officers should be promoted according to ability rather than social standing. An example of this is Goring, whom Honor's brother Robin describes as 'a very good fellow, and an excellent judge of horse'. When asked by Honor if that makes him a good commander, he replies, 'He is full of courage […] and will ride at anything', which Honor, for one, dismisses as little evidence of ability to lead (194). Goring's amateurism – his total unsuitability to lead a unit despite his personal bravery – is typical of Royalist officers who gain commands because of their noble birth, and it is made clear that they are primarily to blame for defeat on the battlefield. Grenvile's plan to lure the enemy into Cornwall, for example, proves a sound one, but

> only partially succeeded. The horse have got away, all owing to that besotted idiot Goring lying in a stupor at his headquarters and permitting – you will scarcely credit it – the rebels to slip through his lines without as much as a musket-shot at their backsides. (187)

That this happens shortly before Honor encounters the 'flushed' Goring drinking in a village inn suggests a further criticism of such military leaders, that they never learn from their mistakes. It is worth noting here that du Maurier was married to General 'Boy' Browning, a prominent officer during World War II who commanded the 1st Airborne Division and 1st Airborne Corps and was from 1944 Chief of Staff of Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten's South East Asia Command, and that du Maurier herself spent much of her writing life in military circles – her criticisms in *The King's General*, in other words, could be seen as prompted by her real-life experiences of contemporary military leadership.

It is unsurprising given their differences and Grenvile's open contempt for gentlemen soldiers that Goring and others tend to oppose him at every turn: the biggest enemy to the Royalists' hopes of success, Honor suggests, is precisely this short-sightedness and narrow-mindedness from within their own ranks (another aspect of the 'enemy within' theme running through the novel), though Grenvile's arrogance and contempt are also recognised as key contributing factors. Grenvile repeatedly lambasts the gentleman soldiers' incompetence. Goring is one such example; another is Francis Bassett, to whom Grenvile says, 'My good fool […] you are a country squire, and I respect your knowledge of cattle and pigs. But for God's sake leave the art of war to professional soldiers' (220). Another example is Edward Champernowne, an officer because of his gentility whom Richard thinks 'would do better to command a squad of ducks' (320). His post, when they inspect it, does not meet the high standards of others and it is Champernowne whose 'tremendous blunder', as Percy describes it, in not leading the second wave of troops to support the first, leads to the loss of three hundred lives in an unsuccessful attempt by Grenvile to take Plymouth, and ultimately to Champernowne being shot for 'contravention of orders' (321). To have him shot in this way reveals Grenvile's ruthlessness, but some might argue that this is a just punishment given that his actions led directly to the deaths of so many. Indeed, the response of Percy, Jo and others at news that someone has been shot for 'contravention of orders' is muted; it is only when they learn who it was that was shot that Jo states this 'is the beginning of the end for Richard Grenvile' and leads a campaign to have him removed from his position of Sheriff and commander of the King's forces in the west. This delayed reaction suggests that Richard's crime is not to have shot an

insubordinate officer but to have shot an insubordinate officer who happened to be a member of the landed classes. Their reaction can be seen as similar to Colonel Julyan's reaction to Favell's accusing Maxim of murdering Rebecca – Julyan knows the accusation to be true, but overlooks it because of who Maxim is and instead turns on Favell for daring to try and undermine a man of nobility. The difference between the two novels, however, is the narrator's support of Maxim, and by extension Julyan, in the immediately pre-war *Rebecca* invites the reader to sympathise with them against Favell, whereas the narrator's sympathy with Grenvile in the immediately post-war *The King's General* invites the reader to sympathise with him: this shift away from sympathy towards the conservative classes could be seen as reflective of a changed political climate by the end of the war.

Of course, conflict is the stuff of fiction, and perhaps one should not make too much of the fact that conflict is central to so many novels of the Second World War. It seems to me, however, that looking at the conflict between, for example, Grenvile and the other royalist leaders here, or Miss Roach and Mr Thwaites in *The Slaves of Solitude*, or Favell and Maxim in the final chapters of *Rebecca*, that conflicts and divisions that ran across the whole of British society are being figured on an individual level – that Roach and Thwaites, Favell and Maxim represent different sections of British society, and different imaginings of how the country should be organised in the future. The various civil wars explored in this chapter thus reflect conflicts and divisions within the country as a whole during World War II.

3. Progressives and Reactionaries

The inevitability of social and economic reorganisation was something widely felt at the time: to quote Gill Plain, '[i]t was the end not just of an era, but a whole way of life' (Plain 1996: 3), a sentiment clearly felt by the poet Louis MacNeice, who in the introduction to his *Collected Poems 1925-40* wrote:

> [w]hen a man collects his poems, people think him dead. I am collecting my poems not because I am dead, but because my past life is. Like most other people in the British Isles I have little idea what will happen next – I will go on writing, but my writing will presumably be different. (Cited in Plain 1996: 3)

Bowling in *Coming Up for Air* suggests the definitiveness of the break between the old world and the new when he describes his parents' generation as living 'at the end of an epoch, when everything was dissolving into a sort of ghastly flux' (Orwell 1939: 122). If the process of change began for Bowling with the First World War, then the Second, he predicts, will complete the transformation:

> this kind of prophetic feeling that keeps coming over me nowadays, the feeling that war's just round the corner and that war's the end of all things, isn't peculiar to me. We've all got it, more or less. (25)

For Bowling, this transformation is far from desirable, and this was doubtless felt by many: Vita Sackville-West, for example, wrote in a letter to her husband Harold Nicolson, as recorded in his diary, '[i]t is not as if we were fighting to preserve the things we care for. This war, whatever happens, will destroy them' (Nicolson 2005: 173). Others felt such change was necessary, however, or came to do so. The *Times* opined as early as mid-1940 that 'the European house cannot be put in order unless we put our own house in order first' (cited in Hewison 1977: 6), while the same year saw the publication of *Labour's Aims in War and Peace*, in which the Labour Party mapped out how it intended to win the peace, not just the war: its commitment to the nationalisation of key industries, increased public works and improved social services was a key reason for its landslide victory in 1945. Voters' apparent determination at the end of the war that Britain would not return to being organised along the same social and economic lines it had been in 1939 was something foreseen by observers on both sides of the political divide and was eloquently summarised by Conservative MP Robert Boothby, who wrote in a letter to David Lloyd George:

> [n]othing is more certain than that this war will mark the transition from monopoly capitalism to socialism […] You cannot hope to go through a world convulsion of this magnitude without fundamental changes in the social as well as the economic structure. It is inconceivable to me that our present hereditary system, or our 'caste' system of education, can survive the struggle without drastic modification. (Cited in Hylton 2010: 64)

Boothby here implies not only the inevitability but also the desirability of change, though naturally such a response was not shared by everyone within his own party and among its supporters. Although Orwell may well have shared his protagonist George Bowling's anxieties regarding modernisation, or 'streamlining', in 'My Country Right or Left' he expressed his commitment to the socialist 'England of tomorrow' that he anticipated would, 'now the revolution has started', come about '[w]ithin two years, maybe a year, if only we can hang on' and 'keep Hitler out', and was prepared to see 'the London gutters […] run with blood' to achieve this (Orwell 2000: 137), ideas that were developed at greater length in 'The Lion and the Unicorn'.[43] I doubt this is something J. B. Priestley would have been prepared to see, but in what he thought might be the last of his influential *Postscripts* on the BBC in October 1940 (in fact he returned the following year to deliver eight more), he soundly rejected any return to a world where 'the privileges of a few are […] regarded as more important than the happiness of many'.[44]

While *The King's General* arguably offers an endorsement of the social and political changes sweeping Britain at the end of the war, a number of novels of the time reflect nostalgically on a happier pre-war world. The most famous, of course, is Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited* (1945): although here there is no overt civil war setting, in juxtaposing memories of a pre-war world of upper-class privilege with a very different 'age of Hooper' (Waugh 1945: 311) that Charles Ryder imagines will replace it once the war is over, Waugh provides perhaps the most well-known of literary depictions of the transformation of Britain during the 1940s. From the first, Ryder's descriptions of the WWII present are dominated by overtones of decay and loss. The camp where he is based at the beginning of the novel 'until quite lately, had been pasture and ploughland', we are told, but although 'the

[43] An example of someone who would seem to share Orwell's view is Herbert Read, whom Ellis cites as writing in 'At the Moment of Writing' in *Horizon* in 1940 that the war was 'the shortest and therefore the best way of replacing capitalism with democracy' (Ellis 2014: 186).

[44] Piette writes with regard to Priestley's *Postscripts* that 'a new wave of patriotism was created […] a democratic, egalitarian patriotism that turned against pre-war conditions' (182). Ellis has noted the controversy these broadcasts created, noting, for example, 'Charles Smyth's hostile attack [in *New English Weekly*] on their supposed promotion of "civil war" against the "ruling classes in this country"' (see Ellis 2014: 185).

farmhouse still stood' and 'ivy still supported what had been the walls of a fruit garden', remnants of a world fast vanishing, it is only a matter of time before they too are lost:

> [t]he place had been marked for destruction before the army came to it. Had there been another year of peace, there would have been no farmhouse, no wall, no apple trees […] Now the huts where we had wintered waited their turn for destruction. (Waugh 1945: 9-10)

It is noteworthy that rather than seen as bringing about the final destruction of the farm and the old world it represents, the war has actually held up the process, which is different from other depictions where the war is seen in part as a war for the future of Britain (Deer argues that the novel thus 'perversely suggests' that the war has 'suspended the destruction wrought by the peace' (Deer 2009: 220)). Nonetheless, change, not just in the British landscape but the organisation of British society, is seen as inevitable, and for Ryder becomes concentrated in the persona of his youngest platoon commander, Hooper, who is 'a symbol to me of Young England' (15). Ryder's lack of enthusiasm for this Young England is nowhere more apparent than in a brief interlude at the very centre of the novel when he describes his decision in 1926 to return to London from Paris 'for the General Strike', believing 'that our country was in great danger and our duty lay there' (193). There he and Boy Mulcaster are 'kindled by a great flame of patriotism' and decide to join 'Bill Meadows' show – defence corps', a flying squad of recruits determined to stand up to the strikers, believing it not only their patriotic duty but also a kind of recompense for having been too young to fight in the Great War:

> 'You and I,' he said, 'were too young to fight in the war. Other chaps fought, millions of them dead. Not us. We'll show them. We'll show the dead chaps we can fight, too.'
>
> 'That's why I'm here,' I said. 'Come from overseas, rallying to old country in hour of need.' (199)

Ryder's statement regarding the need to rally to the old country in her hour of need, echoing as it does the calls to arms of the First World War, makes it absolutely clear that for

Mulcastle and himself those striking are enemies of Britain; the choice of adjective 'old' is also telling, especially when set against his 'age of Hooper' phrase at the end of the novel. Written towards the end of World War II, this description of the 1926 General Strike in civil war terms, with Ryder's professed belief that Britain was in danger from an enemy that needed crushing, seems particularly revealing, especially when one turns to the preface to the novel, written by Waugh in 1959 for a later edition, in which he admits that he 'piled it on rather', because '[i]t was impossible to foresee, in the spring of 1944 [that …] the ancestral seats which were our chief national artistic achievement' were not in fact 'doomed to decay and spoilation like the monasteries in the sixteenth century', that the English aristocracy would in fact 'maintain its identity to a degree that then seemed impossible' and that the 'advance of Hooper' would be 'held up at several points' (8) – it is worth noting here Waugh's military vocabulary, recast in civil war terms. Nonetheless, a certain ambivalence to the changes can be detected In Ryder, for it is notable that his feelings for Hooper 'almost amounted to affection' (13), and while he is critical of Hooper's failing to assert his authority over those beneath him and the implied lack of respect for the whole order of military hierarchy, Ryder's lack of subservience to his immediate officer suggests something similar. Indeed, while Ryder's reminiscences about the days of his youth spent in highly privileged circles is largely positive, it is not uncritical, and his charting of the excesses of those around him, the arrogance and complacency of the privileged elite, suggests, perhaps, a recognition of a need for change.

Bowling in *Coming Up for Air* is of a very different class from Ryder, yet he is similarly dismayed by what he sees as the loss of an older way of life. Indeed, the focus of virtually the whole of his narrative is revisiting the past, first through memory as he tells the story of his life, with the focus on his first twenty years or so before the outbreak of the First World War, and then in the last third of the novel through his return to Lower Binfield, the town where he grew up, twenty years after he was last there. Bowling is haunted by ghosts of the past: 'I've got something else inside me, chiefly a hangover from the past' (Orwell 1939: 20), he says, and while ready to acknowledge as 'a delusion' his memory that '[b]efore the war it was always summer' (106), nonetheless he is convinced that 'it was a good world to live in' (32). Although he sees the loss of the world of his childhood as an ongoing process (he suggests he is not alone in seeing that 'the old life we're used to is being sawn off at the

roots' and that others 'can feel things cracking and collapsing under their feet' (166)), he dates the final year of the old world to 1913. 'My God! 1913! The stillness, the green water, the rushing of the weir! It'll never come again', he states (107). Bowling is clearly dismayed by what has replaced this previous way of living. For him, modernity is represented by the poisoned, rubbish-filled ponds in which he used to fish:

> [b]ecause in a manner of speaking I am sentimental about my childhood – not my own particular childhood, but the civilisation which I grew up in and which is now, I suppose, just about at its last kick. And fishing is somehow typical of that civilisation […] Where are the English coarse fish now? When I was a kid every pond and stream had fish in it. Now all the ponds are drained, and when the streams aren't poisoned with chemicals from factories they're full of rusty tins and motor-bike tyres. (77)

What particularly defines the modern world, Bowling suggests, is the replacement of what is natural with what is artificial. The most obvious example of this is his repeated references to his own false teeth ('Nine people out of ten would have taken my teeth for natural' (24)) while his several descriptions of the mock-Tudor buildings that have sprung up in Lower Binfield are another (the pub, meanwhile, has been got 'up in a kind of medieval style. Brick fireplace with inglenooks, a huge beam across the ceiling, oak panelling on the walls, and every bit of it a fake that you could have spotted fifty yards away' (196)), the belief that 'no English hops ever go into beer nowadays, they're all made into chemicals' (207) a third, and his description of biting into a frankfurter, which for Bowling represents modern food, perhaps the most memorable:

> [i]t gave me the feeling that I'd bitten into the modern world and discovered what it was really made of. That's the way we're going nowadays. Everything slick and streamlined, everything made out of something else […] Rotten fish in a rubber skin. Bombs of filth bursting inside your mouth. (24)

Modernity is here revealingly associated with bombs on the one hand and both Germany and America on the other, through the choice of frankfurter, a food, like the hamburger,

quintessentially American *and* German, something which suggests that 'streamlining' is coming no matter who wins the war.[45]

A similar recoil against modern artificiality can be seen in Henry Green's *Party Going*, where Max's

> armchair was covered with thick fake Spanish brocade, all the coverings were of this material with walls to match, fake Spanish tables with ironwork, silver ashtrays, everything heavy and thick, all of it fake, although he thought it genuine, and it was expensive in proportion […] Amabel's flat had been decorated by the same people Max had his flat done by, her furniture was like his, his walls like hers, their chair coverings were alike and even their ash trays were the same. There were in London at this time more than one hundred rooms identical with these. Even what few books there were bore the same titles and these were dummies. (Green 1939: 397-8, 456-7)

The artificiality of Holme Dene in *The Heat of the Day*, and Windsor Terrace in *The Death of the Heart*, discussed in chapter 1, suggests similar criticisms, as does Greene's description of a mock-Tudor inn in *The Confidential Agent*. In *The Slaves of Solitude*, meanwhile, Hamilton is criticising Thames Lockdon when he describes 'the jostling of the graceful and genuine and old by the demented fake and ye olde' (Hamilton 1947: 4), and is equally critical of The Rosamund Tea Rooms when detailing how it

> had been redecorated […] in such a startling manner [with …] a curious aim at an Elizabethan manner […] in the way of black beams, wooden panelling, uncomfortable black chairs and tables, odd pieces of armour, suspended swords,

[45] Although written in 1939, it was perhaps not difficult to imagine that Britain might be allied with the USA in a war against Germany sometime in the not-so-distant future. Ellis makes this argument slightly differently: '[t]he fear of invasion remains, and of "the new kind of men from eastern Europe, the streamlined men who think in slogans and talk in bullets" (168-9) but even if these are repulsed, the "streamlining" that pervades our own society is heading in the same direction' (Ellis 2014: 154). One is reminded here by Ford Madox Ford's complaint as early as 1907 that '[w]e are getting Germanised or Americanised or automobilised or electrified' (as cited in Rau 2009: 1).

> and almost indecipherable Gothic lettering over the doors. But upon this a Scottish atmosphere had been imposed – samples of Scottish tartans inserted into the upper panels […] To add to the confusion, and in destruction of the other illusions, there were two electric ball-machines (65).

Verbs like 'imposed' and 'inserted' highlight the artificiality, the lack of authenticity, of the scene, stressing a theatricality that, as we saw in chapter 1, is emphasised in any number of novels of the time. Hamilton's equivalent of Orwell's frankfurter – Miss Roach's 'pink artificial-silk bedspread […] which shone and slithered and fell off' (7) – is similarly 'slick and streamlined' and similarly inadequate in terms of fulfilling its primary function of, in this case, keeping the sleeper warm.

For Bowling, while in the past people had a 'feeling of security', and of 'continuity' (110), which gave life meaning, what defines modern living is '[f]ear! We swim in it. It's our element. Everyone that isn't scared stiff of losing his job is scared stiff of war, or Fascism, or Communism, or something' (15). (This overwhelming sense of fear is captured in *The Slaves of Solitude*, where 'Miss Roach stared at the screen with plain fear on her face – fear of life, of herself, of Mr. Thwaites, of the times and things into which she had been born, and which loomed about her and circled her everywhere' (34).) It's no wonder, therefore, that Bowling describes his 'feeling that the world's gone wrong' (166), and also that he is so terrified of the coming war. For if the Great War marked a definitive shift from one way of life to another, Bowling imagines that a second world war will have a similarly definitive impact. 'As I've said several times already, I'm not frightened of the war, only of the after-war', he says (174): 'I can feel it happening. I can see the war that's coming and I can see the after-war, the food-queues and the secret police and the loudspeakers telling you what to think' (166) is Bowling's prophetic warning of an increasingly totalitarian state that he presumably sees as the logical next step of the modernising process.

Bowling's sense of fear and disgust at modernity, especially his use of militaristic language to describe its onset ('[h]ouses, shops, cinemas, chapels, football grounds – new, all new. Again I had that feeling of a kind of enemy invasion having happened behind my back' (192)), is particularly interesting given Petra Rau's thesis, in *English Modernism, National Identity and the Germans*, that before the outbreak of World War II the Germans had for decades been figured as a symbol of a modernity with which many Britons felt

uncomfortable: the presence of the modern within British culture was thus figured as a kind of invasion – a German invasion – that had already proved successful. Rau points to the globalised nature of modernity as the chief reason for 'tension between modernity and national identity', arguing that this globalising process led to the 'anxious formation of political nationalisms as a counter-response' (Rau 2009: 3). This was particularly acute in Britain, she argues, though it was equally true of other countries, including Germany, because '[a]s a global, imperial power, its culture had already begun to "hollow out" national culture […] The empire becomes the occasion for the loss of Englishness'. 'Indeed, there is nothing English modernism is more anxious about than modernity and modernization', Rau concludes, and cites E. P. Williams' *Made in Germany* (1895) as an example of how such processes had since the Victorian period been figured in German terms:

> Williams makes any conventional invasion of England – a constant fear in the Edwardian era – completely superfluous because German manufacturing and export trade have already burrowed into quotidian and cultural life […] Modernity is identified as a foreign agent that influences, challenges and even undermines Englishness. (3)

The enemy within here is modernity itself, in other words, and although associated with Germany and figured as German, this particular enemy is of course part of what it is to be English. As Rau comments with regards to Bowen's *The Heat of the Day* and Greene's *The Ministry of Fear*, the two novels she looks at in her final chapter,

> [a]lthough 'the Germans' remain indispensable, [they are …] hardly mentioned in either novel […] This is symptomatic of the fact that none of the books analysed here is really about 'the Germans', least of all the war novels. (16)

Rau's thesis, in other words, is that frequent references to and imaginings of 'the Germans' in literature throughout the first half of the twentieth century was a way for British writers to engage with modernity, and if all things German were often portrayed in a negative light, it is because the 'German' was symbolic of a part of Englishness with which many

modernists were uncomfortable. This could be seen as an inversion of what I have been investigating elsewhere – namely, in a war in which the ostensible enemy was Nazi Germany, many writers seemed more concerned with the enemy within, while conversely Rau describes English writers seemingly concerned with 'the Germans' when in fact what preoccupied them was what it meant to be English. Ellis makes a similar point when he argues that 'the enemy overseas is seen as the natural consummation of developments that have been happening in England itself over the last twenty years, often summed up by the process Bowling calls streamlining' (Ellis 2014: 148-9), as does Angus Calder in *The Myth of the Blitz*, although this emerges from discussion of the ways the British sought to maintain a them-and-us dichotomy through mythologised views of Britain and Germany built around a series of binary opposites (Calder 1991: 116):

England (Britain)	Germany
Freedom	Tyranny
Improvisation	Calculation
Voluntary Spirit	Drilling
Friendliness	Brutality
Tolerance	Persecution
Timeless Landscape	Mechanisation
Patience	Aggression
Calm	Frenzy
A thousand years of peace	The 'Thousand Year Reich' dedicated to war

The association of Germany with mechanisation and calculation and Britain with timeless landscape and improvisation, in particular, is highly suggestive of the association of Germany with modernity that Rau identifies.

4. 'To be redeemed from fire by fire'?

On first reading, it would seem that in du Maurier's *Rebecca* the social change charted is viewed as far from desirable. We see this at the very beginning of the novel, when the

narrator dreams that she returns to Manderley, symbol throughout of an older world, only to find it transformed:

> Nature had come into her own again and, little by little, in her stealthy, insidious way had encroached upon the drive with long, tenacious fingers. The woods, always a menace in the past, had triumphed in the end. They crowded, dark and uncontrolled, to the borders of the drive. The beeches with white, naked limbs leant closer to one another, their branches intermingled in a strange embrace. (du Maurier 1938: 1)

Although 'Nature had come into her own again' suggests a regression to some past way of life, I read this opening section as nonetheless a metaphor for the dismantling of the traditional way of life represented by Manderley. The uncontrolled violence of this rush to grow and dominate is arguably similar to Bowling's damning descriptions of modern life in *Coming Up for Air*, and like Bowling, the narrator of *Rebecca* seems to see the older way of life as fundamentally civilised, while the modernity that has replaced it is described as involving a regression to a more barbaric age. The threatening sexual imagery, with the vulnerable 'white, naked limbs' of the beeches and, a couple of lines later, the squat oaks 'thrusting themselves out of the quiet earth', is particularly notable, and intensifies a page later when the narrator describes the

> rhododendrons [which] stood fifty feet high, twisted and entwined with bracken, and they had entered into alien marriage with a host of nameless shrubs, poor bastard things that clung about their roots as though conscious of their spurious origin. A lilac had mated with a copper beech […] (2-3)

There is a sense here of boundaries being transgressed, and if the narrator's description is read as metaphorical, as essentially about social change in England, then the description of rhododendrons growing above their station, while other plants mate outside of their class (the narrator herself, of course, is someone of 'spurious origin', a 'poor, bastard' thing who is acutely conscious of having married above her station and her dream can certainly be read as a bubbling up of anxieties that she has sought to repress) suggests a terror of social

change on the part of the narrator. The rhododendrons are of particular importance because of their association with Rebecca later in the novel, and the narrator's apparently conservative response to the changing role of women that the forthright Rebecca represents:

> [t]hey startled me with their crimson faces, massed one upon the other in incredible profusion, showing no leaf, no twig, nothing but the slaughterous red, luscious and fantastic, unlike any rhododendron plant I had seen before […] To me a rhododendron was a homely, domestic thing, strictly conventional, mauve or pink in colour, standing one beside the other in a neat round bed. And these were monsters, rearing to the sky, massed like a battalion, too beautiful, I thought, too powerful; they were not plants at all. (72)

The narrator implies her views on women when she suggests they should be 'homely' and 'domestic', following without question society's conventions and expectations that they should be in effect seen and not heard, trimmed and pruned back, not allowing themselves to show their true nature. Rebecca, meanwhile, is defiant of such conventions: the flowers that represent her are 'too beautiful, too powerful', too sexual; their colour is the colour of blood and passion and danger; they grow in 'profusion' and it is this that so profoundly shocks the narrator.

