

UNIVERZITA KARLOVA V PRAZE  
FILOZOFICKÁ FAKULTA

ÚSTAV ANGLISTIKY A AMERIKANISTIKY

**The Transforming Power of Places:**  
**The Impact of the Spatial Setting on Characters**  
**in Graham Greene's Novel *The Heart of the Matter***

(Síla místa: vliv lokace na postavy v románu  
Grahama Greena *Jádro věci*)

BAKALÁŘSKÁ PRÁCE

Zpracovala:  
**Jindra SHÁNĚLOVÁ**  
obor: anglistika a amerikanistika

Vedoucí práce:  
**PhDr. Zdeněk Beran**

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Prohlašuji, že jsem tuto bakalářskou práci vypracovala samostatně a pouze na základě uvedených pramenů a literatury.

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# 1. An Overview of Selected Approaches to Studying Spatial Setting in Literature

The English novelist Graham Greene kept a journal for most of his life, except when it might threaten his safety.<sup>1</sup> There he captured both mundane as well as extraordinary or otherwise noteworthy moments as a reminder in case he may one day run out of ideas for his fiction. As it happened, however, during his wartime service in African Sierra Leone, the danger of keeping any personal records could have posed too great a threat to himself and his professional interests that, as he came to regret some years later, he had to rely on his memory in order to put together scattered shreds of memories of this particular time of his life which became the main source for one of his masterpieces, the 1948 novel *The Heart of the Matter*. In it he captures the paradoxical situation of Europeans who for professional reasons inhabit these distant and alien corners of the Earth. There he places the protagonist, Major Scobie, and others in order to construe a drama of as common life as we know it, only spiced up by the African setting as a dislocating element, a background for the kaleidoscope of human problems that are correspondingly tinted by the tropical heat. It is the purpose of this paper to show the workings of the spatial setting as an inseparable part of the novel as well as its inevitable impact on the characters.

There are countless kinds of spaces; or perhaps only different definitions of always essentially the same space. The physicists would distinguish, for example, between the notion of space in terms of Newtonian as opposed to Einsteinian physics. In the case of the former time, space, and matter would be dealt with separately, whereas the latter introduced a synthetic approach, merging space and time into a four-dimensional continuum.<sup>2</sup> In geography the term usually applies to a stretch of the earth's surface. But to human perception the idea may be influenced by society, culture, or even the degree of personal involvement. All in all, space is where "things" are located. Whether it be identifiable by physical measuring, exposed to the weather, or in our mind as a mental space, it is the realm where "things" happen, occur, exist.

In the realm of literary theory there has hardly been any significant consensus as to theoretical concepts nor methodology for approaching the spatial element. Moreover,

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1 Graham Greene, *Ways of Escape* (London: Bodley, 1980) 113.

2 John Daintith, ed., "Space," in *A Dictionary of Physics* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000), *Oxford Reference Online*. Accessed on 8th January 2007, <<http://www.oxfordreference.com/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t83.e2842>>.

this area of narrative theory seems rather neglected if compared with the extent of research on time, character, plot, and other typical structural constituents. On the whole, nonetheless, in the considerably sparse output on this matter, it is generally acknowledged that space – subsumed usually under the heading of setting which may, but need not, include the temporal properties as well – is an indivisible component of narrative. Since the beginning of the twentieth century, the interest in this particular area of literary theory has been on the increase.

The spatial aspect in literary theory then tends to be coupled together with the temporal aspect, forming an indivisible spatio-temporal category analogous to that of Einsteinian physics. On the other hand, notwithstanding the fact that the temporal can hardly be detached from the spatial, there are some theories focusing mainly on the spatial without suffering any damage by not considering the temporal component. And as one can hardly speak of any substantial coherent strands in theoretical thought in terms of spatiality in verbal art, such as we can see for instance in studies of time in fiction, the following overview should be viewed as a pool of miscellaneous theories, aiming to address some important issues this problem of space features.