Nonetheless, there is a good deal of ambiguity regarding the narrator's response to Rebecca and to the social transformation described in the novel more generally. The narrator shows herself throughout to be to all appearances thoroughly conservative and supportive of a patriarchal order that places men in a superior position, and that is why, after learning that Maxim killed Rebecca, she implicitly agrees that Rebecca had to be stopped, that she posed a threat to this status quo and therefore Maxim was justified in taking the actions that he did, and why her dream image of nature rampant over a garden formerly constrained and modest is for her a nightmare image. The narrator is frightened by Rebecca's defiance of a system that may leave women in a subservient role but does provide them with security, with a role to play that is clearly defined (as in *Brideshead Revisited*, where Ryder thinks many of 'the troops did not like Hooper' because of his treating them on equal terms as this involved a loss of security in terms of a strictly defined

role and position in society (Waugh 1945: 16)). Yet the fact the narrator experiences this highly sexualised dream is suggestive of buried desire, and there is more than a hint of fascination with Rebecca, which is doubtless why she haunts the narrator's imagination so vividly. Sally Beauman argues that

> there are indications throughout the text that the second Mrs de Winter would like to emulate Rebecca, even to be her – and these continue even when she knows Rebecca has broken every male determined rule as to a woman's behaviour. Although Rebecca is dead, has never been seen, and has in theory for ever been silenced, Mrs de Winter's obsession with her insures that Rebecca will triumph over anonymity and effacement. (du Maurier 1938: xiv)

This subconscious desire to be Rebecca is perhaps best seen at the end of the novel, when the narrator is again asleep, and dreams of becoming Rebecca:

> I got up and went to the looking-glass. A face stared back at me that was not my own […] And I saw then that she was sitting on a chair before the dressing-table in her bedroom, and Maxim was brushing her hair. (426)

It is as she awakes from this dream – a dream that I discuss elsewhere – that the narrator of *Rebecca* sees the first sign of an event that brings the novel to an end and, symbolically, to quote again Gill Plain's description of the period, 'not just an era, but a whole way of life' (Plain 1996: 3). In what might be seen as a premonition of the destruction to come during the Blitz, the novel ends with the destruction of Manderley by fire:

> [t]he sky above was inky black. But the sky on the horizon was not dark at all. It was shot with crimson, like a splash of blood. And the ashes blew towards us with the salt wind from the sea (du Maurier 1938: 428).

If this is a premonition of the Blitz and of the destructive fires of air warfare that was a pervasive anxiety well before the war started then the criticisms implicit earlier in the novel of the traditional, hierarchical organisation of society that Manderley represents might suggest the bombing to come to be, to quote Victoria Stewart, 'an opportunity rather than

an unmitigated tragedy' (Stewart 2006: 101). Vera Brittain suggests precisely this in a description of a visit to the Potteries in 1941:

> I am shown a few places in which bombs have fallen. But these sporadic areas of devastation are difficult to distinguish from the debris normally caused in this district by 'wear and tear' [… M]ore than once my commiseration is misplaced.
>
> 'You've had some trouble here!' I remark […] and am cheerfully corrected by my escorts: 'Oh no! That wasn't done by bombs. It was like that long before the war!' (Vera Brittain, *England's Hour*, 174, cited in Stewart 2006: 101)[46]

Greene describes a similar scene in *The Confidential Agent*, where D. travels to the industrial Midlands and gets

> a glimpse of horrifying squalor in a backyard where a privy stood open. It was like war, but without the spirit of defiance war usually raised […] he was used to ruin, but it occurred to him that bombardment was a waste of time. You could attain your ruined world as easily by just letting go (Greene 1939: 192-3).

While here Greene suggests bombardment cannot really make things worse, in his later *The Ministry of Fear* he goes further and implies it could actually make things better: Rowe thinks of all the places he wishes would be blown up by German bombers and concludes that 'there was such a lot which had to be destroyed before peace came' (Greene 1943: 217). This is a sentiment Greene expressed elsewhere, as cited by Stewart: 'the crated ground round Wolverhampton […] those acres of abandoned cars round Slough […] they all demanded violence' (Stewart 2006: 101).[47]

In the context of such comments, it is suggestive that not only is the old order symbolically destroyed by fire at the end of the pre-war *Rebecca*, but that du Maurier's novel about the English Civil War from the end of the war, *The King's General*, should end

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[46] See also Mellor's discussion of similar sentiments in, for example, Louis MacNeice's 'Brother Fire' and Henry Green's *Caught* (Mellor 2011: 65-68).

[47] Greene's comments echo, of course, John Betjeman's famous pre-war poem 'Slough' (1937) and its call to 'Come, friendly bombs and fall on Slough' (Betjeman 2006: 20).

in a notably similar fashion, with the fire that destroys the summer house at Menabilly bringing to an end both Royalist resistance to the modernising impulse of Cromwell's Parliamentarians, and also the more intimate civil war that has run parallel through the novel within the Grenvile family. Just as in *Rebecca* the fire that destroys Manderley seems to augur a new order built on greater equality, so the fire that destroys the summer house seems to offer the hope of renewal, for while the novel started with the words 'September 1653. The last of summer. The first chill winds of autumn' (du Maurier 1946: 1), suggesting the winter to come, the novel ends with Jonathan pronouncing that '[t]he worst is over. The best is yet to be' and Honor agreeing: 'One day,' I said, 'when the snow melts, when the thaw breaks, when the spring comes' (368).

We see something similar in T. S. Eliot's 'Little Gidding', which begins where *The King's General* ends, in midwinter. Initially drafted in the first half of 1941 – when London and other urban centres were experiencing the Blitz, while abroad the USSR remained allied to Germany (until the Axis powers invasion that began on 22 June) and the USA was still a non-participant – when Britain seemed most isolated and its chances of success in the war most hopeless, 'Little Gidding' is a dark poem through which run recurring images of destruction, death and decay. Nevertheless, the poem is not without hope, and although it starts in midwinter, it is a midwinter's day that experiences a fleeting moment of spring, and there are repeated intimations of the spring to come, as well as the arrival of dawn after the long night:

> In the uncertain hour before the morning
> Near the ending of interminable night
> At the recurrent end of the unending
> After the dark dove with the flickering tongue
> Had passed below the horizon of his homing
> While the dead leaves still rattled on like tin
> Over the asphalt where no other sound was
> Between three districts whence the smoke arose […] (Eliot 1942: 37).

While the **'**dark dove with the flickering tongue**'** seems to suggest the bombers that Eliot watched set London ablaze during his time as fire warden while writing *'*Little Gidding', this

seems to foretell a time when the war will come to an end and the burning of the city will be a thing of the past. Indeed, the 'master' that the narrator of the poem meets in the second section, a ghost from another world, strongly conveys the notion that Britain is at a crucial moment in its history, when one age is at an end and a new one about to begin, something reiterated in Eliot's suggestion at the beginning of the final section that '[t]he end is where we start from':

> Last season's fruit is eaten
> And the fullfed beast shall kick the empty pail.
> For last year's words belong to last year's language
> And next year's words await another voice.
> […] What we call the beginning is often the end
> And to make an end is to make a beginning.
> The end is where we start from. (38-9, 42)

What is important here, I believe, is Eliot's suggestion that the destruction of war can be an opportunity for creation, for a new world to begin.[48] Running through the whole of 'Little Gidding' is the continual motif of fire, but while fire is presented as destructive, it is also presented as purifying, not least just a few lines into the poem where Eliot describes 'pentecostal fire / In the dark time of the year' (35).[49] Fire in 'Little Gidding' is thus associated with purification and renewal, and whatever Eliot's religious intentions, this connects strongly with contemporary secular desires for renewal and the view discussed above that war with Germany was in some way also an internal conflict for the future of Britain. In this context, Eliot's linking of the Second World War with the English Civil War seems pertinent. This can be seen when Eliot's description of those members of the religious community at Little Gidding dispersed and killed during the English Civil War at the

[48] Leo Mellor has suggested that George Harvey Bone symbolises a similar ambiguity in *Hangover Square*, arguing that he 'is both an alien agent of destruction to those in London but also an exemplar of a mode of national renewal' (Mellor 2011: 45).

[49] This is of course a reference to the Biblical story of the twelve apostles of Christ being struck with tongues of fire as the Holy Spirit entered them giving them the ability to communicate God's word in all languages (see Acts 2: 1-13).

end of Section Three ('I think, again, of this place, / And of people […] United in the strife which divided them […] These men, and those who opposed them' (40-41)) is juxtaposed with the Blitz imagery just a few lines later at the beginning of Section Four:

> The dove descending breaks the air
> With flame of incandescent terror
> Of which the tongues declare
> The one discharge from sin and error.
> The only hope, or else despair
> Lies in the choice of pyre or pyre—
> To be redeemed from fire by fire. (41)

The idea of being redeemed from the fires of the Blitz by a purifying pentecostal fire may have resonated with less religious readers hopeful of building a new Britain in social and economic terms as much as those attracted by Eliot's vision of spiritual purification.

Four – Home Front

1. Danger and Distrust in the Wartime City

'More and more will the world be for the tough, the secretive, the treacherous and ruthless. Cities will be dangerous labyrinths' – so wrote H. G. Wells on the eve of war in *The Fate of Homo Sapiens* (cited in Wasson 2010: 7). While a number of writers such as Eliot and Greene had for years focused their descriptions of cities on the fear, threat and isolation of urban living rather than more positive suggestions of community, fiction of the Second World War is arguably more uniform in presenting cities as 'dangerous labyrinths', and this despite post-war descriptions of British city-dwellers pulling together in the face of German bombing raids. While there had always existed sections of cities where poverty and crime were endemic, what the Blitz and resulting blackout achieved was to make the experience of living in fear in cities more or less universal. Not surprisingly, such fear was primarily a result of the threat of aerial bombardment, but, as Stuart Hylton argues in *Careless Talk*, the 'disruption of war, not to mention the blackout, created ideal conditions for crime' (Hylton 2010: 186).[50] Martin Edwards uses notably similar language in his introduction to John G. Brandon's 1940 thriller *A Scream in Soho* in suggesting the blackout 'created conditions ideally suited to crime' (Edwards 2014: 7). Set during the 'phoney war' months of early 1940, *A Scream in Soho* is another novel to feature an 'enemy within' plotline that revolves around the theft of papers likely to help Germany win the war, and here that enemy takes full advantage of the opportunities for secrecy offered by the blackout, which not only covers the murder that sets the events of the novel in motion, but also the removal of the body before the arrival of the police. In *Caught*, similarly, in which, Wasson argues, Green presents 'the wartime city as a monstrous space, overwhelming and inexpressible' (Wasson 2010: 49), 'Pye felt menace in the streets' – but this too is long before the Blitz has begun (166), while in the short story 'Our City', Anna Kavan's first-person narrator paints a

[50] Hylton goes on in his chapter 'War Crimes' to seek to 'unravel the crime statistics for the war years' (186), statistics which include 'a rise in reported crimes from 303,711 in 1939 to 474,394 in 1945 (England and Wales) and a similar rise, of 54 percent, in the number of convictions' (186). Donald Thomas's *An Underworld at War* provides a detailed account of criminality in World War II (Thomas 2003).

black picture of living in, presumably, London in the second half of the war, a place not to 'take refuge' but 'more a place to escape from' (125). She describes 'a passionate secretiveness [that] characterizes the inhabitants of our city' (Kavan 1945: 135) and an uncommunicativeness that is figured as a city-wide silence:

> [t]he tension is frightful. With compressed lips and foreheads lined with anxiety every citizen crouches uneasily, peering up at the transparent black bell of silence hanging over our city. Is it going to break? (131)

The city authorities, meanwhile, are viewed with suspicion – 'O yes, they're ingenious enough for anything, those into whose hands we are committed' (132) – and her comment that 'I am sometimes tricked into forgetting the city; I fall into the trap of believing that I am free' (132) suggests her belief in the authoritarianism of the city regime. Paranoid, perhaps, the narrator believes that, soon, she may be looking back on her current time from '[w]ho knows what stony barrack, what freezing cell' (132). As Mellor comments, the 'eventual mental state of the protagonist, by the end of the tenth section of the story, is to accept that London will both haunt her and hunt her, and all that will be disclosed by this process' (Mellor 2011: 163).

The Ministry of Fear presents London as similarly threatening. We have already seen, in chapter 2, how authority figures like Prentice apparently take the law into their own hands in ways similar to those feared by Kavan's paranoid narrator. Furthermore, as Mellor comments, the 'extent and totality of destruction in the physical fabric of London in *The Ministry of Fear* renders any surviving and intact spaces "insecure" and "leaky"' (Mellor 2011: 145), while Greene also suggests the fragmented nature of wartime London:

> London was no longer one great city: it was a collection of small towns. People went to Hampstead or St John's Wood for a quiet week-end, and if you lived in Holborn you hadn't time between the sirens to visit friends as far away as Kensington. So special characteristics developed, and in Clapham where day raids were frequent there was a hunted look which was absent from Westminster, where the night raids were heavier but the shelters were better. (69)

It is in the temporary shelter of an underground public toilets during an air-raid that a death takes place at the end of the novel that for me seems a perfect expression of the 'enemy within' motif that I have been describing. Here, the anxieties of an unnamed character regarding the air-raid, and whether he should risk leaving the relative safety of the toilets or not, are juxtaposed with those of Hilfe and Rowe, for whom the shelter is altogether more dangerous than the streets outside. It is here that Hilfe drops his own metaphorical bombshell and tells Rowe the truth of his having killed his wife, assuming that this will destroy Rowe, psychologically at least. And it is here that Rowe decides to give Hilfe the gun he is carrying, which Hilfe then uses, realising that the only alternative to capture is suicide, to kill himself. When the unnamed character seems to reply to Hilfe's telling Rowe that 'You poisoned her […] Your Alice' by saying 'An awful night' (217), his response seems entirely appropriate, and when Hilfe asks Rowe a few moments later, 'What are you going to do?' it is the unnamed gentleman who replies, 'I think […] I'll make a dash for it' (218-9), a reply suggesting he is almost speaking for Rowe. His focus on the threat outside means he is oblivious to the danger both Rowe and Hilfe are in, in different ways, inside.

In *Urban Gothic of the Second World War: Dark London*, Sara Wasson cites Mary Désiree Anderson's description of the blackout darkness as 'a time of dread […] making familiar places seem strange and strange scenes familiar' (Wasson 2010: 13), and suggests that what had previously been literary, gothic metaphor was literalised during the war:

> [w]artime London was peculiarly rich as a 'phantasmogenetic centre', for it saw Gothic tropes become literal. People were buried alive in their own houses, night streets turned into a bizarre dreamscape where 'banshee' sirens wailed and death howled down in the form of wailing bombs, shelterers hid in open coffins, and even familiar structures hid new and unexpected horrors, like the ice-cream vans commandeered to carry human blood. (Wasson 2010: 4)

While Wasson's focus is on gothic tropes, a similar argument could be made of Greene's less overtly gothic fiction, for while his early novels of the 1920s and 1930s are often set in dark urban environments where shadowy figures lurk in shadowy corners, Greene's milieu could truly be said to be times of war in the sense that Britain did in fact become a darker, more shadowy place once war was declared and, in London and elsewhere, the blackout

was rigidly enforced. Thus while in pre-war novels such as *A Gun for Sale* (1936) and *Brighton Rock* (1938) Greene had described seedy urban underworlds, by *The Ministry of Fear* he was able to have his protagonist go literally underground. 'Where can I go?' Rowe asks Hilfe when he believes the police will soon be trying to track him down. 'Oh, just underground' (61) is Hilfe's reply and one assumes he means this in the metaphorical sense of undercover. 'But he had to find a bed and so somewhere south of the river he obeyed Hilfe's advice and at last went underground' (63) – and so Rowe heads for one of the underground bomb shelters that were the night-time refuge of so many ordinary Londoners during the Blitz. Perhaps it could be said then that while Greene's wartime fiction is set in a recognisably similar environment to his pre-war fiction, that environment had ceased to be on the periphery but had become a more mainstream experience for Britons. Equally, while danger and distrust pervade earlier novels, in *The Ministry of Fear* there is a sense that Greene is describing something common not just to the criminal underworld of *Brighton Rock*, say, but to Britons more generally.

Ellmann makes a similar point regarding the fictions of Elizabeth Bowen, arguing that 'London, under siege, with its shocks and dislocations, its "inscrutable canyons" and "glissades or ruin", its wanderers and ghosts, resembled the world that Bowen had already dreamed into existence in her fiction'.[51] The sense of fear experienced by Londoners during wartime is captured in the story 'Mysterious Kôr':

> the sky, in whose glassiness floated no clouds but only opaque balloons, remained glassy-silent. The Germans no longer came by the full-moon. Something more immaterial seemed to threaten, and to be keeping people at home […] People stayed at home with a fervour that could be felt: the buildings strained with battened-down human life, but not a beam, not a voice, not a note from a radio escaped. (Bowen 1945: 173)

The fact that German bombers are not expected raises the question of why '[p]eople stayed at home with a fervour that could be felt', suggesting that what presumably threatens the inhabitants of the city, keeping them locked, silent, in their houses, is something closer to

[51] Ellmann 2004: 31; Ellmann is citing Bowen's *The Mulberry Tree* 1986: 99, 23.

home. As is suggested in a number of texts, however, like the city itself, far from offering refuge, to use Kavan's phrase, one's home is often 'more a place to escape from' (Kavan 1945: 125).

2. Home, Sweet Home?

> The scene between Hereward and Dr Bogan was one of many which made Easterham Manor resemble a battlefield. Even before Elizabeth's death, Nigel had heard the premonitory rumblings of conflict. Now, war was openly joined. But, like the war that was convulsing Europe, it would be an affair of long boredoms, broken by sudden brief spasms of violent action. (Blake 1940: 71)

This figuring of home as battlefield in Nicholas Blake's detective thriller of 1940, *The Case of the Abominable Snowman,* captures the weakening of the traditional view of the home as a place of privacy and safety during the Second World War, particularly in those urban centres targeted by German bombers where one's home became a place of danger to be vacated for the comparative security of cellars, bomb shelters and the underground or, more long-term, the countryside. This was the first time in centuries that being at war had led Britons to see the home as no longer a place of safety. German bombs had of course been dropped on Britain in the First World War – '[t]he Germans made over 103 air raids in that war, killing over 1400 people and injuring almost 4000' (Hylton 2010: 37) – but this was small-scale in comparison: rather, the last time civilians had really experienced war in any direct way had been during the Civil War of three hundred years earlier. Just as so much literature of the time concerns enemies within the state rather than across the Channel, however, so it is rarely German bombing raids but internal threats that cause the home to be presented as a place of danger, secrecy and lack of privacy. *The Case of the Abominable Snowman* is just one example of a novel where the home is depicted as a place of danger owing not to external threats so much as internal. Of course, the crime novel had traditionally, like the popular board game Cluedo, staged death in the home, but such death is now frequently found in the work of non-crime novelists such as Hamilton, du Maurier

and Bowen, in whose work there are a number of unnatural deaths that take place in the home, none of which results from the actions of enemy combatants.

The closest anyone comes in the fiction considered here to dying at the hands of the actual enemy is Rowe in *The Ministry of Fear*, when his house is hit by a bomb, although even here one could argue that the bomb actually saves him from the man he has been having tea and cake with, Poole, who has just tried to poison him:

> [h]is chief feeling was astonishment and anger, that anybody should do this to *him*. He dropped the cup on the floor and stood up. The cripple trundled away from him like something on wheels: the huge back and long, strong arms prepared themselves ... and then the bomb went off. (Greene 1943: 28)

Rowe's anger is partly fuelled by the fact he used precisely the same method to help his terminally ill wife to die, again at home, something he has not forgiven himself for, but it is the setting too that adds to his disgust – the decorum suggested by the homely, domestic scene, the tea and cake and news on the radio. The sense that the bombing raids are in fact less dangerous than the threat posed by fellow citizens is suggested too by the fact that on the one occasion that Rowe heads for an underground air-raid shelter, something he never normally does, he does so not out of fear of German bombers but of the English police whom he believes to be hunting him with regard to the 'murder' of Mr Cost, while the nightmares that trouble his sleep while there are not of being buried alive by a direct hit, but of trying to tell his mother, who died years ago, before the Great War, that he killed his wife. The enemy, then, is partly Rowe's fellow Englishmen, and partly his own conscience; he remains, in contrast, largely unconcerned by the enemy beyond the sea.

The home seems similarly unsafe in *The Heat of the Day* and again, when Robert fears for his life while in Stella's apartment – an apartment that has for two years been a home for Robert – it is not the possibility of being bombed that frightens him. Like Rowe, he too is on the run from the police and it is because this is his home, or second home at least, that it has become such a dangerous place to be, as it is precisely where the authorities would look for him (as Stella says, 'you were mad to come here' (Bowen 1948: 287)). It is, however, far from certain that the authorities are looking for Robert, as Harrison, the counter-espionage agent who has unearthed his treachery, has for some time chosen

not to pass on what he has found out. Nonetheless, Robert becomes convinced that the flat is being watched and that he must therefore make his departure under cover of night and via the roof. His anxieties seem confirmed by the sentence that ends the chapter, when, following his departure, we are told that '[i]n the street below, not so much a step as the semi-stumble of someone after long standing shifting his position could be, for the first time by her, heard' (290). It is the clause 'for the first time by her', namely by Stella, that creates uncertainty. Why could she not hear the watcher before? Why is it only at the moment that Robert leaves, when Stella's fears regarding his safety are heightened, that she becomes suddenly aware of the presence of this hidden threat? Even if she does hear movement outside, can she be sure it is someone watching the flat and not just someone passing by? Despite the apparent definiteness of this statement, one is left wondering whether it isn't Robert's fears, and later Stella's, that lead them to believe the flat is not in fact safe, and Robert to make the decision to leave via the roof, a decision that leads to his death. Perhaps the real enemy within, in other words, is the fear that exists within one's own mind. As we only know what Robert is thinking from what he tells Stella, it could be that he in fact has no such fears, and that he decides to go up onto the roof as a way of committing suicide, perhaps believing the game to be up and this to be the best way out for everyone – or at least, best for Stella, who may be spared the shame of Robert's public outing as a spy, as well as for the shady group of fellow fifth columnists whose identities may be kept secret by Robert's dying before the authorities can question him. Robert's insistence on Harrison being out front, and his less plausible (given Harrison's apparent commitment to cover up Robert's actions and the fact he is only ever seen working alone) assertion that there is almost certainly also someone covering the rear of the building – hence the need to leave via the skylight – might just be another deception, a way of getting up onto the roof without Stella trying to stop him. The first sentence of the following chapter, which refers to 'Robert's fall or leap from the roof' (291), leaves us, like Stella, none the wiser as to whether Robert did indeed commit suicide or accidentally lose his footing, so the true extent of Robert's fears remains hidden from us.