Mieke Bal's structuralist survey of spatial setting in her *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*<sup>3</sup> attempts to clearly set out the fundamentals of narratology without any obscure terminology or intricate conceptual interpretations. In her study she states that “spatial elements play an important role in fabulas,”<sup>4</sup> and stresses the potential importance of linking together the concepts of events, characters and location. The dichotomous notions such as the ‘inside-outside,’ ‘city-country,’ ‘here-everywhere else’ induce search for the slightest traces of markedness, which would set off further meanings and significances in terms of the overall structure of a text. She distinguishes between ‘location’ and ‘place,’ the former being an element of fabula, “the topological position in which the actors [are] situated and the events [take] place,” whereas “places can be mapped out.” Her concept is grounded in the material, or physical, understanding of the world, in “the physical, mathematically measurable shape of spatial dimensions,” but with the difference that such places are in fact physically non-existent.<sup>5</sup> To sum her argument so far,

[t]he story is determined by the way in which the fabula is presented. During this

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3 Mieke Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*, translated by Cristine van Boheemen (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1985).

4 Bal, 43.

5 Bal, 93.

process, places are linked to certain points of perception. These places seen in relations to their perception is called space.<sup>6</sup>

In order to analyze space, humans use particularly sight, hearing and touch to establish the fundamental twofold distinction between what Bal calls ‘frame’ and ‘filling;’ when related to binary oppositions identifiable in such a structure, space is thus assigned a certain meaning.<sup>7</sup> Lastly, as to the semantic content and function of a space, Bal states that while the content is “a [...] combination of determination, repetition, accumulation, transformation, and the various spaces,” the function can be either that of a frame, a place of action, or that of the background, of an acting place which in consequence “influences the fabula.” And fabula in turn “becomes subordinate to the presentation of space.”<sup>8</sup> Whether functioning as a frame or as a background, spaces can be either steady or dynamic: “A steady space is a fixed frame [...] within which the events take place. A dynamically functioning space is a factor which allows for the movement of characters.”<sup>9</sup> Bal’s is a descriptive formalist approach, seeking to interrelate different components of the spatial element in fiction with one another as well as contextualize them in terms of the overall structure of a text.

Not unlike Bal’s structuralist views, also the prominent Russian formalist critic Jurij Lotman in *The Structure of the Artistic Text* claims that the status of the spatial properties relies on the identification of binary values operating within the system of a work of art’s narrative constituents to eventually identify this spatial “organizing element around which its non-spatial features are also construed.”<sup>10</sup> Coincidentally, already Mikhail Bakhtin, whose contributions will be discussed shortly, argued that what he calls the ‘chronotope’ – the spatio-temporal interplay in a text – determines a substantial part of all fundamental features of any work of art, and can hence to a significant degree influence even such superordinate properties as the generic and other sorts of categorization of the work of art.

Lotman considers “the work of art as an area of space demarcated in some way and reflecting in its finitude an infinite object: the world which lies outside the work of art.” The “rules for representing the multi-dimensional and limitless reality within the limited [space in a work of art] becomes its specific *language*.”<sup>11</sup> Importantly, what we

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6 Ibid.

7 Bal, 94.

8 Bal, 94-96.

9 Bal, 96.

10 Jurij Lotman, *The Structure of the Artistic Text*, translated by Ronald Vroon (Michigan: U of Michigan P, 1977) 220.

11 Lotman, 217.

see are “denotata of verbal signs,” which results in concretization of the verbal models. He stresses the importance of iconicity and what he calls a graphical quality typical of such verbal models.<sup>12</sup> In consequence,

the structure of the space of a text becomes a model of the structure of the space of the universe, and the internal syntagmatics of the elements within a text becomes the language of spatial modelling.<sup>13</sup>

Based on a mathematically formulated definition of space, Lotman points out that the spatial modelling is possible precisely due to space being “the sum total of homogeneous objects [such as phenomena, states, functions, etc.] between which relations exist which are similar to normal spatial relations” such as continuity and distance. This is possible even in case of such “concepts which themselves are not spatial in nature. Physics and mathematics make broad use of this property of spatial modelling.”<sup>14</sup> It is crucial to realize, as Lotman stresses, that

[e]ven on the level of supra-textual, purely ideational modelling, the language of spatial relations turns out to be one of the basic means for comprehending reality. The concepts ‘high-low,’ ‘right-left,’ ‘near-far,’ ‘open-closed,’ ‘demarcated-not demarcated’ and ‘discrete-continuous’ prove to be the material for constructing cultural models with completely non-spatial content and come to mean ‘valuable-not valuable,’ ‘good-bad,’ ‘one’s own-another’s,’ ‘accessible-inaccessible,’ ‘mortal-immortal,’ and so on. The most general social, religious, political, and ethical models of the world, with whose help man comprehends the world around him at various stages in his spiritual development, are invariably invested with spatial characteristics – sometimes in the form of oppositions such as ‘heaven vs. earth’ [...], and sometimes in the form of a socio-political hierarchy with the marked opposition of ‘the height’ to ‘the depths,’ and sometimes in a form that involves ethically marked oppositions such as ‘right-left’ [...]. Ideas regarding ‘elevated’ and ‘degrading’ thoughts, occupations and professions, the identification of what is ‘near’ with what is understandable, one’s own and familiar, and the identification of what is ‘distant’ with what is not understood and alien – all these are couched in models of the world invested with distinctly spatial features.<sup>15</sup>

By and large, according to Lotman “[a]n artistic text [...] is formed of meaningful non-fulfilments of the system’s requirements,”<sup>16</sup> emphasizing the importance of dichotomous structures which, having identified any presence of markedness, actualization/automatization, or other formal properties may help to understand the functional, or semantic, content of a work.

An exhaustive analysis as a pre-requisite to postulating his remarkable theory of chronotope, “Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel”<sup>17</sup> by Mikhail Bakhtin, has

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12 Ibid.

13 Ibid.

14 Lotman, 217-218.

15 Lotman, 218.

16 Lotman, 227.

17 Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin, “Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel,” in *The Dialogic*

been mentioned above in relation to some of Lotman's theoretical assumptions about the essential interconnection (or at least the absence of absolute discreteness) of the temporal aspect in fiction with its spatial counterpart. Bakhtin views the chronotopic basis in verbal art through the prism of Einstein's spatio-temporal Theory of Relativity. The interconnectedness of time and space functions as a couple of crucial variables essential for determining what kind of actions is likely to occur in the universe of a novel; these two variables are "always colored by emotions and values."<sup>18</sup> The term 'chronotope,' or 'time space' is defined as "the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature," being "a formally constitutive category of literature."<sup>19</sup> The general idea is that

[i]n the literary artistic chronotope, spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole. [...] The chronotope in literature has an intrinsic *generic* significance [because it] defines genre and generic distinctions. [...] [Therefore the] chronotope as a formally constitutive category determines to a significant degree the image of man in literature as well. The image of man is always intrinsically chronotopic.<sup>20</sup>

All in all, Bakhtin in his analysis of chronotope as transforming throughout the evolution of novel from the antiquity onwards, identifies in total ten chronotopes. Four belong to the category of adventure chronotope (that of the Greek romance, chivalric, everyday, autobiographical), five into so called folkloric chronotopes (a clown-rogue-fool one, a chronotope of the reversed here-and-now nature, Rabelaisian, grotesque, and idyllic), and lastly an odd one, that of the castle. By performing such a thorough text-based analysis, which is not meant to be prescriptive but descriptive, Bakhtin shows to what degree time and space together are capable of determining categorial properties of a text. In the final chapter, attached to the original 1937-8 essay much later, in 1973, he focuses on outlining some theoretical implications emerging from his practical analysis. He maintains that there are two elementary kinds of chronotope: first, the chronotope of the real world, which is that of the author as a living person and also potentially, that of the reader, and second, the chronotope within the work of art, the place and time of events within the novel. Both of these spheres are further divisible into an unlimited number of sub-chronotopes that can be related to, and defined, on the basis of any predefined criteria, formal properties or semantic implications of the text. Thus every

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*Imagination: Four Essays*, translated by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, edited by Michael Holquist (Austin: U of Texas P, 1981).

18 Bakhtin, 243.

19 Bakhtin, 84.

20 Bakhtin, 84-85.



single member of the audience, or a reader of a particular novel has around himself a certain chronotope relevant to his real life defined by his own idiosyncratic spatio-temporal conditions, as opposed to the spatio-temporal universe existing within the limits of the work of art. Likewise, the author himself can find himself in changing spatio-temporal situation during the creation of the work of art. This will have some vital implications for understanding the nature of universe in a work of art.

According to Bakhtin, there is a threefold importance of chronotopes. First and foremost, they are crucial for narrative because “[t]he chronotope is the place where the knots of narrative are tied and untied.”<sup>21</sup> Next is the representational significance of the chronotope, because it is “the primary means for materializing time in space.”