Robert's fears of being captured while visiting Holme Dene, the 'man-eating' family home where he grew up (257), the evening before coming to Stella's flat, are equally strong, hence his 'start[ing] outright' when the phone suddenly rings, 'so much so that Anna, as

though he had thrust her from him, grabbed at the air with a little cry', leading Mrs Kelway to demand, 'So what is the matter, Robert?' Recounting the experience to Stella the following night, Robert tells her that it was the sudden realisation that he might be captured in a place he hated so much that caused such 'terror':

> [t]ill then I'd only known I was in danger: I'd never felt it. Must have been the effect of the house, them! What a place to be taken in, to be taken away from – *theirs* to be the last faces I saw […] My mother had been waiting for this: she wished it! It would be they who got me into this trap. (278)

Robert's suggestion that in some way it is his family who have laid 'this trap' is again telling. This is true, to some extent, the following night with Stella, as the only reason Robert is now apparently threatened by capture and imprisonment is that Stella revealed to him, against Harrison's instructions, that his espionage was known. And it is true too in the sense that Harrison triggered this series of events from within the very apartment that Robert thinks of as more or less his own – his dressing gown hangs in the bathroom, for example. In a telling phrase that goes a long way to blurring exactly who the enemy actually is, Harrison is described earlier in the novel when he first tells Stella of Robert's espionage as entering the flat and looking 'about him like a German in Paris' (44); Stella also says he rings up 'like the Gestapo' (33). That, for Stella, it is Harrison who is the enemy is made clear when he next visits her in her apartment and tries to explain that he has left his livelihood – his work in counter-espionage – 'outside':

> [t]o her, tonight, 'outside' meant the harmless world: the mischief was in her own and in other rooms. The grind and scream of battles, mechanized advances excoriating flesh and country, tearing through nerves and tearing up trees, were indoor-plotted: this was a war of dry cerebration inside windowless walls. (142)

Although Stella is here thinking about the war generally, it is not only in other rooms that the mischief lies but hers too, and given that she has just attacked Harrison for causing *her* to become a spy ('[y]ou may not feel what it is like to be a spy; I do – ever since you came to me with that story' (142)), it is clear that while Harrison may be one cause of the mischief

in the room, she is perhaps another. Stella seems aware, in other words, of a threat that exists not just within what she describes claustrophobically as 'windowless walls' but within herself. Ellmann's comment that '[h]aving invaded her flat […] Harrison proceeds to invade Stella's mind with knowledge about Robert's treachery' (Ellmann 2001: 2) seems appropriate here, as does her assessment elsewhere of *The Heat of the Day* that it is 'a novel about leaks, about the porousness of architectural and psychic spaces, about the failure to keep secrets in, intruders out' (Ellmann 2004: 153).

Henry Green's *Loving* is another novel about leaks ('There's not much is kept mum in this house love', Kate tells Edith (Green 1945: 177)) and fears regarding the apparent 'failure to keep secrets in, intruders out', but here, interestingly, the sense of being under siege that presumably forces Robert to seek his escape from the roof in *The Heat of the Day* is experienced by a group of characters living in a castle in neutral Ireland during the war. One might have expected that both the castle walls and neutrality of the state would provide some sense of security to the mostly English characters living there, but in fact Green dramatises anxieties that border on paranoia regarding both the possibility of a German invasion and the threat posed by local Irishmen. Edith explains her suddenly bursting into tears, for example, by saying, 'it's all this talk of invasion – an' the Jerries an' the Irish' (102), while Raunce worries that 'we're at the mercy of any 'ooligan, German or Irish, situated as we are' (189). They seem particularly anxious about the latter, however, Mrs Tennant commenting twice that '[w]e're really in enemy country here you know' (23), while the servants talk 'with dread of the I.R.A.' (92), described by Mrs Welch as '[t]hieves and murderers' (153), and given that we are told the castle 'contains the most celebrated eighteenth-century folly in Eire that had still to be burned down [by the I.R.A.]' (182), perhaps this fear is justified. Paranoia amongst the servants reaches a crescendo following the visit of an insurance agent, whom Raunce believes to be a member of the I.R.A., presumably seeking information about the castle and its inhabitants in preparation for an attack:

> [a]n I.R.A. man now. An inspector from the Insurance Company. Then the drains an' all on top of all this bombing not to mention the invasion with Jerry set to cross over with drawn swords, it's plenty to get anyone down. (146)

The footman Albert is so terrified by what Raunce says here that, his face 'dead white', he announces that he is 'crossing over the other side to enlist' (146), his choice of words suggesting a kind of desertion. This provokes a shocked response, Raunce warning him that he will 'be killed' (147), but Albert is determined, the ordering of his statement that 'I wish to get me out of here, then go an' fight' (147) suggesting his desire to escape the castle takes precedence over any feeling of patriotism. He is not the only character to state that they would rather return to the relative safety of war-torn, blitzed England than remain endangered in neutral Ireland, nor is he the only one to actually do so: the novel ends with Raunce and Edith leaving. What holds many characters back, however, is fear of what awaits them back in Britain, although here they seem less fearful of German air-raids, though this plays its part, than of the British authorities. Raunce warns Kate that she will be

> 'called up in the Army when you land on the other side. […] Didn't you know? They've Army police waitin' where the travellers come off the boat. You'll be took straight off to the depot.'
>
> 'I wouldn't go.'
>
> 'Then if you resist it's the glass 'ouse for you my girl.'
>
> 'The glass 'ouse? What's that?'
>
> 'Army Detention Barracks ducks. It's rough in them places.' (98)

Raunce's choice of language is telling, too, when he expresses how upset he is that Albert has gone over 'to give 'imself up, to enlist' (196), and suggestive of the fears of authoritarianism explored in chapter 2. Mrs Burch, furthermore, is convinced that the war in Britain has created conditions of real danger for women, and warns Edith and Kate that 'over at home they were all being sent in the army to be leapt on so she honestly believed by drunken soldiers in darkness' (38). Yet while '[s]he said they were never to leave the Castle, that they didn't know their luck', at the same time she sobs that to stay is 'to throw away' one's life (38). Mrs Burch's sense of being caught between castle and country, home and homeland, terrified of both, is shared by several others, most notably Raunce, who at different times in the novel is determined to stay in Ireland, and bring his mother over away from the danger of the Blitz, and at others to leave for Britain to escape the dangers posed by being in 'enemy country', as Mrs Tennant describes it. This indecision is difficult for Edith

to understand: 'One minute you say the Jerries are comin' over […] and next you won't have a body try and get over home while there's time', she complains (102).

If Raunce decides in the end that the castle is the more dangerous place to be, however, it is perhaps because of the threat over and above that of the Germans and the Irish posed by his fellow English servants. This is something expressed by Edith when she adds to her explanation above of why she has suddenly started crying, that 'it's all this talk of invasion – an' the Jerries an' the Irish', stating, 'then what I witnessed when I called my young lady – an' you makin' out I never seen what I did – oh it's disgustin' that's what this old place is, it's horrible' (102). The event to which she is referring is her having brought breakfast into Mrs Jack's room only to find her mistress in bed with another man – another act of personal treachery in literature of the time. It is her extramarital relations with Captain Davenport which cause Mrs Jack to become 'agitated' (167) when her mother-in-law Mrs Tennant complains that 'when you feel there's someone in the house you can't trust matters become almost impossible' (167) and her wishing '[i]f only there wasn't this feeling of distrust hanging over one' (169), even though Mrs Tennant is actually referring to her suspicion that the footman Albert has stolen her ring (in fact, it is the cook's nephew, also called Albert, an evacuee, who has done so). While Mrs Tennant is suspicious of the servants ('What do we know about the servants?' she muses (36)), they are suspicious of her and Mrs Jack for leaving them unprotected when they returns to England: 'per'aps they've learned something about the invasion', Mrs Welch suggests when she learns Captain Davenport has also returned, though Mrs Burch, aware of his affair with Mrs Jack, replies, 'Maybe there's something you don't know Mary […] and which has nothing to do with wars or rumours of wars' (100). The servants are, meanwhile, even more suspicious of each other, Mrs Burch describing Raunce, for example, as a 'deathly menace' (53), so much so that Mrs Welch begins padlocking her saucepans and takes on a role of home guard ('I daren't abandon this kitchen day or night, not till I go to me bed when day is done that is and then I double lock the door. On guard I am,' she says (152)), while the sole Irish servant Paddy locks himself up for days on end with the peacocks to protect them. 'What I always say is, if one can't trust the people about you where is one?' Mrs Tennant remarks (169), a comment that summarises the fundamental problem at Kinalty Castle.

The home is an equally threatening place in T. S. Eliot's 1939 verse play *The Family Reunion*. Harry returns to his childhood home after some eight years of absence hoping to 'get rid of […] the shadows that I wanted to escape' and to 'escape from one life to another' (Eliot 1939: 40), only to discover that not only will he not be able to find '[w]hatever I hoped for' but that the 'shadows that I wanted to escape' are waiting for him:

> *Harry*: Come out!
> [*The curtains part, revealing the Eumenides in the window embrasure*.]
> Why do you show yourselves now for the first time? (Eliot 1939: 57)

Although Harry states that he has been haunted by these deities of vengeance for some years, it is only when he returns to the supposed safety of the home that they reveal themselves for the first time, suggesting that he was safer when he was away: '[t]his is the first time that I have seen them. / In the Java straits, in the Sunda Sea […] They were always there. But I did not see them' (23). Eliot's play is in fact more complex than this – Martha C. Carpentier argues that Eliot sought, unsuccessfully perhaps, to '"transform" the avenging Erinyes into benevolent Eumenides', 'guiding angels which must be welcomed and followed' (Carpentier 1989: 17) – but the Eumenides are nevertheless presented as a threatening, eerie presence; and even if they are to be welcomed and followed, the fact they appear for the first time in the home and lead Harry almost immediately away suggests that if redemption is to be found, it is to be found elsewhere.

If the Eumenides are best seen as 'ghosts' personifying Harry's 'animosity towards both his mother and his wife' (Grover Smith cited in Carpentier 1989: 18) then the ghostly presence in the title story of Bowen's *The Demon Lover and Other Stories* seems less ambiguously the ghost of Mrs Drover's dead fiancé, killed twenty-five years previously during the Great War, a symbol perhaps of the haunting of the Second World War by the First. Indeed, Neil Corcoran's comment with regard to another story in the collection, 'Ivy Gripped the Steps', that 'the First World War persists under the surface of the Second' (Corcoran 2004: 157) applies to this story too, although he is also right to argue that this 'return of the dead should also be read […] as figuring the actual dead of the Blitz, who nowhere appear literally [in *The Demon Lover and Other Stories*] … but their presence is,

nevertheless, everywhere' (148). As with *The Family Reunion*, it is when Mrs Drover returns to her home (from the country where she has taken her family to escape from the dangers of the Blitz) that she finds herself in danger. Having unlocked the front door she finds a letter waiting for her dated that morning that, mysteriously enough, has not been posted through the letter box but left on the hall table. Wondering who can have left it, how they might have got into the house, how they might have known that she was going to come to the house that very day, and whether they might still be there quickly erodes any confidence Mrs Drover has in the safety of her own home and she decides to leave as quickly as possible:

> [u]nable, for some minutes, to go on kneeling with her back exposed to the empty room, Mrs Drover rose from the chest to sit on an upright chair whose back was firmly against the wall […] It was possible that she was not alone now. She might be being waited for downstairs […] The thing was to get out […] She would slip down the street and round the side of the square to where the square gave on the main road. She would return in the taxi, safe, and bring the solid driver into the house with her to pick up the parcels from room to room. The idea of the taxi driver made her decisive, bold; she unlocked the door, went to the top of the staircase and listened down. (Bowen 1945: 86-7)

It is Mrs Drover's increasing paranoia that she is being controlled by someone who seems to wield supernatural forces and may have, in seeking to protect herself from any external threat by locking the door, actually have placed herself in greater danger by blocking her escape, that leads her to do what she was apparently intended to from the very beginning: Mrs Drover leaves her house and heads for the taxi rank, trying 'not to keep looking behind her' (87), but the danger actually lies ahead – it is the taxi driver who turns out to be her demon lover, waiting for her to come. While critics have debated whether the story is best read as a study in psychology or a story of the supernatural,[52] what is worth noting is that

[52] Corcoran, for example, suggests that the 'domestic space of the house has been defamiliarized for her, estranged from her, by her absence and its dereliction; and the story, a tale of two Augusts, is very much

this is another story that features the dominant motif of the 'enemy within', but while it is her fear of an enemy that may or may not be within the house that prompts Mrs Drover to act as she does, in the end it is the enemy within herself – her fear and paranoia – that brings about her apparent downfall.

It is clear that Manderley, the ancestral home of the de Winters that dominates the plotline of du Maurier's *Rebecca*, inspires similar fear and paranoia in the novel's narrator, even after the house has been destroyed and the narrator is far away, with Maxim, on the Mediterranean. The opening line of the novel – '[l]ast night I dreamt I went to Manderley again' (du Maurier 1938: 1) – indicates the narrator's inability to repress her traumatic memories of the past, which continue to bubble back up to the surface of her consciousness in her dreams. On waking, the narrator determines that Manderley will be a 'sepulchre, our fear and suffering […] buried in the ruins', and that she will remember it 'as it might have been, could I have lived there without fear' (4), but the narrative that ensues suggests the impossibility of this. From her first sighting of her husband's ancestral home, Manderley – with its 'blood-red wall' of rhododendrons (73), its labyrinthine rooms and corridors in which the narrator loses herself, and its haunting presences of the living yet seemingly dead Mrs Danvers, with her 'skull's face, parchment-white, set on a skeleton's frame' and her hand which, 'limp and heavy, deathly cold […] lay in mine like a deathless thing' (74), and the dead yet seemingly still living Rebecca – is described by the narrator in Gothic terms, a haunted house where the ghost of Rebecca roams the corridors: '[s]ometimes when I walk along the corridor here, I fancy I hear her just behind me. That quick, light footstep. I could not mistake it anywhere' (194), says Mrs Danvers, and the narrator seems to sense her presence just as much. While Rebecca's ghost seems in reality a product of Mrs Danvers' grief at Rebecca's loss and the narrator's sense of insecurity, which causes her to compare herself unfavourably with Rebecca, it is clear nonetheless that Manderley is indeed a dangerous place that inspires acts of violence and cruelty, most obviously the murder of Rebecca by her husband. When he admits having killed her to the narrator, Maxim makes it clear that he did so 'because of Manderley' (308), by which he presumably means not just

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preoccupied with – in fact, pits in radical opposition – domesticity and its other' (Corcoran 2004: 158); see also Hughes 1973, Fraustino 1980, Calder 1994 and Porcelli 2015.

the bricks and mortar of a house or the forests and gardens of an estate, but a generations-long family history whereby the name Manderley has become synonymous with de Winter. Rebecca poses a threat to Manderley in a similar way to Prentice's posing a threat to Mrs Bellairs' home in *The Ministry of Fear*, where he gives the order to 'skin the place alive' (175) – a curious personification that has led Mellor to suggest that 'the physical body of the flat […] is haunted by treason' (Mellor 2011: 146) – and it is because of this that the home poses a threat to her: Maxim murders Rebecca to protect Manderley.

The home poses a similar threat, albeit in different ways, in Hamilton's play *Gaslight*, first produced in December 1938, which is set entirely within the home of the Manninghams, and where Jack Manningham uses the very furniture as a weapon against his wife, Bella, as he seeks slowly and deliberately to drive her insane. For example, as a way of showing her that she is beginning to do things that she later cannot remember (not unlike the condition afflicting George in *Hangover Square*), Jack takes down from the wall and hides a picture and then accuses Bella of having herself done so and forgotten (Hamilton 1938: 9). As a result, Bella's home becomes a terrifying place, not least because her husband never allows her to leave it. 'Is it the house itself you fear, Mrs Manningham?' the character Rough asks, to which she replies, 'Yes, I suppose it is. I hate the house' (18). Bella fears particularly to be alone in her room ('No, no – not my room ... For God's sake, don't send me to my room!' (12)) because it is there that she truly believes she is going mad, as shortly after her husband goes out she hears footsteps in the boarded-up attic above and the gaslight in her room dims, suggesting that somewhere else in the house, someone is putting on a light. In fact, it is her husband overhead, turning up the light, having come back to the house over the roof-tops. At the end of the play the tables are turned, however, for just as his presence in the attic room causes his wife to panic and begin to doubt her sanity, so in the closing moments of the play the lights again 'fade slowly down almost to darkness' (53), this time signifying that police officers have entered the house to bar Manningham's escape. The Victorian setting and the dramatic device of plunging the stage into darkness seem particularly notable given that within months of the first production of *Gaslight* London would for the first time since the Victorian era experience a darkness unknown following the rise of electric lighting, and the word blackout would transfer from the stage to the city.

Bella's confinement within her own house, in such close proximity with her husband whom she trusts but who is in fact plotting against her, is not dissimilar to Honor Harris's situation in du Maurier's *The King's General*. Because she is crippled by a fall early in the novel, and is thus unable to move even from her bedroom to the dining room without help, Honor is physically even more powerless than others to escape the events of the Civil War during which the novel is set. In other texts considered here such as 'The Demon Lover' or *Gaslight* or *The Heat of the Day* the protagonist is desperate to escape from their own home, but this is something Honor is wholly unable to do. What is different, however, is that at first glance at least this appears to be a novel where the danger lies without, not within, and it is only with the arrival of Parliamentarian forces, 'the alien enemy' (155) who seize and ransack the house that Honor or any of the other inhabitants are threatened in any serious way, even though before this Honor has described the different branches of the Rashleigh family in residence as 'rival factions' warring against each other (70). Nonetheless, when Honor has to hide Dick Grenvile, the son of the eponymous king's general, from capture by the parliamentarians, it is her fellow prisoners that she fears the most, and in particular Gartred Grenvile, Dick's own aunt and the woman responsible for Honor being crippled in the first place, of whom Honor says: '[w]hoever won or lost the campaign in the west, it would not matter much to Gartred, she would see to it that she had a footing on the winning side. She could play the spy for both' (170). Having only recently been warned by her relative Jonathan Rashleigh, the owner of Menabilly, that she must keep the secret of a hidden staircase built into a buttress at one corner of the house leading down to an underground chamber wholly to herself, because '[s]pies abound, as you are well aware. Neighbours have long ears, and even a close friend can turn informer' (115), Honor is relieved when forced to hide Dick there that '[n]ot one soul […] knew the secret of the buttress but myself […] making betrayal an impossibility' (151). Gartred's suspicion of the secret chamber's existence, however, and her further suspicion that it might contain money collected by Jonathan for the King's cause, money that she herself hopes to attain despite her apparent commitment to the Royalist cause, means she is the person whom Honor fears most. Ultimately, however, it is not his aunt who brings about Dick's death, but his father, and the secret chamber at Menabilly becomes the means of Dick's losing rather than preserving his life. Whether it is entirely Dick's choice that he shuts himself into the chamber and destroys

the means of leaving or whether he is partly coerced into doing so by his father is never made clear, but in a postscript to the novel, du Maurier refers to the real-life renovations of Menabilly in 1824, in which a chamber was found beneath the buttress and, here, 'the skeleton of a young man seated on a stool, a trencher at his feet […] dressed in the clothes of a Cavalier, as worn during the period of the Civil War' (373). It seems fitting in some way that du Maurier should have created a fictional explanation of this real-life discovery at a time when civilians were still being buried alive in shelters intended to protect them from the falling bombs, but in doing so, just like in *The Ministry of Fear*, where Willi Hilfe takes his own life in an underground shelter, to have described a death that results not from the actions of any external enemy, but from one much closer to home.

3. Under Surveillance

That disturbing sense of being watched, or the house being watched at least, that presumably causes Robert to rashly try to escape via the roof in *The Heat of the Day* (previously Stella has returned to this apartment to find it a 'a watched house' with 'a figure posted, waiting' (Bowen 1948: 127)), can be found in a number of other writers' work of the period. Doubtless this on one level reflects one effect of the bombing raids, which was to open up previously private spaces to public view, to push 'the private space of the house into the public arena', as Porcelli puts it (Porcelli 2013: 25). As Neil Corcoran states, 'hitherto private, domestic, spaces are, quite literally, when walls are knocked down and interiors become visible, exposed and intruded upon by bombing' (Corcoran 2004: 195), something anticipated by Greene in his pre-war novel *The Confidential Agent*, where D. considers that 'a person's home had a kind of innocency. When a house-front gave way before an explosion and showed the iron bed, the chairs, the hideous picture and the chamber-pot, you had a sense of rape: intrusion into a stranger's home was an act of lust' (Greene 1939: 162). Ambler expresses a similar sentiment in his 1938 thriller *Epitaph for a Spy*, where 'searching someone's room' is seen as 'inexcusable': '[i]t is the ingrained respect for privacy that is violated. There is a strange door, a strange door-handle and, beyond it, part of

another person's life. To open the door seems as inexcusable an intrusion as spying on a pair of lovers' (Ambler 1938: 131).

In Greene's *Loving*, however, privacy is so regularly violated that it is clear that such behaviour has moved from being 'inexcusable' to commonplace. As Mengham notes, 'everyone is under suspicion' (Mengham 1982: 124), 'everyone is under surveillance' (115) and there is a 'common need to inform on others' (115). Thus Mrs Welch 'advanced one eye to a hole and grimly watched' (Green 1945: 55) into the next room and at another moment sees through a window her nephew kill a peacock, while Edith and Kate spy on Raunce as he enters into the chamber where the peacocks live through a window from Paddy's room, a room they have silently entered while he is asleep. Such surveillance allows characters to gain advantages over each other, leading Mengham to comment that 'Eldon's blackmail is only the most obvious exercise of betrayal when it requires no effort for any member of the household to inform on all the others' and that this creates an 'atmosphere of oppressive perspicuousness, a general recognition of being exposed to scrutiny […] It is as if each person is subject to an irresistible gaze' (Mengham 1982: 115). Characters go out of their way to not be heard talking, and Mengham argues that 'language [is used] as a form of "resistance" to surveillance', suggesting that the insurance agent Matthewson is an example of this, his deliberate lisping a 'form of camouflage' that suggests, falsely, 'his potency has been removed' (122). Characters' mimicry of others, a feature of the novel, the most memorable example being the servants' mimicry of Matthewson, can be seen as similarly motivated in allowing a kind of self-effacement.

The 'absolute capability of observation which nothing escapes', which Mengham believes is symbolised by the weather vane connected to a map in *Loving* (117), and characters' resulting vulnerability is similarly suggested at the beginning of Bowen's 'Mysterious Kôr' by Bowen, who Deer suggests 'interrogates the corrosive effect of wartime secrecy and surveillance' (Deer 2009: 168). Bowen describes London on a brilliantly clear night that makes a mockery of any attempt to hide the geography of the city from German bombers through an enforced blackout:

> [f]ull moonlight drenched the city, and searched it; there was not a niche left to stand in. The effect was remorseless […] The soaring new flats and crouching old

> shops and houses looked equally brittle under the moon, which blazed in windows that looked its way. The futility of the black-out became laughable. (Bowen 1945: 173)

There is a strong sense here of the home being, as Robert Hewison described the experience of living in London during the Blitz, 'under siege' (Hewison 1977), and the moon is described in militaristic terms: its intrusion is an 'advance', its beams 'a searchlight […] turned full and steady upon her defended windows' (173) and, when Callie is lured into parting the curtains, 'the light marched in' (181). It is unclear whether the moon is ultimately a benevolent or malevolent force, however, for though its advance is successful, its victory does not bring the expected destruction of Callie's world; rather, it 'exonerated and beautified the lateness of the lovers' return. The moon's symbolism is thus ambiguous, threatening yet beautifying, apparently in cahoots with the enemy, revealing what is meant to be hidden in the blackout yet, given that '[t]he Germans no longer came by the full-moon' (173), perhaps working rather to light up any enemy aircraft and thus an ally against bombardment. London in Bowen's opening descriptive passage is a ghost-city, with Pepita and Alfred for some time its only visible inhabitants – hence Pepita's reference to 'Mysterious Kôr', a place from a poem she read long ago that continues to haunt her imagination:

> *Mysterious Kôr thy walls forsaken stand,*
> *Thy lonely towers beneath a lonely moon —* [53]

Kôr is lonely, isolated, but it is precisely this that Pepita finds so attractive: 'we'd be alone there', she says wistfully, 'reminded that they were homeless on this his first night of leave in London. They were, that was to say, in London without any hope of any place of their own' (177). There is thus an immediate reason for Pepita's longing for Kôr, that is, somewhere where she can be alone with the man she loves, something impossible in London, where she shares a tiny 'flatlet' with her girl-friend Callie. What she wants, in other words, is privacy.

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[53] Bowen 1945: 174: the poem remembered is the sonnet 'She' by Andrew Lang (from *Grass of Parnassus* (1888)), itself based on another text, Rider Haggard's *She: A History of Adventure* (1887).

While it is the moon that invades and intrudes in 'Mysterious Kôr', in the opening story of the collection, 'In the Square', it is the sun. If the letter that appears on the hall table of Mrs Drover's shut-up house in 'The Demon Lover' can be seen as a 'disruption of legitimate privacies of a kind […] endemic to the wartime existence described in other stories' in the collection (Corcoran 2004: 59), then 'In the Square' is perhaps the most obvious example of a story that is about loss of privacy. It is a story in which everyone watches everyone else and the most dominant symbols are the doors always left open and, more poignantly, the square itself being left open by the destruction of several houses. Magdela complains more than once of a lack of privacy: 'I never am [alone]. This is my only room in the house – and, even so, as you see, Bennet comes in. The house seems to belong to everyone now' (11). Bennet leaves the door to the drawing room open as he leaves, adding to the two windows already open that must have allowed Magdela, Rupert thinks, to have heard his arrival. The effect of these open doors is that everyone is able to hear everyone else, as is made clear at the beginning of the story, when the opening of the front door allows Rupert on the outside to suddenly hear everything happening within:

> [b]y contrast with the fixed outdoor silence, this dark interior was a cave of sound. The house was now like a machine with the silencer taken off it; there was nothing muted […] At the top of the house a bath was being run out. A tray of glasses was moved […] (8).

This seems an environment unsuitable to the keeping of secrets yet the two main occupants of the house, Magdela and her husband Anthony's secretary Gina, seem intent on just that. It is not made clear whether Magdela knows Gina has been having an affair with Anthony, although the suspicion at the end of the story that the telephone call she receives is from a lover of her own suggests she is not unaware of the liaison. Whether she knows that Gina is now seeing someone else and is trying to find a way of cutting ties with Anthony is even less clear, though given the nature of the house they live in, it seems likely. There is certainly an irony that none of this is made clear, that in a story that seems to be all about the difficulty of keeping secrets it is the reader who is effectively kept in the dark, despite the directness of the third-person narrative that traces the key event of the story – the telephone call – from the perspectives of both Gina and Magdela. The narrative in this sense

is similar to the sunlight that lights the square, lighting up parts of the square brilliantly but leaving the rest in shadow:

> [a]t about nine o'clock on this hot bright July evening the square looked mysterious: it was completely empty, and a whitish reflection, ghost of the glare of midday, came from the pale-coloured façades on its four sides and seemed to brim to the top […] the sun, now too low to enter normally, was able to enter brilliantly at a point where three of the houses had been bombed away; two or three of the may trees, dark with summer, caught on their tops the illicit gold. Each side of the breach, exposed wallpapers were exaggerated into viridians, yellows and corals that they had probably never been […] Much of the glassless windows were shuttered or boarded up, but some framed hollow inside dark. (7)

The first paragraph of the story and of the collection as a whole, this resonant writing is immediately suggestive of key themes that run through the collection: the sense of isolation ('completely empty'), of loss (it is 'evening' and the heat and light of the hot July day are fading to memory, living on, in an extremely telling phrase given the ghosts that haunt the collection, as the 'ghost of the glare of midday'), of vulnerability ('exposed wallpapers', 'glassless windows' that are 'shuttered or boarded up' in a desperate attempt to preserve the security and privacy of the home, but 'some framed hollow inside dark'), of mystery ('mysterious', but more evocatively perhaps the oxymoronic 'dark with summer').

In *The Heat of the Day*, too, there is a haunting sense of being watched. 'The habit of guardedness was growing on her, as on many other people' (Bowen 1948: 26), we are told, hence Stella's sense of discomfort whenever she is with Harrison, who inspires 'the feeling of being looked at twice – being viewed then checked over again at the same moment' (12), though Harrison too is forced on occasion to experience the same feeling of being surveyed: Louie 'had given him, the watcher, the enormity of the sense of having been watched' (14). Ernestina, meanwhile, complains after an offer has been made on the Kelways' house that whoever wants to buy the house has not come to view it, or not openly anyway: 'why cannot they come to the door and openly ring the bell? Creeping and spying about when we did not know, calculating the value of everything, planning how soon they could get us out […] This is England, Robert: one expects to have privacy' (254). Earlier in

the novel Stella visits Holme Dene with a view to trying to find evidence from Robert's childhood that he would be capable of betraying his country but finds it is she who is under surveillance. Mrs Kelway is presented as just one of a family of spies who seems to see everything that takes place around her, meaning that no privacy exists within Holme Dene. Her chair, we are told, 'was posted midway across the floor. Was this position strategic? – from it she commanded all three windows, also the leaded squints in the inglenook' (108-9). She is not alone: '[w]e have eyes like gimlets,' Ernestina tells Stella after Robert's nephew and niece reveal that they observed Robert and Stella's arrival while 'under cover' (112). It is the lack of privacy and sense of being under constant surveillance from within that makes Holme Dene, to again use Lee's phrase quoted in chapter 1, the 'breeding ground of the traitor' (cited in Suh 2009: 149):

> [u]pstairs, as elsewhere, it had been planned with a sort of playful circumlocution – corridors, archways, recesses, half-landings, ledges, niches and balustrades combined to fuddle any sense of direction and check, as far as possible, progress from room to room […] Their private hours, it could be taken, were spent in nerving themselves for inevitable family confrontations at meal-times, and in working onto their faces the required expression of having nothing to hide.
>
> At the same time the intelligence service had been good: everyone knew where everyone else was and, in time, what everyone else was up to […] It had not been possible for anybody to leave the house unseen. (256)

The experience of growing up at Holme Dene, it could be argued, was for Robert ideal preparation for the life of the spy ahead of him – with its dual focus on watching others while trying to keep one's own movements as hidden as possible, as Neil Corcoran argues:

> Harrison interprets Stella's visit there as her attempt to discover 'the place where rot might start'; and, in the bullying antagonism, in what we learn of the spinelessness of his now dead father, and, crucially in the house itself – one of the most heavily moralized houses even in Elizabeth Bowen, with its rebarbatively alienating spaces, its kitsch garden, its 'swastika-arms of passage leading to nothing' – we are offered, and chillingly, a convincing genealogy for the development of a fascist sensibility and psychology. (Corcoran 2004: 176)

Bowen's 1941 story 'Summer Night' anticipates many of the themes of *The Heat of the Day*, Di and Vivie's hearing everything that happens in their house, for example ('Di said, "I just heard." "And I heard," said Vivie' (Bowen 1999: 668)), anticipating Robert's nephew and niece in Holme Dene. In contrast, Queenie's deafness prevents her from hearing anything but that does not seem to prevent her from seeing: her brother Justin, we are told, 'was exposed to the odd, immune, plumbing looks she was for ever passing over his face. He could not deflect the tilted blue of her eyes. The things she said out of nowhere, things with no surface context, were never quite off the mark' (658). Aunt Fran, on the other hand, despite the fact she only allows herself to 'relax her watch on the house' (671) when everyone is in bed, complains bitterly that 'You keep everything back from me. No one speaks the truth to me […] I am never told, never told, never told. I get the one answer, "nothing"' (670). Even so, despite her apparent belief that whatever threatens the house lies without – hence her relief when she hears her nephew the Major 'going from room to room, unfolding and barring the heavy shutters and barring and chaining the front door' (667) and 'could begin to feel calmer now that the house was a fortress against the wakeful night' (667), she appears to sense, accurately it would seem, that danger lies within: '[n]ot a benediction falls on this apart house of the Major; the enemy is within it, creeping about. Each heart here falls to the enemy' (672). Robinson's house, meanwhile, the other setting of the story, to which the Major's wife Emma is driving at the beginning of the story to spend an illicit night, provokes a similar if less powerful sense of unease: Justin and Queenie leave 'almost in flight' (675), while Emma, sensing that the house itself, 'the authoritative male room' in particular, is creating 'a gulf between her and him' (677), asks if they can go outside within minutes of arrival.

Bowen's earlier *The Death of the Heart* deals with similar issues of surveillance and privacy. The novel opens on an icy winter's morning – Anna Quayne is describing to St Quentin Miller the experience of having read the entirety of her sister-in-law and now ward Portia's diary, which she uncovered in what Maud Ellmann tellingly describes as a 'secret raid on Portia's room' (Ellmann 2004: 128). Although it is Anna who has arguably betrayed Portia by reading something clearly not meant for her eyes, it is she who feels betrayed by the fact that Portia has observed her closely, and then recorded her findings. 'There does not seem to be a single thing she misses, and there's certainly not a thing that she does not

misconstruct', she complains (Bowen 1938: 12). Although Anna initially claims that Portia's record of her time with Anna and Thomas is 'distorted and distorting' (12), much later in the novel, when she admits to Thomas she has been reading it, she acknowledges that '[h]er diary's very good – you see, she's got us taped', adding that 'it's given me a rather more disagreeable feeling about being alive – or at least, about being me' (304). Portia's betrayal, then, if betrayal is what it is, takes the form of having observed Anna too closely – and because she keeps a diary that Anna then reads, the consequence is that Anna has to observe herself in the same way, to look past the fictions she has created for herself and the world around her, and this is a 'disagreeable' experience. Ellmann comments that Thomas and Anna 'are unconsciously in league with each other in their determination to sweep away the shadows of the past' (Ellmann 2004: 130) – Thomas the family shame resulting from his father's affair with another woman, which led to Portia's birth, Anna her passion for and betrayal at the hands of Robert Pidgeon. 'Something edited life in the Quaynes' house' (171), the narrator comments, and the danger posed by Portia's presence is that she might see what has been edited out and record it into her diaries. 'Her look, steady, level, and unassuming, missed nothing the other two did' (27), we are told, while later, 'during the conversation about Pidgeon, Anna had felt those dark eyes with a determined innocence steal back again and again to her face' (49), leading Anna to state, 'I'm not good at seeming […] I cannot stand being watched. She watches us' (37). Portia, too, of course, is under surveillance: 'I never had any reason to spy on her', Anna claims, but Thomas's pithy response, '[e]xcept by reading her diary' (307), shows the wrongness of this. Equally, so intently is Portia 'watched' at one moment in the novel that '[t]he pointed attention of St Quentin and Anna reached her like a quick tide, or an attack' (29).

Being scrutinised so closely that it feels like one is under attack is something experienced too by the narrator in du Maurier's *Rebecca*. Much of the narrator's unhappiness at Manderley stems from low self-esteem and belief that her every move is being watched by others and judged and compared with Rebecca. Her first memory of Manderley is arriving to 'a sea of faces, open mouthed and curious, gazing at me as though they were the watching crowd about the block, and I the victim with my hands behind my back' (du Maurier 1938: 74). The feature of Mrs Danvers that first strikes her is her 'great hollow eyes' (74), eyes that follow her every movement, not least at the fateful Manderley

Ball when she watches the narrator descend the stairs to the waiting guests dressed in the same dress that Rebecca had worn at the same ball two years before, and the following morning when Mrs Danvers watches the narrator from the window of Rebecca's bedroom, 'staring at [her] with those red, swollen eyes' (270). According to Mrs Danvers, it is not just the living who watch the narrator's every movement:

> '[d]o you think she [Rebecca] can see us talking to one another now?' she said slowly. 'Do you think the dead come back and watch the living? […] Sometimes I wonder if she comes back here to Manderley and watches you and Mr de Winter together' (194-195).

The impact of Mrs Danvers' words on the already fragile narrator, combined with her persuading her what she already fears, that her husband Maxim doesn't love her, causes the narrator to come close to committing suicide the morning after the ball ('[s]oon I would not have to think about Rebecca any more' (277)), and she is only brought back to her senses by a timely 'explosion' as distress rockets are sent up by a ship run aground.

Harry in Eliot's *The Family Reunion* is not driven to such extremes but he too is haunted by ghosts that watch his every move. Harry's very first words in the play suggest an obsession regarding privacy:

> *Harry:* How can you sit in this blaze of light for all the world to look at?
> If you knew how you looked, when I saw you through the window!
> Do you like to be stared at by eyes through a window? (Eliot 1939: 25)

(This concern is echoed in *The Death of the Heart*, where Harrison draws the curtains because, he believes, 'People are looking in' (Bowen 1938: 308).) Harry is reminded that no-one can see in, that they live in the country and have no nearby neighbours, but Harry's next words reveal the reason for his concern about being watched – his fears of the Eumenides:

> *Harry:* Look there; look there; do you see them?
> […] Can't you see them? *You* don't see them, but I see them,

And they see me. (25)

This is reminiscent of perhaps the most memorable image of being watched in literature of the period, even more perhaps than the eyes of Big Brother that seem to follow the movements of everybody in Orwell's post-war *Nineteen Eighty-Four* – namely, the 'lidless eye […] terrible […] rimmed with fire' of Sauron in Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* trilogy that he was working on throughout the war, an eye that pierces and searches and sees everything (Tolkien 1954: 472).

4. Temporary Rooms

Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the number of homes lost to bombing raids during the Second World War ('[d]uring 1940 and 1941 one Londoner in six was made homeless' (Mudford 2001: 186)), many of the homes that feature in fiction of the time are in fact temporary. The flat from whose roof Robert leaps or falls to his death in *The Heat of the Day*, for example, is one where Stella has lived for at least two years by the time of the novel's events, but is in fact not hers but a friend's – she was forced to move in, we are told, following the loss of her own home to a direct hit by a bomb. Similarly, Miss Roach in Hamilton's *The Slaves of Solitude* moves into the Rosamund Tea Rooms – no longer a tea rooms, in fact, but a boarding house in Thames Lockdon, a commuter town outside London – because she has 'been bombed out of her room in Kensington' (Hamilton 1947: 9). This new, temporary home proves as short of security and privacy as any of the real homes discussed earlier in this chapter, however, and Miss Roach's suffering and sense of fear just as strong as, say, the narrator's in *Rebecca*. Indeed, as discussed in chapter 3, Miss Roach's life there is so miserable that by the time the novel begins she would prefer to face the danger of air-raids in London than the psychological damage of the Tea Rooms. As Harding argues, '[l]ife in the Rosamund Tea Rooms turns out to be a repetition of life in London with a vengeance – as the sense of imprisonment replaces the terrors of the Blitz', adding that Miss Roach has 'merely exchanged one kind of hell for another':

> [she] certainly endures great mental stresses and strains. Having exchanged an Anderson shelter for a proper upstairs bedroom, she finds she still cannot escape her anguished insomnia. Several long sections of the novel are devoted to her lonely sleeplessness caused not simply by her fears of the conflict without but she is also obsessively trying to divine what her fellow lodgers' intentions towards her are. In many ways it's simply another battle, but this time raging within the Tea Rooms, and within herself. (Harding 2007: 58)

Harding is doubtless right in what he says here, but I would argue that what Hamilton is doing is not just suggesting similarities between the 'mental stresses' and 'anguished insomnia' Miss Roach presumably endured in London and that she now endures in The Rosamund Tea Rooms. Rather, Hamilton is using the Tea Rooms as a symbol, with Miss Roach's paranoia and insomnia coming to represent that of British civilians more generally during the war. When one compares *The Slaves of Solitude* with so many other works of fiction of the time, such as *The Ministry of Fear* or Bowen's wartime short stories or *The Heat of the Day*, with their preoccupation with the enemy within and acts of duplicity and treachery, the fact that it is the *inhabitants* of the Tea Rooms whom Miss Roach fears, that this is a battle 'raging within the Tea Rooms, and within herself', makes more sense. Rather than having 'merely exchanged one kind of hell for another', it becomes clear that Miss Roach hasn't exchanged hells at all, but is living in the same one engulfing London that she was hoping to escape. This is thus a war novel in ways that transcend those offered by Doris Lessing in her introduction to the novel:

> [t]hough there is no sound of gunfire in the book, no sight of blood or spectacle of killing, it is, [Hamilton] tells us, a war novel. The only bombshells are verbal bombshells, but the grey deprivation of life is seen as much a part of the war as soldiering. (Lessing 2006: xix)

Like in *The King's General* when Menabilly is under the control of the parliamentarians and Honor and the other inhabitants are placed under house arrest, the boarders in the Rosamund Tea Rooms are presented as prisoners. At dinner, for example, they would generally remain silent, but we are told that

> [s]ometimes an attempt at a conversational jailbreak was made, and there would be some unnecessarily loud and cheerful exchanges between table and table: but this never had any hope of success. As the maid handed round the vegetables one voice dropped down after another: the prisoners were back in their cells more subdued than ever. (Hamilton 1947: 12-3)

That the Tea Rooms is an authoritarian state in miniature, perhaps suggesting again the kind of fears of fascism within Britain explored in chapter 2, is suggested not only by this description of residents as prisoners but also the regimentation of life there and the expectation of strict adherence to the many rules and regulations: '[e]xperienced guests were aware that to take the smallest step in an original direction would be to provoke a sharp note within twenty-four hours at the outside' (7). This also suggests that their every step is being observed, and indeed, while Miss Roach is described as 'an ardent lover and pursuer of privacy' (121), it is clear that the Tea Rooms represent 'the end of privacy' (83), that the 'watchful' Thwaites in particular is 'never out, off duty, himself' (15, 32), and nor it would seem is Vicki: 'Ah, I know. I know everything […] I saw you', she says (67-68). Albert Brent, meanwhile, a minor character who is only introduced towards the end, 'took an interest in human nature and, without their knowing it, studied and came to conclusions about the guests' (210), while Mr Prest 'observed and understood more than any other spectator' (215), leading the narrator to comment that

> [j]ust as the guests of the Rosamund Tea Rooms were occasionally observed and appraised from the outside, so the relationship existing between Mr. Thwaites, Miss Kugelmann and Miss Roach was watched from within. (213)

George in Hamilton's earlier *Hangover Square* has of course not been bombed out of his home, but he, like Miss Roach, lives in the temporary, albeit long-term, accommodation of a hotel. He suffers from none of Miss Roach's, or the narrator's in *Rebecca*, fears of being watched all the time, but it is made clear that this is because he is unaware of the scrutiny he is under, not because it doesn't exist:

> [t]here were others, too, who observed George Harvey Bone from a distance, and indulged in speculation regarding his character and employment [...] The guests would ask about 'that man' […] Many guests wondered where he worked during the day. Because he was out all day they were certain he worked at something, and because they could not gain the faintest conception of what this was, they concluded that it was something not altogether reputable. (212)

The hotel manageress, meanwhile, views him with 'suspicion, if not dislike, and would have been glad, in her heart, to have got him out of the hotel' (212), but only because she has never been able to find out much about him, despite her close observation of his movements while in the hotel. It is only after some two years there, when he comes to tell her he is planning on leaving, and smiles at her, that they communicate enough that, 'deciding that she had probably misjudged the man, she was almost sorry he was going. His sad smile, and his big, quiet, morose presence, haunted her on and off all day' (213). Arguably George's true home is the public houses of Earl's Court, but there too he is carefully observed by others, and, again, one such observer, John Halliwell, is forced to change his negative opinion of George once they meet and converse. Halliwell seems a particularly important character for although he appears in the novel for less than eight pages, his solitude and desire for companionship seem representative of Londoners more generally, and it is notable that his favourite pastime is 'to go to the saloon bars of public houses, and having one or two drinks, watch and listen to people' (205). It is because he has watched and listened to George prior to their meeting 'only against the background of the mature, harsh and aggressive set with whom he mixed' that Halliwell, having 'got a picture of him as being almost certainly in some measure harsh and aggressive as well', is 'quite taken aback' to find him 'naïve, simple, subdued' – the opposite of his expectations (208). Halliwell, we are told, 'at once warmed to [him …] and before long they were in friendly and easy conversation' (208-9). They discuss, among other things, 'the respective merits and demerits of living in rooms or a hotel. Young Halliwell said that you could get extremely lonely in a room by yourself, and George replied that if it came to that, you could be even more lonely in a hotel' (209). Nevertheless, despite the warmth and friendliness of their time together, and the admission on both sides of loneliness, when they part after the pubs close, their parting is permanent. 'He never saw George Harvey Bone again' (210), we are

told, and so the chapter comes to a close with an abruptness that reflects their brief encounter.

Major Brutt in Bowen's *The Death of the Heart* finds himself in a similar situation to George – he too is a long-term resident of a London hotel on the eve of war – but his greater awareness of what is taking place around him means he is more alert to the surveillance he is under in his temporary home. Hence his discomfort when Portia comes to him in the hotel lounge, having fled the Quaynes' house following Anna and Eddie's combined betrayal of her:

> 'You must sit down,' he said to Portia, unexpectedly sharply. 'You don't want all these people staring at you.' He pulled another chair close […] Major Brutt intently watched four other people take their favourite seats. Portia watched him watch; his eyes clung to these people […] When he could not look any more without having to meet their looks, he dropped his eyes and sat not looking at Portia. It was she, for the moment, who felt how striking their silence, their nearness here had become – anxiety, and the sense of being pursued by glances still more closely than she had been all day made her sit stone still, not even moving her hands.
>
> There seemed no reason why Major Brutt should ever raise his eyes from the floor: he had begun, in fact, to stroke the back of his head. She interposed, in a low voice: 'Is there no other place –? […] Oh, *can't* we go upstairs? Can't we go somewhere else? […] Everyone's listening to us.' (289)

The sense of being under surveillance is more than Portia can bear, and Major Brutt too it would seem. Perhaps he too, like Rowe in *The Ministry of Fear* after his home has been destroyed by a bomb, wishes he had 'what he called a home – somewhere to shelter from people who might know him' (Greene 1943: 87).

Henry Green's *Party Going* presents similar anxieties regarding one's safety within a hotel, but while Julia is terrified by what 'those frantic drinking hordes of awful people' outside (Greene 1939: 520) might do should they get past the barricades and invade the hotel in which she and her party are staying, it is not in fact those outside who are 'drinking', but Max and Robert and Alex there in the hotel room who have been drinking steadily since they arrived and Max ordered a bottle of whiskey, a bottle of cointreau and two bottles of

gin to be sent up. Equally, if the word 'awful' is to be applied to any characters in the novel, it is those surrounding Julia to whom this would be most appropriate: while Julia is frightened those outside, having broken in, might 'try to kiss us or something' (516), it is Max who 'pounces' on her and tries to kiss her (520), and it is Max who betrays her with Amabel. Although Julia is angry when she learns Max is 'upstairs with Amabel' ('"Oh no, Alex, how revolting," she said, and gave herself away. She blushed with rage' (517)), she is hardly surprised. She is well aware both of Max's potential for treachery ('[h]e had her at a hopeless disadvantage, he could gad about London with her gone and go to bed with every girl', she thinks (390)) and his potential for deceitfulness (she knows that 'he was a liar' (413) and 'could not give straight answers' (391), as indeed is shown through his repeatedly taking 'the plunge into another lie' (445)). This presentation of misdirected or displaced fear, where the character is fearful of what lies without when it is in fact what lies within, what they have brought with them, that they should be wary of, is as we have seen typical of literature of the period. In *Party Going* there are repeated instances of treachery and deception, but these are played out by members of the party on each other – thus Angela is forced to realise 'how treacherous Alex really was' (429), Julia is led to comment that '[p]eople do play awful tricks on each other when they are in love' (434) as a way of explaining, to herself, why Max behaves toward her as he does, and verbal bombs are dropped: '"Alex is helping Amabel, actually, in her bath," Miss Crevy said, and wished she had a periscope to see that bomb explode. But if it went off it did so out of sight' (474).

Despite this, none of the hotel rooms in *Party Going* pose the same threat as those in *The Confidential Agent* (where D.'s is searched by the hotel manageress and Else's is the scene of her murder, thrown from the window to her death by the same manageress) or *The Ministry of Fear*, in which an attempt is made to murder Rowe and Anna Hilfe in a hotel room. Rowe is tricked into carrying a suitcase that he believes to be filled with second-hand books to a room in a hotel in which he finds Anna waiting, having also been persuaded to come. It is only when they are both together that they begin to suspect they have walked into a trap. Initially, once Rowe has turned the key in the lock, it seems to him that they are now safe because 'they can't get in. Except through the window' and not even there as 'there is twelve feet of smooth wall'. Anna is quick to realise the true danger of their predicament, however: 'We *are* besieged [she says, adding …] I wonder what they are going

to do' (Greene 1943: 101-2). Because Anna and Rowe believe the threat lies without, their concern is with making sure no-one comes in, or, if someone does, that they are trustworthy ('We might ring up the restaurant and order dinner', Rowe suggests, to which Anna replies, 'Yes […] if we were sure the right waiter would bring it' (102)). Not knowing what their enemy is planning, not knowing who they can trust, the feeling of isolation once it is realised the telephone line is dead and no-one can hear their screams – together these elements help create the feelings of 'urgency, despair, paranoia' that Ian Rankin felt were typical of wartime (Rankin 2006: v), panic that only increases as night comes and the possibility of an air-raid grows, but it is not the possibility of bombs that scares Anna: 'the sirens will go. And then they'll all go down to the basement, and the only ones left will be us – and them' (103). It is this that leads them to open the suitcase Rowe has brought with him, detonating the bomb within that almost kills them. It is what is already in the room, what they themselves have brought with them, that turns out to be the real threat – the enemy within so to speak – and it is for this reason that this scene seems so paradigmatic of the period.

Although, as we have seen, Rowe in *The Ministry of Fear* wants 'what he called a home – somewhere to shelter from people who might know him' (Greene 1943: 87), and it is revealing that he seems much less concerned about those that do not know him, the home as a place of refuge is interrogated in many texts of this period. However, living-space outside the home – the temporary dwellings of hotels, for example – provides just as little sense of security, or shelter from prying eyes. The complex sense of 'enemy' surveillance – of being watched in the process of watching others watching, which is as we have seen a common theme of the period – therefore takes place across a varied network of locales, united, however, in the characteristic that none of them provides the privacy normally expected of 'home'.

Five – Fractured Identities

1. Trauma, Repression and the Uncanny

> It was an electric clock that had belonged to one of his aunts, it was made of brass with all its works showing, a skeleton of a clock inside a glass dome, and it never required winding. When he was a small boy there had seemed to him to be something horrific and fascinating and pathetic about the sight of the pendulum frantically swinging, swinging, swinging, perpetually exposed and driven in that transparent tomb. (Kavan 1945: 23)

In the short story 'Who Has Desired the Sea' from Anna Kavan's 1945 collection *I am Lazarus*, the protagonist, Lennie, a traumatised naval officer trying to deal emotionally with the sinking of his ship, remembers the skeleton clock his aunt used to own that scared him so much as a child, and imagines that he is that clock, 'a hollow thing; only wheels and a pendulum working inside a case' (26). Why might Lennie picture himself as a skeleton clock? It could perhaps be that he feels he has no control over his life – hence the description of the 'pendulum frantically swinging, swinging, swinging', and the sense that this state of perpetual and seemingly purposeless motion can never be escaped. Or perhaps, given that he is residing in a mental asylum for traumatised soldiers not unlike that in which Kavan herself worked, where each patient is under continual observation, it is the clock's 'perpetually exposed' inner workings that cause him to make the comparison. His description of himself as 'a hollow thing; only wheels and a pendulum working inside a case', meanwhile, implies his apparent inability to empathise, to respond emotionally to others, while the fact that he describes the glass case of the skeleton clock as a 'transparent tomb' connotes that he has become a kind of zombie, one of the living dead.

Despite the many negative connotations of the comparison, however, it emerges that for Lennie it is not intended entirely negatively. The glass covering of the clock, transparent though it may be, does provide a kind of protection for the fragile workings within, and it becomes clear that Lennie prefers the isolation and security this invisible, protective barrier dividing him from the outer world offers to the alternative of having to re-engage with the world outside, to re-enter relationships with others. Indeed, it is Lennie's

preference to stay literally inside, to observe the world from behind the protective pane of glass in his room, that causes him to remember his aunt's skeleton clock in the first place:

> [h]e felt the sunshine and saw it, but it was beyond the glass, it was not touching him really. After a moment he put his hand down again on the blanket beside him. He did not feel disappointed or troubled about the glass. He was used to it. It was queer how you got used to things, even to living inside a glass cell. A picture of a clock drifted in front of him. (22-23)

His preference for 'living inside a glass cell' is demonstrated when he is fetched by a nurse to meet with his fiancée for the first time since the sinking of the ship and charged with the job of showing her that he is 'going to be quite all right' (23). It is clear, however, that he is not quite all right, and that although, according to the nurse, 'Doctor thinks it will do you good to see her' (23), this seems unlikely given the strain placed upon Lennie of having to try to achieve what he sees as an impossible task: '[i]t was impossible. But it was required of him. He would be obliged to attempt the impossible thing. He would not be allowed to evade the foredoomed attempt' (24). It is in this situation that the transparent glass fulfils its positive function of protecting him from the outside world. As Nora, his fiancée, approaches him, we are told that he begins to panic, but 'then it passed, he felt her breath and her light kiss on his cheek, it was over, he was in his glass cell and it seemed quiet there and he felt nothing at all' (26). Later, walking by her side, Lennie feels 'the bad feeling come on him again […] a sudden sinking and emptiness', but is able to recover with the thought that 'nothing mattered […] because nothing could reach him while he was inside the glass' (27).

In 'Who Has Desired the Sea', then, Kavan presents a protagonist who must choose between living in the 'real world' of the present, the world of conventions and people and relationships, the world metaphorically outside the skeleton clock, or in the confined, claustrophobic world represented by the space within the 'transparent tomb', a world of the past where memories, of the ship sinking but of other moments in his life too, bombard and confuse Lennie. It would seem that his preference is for the latter, but in fact Kavan shows that whatever the demands of others that he return to the world of the present, this is an impossible task, so he has no real choice in the matter, and if his preference is indeed

for the interior of the clock, this is because he is used to it and has learnt to cope with it, and not because it necessarily offers the possibility of happiness or calm.

A similar situation faces Clara, the protagonist of Bowen's story 'The Inherited Clock', from *The Demon Lover and Other Stories*, although in this story Clara has so successfully repressed the traumatic experiences of her past that she is totally unaware, consciously at least, they ever took place – she, in other words, lives in the world of the present, outside the transparent tomb, to use Kavan's metaphor. Curiously enough, the traumatising experiences she has managed to repress all relate to a skeleton clock not dissimilar to Kavan's, one that Clara is to be left in her will by Cousin Rosanna because, Aunt Addie reminds her at the beginning of the story, she likes it so much. 'But what clock are you talking about?' Clara asks blankly (Bowen 1945: 27), much to her aunt's astonishment. Later she visits Cousin Rosanna and asks to open up one of the rooms shut up owing to the war in order to see this mysterious clock:

> [t]he skeleton clock, in daylight, was threatening to a degree its oddness could not explain. Looking through the glass at its wheels, cogs, springs and tensions […] Clara tried to tell herself that it was, only, shocking to see the anatomy of time. The clock was without a face […] As she watched, the minute hand against the background of nothing made one, then another, spectral advance. This was enough: if she did not yet feel she could anticipate feeling her sanity being demolished by one degree more, as every sixtieth second brought round this unheard click. (33)

As with Kavan's description, Bowen's is highly suggestive. The clock's lack of face and therefore individual identity, the spectral progress of its hand providing a visual reminder of the passing of time, the suggestion that the clock threatens Clara's very sanity – together these provoke a feeling of what Sigmund Freud would call the uncanny,[54] while Corcoran

[54] Freud developed his theorising of the term in the immediate aftermath of the First World War, publishing his essay *Das Unheimliche*, translated into English as *The Uncanny*, in 1919. Noting that the German word '[u]nheimlich is clearly the opposite of heimlich, heimisch', meaning familiar, native, belonging to the home, Freud argues that it is tempting to conclude that what is 'uncanny' is 'frightening precisely because it is unknown and unfamiliar' (Freud 1919: 124-5). Freud goes on to argue precisely the opposite, however, that 'the "uncanny" is that class of the terrifying which leads back to something long known to us, once very

has suggested that 'the story is an almost literal realization of the Freudian return of the repressed' (Corcoran 2004: 155).

This is indicated by the fact that although Clara believes that she has never seen the clock before, as a child, in which case it would be its unfamiliarity that is at least partly the cause of her terror, its foreignness, in reality it is the resurfacing of memories that ought to have remained hidden that poses such a threat to Clara. The extent of this threat is revealed when Cousin Rosanna dies and the clock is delivered to Clara's flat: its impact on her is instantaneous – immediately following its arrival Clara, who has to force herself even to face it, is so disturbed by its presence that she leaves her flat to walk through the blackout streets ('The Inherited Clock' is yet another story, in other words, where the home comes to be the place most feared by the protagonist). When three days later her cousin Paul, who turns out to be the cause of her trauma (his sadistic behaviour towards her as a child, including his using the clock to physically torture her, is precisely what she has repressed), arrives unexpectedly at her flat to ask that she give him the clock, she is well on the way to 'going crackers', as Paul phrases it. 'Crackers – what do you mean?' she asks. 'Well, look at yourself in the glass', Paul replies (43). The strain is etched onto Clara's face, and so it is with some confidence that Paul speculates she has probably already tried to destroy the recently-arrived clock:

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familiar' (124). Freud assesses the 'different shades of meaning the word heimlich exhibits' and finds it particularly telling that one of these 'is identical with its opposite, unheimlich. What is heimlich thus comes to be unheimlich' (132). Freud summarises that 'heimlich is a word the meaning of which develops towards an ambivalence, until it finally coincides with its opposite, unheimlich. Unheimlich is in some way or other a sub-species of heimlich' (134). He goes on to argue that the uncanny is terrifying not because it is foreign or alien but because it is familiar, something long repressed that becomes visible again: the 'unheimlich is what was once heimisch, homelike, familiar; the prefix "un" is the token of repression' (151), Freud concludes – 'the uncanny is nothing else than a hidden, familiar thing that has undergone repression and then emerged from it' (152). This seems a particularly important concept for the study of a literature that deals with a civilian experience that is frightening at least in part because it appears new and unfamiliar and foreign in source, yet seems more preoccupied with home-grown threats that often date from long before the war began, especially as the home is, as we saw in the previous chapter, repeatedly presented in such literature as an enemy space.

> [h]e was right. Once in the small hours of a sleepless night, once on the occasion of an unnerving return home, that solution had already offered itself. Clara had turned the lights out, opened her eighth-floor window, found her way to the clock by the noise it made in the dark, and gone so far as to balance it on the window-sill. (44)

It is clear that the presence of the clock is having a profound, disturbing effect upon Clara and is threatening to demolish her sanity, as she instinctively felt it would when viewing it at her cousin's.

Bowen's story is not a war story as such, unlike Kavan's, in the sense that while the wartime setting is made clear by details such as the shutting up of a number of rooms in Rosanna's house owing to servants being called up, and Paul's wearing khaki when he visits Clara, the traumatising events that threaten to overwhelm Clara from within are apparently nothing to do with war. Nevertheless, in her preface to the American edition of *The Demon Lover and Other Stories* Bowen states that all of the stories in the collection are 'wartime, none of them *war*, stories [...] These are, more, studies of climate, war climate' (Bowen 1950: 48). In this sense there is something very revealing that the story is about a protagonist having to confront repressed memories that after so long having been safely forgotten return to haunt the present, especially as those memories are of violence and suffering. The fact that it is a story of male violence directed at a female is also telling, given the association of militarism with masculinity in the work of Woolf and others discussed in chapter 2. Indeed, the enemy within in Bowen's story, the repressed memory which exists within the subconscious of the protagonist, seems more dangerous and disturbing than the more conventional enemies within – the fifth columnists, traitors, fascist sympathisers and spies – considered in earlier chapters.

One question that is addressed by both Bowen and Kavan is how such traumatised individuals should be treated, and whether it is better to seek to bring the repressed memory to the surface so it can be directly confronted. In Bowen's story, Paul seeks to do just this: having been told by Clara that she has no memory of the clock but knows she 'detest[s] it, and should be glad if you'd tell me why' (45), he goes as far as to re-enact with Clara a scene from when she was around six and he nine in which he removes the glass lid from the clock and guides one of her fingers into its mechanism and holds it there until the clock stops working, something which apparently it has never done except on these two

occasions, and Clara's finger is bruised and bleeding. Suddenly Clara can remember everything, and it is clear that more traumatising than the physical hurt inflicted on her is the knowledge that they have stopped the clock, and, symbolically at least, the progress of time, though why this should be is never fully explained. This process of bringing back Clara's lost memories is certainly a painful one, both physically and psychologically, but the fact Clara thanks Paul at the end and adds that he can 'by all means have the clock' (51), and, further, that she is happy to look after it for him until he is ready to pick it up, seems to suggest that in confronting her repressed memories, Clara is able to come to terms with them and move on. The message seems to be that she is haunted by the past no longer, although it should be noted that Paul has already commented that '[i]f you *have* forgotten, you must have some rather too good reason' (46), and that he might be wrong to force the memories of the past on her. It is difficult to tell what motivates Paul here – a genuine desire to help his cousin overcome past trauma, or a sadistic glee gained from repeating the experience.

While the ending of 'The Inherited Clock' is thus ambiguous, it is clear that in 'Who Has Desired the Sea', there is no such happy ending for Lennie. He too is placed in a painful position that is hoped by his doctor will have a similarly healing effect as Paul's rather brutal approach to dealing with Clara apparently does. With Lennie, of course, what is required is not to make any repressed memories visible; rather, the doctor in arranging for him to see his fiancée presumably hopes to refocus Lennie's mind onto happier memories, and in so doing to help him switch his attention from the past to the future. Lennie, and the reader, know that this is 'impossible', however, and so it proves:

> 'Don't you like me any more either?' [his fiancée] said.
>
> 'I can't explain,' he said. 'I can't help it.'
>
> The sickness had come up in his throat now and his lungs, and he could feel it strangling him and he was drowning again in the four-mile-deep icy horror of sickness or water. He looked at the girl and saw that she was crying.
>
> 'It's no good. I can't do it,' he said. (Kavan 1945: 30)

Lennie stands up and leaves the tea-room, and one assumes he does so because he is overwhelmed by the vividness of his memories of the sinking ship, or because there is no

more to say. In fact, however, we learn that Lennie chooses to leave because at that very moment he has spotted someone he very much wants to speak to:

> just then, he saw the young man's face in a mirror up on the wall, he saw the thick wind-ruffled hair and the little scar on the cheekbone. The face moved in the mirror and when he looked round he could not see it anywhere in the room, and when he wanted to call out the sickness choked him, and now he tried to fight off the icy sickness, but like whales the waves of it fell on him till he was pounded and drowned, and while he froze suffocating and could not move or breathe, he heard the girl say, 'Where are you going?' and then he was able to move suddenly, and he got out of the tea-room. (30)

(The odd choice of simile, 'of whales', could perhaps be seen as a symbol of the return of the repressed in the sense that while whales are for long periods hidden well beneath the surface, their need for oxygen necessitates that they regularly emerge from the depths.) This mysterious, unnamed individual is someone we first learned of towards the beginning of the story, when Lennie was sat in his room in the hospital, avoiding having to meet with his fiancée but hoping to meet with

> the young man with the scar [who he felt] was more likely to come when there was no one about. Maybe he had something private to say, and that was why he would come when things were quiet. (24)

That Lennie sees him later in the mirror in the tea-room, but finds no sign of him when he turns his head, suggests that he is confronted here by an image of himself, by his own double or doppelganger, which is for Freud another striking example of the uncanny, in which case the scar might be assumed to date from the sinking of the ship that Lennie recollects with such disturbing vividness. This seems to be the first time Lennie has seen him in a mirror, however, and it may seem more likely, especially given his frequent memories of happier times from before the war, before he came to Europe from the colonies, that he is seeing a younger Lennie, carefree and unaffected by the trauma of war. Just as in *Hangover Square* George dreams of returning to a time in childhood when he was

happy – a time that presumably, given his age in the novel and probable age when visiting Maidenhead, dates to just before the First World War began, the same moment that George Bowling in *Coming Up for Air*, so aware as he is of the forthcoming war, also longs to return to – so too in 'Who Has Desired the Sea' Lennie's greatest desire is to return to the pre-war past, to stop having to live in the present. (Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited* is similar: Sebastian Flyte 'is in love with his own childhood' (Waugh 1945: 99-100), Cara states, adding that this 'will make him very unhappy' (100), presumably because he will one day have to confront the impossibility of returning to it.) Again, like in *Hangover Square*, where George is forced on reaching Maidenhead at the end of the novel to confront the impossibility of returning to the past, so in Kavan's story Lennie must confront the same impossibility as his pursuit of the figure in the mirror leads him out of town and towards the cliffs and the sound of the sea. The story ends as follows:

> he looked over the sea and there were islands it seemed, and then a great migration of birds thickened the air and he was in a rushing of wings, the wings beat so dark and fast round him he felt dizzy like falling and the moon disappeared. And then it was clear again, brilliant moonlight, and there, ahead, bright as day, were all the small islands, Cape Promise, and the bay of Mairangi, wide, still, unbelievably peaceful under the full moon. And then he did know where he was going. (31)

Just as George realises, after murdering Netta and Peter and arriving in Maidenhead, that he can never return to the past, never be reunited with his sister, and in his despair chooses to end his life by gassing himself, so it would seem that Lennie, too, chooses to take his own life by throwing himself into the sea. It should be noted, however, that at the moment of their death both George and Lennie seem to achieve a sort of mystical reunion with the past, as suggested by the imagery at the end of Kavan's story (the 'brilliant moonlight', for example) and Lennie's certainty, his knowing where he was going and being able to see the islands and bay, 'unbelievably peaceful', of his childhood, while George is able to feel his sister Ellen's hand and hear her as she says, 'as she said in the old days, "It's all right. Don't be frightened, George. It's all right"' (Hamilton 1941: 281). In Hamilton's now largely forgotten play of the following year, *The Duke in Darkness*, Gribaud, whose experience of fifteen years' imprisonment has sent him mad, is put out of his misery by the Duke he serves,

and achieves a similar escape from suffering, believing at the moment of his death that he is now free and able to feel the rain on his face: *'[i]n his dying imagination, he is running out into the rain and calling his friend [the Duke] to join him',* the stage direction states (Hamilton 1942: 72). That the Duke and Voulain are so convinced that poisoning Gribaud is an act of true mercy ('Gribaud is well', the Duke confidently tells Voulain (75)) shines a light on Hamilton's possible intentions at the end of *Hangover Square* regarding George's suicide and suggests Hamilton's view on how to treat deeply traumatised individuals – on whether or not to seek to make them confront what they have repressed, or to allow them to imagine a more comforting alternative reality – was perhaps not dissimilar to Kavan's.

Kavan's attitude to psychoanalytical efforts to help patients confront the traumatising memories they have repressed is suggested in her story 'The Blackout', the first line of which – '"I can't remember anything that happened," the boy said. "It was like a blackout, sort of"' (Kavan 1945: 32) – makes it immediately clear that this is a story not, as one might expect, about the enforced nightly blackout, but that other kind of blackout, a temporary loss of consciousness often resulting in a loss of memory. The action of the story takes place in a psychiatrist's examination room, where the doctor asks questions of the unnamed 'boy', trying to ascertain what happened during the five days the soldier has no recollection of:

> 'And where did you spend this leave?'
>
> There now, it's begun now, the bad part's beginning, he thought in himself. And recognizing helplessly the preliminary movement of that thing which from the outset had filled him with a profound unease he remained silent now, while his mind ran from side to side, seeking the unknown avenues of defence or escape.
>
> 'Well, where did you spend your leave?'
>
> The doctor's voice was casual and almost friendly, but there was much firmness in it, and also there came along with it the dangerous thing preparing to launch its attack, which could not be trifled with. (33-34)

What this 'dangerous thing' described militaristically as 'preparing to launch its attack' is, exactly, is uncertain, but one supposes that it is the past, the boy's own memories, and indeed, his mind turns almost immediately to his unhappy childhood and

> his dad coming in drunk as often as not and knocking [his mother] about […] and himself feeling shaky and sick and trying not to make a noise with his crying as he hid there crouched up in a ball of misery under the table' (34).

Hence his happiness when, following his father's death – his mother having already died – he goes at the age of eight to live with his 'auntie' (it is worth noting that in Freud's formulation of the 'uncanny', the fear of the 'homely' is crucially the Oedipal fear of the father).

It is the boy's relationship with his auntie that is the focus of the story. Though presumably far from old at the time of the war, she is unwell and heavily reliant on him to look after her when he is called up to the army: he 'hated leaving her badly off now, financially insecure, bombs falling perhaps, and she alone with her crippling pains and no one reliable to take care of her' (35). What happens to her, whether she dies and if so how and why, is never revealed. Kavan describes the doctor seeking 'to force memory on him' and the boy's journey towards the past as travelling through a dark tunnel, but although snippets of memory do return to him – having to return home after he had left for the station to return to the army owing to having forgotten his pay-book, entering the silent house and assuming that his auntie must be asleep, leaving, and then, some time later, days presumably, eating part of a sausage found in the gutter, drinking from a horses' trough, being violently sick, being too weak to move or to drive away the insects swarming around him – the all-important memory that so terrifies him, 'the frightening thing which he had to fight in the dark', never returns to his conscious mind. In a vivid description Kavan describes the boy 'running in panic along the tunnel' of his memory (37), the clanging of a church bell echoing inside his head:

> because of the unknown thing whose immediate agent was the casual, near friendly voice nothing could save him from that black exploration split by the doleful and ugly clang of a distant bell.
>
> 'As if someone had died,' he said out loud.
>
> 'Who do you think might have died?'

> No, no. Not that. Don't let it come, the boy thought, fighting desperately against what had all the time been waiting there behind every word […]
>
> Faster and faster he ran to escape from the tunnel and the tolling noise of the bell […] The boy was not lying on the couch any more but bending over with hunched shoulders as if hiding from something, his head on his raised knees in the posture a person might take crouching under a table: and though he was crying he was no longer thinking of the tunnel or of the dangerous secret thing which had scared him so terribly […]
>
> 'It was like a blackout. A blackout. I can't remember,' he kept on hopelessly mumbling, among the tears. (37-8)

There are a number of things worth noting in this final section of the story. First, again, there is a sense of the enemy being closer to home than one might imagine – the 'dangerous secret thing which had scared him so terribly' is, of course, to be found within himself, but its 'immediate agent' is the 'near friendly' doctor, and it is notable that the blackout curtain he metaphorically pulls down in his mind so as to protect himself from attack is in response to the 'blitz' of questions dropped on him by the doctor. Second, while 'Who Has Desired the Sea' describes an equally traumatised combatant, but one whose difficulties derive directly from his war experience, the sinking of his ship, here we have a patient who has been forced to leave his auntie because of conscription and whose concerns for her are heightened by the threat of bombs, but who otherwise has been traumatised by events seemingly unconnected with the war: Bowen's description of her stories being 'wartime, none of them *war*, stories' (Bowen 1950: 48) seems to apply equally to Kavan's. Third, his journey into his memory is figured as like journeying into a dark tunnel not dissimilar, presumably, from the underground shelters where Londoners sought to escape the threat posed by bombers overhead, while the kitchen table that he used to hide under as a child could be read as a metaphor for an air-raid shelter – here again it is the place of apparent safety that turns out to be the most dangerous. Fourth, and most important for the purpose of this chapter, is the fragmenting of the boy's identity, something that can be best seen by the fact he is at once in the doctor's room lying on the couch, in a metaphorical tunnel running from the 'dangerous thing', and in an alley eating bits of food from the gutter or in 'an open space, a heath or a common' being sick. The

traumatic experience he is so fearful of having to confront has had a fracturing impact on his identity, causing a chasm to widen between his conscious and unconscious self, between the present and the past. Stoneman's description of how trauma 'divides the mind not only from itself, but also splits it in time: there's a lag, a snatch, in the experienced of the traumatized that pulls them out of linear chronology' (Stonebridge 2009: 196) seems particularly apt here.

The endings of 'The Blackout' and 'Who Has Desired the Sea' both suggest Kavan's opposition to accepted psychiatric practice – to, in this case, seek to 'force' patients to face memories they have buried so deep within them, on the grounds this will help them escape from what haunts them. In *I am Lazarus*, Kavan repeatedly argues against this, suggesting that it is often better to allow highly traumatised patients to cut themselves off from the world outside them by receding metaphorically into a glass cell, as Lennie does, or else to create delusional worlds in which to reside that may be fantastic but are at least without pain. In these stories Kavan questions both the methods and goals of the treatment of mental patients that she experienced both as a patient incarcerated on several occasions within the kind of institution described owing to her decades-long addiction to heroin and battle with depression, and as psychiatric worker in 1943 at Mill Hill Emergency Hospital, where she worked with traumatised soldiers suffering from effort syndrome. In her foreword to *I am Lazarus*, Victoria Walker notes the impact this experience of working with traumatised soldiers had on Kavan's writing (Walker 2013: 1-2), arguing, however, that 'these are not the shell-shocked figures one might expect from war literature. The trauma of battle is not the sole cause of their psychological damage – childhood experiences and social circumstance play equal parts in their distress; war exacerbates old psychological wounds' (2). Like Bowen's, Kavan's stories seek to capture the climate of war, but in the more generalised sense of the term, and frequently do so by exploring more long-term, home-grown issues that are exacerbated by, rather than a direct product of, World War II. Although hospitalised soldiers are at the centre of several of Kavan's stories, even then, as Walker notes,

> [f]eelings of displacement and homesickness, the awful responsibility for the lives of others and the sight of so much pain and wasted life, these more than violence and bloodshed are the precipitants of the soldiers' breakdowns. (2)

2. Zombies and Ghosts, Doppelgangers and Schizophrenics

It seems to me wholly appropriate that in Orwell's *Coming Up for Air*, when Bowling returns to the town of his birth only to find everything that he has nostalgically remembered of the past to have been swept away, that he should find Binfield House, which in his memory has become transformed into a symbol of all that was good about the past, associated as it is with his memories of fishing and of a pool in particular that he has dreamt of returning to, has been turned into a 'Mental Home' (Orwell 1939: 207). 'A loony bin!' he exclaims, adding, 'But after all, what else could you expect?' (207). Indeed, the transformation of a stately home, symbol like Manderley in *Rebecca* and Brideshead in *Brideshead Revisited* of an older way of life, into an asylum not dissimilar presumably to that in which Rowe finds himself incarcerated in *The Ministry of Fear*, or those that are the focus of a number of Kavan's *I am Lazarus* stories, seems in some way paradigmatic of the fears of the time and the literature such anxieties shaped. While the various homes discussed in chapter 4 are presented as places not of privacy and security but the complete opposite, mental homes take this further because their very nature requires that their inmates are kept under close surveillance and their actions tightly controlled, and it is for this reason that, as discussed in chapter 2, in the work of some authors mental asylums feature as symbols of the kind of authoritarian state that Britain had gone to war against but for some Britons was, as a result, in serious danger of becoming. A second reason why mental asylums seem to me such an important symbol in literature of the Second World War is that the 'enemy within' motif found repeatedly in such literature is figured even more profoundly and widely in terms of an enemy lying within the individual than it is as an enemy residing within the country, the community or the home. Stonebridge suggests that 'what was thought of as a war on the mind by many progressive writers and thinkers in the First World War, became, by the Second, a war *in* the mind' (Stonebridge 2009: 194), while Piette has argued that 'the dark nature of the Blitz for many Londoners' was 'revelatory of their own self destructive desires

and death wishes – a kind of psychic civil war' (Piette 1995: 54), and this may well explain why schizophrenia, insanity and suicidal impulses inhabit the literature of the 1940s, and why such a frequent topic of exploration is the cracks that open up within the psyches of traumatised characters creating 'something equivalent to a geological fault in [the] unconscious', to use a phrase from Nicholas Blake's *Minute for Murder* (Blake 1947: 105). Indeed, Blake's description of the effects of living through the Blitz, and his comparison of the impact of bombs on buildings and minds, is particularly powerful:

> Nigel [ruminated …] on the bizarre exposures of war. A bomb tore away the side of a house and revealed a vertical series of lavatory bowls hanging on the edge of an abyss. It tore away the façade of a human being, and you got a view of the psychological plumbing: but only for a moment; the wall was soon up again, the interior tidied. Tidied, but the structure warped, perhaps dangerously and invisibly weakened. (28)

More often than not, it is the experience of loss and grief that causes such fault-lines and we see this in *Rebecca*, where Mrs Danvers is an example of a character who seems to have given herself over 'prematurely to death', to use Kavan's phrase in 'Palace of Sleep' (Kavan 1945: 20). Dedicated to keeping alive the memory and influence of Rebecca, Mrs Danvers has kept her rooms precisely as they were when she was alive, and goes as far as to resurrect her from the dead through dressing the new mistress of Manderley so as to resemble Rebecca. Perhaps it is this devotion to the dead that has caused Mrs Danvers to come physically to resemble a zombie herself – as noted in chapter 4, when the narrator first meets her and takes Mrs Danvers' hand it is 'limp and heavy, deathly cold, and it lay in mine like a lifeless thing' (du Maurier 1938: 74) while her 'prominent cheek-bones and great, hollow eyes gave her a skull's face, parchment white, set on a skeleton's frame' (74). In fact, as the novel moves forward and we learn of the devotion and love Mrs Danvers paid to Rebecca, and the 'suffering' and 'grief' (274) she experienced following her death, it seems increasingly likely that it is Mrs Danvers' devotion to the dead that has brought about her death-like appearance: she emerges as yet another traumatised individual, someone haunted by memories of the past and struggling to deal with having to live in the present, someone whose zombie appearance is explained by psychological not supernatural

reasons. Certainly, Bowling's statement in *Coming Up for Air* 'that perhaps a lot of the people you see walking about are dead' and his explanation that what he means by this is they are trapped in the past, with '[d]ead minds, stopped inside [that j]ust keep moving backwards and forwards on the same little track, getting fainter all the time, like ghosts' (Orwell 1939: 168) seems to apply to Mrs Danvers. Although presented from the antagonistic viewpoint of the narrator, whom Mrs Danvers admits to having 'hated' (272) because '[y]ou tried to take Mrs de Winter's place' (273), some readers may feel growing sympathy for Mrs Danvers. Just as Lennie in 'Who Has Desired the Sea' still experiences moments from the past, the sinking of his ship and his being plunged into the sea in particular, in vividly realistic detail, so the past remains alive for Mrs Danvers, who, as discussed in chapter 4, is convinced the ghost of Rebecca continues to walk the corridors of Manderley.

Ghosts of the past haunting the present can be found in any number of texts, perhaps reflecting the increased interest in the supernatural during the war that, Deer states, so worried the authorities:

> [i]n 1942, facing military disaster and domestic unrest, the wartime British state launched a campaign to battle the ghosts of the home front. Invoking the Witchcraft Act of 1735, civil authorities began prosecuting clairvoyants, spiritualists, and mediums who were 'fraudulently' and 'unscrupulously' summoning the spirits of dead soldiers and civilians to console the living […] According to Mass Observation, 'a quarter' of the population was gripped by paranormal beliefs [their preoccupation with horoscopes and the supernatural …] encouraged by uncertainty and an enhanced sensitivity owing to the blackout.' (Deer 2009: 151)

In Hamilton's *Slaves of Solitude*, it is the ghosts of peacetime that haunt the wartime present:

> [a]bout the dining-room there was something peculiarly and gratuitously hellish […] Ghosts of hot riverside trippers still haunted this room – ghosts of exhausted families, of sweating fathers shyly rebuking their children, of young men with open collars and a look of sunburned eczema, of timid husbands and wives exchanging

> no word with each other in corners, of cyclists with packs, and all the rest ... And it was this distant yet indelible air of populous summer which brought home to the heart, so gloomily, the present cold and bleakness of the boarding-house in winter and war and black-out. (Hamilton 1947: 10-11)

One of the interesting things about this is although the presence of these ghosts of the past serve to highlight 'the present cold and bleakness', the description of the past is far from appealing – here is none of the longing of Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited*, and no sense that the past is something Hamilton hopes to return to once the war is over.

More commonly, it is the ghosts of the First World War who haunt the Second,[55] Bowen's much discussed short story 'The Demon Lover' being perhaps the most obvious example. Bowen's fiction penetrates, Ellmann has suggested, 'deep into the haunted chambers of the mind' (Ellmann 2004: 5) and in this story, one that is unusual for its apparently supernatural content – its real rather than metaphorical ghosts[56] – Mrs Drover is forced to open the door to one such chamber by the mysterious appearance of a letter on a table within her locked London house. The letter is signed with just an initial, K., but it is clear Mrs Drover recognises from the hand-writing and initial from whom the letter comes – namely her past fiancé who, twenty-five years earlier, had been 'reported missing, presumed killed' (84), a number of years after which she had married someone else and 'settled down in this quiet, arboreal part of Kensington […] till they were driven out by the bombs of the next war' (84). For Jessica Gildersleeve, the demon of the title 'is an allegory for war' – she cites Heather Bryant Jordan in arguing that 'in the midst of war, a relic from an earlier one that was to have been the war to end all wars, would be a ghastly symbol of

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[55] One writer not discussed here is Vera Brittain, who, In *England's Hour* (1941), 'still mourns for the dead of the first war, and her observer's prose remains almost clinically detached from the mounting corpses of the second' (Plain 1996: 3).

[56] 'In Bowen's fiction, war produces hallucinations as well as "real" ghosts [Porcelli argues], inasmuch as it blurs the distinction between life and death. Bowen's ghosts represent at the same time the survivors of the Blitz (alive only until the next bombing), hallucinations induced by air raids, and spirits from the past claiming a place among the living. The ghost, lingering in this liminal space, becomes an effective literary device in the representation of what people daily experienced in wartime London, where the categories of "certainty," "finality," and "reality" are repeatedly put into question' (Porcelli 2013: 24).

endless, inescapable violence' (Gildersleeve 2014: 91), something also suggested by Calder, who says more generally of Bowen's ghosts that they are 'a symbol of war that will not go away' (Calder cited in Porcelli 2013: 15). Corcoran stresses that both the return of someone from the past in this story and the return of someone to it in 'The Happy Autumn Fields' should be read 'as figuring the actual dead of the Blitz' (Corcoran 2004: 148), but he also stresses that the Demon Lover 'is the culturally repressed which returns, with extreme violence, bringing death once more in its wake; he is the unexorcised and unassimilated other, the "*unheimlich*" which intrudes on the space of the "*heimlich*"' (Corcoran 2004: 164). The sense of repetition is a key element in explaining mental breakdown, I think, for these 'actual dead' of the Blitz are an uncanny reminder of the dead of the previous war and so help to draw repressed memories of them back to the surface – to bring them back to life: '[i]n the unfamiliar the familiar persisted like a ghost', as Bowen writes in *The Heat of the Day* (Bowen 1948: 98).

Bowen's earlier *The Death of the Heart* explores the societal repression of memories of the First World War, too, through the character of Major Brutt. 'Makes of men date, like makes of cars; Major Brutt was a 1914-1918 model; there was now no market for that make', Bowen writes, leading Ellmann to comment:

> '[n]o wonder his contemporaries in the 1930s would prefer to forget he exists […] Major Brutt is another unwelcome 'portion' of the past that the Quaynes would prefer to cast aside. Anna describes him as 'the appendix to the finished story of Robert' (261) […] Portia and Major Brutt themselves are unfinished puzzles left over from another age – puzzled, puzzling reminders of an expurgated past' (Ellmann 2004: 138).

One reason his contemporaries would prefer to forget he exists is because he represents a war, memories of which Britain as a nation was eager to repress or 'expurgate' or, as Bowen puts it, 'edit' (Bowen 1938: 174). It is hardly surprising that the arrival of a second global conflict would make such expurgation difficult to achieve, and it is for this reason that depictions of the Second World War repeatedly suggest its haunting by the First and convey, as Gildersleeve has said of *The Demon Lover and Other Stories*, the 'fear that these traumatic cycles will never end' (Gildersleeve 2014: 91). The story 'Ivy Gripped the Steps', for example,

straddles the two wars. Gavin, 'too young for the last war, too old for this' (Bowen 1945: 144), visits the house at Southstone where he stayed just before the outbreak of World War I. 'It was an existence mortgaged to necessity: it was an inheritance of uneasiness, tension, and suspicion' (129), we are told, suggesting that the anxieties of the Second World War are an echo of those of the First: the 'disturbing metaphor [of the ivy] suggests the wound beneath the scab has been re-opened, letting forth a haemorrhage of memories', Ellmann argues (Ellmann 2004: 147). For Gildersleeve, 'The Inherited Clock' discussed in the previous section deals with similar issues: the story 'is concerned with the repetition of childhood trauma during a second global conflict', she argues, adding that in Paul's 'retelling, his repetition, and his re-enactment of the traumatic event […] the story demonstrates at once the compulsion to repeat an earlier trauma' (Gildersleeve 2014: 90). Although this second time round Paul seems to be trying to help Clara rather than hurt her, the fact he insists he cannot take the clock at the end of the story, despite coming all this way to demand it from Clara, Gildersleeve sees as itself a repetition of his 'cruel tricks' as a child.

The presence of ghosts in the collection was apparently not intended wholly negatively, however. Bowen wrote that '[t]he hallucinations are an unconscious, instinctive, saving resort on the part of the characters: life, mechanized by the controls of wartime, and emotionally torn and impoverished by changes, had to complete itself in some way. It is a fact that in Britain, and especially in London, people had strange deep intense dreams' (Bowen 1986: 96). Responding to this idea that imagination 'can conjure up figures of ghosts in order to help people cope with the distress of war', and suggesting that 'Mysterious Kôr' is 'the book's ultimate example of how the dreams and fantasies of ordinary people worked as consoling compensations for what Bowen called the "desiccation" caused by war', Porcelli has argued that in *The Demon Lover*, ghosts, dreams, and hallucinations are never symptoms of mental disorder. They are in fact the only certainties that 'fill the vacuum for the uncertain "I"' (Porcelli 2013: 18; here she is citing Bowen 1986: 98). While the title story itself has provoked contrasting critical responses, some seeing the demon lover as a 'saving resort'[57] – saving Mrs Drover from her current life – I am not convinced that in this story, at

[57] See Fraustino 1980; Hughes 1973; Shumaker 1999.

least, this is the case, and think Corcoran is right in suggesting that 'the repressed does not return to aid release but to enforce [imprisonment]' (Corcoran 2004: 162).

In *The Heat of the Day*, meanwhile, the shadows of the First World War can also be seen to haunt those living through the Second, as Robert seems driven to spy on his own country at least in part by a perceived inability to live up to the expectations of those soldiers that had given up their lives in the Great War.[58] 'You're thinking of your brothers [killed in the First World War]?' Robert says to Stella after she states that the more she thinks about his treachery, the more she 'hates' it. 'Thinking what was good enough for them, honour, ought to be good enough for me?' (Bowen 1948: 275-6). Stella never replies to this, so we can never know whether she was indeed comparing Robert's actions with her brothers' – but the fact Robert feels compelled to defend himself against charges of not behaving honourably like those killed in the previous war suggests he at least is thinking of them. The character Louie, meanwhile, is haunted not by the ghostly presence of her husband, abroad fighting the enemy, but by his very absence, the lack of sound of his footstep, which, 'still only just out of hearing, could be imagined turning and coming back' (146), 'the hollow left by Tom's body' (17) and the emptiness of his chair. Although when out of her flat Louie is constantly reminded of 'London's indifference' to her (146),

> [t]here still was, however, some negative virtue in being outdoors. Indoors meant Chilcombe Street; here resided the fact of her being of meaning only to an absent person, absent most appallingly from this double room. Tom had seldom looked at Louie […] It had been Louie who […] had hour-long passively gazed at Tom. Why now, therefore, should it be his chair that gazed at her? It directed something at her whichever way she pushed, pulled or turned it, in whatever direction she turned herself. (146)

Coping with her husband's absence is something Louie struggles with throughout the entirety of the novel, despite the fact that she seems to remember him in a far from positive

[58] 'War, if you come to think of it, hasn't started anything that wasn't there already', Harrison tells Stella (33), leading Porcelli to argue that '[t]his explains why in wartime the past often comes back as a ghostly presence' (Porcelli 2013: 20).

light. Afflicted by a deeply-felt, 'incredulous loneliness' (145), Louie finds she feels 'nearer to Tom with any man than she did with no man' and is driven to bring home strangers she meets in order to 'discountenanc[e] the chair by filling it'.

Set against Tom's ghostly absence is the ghostly presence of Harrison. In *The Heat of the Day*, Bowen suggests identity is a product of the narratives that are told about oneself, and because such narratives are so many and varied, so identity is a deeply tenuous product. 'What is anyone? Mad, divided, undoing what they do,' Stella states (287), while elsewhere Roderick asks, 'You do really think I am a person?' (300). This is particularly the case in wartime, Bowen suggests, because '[l]ife stories were shed as so much superfluous weight' (95) and it seems especially so of Harrison, whose past is an empty page and so whose identity is hollow. 'By the rules of fiction [Stella thinks], by which life to be credible must comply, he was as a character "impossible" – each time they met, for instance, he showed no shred or trace of having been continuous since they last met' (140). Harrison's ghostliness, in other words, far from involving a return from the past, is a product of lacking a past, existing entirely in the present. If this implies fractured or unstable identity, Harrison's positioning as Robert's double, his 'nemesis and doppelgänger' as Roy Foster describes him in his introduction to the novel (Foster 1998: 2), only serves to reinforce this. 'It seemed to [Stella] that it was Robert who was the Harrison', we are told (Bowen 1948: 275), and the novel is, as Foster notes,

> full of doublings: Stella and Louie, for all their differences, are twinned, as Harrison points out; Harrison himself and his quarry Robert even turn out to share a name. Neither 'belongs'; both are in a sense spies. Harrison gapes at Stella's ostensibly elegant life 'like a German in Paris' – and this means an invader, not a tourist. (Foster 1998: 4)

Du Maurier deploys the doppelganger device in different ways in *Rebecca*, for while the two female protagonists of the novel – Rebecca and the narrator – are twinned in sharing the name and role of Mrs de Winter, mistress of Manderley, they also represent binary, albeit complementary, opposites. The narrator's crisis of identity resulting from becoming the second Mrs de Winter is apparent almost immediately after she arrives at Manderley: the following morning she receives an internal phone call from Mrs Danvers,

asking for 'Mrs de Winter'. 'I'm afraid you have made a mistake,' the narrator replies: 'Mrs de Winter has been dead for over a year' (95). Although it seems by the end of the novel the narrator has found some degree of self-confidence and is able to assert her own identity more fully, this is brought into question when, two pages from the end, the narrator, asleep, dreams that she is sat at her desk in the morning room at Manderley:

> I was sending out invitations. I wrote them all myself with a thick, black pen. But when I looked down to see what I had written it was not my small, square handwriting at all, it was long, and slanting, with curious pointed strokes. I pushed the cards away from the blotter and hid them. I got up and went to the looking-glass. A face stared at me that was not my own. It was very pale, very lovely, framed in a cloud of dark hair. The eyes narrowed and smiled. The lips parted. The face in the glass stared back at me and laughed. (426)

It would seem at the end, then, that the narrator has lost her identity totally, having been subsumed into that of the first Mrs de Winter, or at least fears as much subconsciously. It is particularly interesting, given the importance attached to the act of writing throughout the novel, that the contrast made here between the submissive, conventional narrator and the dominating, unconventional Rebecca is suggested through their contrasting handwriting, and that it is in the act of writing that the narrator first notes her apparent conversion into Rebecca, before the looking glass reveals a corresponding physical transformation. The novel bears the name *Rebecca* after all, while the narrator, who presumably shapes the narrative, whether consciously or not, remains nameless. In her introduction to the Virago edition, Sally Beauman argues that Rebecca and the narrator reflect the two opposing sides of du Maurier's own personality: 'she divided herself between them, and the splitting, doubling and mirroring devices she uses throughout the text destabilise' her personality (Beauman 2003: vi). One could argue that the two Donas in *Frenchman's Creek,* the public and the private, bring together these two sides into a single, split personality: as in *Rebecca*, it is the pressures on women in particular to conform to social expectations that brings about this split, and indeed is perhaps the main reason why Dona chooses to enter into a relationship with the French pirate of the title, owing to the 'boiling up of resentment against the futility of her life' (1941: 8) and her 'self-loathing and exasperation' at having

> played too long a part unworthy of her. She had consented to be the Dona her world had demanded – a superficial, lovely creature, who walked and talked, and laughed, accepting praise and admiration with a shrug of the shoulder as natural homage to her beauty, careless, insolent, deliberately indifferent, and all the while another Dona, a strange, phantom Dona, peered at her from a dark mirror and was ashamed. (du Maurier 1941: 8)

Again we have the device of the mirror to suggest the tenuousness and fragility of identity.

No motif perhaps suggests this fragility as much as schizophrenia, a condition explored in several texts of the period, including Nicholas Blake's crime novels *Malice in Wonderland* (1940) and *Minute for Murder* (1947). In *Malice in Wonderland*, so difficult to understand seem the motives of the 'Mad Hatter' – the person, two persons as it turns out, behind a series of pranks that create a sense of panic and fear among those staying at the holiday camp where the story is set – that it is speculated that 'it must be a lunatic at work', a 'schizophrenic perhaps' who might thus have no control over their actions: 'When your left hand doesn't know what your right's been doing—', as one character explains it (Blake 1940: 110). This is not just idle speculation. Paul, one of the chief suspects, admits to private investigator Nigel Strangeways his fear that he may indeed be responsible:

> 'Perhaps I did do it,' he said, fingering the wire, staring at it as if painfully striving to remember whether he had seen it before. 'A schizophrenic, you said. I thought of that, at the beginning. Well, how am I to know if I'm not the split personality? Suppose I've been doing all these vile, stupid things—my other self? … I had a nervous breakdown at Cambridge once. Overwork. I've been afraid ever since …' (115)

Paul's fears prove unfounded but the fact they are directed at himself, at what he might be capable of, is worth noting. While Paul only fears he might be schizophrenic, in *Minute for Murder* Merrion Squires, a minor character but one who emerges mid-way through the novel as the chief suspect in the murder investigation, reveals himself to be afflicted with the condition, and to have been responsible a year or so previously for the destruction of several coats belonging to female members of the department he works for:

> Squires, looking sick with self-disgust […] now revealed that he had been the cause of it all. He had had no idea that he was the culprit, he said, until a member of the staff had caught him at work, the knife in his hand. 'It was as if I'd been sleep-walking, and someone had woken me up. I mean, I had no idea what I was doing in the room, with a knife. The last I remembered was sitting at my own desk working on some rough lay-outs. But there was the knife, and there was the coat, all mutilated. It was a pretty nasty awakening, I can tell you.'
>
> Merrion went on to say that he supposed the flying bomb, which had blown him off the ledge, must have created something equivalent to a geological fault in his unconscious. (Blake 1947: 105)

The description of the geological fault seems particularly revealing, suggesting as it does a relationship between the physical damage to the buildings of London caused by the bombing raids and the corresponding mental damage to its inhabitants. While Merrion is presented as suffering from actual multiple personality disorder, Jimmy is described metaphorically as suffering from the same condition: a 'conflict was set up within him', we are told, his was 'a divided mind', 'there's always a hell of a dualism in his sort of nature' (98).

This is by no means the only story where trauma, and amnesia, is associated directly, and explicitly, with the fracturing of identity. An obvious example is Greene's *The Ministry of Fear*, a novel in which, as Mudford suggests, 'war is the context for another kind of war, war in the heart, with its explosions like the V1s which occur unexpectedly and by stealth after the engines were cut out' (Mudford 2001: 200). Rowe loses his memory following an explosion which causes him to forget everything that has happened to him since he was an adolescent, as well as his name and other key elements of his identity. The irony – or perhaps it is no irony but the natural response of a mind under siege – is that this is the fulfilment of a wish Rowe has held ever since he poisoned his wife some time before the action of the novel. He cannot forgive himself for his crime even though everyone around him believes his action not murder, but mercy-killing, and Rowe himself acknowledges that it was pity for his wife, who was suffering from some debilitating illness, that caused him to act as he did. It is the memory of his actions that makes him an unhappy, lonely man at the

beginning of the novel (the first part of which is titled 'The Unhappy Man'). He wishes that he could erase the memory of the past twenty years and return to the happy innocence and simple truths of childhood (and indeed, at the fete at the beginning of the novel, he 'stepped joyfully back into adolescence, into childhood', because he associates such fetes with that time (12)):

> [i]n childhood we live under the brightness of immortality – heaven is as near and actual as the seaside. Behind the complicated details of the world stand the simplicities: God is good, the grown up man or woman knows the answer to every question, there is such a thing as truth, and justice is as measured and faultless as the clock. (Greene 1943: 89)

The bomb that erases Rowe's memory enables him to return to this state in the second part of the novel, titled 'The Happy Man', suggesting that amnesia can have a positive effect. The problem is that while his memory loss does instigate a new episode in his life, a period in which he is carefree, no longer weighed down by the baggage of the past, Rowe at this stage is disconnected from the world around him, and indeed is disconnected from himself – he doesn't even go by his true name Rowe, which he has forgotten, but by the name Digby, given to him by those working in the psychiatric hospital he has been taken to. Rowe is only temporarily content with this state of affairs and soon wishes to discover who he really is. In doing so, he is forced to re-engage with the world around him – as Lennie is asked to do in 'Who Has Desired the Sea', except that while for Lennie this is an overwhelming experience that leads to his presumed suicide, in Rowe's case the experience of having his dream of returning to childhood come true, and finding it ultimately unsatisfactory, causes him to grow and come to terms with the past and present alike. While the short third section of the novel is entitled 'Bits and Pieces', reflecting the disintegration of Rowe's identity as he loses his Digby identity and becomes Rowe again, the final section is entitled 'The Whole Man' suggesting that being whole requires a marrying together of living in the present and the past, of happiness and unhappiness, and of the two sides of the self.

Another novel that deals with the experience of fractured identity and amnesia is Margery Allingham's 1941 detective thriller *Traitor's Purse*, in which Campion must foil a

fifth columnist plot to destroy Britain through an attack not on any military institution but the confidence of her people:

> at this moment Britain depends practically entirely on her faith in herself and on her own internal stability. If that could be destroyed suddenly, by a single stroke, there would come confusion, exhaustion, and finally decay. (Allingham 1941: 163)

Severe concussion sustained immediately before the novel begins means, however, that Campion 'did not remember anything at all. There was only that secret worry, that gnawing, fidgeting, terrifying anxiety' (9). As a result the novel becomes more about Campion's battle against himself and his own memory loss than the actual enemy – he is aware that the 'other half of the talisman was lying just out of his reach in the monstrous darkness of his own brain' (72). Indeed, once Campion does finally regain his memory – once 'his two minds and personalities merged at last, [allowing] the new Campion's witless discoveries [to fit] over the old Campion's certain knowledge, [and] the three-dimensional truth suddenly [to spring] out in blazing colours' (180) – it takes little more than a few pages to stop the plot (it takes longer, in fact, to get out of prison – as in several other texts, the British police must be eluded and overcome for the country to be saved). As occasionally found in other texts, here the linking of mental and theatrical blackout is explicit rather than just implicit: Campion must raise 'the curtain of darkness which hung between the front and the back of his mind' (28).

3. Fractured Identity, Fractured Text

Perhaps the most striking example of a split personality or fragmented identity in literature of the Second World War is that of George Harvey Bone in *Hangover Square*. This is not a novel that includes mention of schizophrenia like *Malice in Wonderland* or *Minute for Murder*; rather it is a novel *about* schizophrenia, as is suggested by both its original title on publication in 1941 – *Hangover Square, or The Man with Two Minds* – and the epigraph on its opening page from *Black's Medical Dictionary* defining 'SCHIZOPHAENIA' as 'a cleavage of the mental functions, associated with assumption by the affected person of a second

personality' (6). It is his assumption of a second personality that drives the plot, as it is this second George that plans the murder initially of Netta and later of Peter, while the first, 'normal' George remains oblivious to his second self's plotting. He does not just seem to be suffering from what might now be referred to as dissociative identity disorder. Like the narrator of *Rebecca*, George seems to suffer from what would be diagnosed today as bipolarity – experiencing as he does extreme highs and lows that have a profound impact on his view of the world. This can be seen in his round of golf waiting for Netta to arrive in Brighton, where the high standard of his play gives him a brighter perspective both of himself and the world around him:

> His face shone, his eyes gleamed, and he felt, deep in his being, that he was not a bad man, as he had thought he was a few hours ago. And because he was a good man, he was a happy man, and if he could only break seventy he would never be unhappy again. (Hamilton 1941: 145)

George here is focused entirely on the moment – he has forgotten Netta and his life in Earl's Court and is living entirely in the present, cut off from past and future both. This is why his emotions fluctuate so rapidly, because his happiness is dependent solely on the outcome of each shot, something made clear by a narrative voice that though in the third-person is entirely from George's inner perspective (an example is '[i]t was a rotten shot … but it was on, it was on, it was on!', that is, on the green (146)).

George's split personality is crucial in conveying and exploring some of Hamilton's key ideas, for it not only expresses his own fractured identity, but that of the nation as a whole. In chapter 3 I considered how he can be seen as representative of political divisions within Britain during the period in which the novel is set, namely the months leading up to the outbreak of war, and in particular opposing responses to German aggression. Here I want to suggest that there is a second way of reading George's split personality. Hamilton described *Hangover Square* to his brother as a 'Blitzy novel' (cited in Harding 2007: 45) – the novel was written during the Blitz, between late 1940 and early 1941 – and it can be argued that the clicking between personalities that George experiences mirrors the daily oscillation of London between the 'normal', daytime London that everyone was largely familiar with, a bustling, cosmopolitan metropolis, albeit one whose ruined buildings bore

obvious witness to the ongoing war, and a night-time London of the blackout that was 'grim, dreary, mysterious, silent' (Hamilton 1941: 20), as the world is described during one of George's own blackouts. The dislocation experienced by many in Britain during the bombing raids, not just in London, is present in George's thought processes and the severing of his identity in two. At night, when all lights were extinguished and few people were to be seen on the streets, even fewer when the air-raid siren wailed, London was akin to a ghost-town. It is described as such, as 'ghostly', in Bowen's short story 'Mysterious Kôr' (Bowen 1945: 173), and talking with George, John Halliwell has the 'feeling of having talked to a ghost' (Hamilton 1941: 211). During his dead moods, George is a ghostly figure, silent and shadowy, one who experiences the world around him as ethereal. Hamilton's description of his sensory shutdown as he transforms into this second personality seems to capture the transforming of London into a second city during the blackout:

> [c]lick! … It was as though his head were a five-shilling Kodak camera, and someone had switched over the little trigger which makes the exposure […] But instead of an exposure having been made the opposite had happened – an inclosure – a shutting down, a locking in. A moment before his head, his brain, were out in the world, seeing, hearing, sensing objects directly; now they were enclosed behind glass […] behind a film […] a film behind which all things and people moved eerily, without colour, vivacity or meaning, grimly, puppet-like, without motive or conscious volition of their own … Numbed and sensationless. (165)

Like several characters from other texts discussed in this chapter, George in his 'dead' moods seems a kind of automaton or zombie to others, but because he views the world as 'remote, almost impalpable, miles away' (86) – '[t]he world he was in now was the same in shape, the same to look at, but "dead", silent, mysterious' (85) – so those around him seem to George to be like puppets, and at other times ghosts. Netta, for example, ceases to be a real person and becomes 'a voice over the telephone, or the mental construction of the owner of a voice one might make while phoning – a ghost if you liked' (86). With time George's attacks worsen and his transformations become more intense, until they are described in terms akin to the explosion of a bomb, the 'click' replaced with a '*Crack!*': '[i]t almost knocked him down. It made him reel. It was as though he had been hit by something

[…] this time his brain had almost burst in two: it had practically knocked him off his feet' (170).[59] George remains within his second personality for longer and longer periods and finds it increasingly difficult coping with returning to his 'real' self: 'Coming up from the depths the impact of the real world was too much' (170) – a description of his mental state that evokes the physical return of Londoners from the bomb shelters beneath the ground. This 'coming up from the depths' is particularly disorientating because George never has any memory of what he has thought, said or done while 'below', meaning that for him his dead periods are in essence blackouts – periods of darkness into which he is unable to peer once he has returned to the light.

Why does George suffer from these schizophrenic shifts of personality? Hamilton never makes this clear, although we do learn that George has suffered from them since school, but that 'it was happening a good deal too often nowadays' (85), and that they are now 'much worse […] I pass out for days on end nowadays' (98), as he tells Johnnie. All this suggests that something has happened recently to exacerbate George's schizophrenia, but that it actually derives from earlier in his life, from while he was at school. Victoria Walker's comment regarding Kavan's traumatised soldiers that 'childhood experiences and social circumstance play equal parts in their distress; war exacerbates old psychological wounds' (Walker 2013: 2) seems equally applicable to George. It seems likely that his heavy drinking and strained relations with Netta and her accomplices throughout the period of the novel – the eight months or so from Christmas Day 1938 to the outbreak of war on 3 September 1939; longer, in fact, as we learn that he has known Netta for some eighteen months prior to the novel beginning – are the cause of the worsening of his schizophrenic shifts. As for their original cause, it seems reasonable to imagine that, given his desire in his second self to escape from his current life to the safety of Maidenhead, a place where he is confident he will not only be happy but secure, and the fact that his choice of Maidenhead is due to his having 'been happy there with his sister, Ellen', who died 'a year or so later' (18), that this period in Maidenhead pre-dates whatever traumatic experience it is that has caused

[59] It is descriptions like these that presumably led Leo Mellor to describe George's 'numbed wanderings and dulled hysteria [as] those of the putative "psychic victim" of the air raids and as representative of both appeasement versus engagement and the "mental walking wounded"' (Mellor 2011: 43).

his ‘blank moods’, and that his sister’s death may well be that experience. Given the allegorical nature of the novel, as I read it, I think it worth noting that we can date his sister’s death and the onset of his dead moods to around the time of the First World War (like Hamilton himself, George was presumably born in 1904, as he is aged 34 at the time the novel begins in December 1938, and it seems likely he was around ten when his sister died). Once one has calculated this, it is not difficult to reach the conclusion that, if George is indeed a symbol for Great Britain as I have argued, then the traumatic event that triggered his schizophrenia in the 1910s is representative of Britain’s traumatic experience of the Great War, while his struggles to deal with the fascist-sympathising Netta and Peter, which seem to exacerbate his condition, stand for Britain’s difficult relations with an aggressive Nazi Germany in the late 1930s. Just as in his second personality George realises ‘things had been going on too long’ with Netta and he ‘must’ kill her (18), so by implication Britain is aware, subconsciously at least, that things have been going on too long with Nazi Germany and war is becoming a necessity. This explains George’s alcohol dependence too, especially when *Hangover Square* is read alongside Louis MacNeice’s *Autumn Journal*, and his vivid description in section XV of the poem of an individual’s, though this reads as a nation’s too, efforts to suppress visions of the dead brought back to life, the ghosts perhaps of ‘someone at Gallipoli or in Flanders / Caught in the end-all mud’ (MacNeice 1939: 49). Aids to suppressing such visions include ‘Shelley and jazz and lieder and love and […] get[ting] drunk among the roses’ (48): but although the narrator advises giving ‘them time to vanish’, taking ‘another drink’, the section concludes with the statement that ‘they are still there’ (50).

What I am seeking to highlight here are the allegorical aspects of *Hangover Square*, the way the novel can be read as metaphor, though it is the social realism of the novel that has tended to strike critics. In his survey of critical responses to Hamilton, John Harding argues that *Hangover Square* is

> a perfect example of Hamilton’s magical ability to render place with compelling accuracy and style. The novel’s greatest strength resides in that solid sense of a sordid, futile and irresponsible world, which is conveyed, according to Peter Widdowson, ‘as much by the cheap hotels, corner houses, cinemas, pubs and streets, as by the sleazy self-indulgence of the characters and the drink-sodden atmosphere’ (Harding 2011: 56).

Harding supports this view by citing writers like Doris Lessing as arguing that 'Hamilton is a social historian virtually without equal' and Nick Hornby that 'as social historian he is unparalleled' (56). Nevertheless, Harding does suggest that seeing *Hangover Square* purely as a work of social realism, albeit highly accurate realism, is problematic. Discussing George's schizophrenia, Harding comments that if this is meant purely as a medical condition, 'if Bone is merely ill, then are we just watching a sick person going about murder? If not, what can his "schizophrenia" *mean*? Is it a symbol for something else?' (53). Harding answers this by referring to Neil Maycroft's belief that the contrivance is used by Hamilton to produce a 'series of contrasting inversions of the world around him' so as to, in Harding's words, 'reflect back to us a society organised along the lines of capitalist and bourgeois ideology made concrete' (54), as in his previous novel *Impromptu in Moribundia* (1939), an allegory in which the narrator visits and describes a distant planet clearly intended to represent Britain and provide Hamilton with a means of critiquing 1930s British society. This is certainly a possible reading of *Hangover Square*, though I am more persuaded that if George's schizophrenia is indeed 'a symbol for something else', it is, as I suggest above, for the blackout Britain in which Hamilton was writing and pre-war, divided Britain in which the novel is set.

Either way, what I argue is important here is Hamilton's combining of mimetic realism and allegory, for in earlier novels he had experimented with both: the social realism of *Twenty Thousand Streets under the Sky, A London Trilogy* (1935) succeeded by the fable of *Impromptu in Moribundia*, a novel also notable for its typographical experimentation. Peter Widdowson's description of 1930s British writers as 'oscillating between a more or less realistic portrayal of the world about them, and the contrivance of "parallel" worlds through fable, allegory, satire and dystopia' (Widdowson 2011: ix) in his introduction to *Impromptu* certainly seems an apt one for Hamilton specifically, but *Hangover Square*, with its closely-observed recording of seedy London life in the late 1930s married to the devices that make it seem in many ways more akin to fable than realism, seems to embody such oscillation by combining the two forms, and to do so in a way that mirrors George's own divided identity. Hamilton described the world of *Impromptu* as 'a world of realities so preposterous that [the] human brain could not cope with them' (80), echoing what

Christopher Isherwood described in *Lions and Shadows* as the 'fantastic realities' of the 'everyday world' (Isherwood 1938: 107). It seems to me that the schizophrenic form of *Hangover Square* is a logical response to such a vision of the world.

That George's brain cannot 'cope' with 'realities so preposterous' following his murder of Netta and Peter is made clear two pages from the end of the novel:

> [h]e had a peculiar feeling of being in a dream – unable to focus his mind. He felt he had been in a dream for days now. And yet something told him now that he must not wake from this dream – that only in this dream state could he understand and see in their true perspective the now haunting and repellent events in which he had participated this morning. If he woke up now, if anything happened to change his dream state of mind, he felt that he might be faced with some inconceivable horror of the mind such as he could not bear. (278)

The repetition of 'now' suggests he is as afraid of the present as Lennie in 'Who Has Desired the Sea' – as terrified of emerging from his second personality, from viewing the world from 'behind glass' (165) as Lennie is of emerging from his 'glass cell' (Kavan 1945: 23). Just as 'Who Has Desired the Sea' ends with Lennie's apparent suicide, so *Hangover Square* ends with George's. Faced with the imminent prospect of waking up to the nightmare reality of being at war, of having murdered, of having realised that Maidenhead 'was just a town with shops, and newsagents, and jobs and cinemas. It wasn't, and never could be, the peace, Ellen, the river, the quiet glass of beer […]' (279), George chooses to take his own life. One wonders what Hamilton might have intended by having him commit suicide on the day that war with Germany was declared, given the idea that George is intended to symbolise Britain. It is easy to read this in a wholly pessimistic light but one possibility is that if George represents pre-war Britain, Hamilton is expressing his belief that this Britain will never survive the war: Hamilton wrote to his brother shortly after war was declared that 'the Second World War would be the end of life as we know it' and of his confidence – Hamilton was no supporter of 'life as we know it' – that 'a better world will come out of it all right' (cited in Harding 2011: 44).

Similar to *Hangover Square* is the way the fragmented form of Henry Green's *Back* reflects the fractured mind of the protagonist Charley Summers. 'The war had injured him'

(Green 1946: 200), Nancy realises, and she wonders, as does the reader, what has so traumatised him. We never learn anything other than that something took place in France, 'at night' (187), presumably while being held as a prison of war (Charley says at one stage that he 'can't [talk about] those prisoner of war camps' (131-2)). When Mr Grant is dying towards the end of the novel, the calls of anguish from upstairs threaten to cause repressed memories from the past to resurface:

> 'Father,' then, finally, 'Come back,' and the culmination of all this was about to remind Summers of something in France which he knew, as he valued his reason, that he must always shut out. He clapped hands down tight over his ears. He concentrated on not ever remembering. On keeping himself dead empty. (186)

As in Kavan's stories and other texts explored in this chapter, a central question raised in the course of the novel is whether it is better for a traumatised individual to confront their repressed memories or whether the doctor treating Mrs Grant is correct in believing that 'nature provides her own defence, she's merciful, she draws a blackout over what she doesn't want remembered. Or rather the nervous system rejects what is surplus to its immediate requirement' (158). Like Rowe in *The Ministry of Fear*, Mrs Grant has lost her memory, in her case owing to the shock of losing her daughter, Rose. Her husband muses when explaining all of this to Charley that perhaps the doctor is right:

> [i]t's merciful in a way perhaps, but I wouldn't know. You see she doesn't remember so very well as a rule, nowadays. What it may be is that nature protects us by drawing a curtain, blacks certain things out. Rose's going as she did was a terrible shock to her naturally. (13)

Mr Grant is clearly not totally convinced by this, however, noting how he 'knew a man once, in the ordinary run of business, who started to misremember in that fashion. Wasn't long before he'd lost all his connections' (14). Offering a view that is echoed later by Middlewitch, who tells Charley that 'one or two [fellow returned soldiers] have drawn their horns in, gone inside of themselves, if you follow me. Now that's dangerous' (28-9), and also by Mrs Frazier, who draws on her experience of World War I when she tells Charley,

'But you want to brisk yourself up […] There were plenty like it after the last war. Sat about and moped' (34), Mr Grant says:

> Nature's cruel, there's no getting away from her laws. She won't let up on the weak, I mean. When the doctor went into it with me, his idea about Amy was it might be nature's way to protect her by letting her forget […] Yes, well, I took leave to doubt that doctor. Nature's cruel I said to myself, you can't expect mercy in that quarter. So d'you know what? I'll tell you. I thought maybe it wasn't the best thing for Amy to forget Rose. (14-15)

Tellingly, Amy's memory loss extends back to a time before the death of her brother in World War I: this is another story, in other words, like 'The Demon Lover' and other Bowen stories, where the Second World War seems haunted by the First (and in this sense Charley is a kind of ghost, not least in being a 'shell-shock case' (91): Mr Pike 'was disheartened with the times he lived in. "They're coming back nervous cases, like they did out of the last war," he repeated to himself, and thought that, in that case, then everything was hopeless' (110-1)). Equally, it is another case where a recent traumatic event (Rose's 'going as she did') seems to have reopened older wounds. In fact, just as Charley spends most of the novel in the mistaken belief that Nancy is Rose, so Mrs Grant mistakes Charley for 'her brother who was killed in seventeen' (16) and seems to believe that the First War is still taking place, stating that

> we've had some terrible Zeppelin raids round about, lately [and…] complaining […] that it must be the war, that ever since the Russians gave up she had felt tired. "This terrible war," she ended (16).

Mr Grant is determined to disillusion her, to make sure, for example, that she understands exactly who Charley is, and in this he clearly differs from Nancy, who admittedly spends most of the novel strenuously trying to disillusion Charley too, but seems to have accepted by the end of the novel that perhaps it is better, after all, to let him believe in his own narrative. We see this on the night that Mr Grant dies, when, as quoted above, memories that must not be allowed to return almost do, Nancy brings Charley a glass of whiskey with

a sleeping-drought in it and, in doing so, brings him 'peace', allowing him to sleep 'like the dead' (186). When at the very end of the novel, having asked him in a reversal of gender roles 'to marry her, and […] been accepted', she lies 'stark naked in the bed' and Charley experiences the 'overwhelming sight of the woman he loved, for the first time, without her clothes' and 'it was too much, for he burst into tears […] and bawled like a child. "Rose," he called out, not knowing he did so, "Rose"', she responds by saying 'There […] there' and presses 'his head with her hands' (208). The ambiguously romantic ending to the novel chimes with that of *The Ministry of Fear*: 'she knew what she had taken on. It was no more or less, really, than she had expected' (208).

While the last fifteen years or so have seen increased critical interest in what had previously been a very under-studied period, Henry Green has perhaps not benefitted as much from this as other writers such as Elizabeth Bowen, but one particularly illuminating essay is that of Gerard Barrett on *Back* in which he examines what is, in terms of form, the oddest element of the novel's construction, namely the inclusion part way through the narrative of an extract from the eighteenth century text *The Souvenirs* that Green had himself translated from the French. This provoked a largely negative response on publication but is justified, Barrett argues, because '[a]long with the thematic parallels between the extract and the novel, such as mistaken identity and the death of the beloved, there are several correspondences of detail and motif' (Barrett 2001: 178). Furthermore, Barrett cites Evelyn Waugh's criticism of Green's insertion of the extract into the novel as 'very mad' (179), arguing, however, that this is in fact part of the novel's design and 'parallels Charley's mental disorientation'. He goes on to cite Rod Mengham's argument that 'madness is the aesthetic milieu of the text' and that 'the real meaning of the extract "is a wholly schizophrenic one, irrecoverable without special knowledge. In intra-textual terms this is *unknown* knowledge and the meaning remains ostensibly hidden"' (180). Barrett argues that 'the eccentric, mad or schizophrenic nature of the extract has both aesthetic and historical justification. It is a formal parallel for Charley's delusions and paranoia, being a double of the text that contains him' (180). In *Back* Green could thus be seen to be developing Hamilton's use in *Hangover Square* of a schizophrenic protagonist to explore broader societal fracturings through extending this to the deployment of a schizophrenic form:

> [a]lthough the intertextuality of *Back* may well result from an incipient postmodernism that began to emerge in Green's work at this stage, we can come to a closer understanding of the way it works by relating it to the historical conditions in which the novel was written. Intertextuality in *Back* is an aesthetic equivalent of the trauma that afflicts its central character. Green has written the novel in such a way that it can be seen as a double of other texts, as Nancy, in Charley's traumatised consciousness, is 'the living image' of Rose […] Green's procedure of cutting an extract out of a nineteenth-century text enacts, on a symbolic and formal level, the amputations that Summers, Middlewitch and thousands of their historical counterparts suffered during the war. As an avatar of the motif of amputation, the extract from *The Souvenirs* exemplifies the novel's textual traumatism. If it sits rather awkwardly in the novel then that is exactly how it should be: as awkward and artificial as a peg-leg. (Barrett 2001: 180)

4. The Enemy Within

If Bowen is right in her preface to *The Demon Lover and Other Stories*, as quoted in my Introduction, that 'during the war in England the overcharged sub-consciousnesses of everybody overflowed and merged' (Bowen 1950: 47), and that this impacted on writing of the period, then the literature of the Second World War suggests society-wide anxieties regarding an 'enemy within' that go beyond the broader societal fracturings and more specific fears of fifth columnist treachery discussed in previous chapters to include anxieties regarding the individual psyche and identity and fears of one's own capability for treachery, and this can be seen in particular in stories of schizophrenia where individual characters worry what they might be capable of. Campion in Allingham's *Traitor's Purse* worries that he might be 'a lunatic, very possibly a dangerous lunatic' (1941: 77)), while in *Hangover Square* George is forced to ask himself 'what *had* he been thinking about – what went on in his head when the shutter went down?' (24). 'Perhaps he was really crazy', George fears (28): he 'might, for all [he] knew, be a criminal maniac' (25). Maybe, given these anxieties are expressed very early in the novel, we should not be surprised that George ends up taking his own life; and perhaps, given Bowen's description of the overflowing and merging of the

sub-consciousnesses of everybody, we should not be surprised either that George is by no means the only character to commit suicide in the literature considered here. Admittedly, there is some ambiguity in a number of texts as to whether the protagonist commits suicide or not: while Hilfe certainly shoots himself at the end of *The Ministry of Fear,* and we can with some confidence say that Pye in *Caught*, Lennie in 'Who Has Desired the Sea' and Dick in *The King's General* all take their own life, it is unclear whether Robert Kelway jumps or falls from Stella's roof in *The Heat of the Day* and in the case of Mrs Danvers' disappearance at the end of *Rebecca*, by no means definite that she even dies. Overall, it may strike readers of literature of the period that suicide seems by far the most common cause of death. Why this should be is not totally clear. Perhaps it is the only satisfactory solution to these stories of treachery where those closest to the traitor are the most betrayed of all. Perhaps it is being implicitly stated that betraying those close to us is to act against a part of us, a part of who we are. Or perhaps it is the logical consequence of characters being most fearful of, and most desperate to escape from, what lies within themselves. One is reminded of Robert Frost's pre-war poem 'Desert Places' (1936), where having contemplated a blank, empty, snow-covered landscape in the first three stanzas, the narrator suggests in the final stanza that it is the emptiness and coldness he sees within himself that is truly frightening:

> They cannot scare me with their empty spaces
> Between stars — on stars where no human race is.
> I have it in me so much nearer home
> To scare myself with my own desert places. (Frost 2011: 60)

Conclusion: Scepticism and Storytelling in WWII Literature

In her helpful introduction to *Long Shadows: The Second World War in British Fiction and Film*, Petra Rau suggests that '[m]any [writers] who were popular at the time – Graham Greene, George Orwell, Nevil Shute, Alexander Baron – wrote about war in a way that counteracted the popular myths that were already shaping up during the war years' (Rau 2016: 9): as we have seen, this is true of many others too, and the motif of 'the enemy within' is an important way in which such myths are challenged. Rau is keen to express exactly what she means by myth, arguing after Barthes that it

> should not be understood as fabrication or fiction, nor is it mendacity. Rather, it functions to disguise its own mechanics: it makes things 'mean something by themselves' (Barthes, 'Myth Today', 145); hence the appearance of naturalness. In the Myth of the Blitz, the British 'naturally' come together and put all social grievances, divisions and self-interest aside to fight a common enemy (Rau 2016: 6-7).

We might expect that fiction that seeks to counteract myth would seek to expose what myth 'functions to disguise', namely its own mechanics, and that the need to do so might be felt even more insistently when, to again quote Green's character Raunce in *Loving*, there's 'nothing but propaganda these days' (Green 1945: 95). In countering, in effect, the propaganda of wartime unity, the writers considered here do not, however, offer their work as a 'truth' that opposes official fictions; rather, the idea of the fictiveness, the provisionality, of *all* accounts is extended to their own work too.

We can see this in Bowen's *The Heat of the Day*, where storytelling is arguably the central concern. As Corcoran argues, Bowen explores 'where the truth of any story might lie in a universal wartime discourse of story-telling', while Piette notes that the novel is 'a story about stories, and is keenly conscious of the power of the news stories in wartime' (Piette 1995: 163). The action of the novel is triggered by what Harrison refers to as 'that particular story' – namely, that Stella's lover Robert is spying for the Germans. Stella tells Robert later that 'somebody […] came to me with a story about you', suggesting perhaps that she believes it to be just that – a fiction, a story; but it remains a story even after Robert

finally acknowledges its veracity: 'What was to stop you turning the story in?' he wonders, an odd turn of phrase not only owing to the personification of 'the story' but also in the continued use of a word most commonly associated with fiction to describe an accusation now admitted as fact. Here, then, the word 'story' has ceased to refer solely to a fictitious narrative but any narrative, highlighting that the narratives we construct are always just that – constructions – and suggesting also that the narratives we hear are so rarely objectively factual that to distinguish between fiction and fact has become a more or less meaningless exercise. The novel thus offers, in Corcoran's words,

> a wry exposure of its own fictionality [… A] virtually febrile self-consciousness about being narrated informs the entire narrative […] The sense of being narrated, of being part of a discourse you cannot control, is also congruent with the wartime narratives of propaganda […] The story of Louie Lewis and her friend Connie is a story of believing, and then choosing to disbelieve, the stories about yourself with which the state, through the machinery of the press, would wish to shape you. (Corcoran 2004: 171)

Cousin Francis's story also involves the believing of stories: 'It was characteristic of Frankie,' said Colonel Pole, 'not to spot hanky-panky when he saw it. Up to a point he'd listen to any story; he was as innocent as a babe unborn' (Bowen 1948: 80). Hence Corcoran's summation that 'the propaganda of narrative is deeply undermined' (Corcoran 2004: 171).

Apart from the instances already quoted, the novel abounds with the telling of stories – not just the story Harrison tells Stella that Robert is a spy, nor just the stories Robert tells to cover this particular story up; nor are the story-tellers limited to those characters, Harrison and Robert, who work in the shady world of espionage and counter-espionage. The 'entangled loyalties and treacheries' that lie at the heart of the novel, as Corcoran notes, are not just 'in war [but] in love, and in relationships across the generations', the product of 'a radical sense of the destabilization or erosions of identity consequent on wartime displacement and disorientations' (168). It is 'in order to maintain identities in peril' (170), that characters tell so many stories about themselves both to each other and to themselves. Thus Stella allows her son Roderick to believe that she left Victor, his father who died very shortly after the collapse of their marriage, partly to protect

Roderick's sense of his dead father's merit, but also out of a preference to 'sound a monster than look a fool' (Bowen 1948: 224). 'But what story is true?' Nettie muses (214). Stella does admit to the fictiveness of 'the story that I had walked out on Victor' (224) commenting to Harrison that

> [w]hoever's the story had been, I let it be mine … it came to be my story and I stuck to it. Or rather, first I stuck to it, then it continued sticking to me: it took my shape and equally I took its. (224)

As discussed in the previous chapter, Bowen suggests the tenuousness of identity, especially in wartime, because it is a product of the narratives that are told about oneself: to put it another way, using Corcoran's words, in *The Heat of the Day* 'the uncertain "I" is shaped as derivative, imitative, and virtually random, an aggregate, a composite, a composition: the "I" is only whatever story will stick to it for long enough' (Corcoran 2004: 170). This suggestion that we are all characters in a story – because our identity is a product of the narratives we, and others, weave about us – is an idea explored generally within much postmodernist fiction written later in the twentieth century, but it seems in *The Heat of the Day* that though this may be true of all human beings, it is particularly true of those living through the war because, as quoted earlier, the specific experience of remaining in London during the Blitz meant '[l]ife stories were shed as so much superfluous weight' (Bowen 1948: 95). As noted in the previous chapter, the most obvious example of this is Harrison, of whom Stella thinks: 'By the rules of fiction, by which life to be credible must comply, he was as a character "impossible"' (140). Harrison is not the only character whose status as a character in a novel is foregrounded, however: Stella comments that it is odd that she 'should have turned up in two different stories' (135) and wonders elsewhere whether 'Robert [was] himself fictitious' (97).

While in *The Heat of the Day* the very words 'story' and 'stories' appear some fifty-four times during the course of the novel, in *The Confidential Agent* the same words appear thirty times, and in many cases are combined with adjectives that stress the unbelievability of D.'s story: 'It's an extraordinary story [… It] *is* a tall story […] It was, of course, an incredible story […] It was the wildest story, but no story is too wild for a man who hopes' (Greene 1939: 49, 110, 120, 157). This repeated highlighting of the story's incredibility, like

Harrison's being described as 'a character "impossible", has metafictional consequences, of course, as does the inclusion of intertextual elements: as Brennan comments, '[i]t becomes of central significance that the Berne manuscript of "The Song Of Roland" offers an alternative version of the story' (Brennan 2010: 64) and indeed the fact that alternative versions of a story might exist reflects back on Greene's own text.[60] As a result, Diemert's comment regarding *Brighton Rock* (1938), published one year earlier, that

> it expresses a radical scepticism about the person or institution that claims for itself the ability to discern and present a single meaning or truth [and that …] this kind of scepticism has far-reaching consequences, because it undermines the basis of any kind of authority, whether political, religious, or critical (Diemert 1996: 145)

is equally applicable to *The Confidential Agent*. Even though D. must choose which side to commit to in the civil war, he does so in the knowledge that he might be choosing wrongly: 'You choose your side once for all – of course, it may be the wrong side. Only history can tell that' (Greene 1939: 68). 'As he struggles to find truth among the numerous fictions, the layers of deceit and mistrust he encounters D. discovers that the only solution is to choose the fiction he wants to believe while acknowledging its status as a fiction open to various interpretations' (Diemert 1996: 146).

Diemert suggests that, if this metafictional self-awareness is even more marked in *The Ministry of Fear*, this is due to its being written in wartime:

> [p]erhaps because it was written during the war, *The Ministry of Fear* radically restructures conventional modes of literary realism; it is as though the release of tension that accompanied the explosion of the war's long-awaited violence freed Greene from the textual restraints of his earlier fiction […] highlighting the thriller's conventions (Diemert 1996: 151).

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[60] Intertextuality is a prominent feature of *The Heat of the Day* too: noting that the title of the novel is a reference to the 'biblical story of the husbandman who paid those labourers that were hired at the eleventh hour the same as those who had worked all day and "borne the burden and heat of the day" (Matthew 21:12)', Christensen notes that '[o]ther examples are references to Shakespearean and Dickensian characters – Hamlet, Lady Macbeth, Mr Dick – that point up the motif of madness which runs through the story' (172).

It is perhaps precisely because it was written in the middle of the war that, according to Diemert, '*The Ministry of Fear* is its author's most ambitious and most complex handling of […] the problem of accommodating a radically sceptical approach to the demands of reading' (177) and is, as Mellor argues, 'a remaking of Greene's 1930s "entertainments", but now with knowledge, and knowingness, of literary artifice' (Mellor 2011: 141). This awareness of its own artifice can be seen in Greene's deployment of intertextual references, especially to *The Little Duke*, which provides the epigraphs at the beginning of each chapter and the novel as a whole, a copy of which is purchased early in the text by Rowe. The narrative explicitly compares Rowe's experiences with those of adventure stories such as *The Little Duke*, leading Diemert to argue that '[t]he reality Rowe experiences is shown to be highly questionable because not only is it the product of fictions but it is also explicitly figured as a text, another fiction, which is specifically a thriller since "thrillers," we are told, "are like life" ([Greene 1943:] 65)' and that 'issues relating to reading and to the thriller as a form are figured in its plot and alluded to in its self-conscious references' (Diemert 1996: 152, 157). Although Greene does not appear within the narrative in the manner of some later, postmodernist novels (Paul Auster in *The New York Trilogy* (1990), Martin Amis in *Money* (1984), and so forth), he does seem to be alluded to when Rowe 'felt directed, controlled, moulded, by some agency with a surrealist imagination' (95), for while this agency could be Hilfe, who for much of the novel seems to control Rowe, the repeated suggestions that Rowe is a character within an adventure story might lead many readers to infer that it is the author who is in fact controlling his actions and moulding his character. One could apply to *The Ministry of Fear* Bennett and Royle's assertion regarding Bowen's writing that it

> operates through multiple knittings of 'fiction, 'books' and 'acting', on the one hand, and 'life' on the other. *The Heat of the Day* works with those 'rules of fiction, with which life to be credible must comply' (140). There is no 'life' and no 'real' which is not marked by the undeniably fictitious or 'half-fictitious' (166); by senses of being 'inside the pages of a book' (97) or in a drama or 'thriller' (190); by generative uncertainties of what is acting and what is not acting; by the demands of participating in a story […] (Bennett and Royle 1994: 95-6).

Henry Green, similarly, problematises narrative voice in his wartime fictions, not least by bringing into question the various stories of individual characters. Thus in *Caught*, a novel 'about storytelling and the problem of representation' (Mellor 2011: 67), Dy 'told him the story as she knew it, but so brokenly, so interrupted by her imagination, by her feeling for the boy's feelings in surroundings she could not grasp that she was extremely vague, giving him no picture at all' (Green 1943: 14), while Roe's status as a character is suggested by his being brought to life by Piper's story: '[f]or the first time he became real to the substation, and all this from a tale that had expanded remarkably within thirty-six hours' (154). Meanwhile, the narrator repeatedly intervenes to tell us that characters are wrong, stressing difficulties of interpretation and knowledge: '[s]he was wrong about Chopper […] in this the men were wrong […] in this he was wrong twice, both times' (94, 154, 65). The stories we tell ourselves, it is suggested, are just as prone to be false as those others tell us. Holmesland's comment that 'Green's preoccupation with literary form reflects what he sees as basic facts about the world: the inability to communicate effectively and the impossibility of knowing the truth' (Holmesland 1986: 2) seems entirely apt here, but perhaps what could be added when looking at novels like *Caught* and *Back* is this is heightened in his wartime fiction, and this may strengthen Plain's assertion that '[t]he centrality of fictions in the process of "making sense" of war cannot be underestimated' (Plain 1996: 18).

While I would certainly agree with Petra Rau's partial explanation for why '[f]or a long time the literature of the 1940s languished without much critical attention' that '[n]o-one knew what to do with this awkward decade, pinched between late modernism, Angry Young Men, the return to realism, and early postmodern experiment' (Rau 2016: 8), what I would want to stress here is that the anxieties of the time regarding the trustworthiness of those closest to us, as well as scepticism regarding what was being communicated by the government through the press, prompted an incredulity towards narratives[61] that found expression in a number of writers' work through the metafictional highlighting of texts' own artificiality, and thus that what Rau rightly identifies as 'early postmodern experiment' can

[61] I am, of course, referencing Jean-François Lyotard's famous identification of 'incredulity towards metanarratives' as the defining feature of the postmodern (Lyotard 1985: xxiv).

be made sense of historically through consideration of these fears. This early postmodernism can also be seen stylistically in the engagement of writers of the time with popular culture. To take the examples for the moment of du Maurier and Greene, the most popular and arguably populist of the writers considered here, both write within popular genres such as romance, spy, gothic, science fiction, and so on (though never entirely within any one genre – both tend to redefine genres rather than produce stereotypical examples of them) and in a style that is accessible but also raises questions regarding the authenticity of the narrative voice. This is the hallmark of postmodernist writing for critics such as Peter Brooke who sees the highlighting of 'narrative's arbitrariness and lack of authority' as a characteristic of postmodernist fiction (Smyth 1991: 36) and Andreas Huyssen, who argues that postmodernism tends to engage with popular culture where modernism distanced itself from it:

> [m]odernism constituted itself through a conscious strategy of exclusion, an anxiety of contamination by its *other*: an increasingly consuming and engulfing mass culture [Hence …] modernism's insistence on the autonomy of the art work, its obsessive hostility to mass culture, its radical separation from the culture of everyday life, and its programmatic distance from political, economic and social concerns. (Huyssen 1986: 8)

Huyssen sees postmodernism, on the other hand, as providing a 'major challenge […] to the canonized high/low dichotomy [which …] rejects the theories and practices of the Great Divide' (Huyssen 1986: 8).[62] I would argue that du Maurier's 'middle-brow yarns', as Neil Spencer called them (Horner & Zlosnik 1998: 1), do just that – they sit on the boundary between a high art that is challenging and sophisticated and a popular art that is more accessible, plot-driven and tends to be more easily categorised in terms of genre. So do Graham Greene's, and as several critics have suggested recently, notably in the essays

[62] Huyssen's argument is in fact more complicated than this for he sees this Great Divide between high and mass culture less as a feature of modernism than of institutionalised views of modernism (such as that of the American New Critics), but this does not alter his suggestion that postmodernism seeks actively to break down such boundaries and to engage with mass culture. See also Beverley 1993: 112; Williams 1995: 16.

collected in *Intermodernism* (Bluemel 2011), so do other novels from the Second World War. In her essay on the detective thrillers of Allingham and MacInnes, for example, Phyllis Lassner argues – and I think this can be extended to include many of the writers considered in this thesis – that

> [i]n effect, these 1940s fictions achieve a form of narrative experiment that will not end with high modernism in 1940 or global victory over the Axis powers in 1945 but will leave a legacy of questions about classifying genres and the prestige hierarchies in modern fiction. This legacy provides support for intermodernism as a category of analysing modern fiction that slips between modernism, realism and speculative fiction to ground its narrative experiments in historical and political analysis (114-5).

While I appreciate the merits of the term 'intermodernism' as argued by Lassner, I feel Barratt's phrase 'incipient postmodernism' (that he sees as beginning to emerge in Henry Green's work at the time he wrote *Back*, as quoted in the previous chapter (Barratt 2001: 180)) is preferable in highlighting the formal experimentation of much of the fiction of the period, experimentation that I see as primarily a response to scepticism regarding government propaganda and the smaller narratives of individuals. Mooney's statement regarding Bowen that 'aspects of the mimetic persist' in her work where 'obviously avant-garde or postmodernist texts flaunt their own strangeness' (Mooney 2007: 242) may not only be true but equally applicable to other contemporary writers like Green, Hamilton or Greene, but the genre-blurring, problematising of narrative voice and metafictional elements of much fiction of the 1940s do, nonetheless, pave the way for the formal experimentation of postmodernist writing of the second half of the twentieth century and bring into question the rightness of B. S. Johnson's complaint in the 1960s that

> Nathalie Sarraute once described literature as a relay race, the baton of innovation passing from one generation to another. The vast majority of British novelists has dropped the baton, stood still, turned back, or not even realised that there is a race. (Johnson 1964: 17)

One aspect of postmodernism that is not anticipated in the fiction I have looked at in this thesis is the play and playfulness of the mingled discourse it often highlights, but given the seriousness of the wartime context this is not surprising. Even so, I would finally want to question, and the work over the last twenty years of a number of critics to rehabilitate literature of the Second World War suggests I am not alone in doing so, the rightness of Terry Eagleton's implication in *The English Novel: An Introduction* that fiction of the Second World War and later can be written off as unimportant or contributing little to the repertoire of narrative, or that 'history' has impacted on it in a less significant way than earlier writing. In a postscript entitled 'After the Wake', Eagleton breezily explains why an introduction to the English novel need venture no further than 1939 by stating that

> [m]odern English literature reached its zenith in the period of high modernism […] the era of major literary achievement […] was the tumultuous years around the First World War […] the Second World War was to witness no equivalent peak of fictional achievement. (Eagleton 2005:331-2)

Eagleton's binding of achievement with innovation, specifically modernist experimentations with non-realist modes of writing, is made clear with his complaint that the generation following Joyce and Woolf 'reinstalled' realism:

> it was out of this seismic upheaval [of World War One] that the major English novel of the twentieth century emerged, in an achievement not to be repeated since. Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* is a lonely outpost of this extraordinary epoch. By that time, however, a less ambitiously experimental form of writing (Auden, Orwell, Isherwood) had already overtaken it […] Realism had been reinstalled. (332)

While Eagleton could certainly be challenged regarding his implicit favouring of non-realist over realist forms, I would want to further challenge the suggestion that the conditions of World War II did not foster significant further developments and experimentation in writing. Bowen's experimentations, for example, may have taken a different form from Joyce's but they are experimentations nonetheless, and ambitious ones at that: Mooney has suggested that 'her novels belong to what Frank Kermode has influentially called the

"problematical middle ground between the 'classic realist text' and the scriptible" ([Kermode 1983:] 72)' (Mooney 2007: 242)[63] and I would argue that what she, like others considered here, sought was not to reinstall realism but to develop forms that blend realism and non-realism. This sense of a fiction that installed and indeed exploited 'problematic' internal dialogue and division arose in the wider historical context of internal division bred, as we have seen, by World War II.

[63] Bowen, Mooney adds, 'is an exemplary instance of a writer who exists in a hinterland between different kinds of writing, uncomfortably assimilated to forms of orthodox mimesis. […] it is precisely the lack of epistemological certainty that is the point' (Mooney 2007: 242).

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