Time becomes [...] palpable and visible; the chronotope makes narrative events concrete, makes them take on flesh, causes blood to flow in their veins. [...] [It also] provides the ground essential for the showing-forth, the representability of events. [...] It serves as the primary point from which ‘scenes’ in a novel unfold, while at the same time other ‘binding’ events, located far from the chronotope, appear as mere dry information and communicated facts.<sup>22</sup>

Lastly, chronotopes lie at the heart of generic distinctions.

The most usual way to get in touch with a particular chronotope in a work of art is when “we experience them in the external material being of the work of art and in its purely external composition.”<sup>23</sup> In addition, being “a text occupying a certain specific place in space, [...] it is localized. [...] The text as such never appears as a dead thing, [...] [however] the text is always imprisoned in dead material of some sort.”<sup>24</sup> In sum, the dichotomy of real-life chronotope as opposed to a particular fictitious-world chronotope implies that in this duality, the worlds and personas “are all located in a real, unitary and as yet incomplete historical world set off by a sharp and categorical boundary from the *represented* world in the text.”<sup>25</sup> In other words, based on Bakhtin’s findings, it is methodologically impossible to confuse the real-life world and the represented world because of the incompatibility of the two totally different chronotopes. However, the two are “nevertheless tied up with each other and find themselves in continual mutual interaction”<sup>26</sup> in the following manner:

The work and the world represented in it enter the real world and enrich it, and the real world enters the work and its world as part of the process of its creation, as

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21 Bakhtin, 250.

22 Ibid.

23 Bakhtin, 252.

24 Bakhtin, 252-253.

25 Bakhtin, 253.

26 Bakhtin, 254.

well as part of its subsequent life, in a continual renewing of the work through the creative perception of listeners and readers.<sup>27</sup>

Analogically, the same applies to the author whose identity is never to be confused with any characters depicted due to the mutual exclusivity of the two different chronotopes.<sup>28</sup> In his study Bakhtin succeeded in logically implicating the duality (or multiplicity) of disparate chronotopic universes as well as laying grounds to spatio-temporal relations determining unique generic affiliations.

The last theoretical excursion is into the theory of Wesley A. Kort who in his recent study on space and place as a particular language of its own, *Place and Space in Modern Fiction*, presents a rather unique model within the scope of literary theory based on various kinds of human place-relations. He claims that

[p]laces affect human activities, attitudes, and behaviors, and their effects can be beneficial or harmful. Spatial theory, then, because it cannot be separated either from personal identity or from the relations of persons to one another and because it can give directions for improving the qualities of place-relation, has obvious moral and spiritual content.<sup>29</sup>

Kort has selected six texts in which what he calls the ‘language of place and space’ is prominent,<sup>30</sup> in order to construe and illustrate in practice his “narrative-based theory of place-relations.”<sup>31</sup> The purpose of his analysis is to reapply in turn its results and findings to explicate the all-important role of place and space in the very same texts. Since this is a highly complex approach whose thorough discussion would require a lengthier treatment than this, the present survey will focus mainly on what can be related to understanding Kort’s views of Graham Greene’s work.

This theory of human place-relations comprises three fundamental components. Firstly, there are three kinds of human place-relations, secondly, Kort discusses two sides of human place-relations, and lastly he pays attention to a single norm of human place-relations. The authors of the studied texts, representing the fundamental criteria of Kort’s original theory, are what he terms the early modernists Thomas Hardy, Joseph Conrad, and E. M. Forster, standing for cosmic/comprehensive, social/political, and personal/intimate space respectively, and Graham Greene, William Golding, and Muriel Spark featuring later modernists, likewise falling under the respective headings of the three kinds of human place-relations. The table below shows the relation between the

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27 Ibid.

28 Bakhtin, 256-258.

29 Wesley A. Kort, *Place and Space in Modern Fiction* (Gainesville: U of Florida P, 2004) 206.

30 Kort, 19.

31 Ibid.

first two components:<sup>32</sup>

|   |                       | <b>(2) Two sides of human place-relations:</b> |  |
|---|-----------------------|--|--|
|   |                       | early modernists /<br><b>physical</b>          | later modernists /<br><b>spiritual</b> |
| <b>(1) Three kinds of human place-relations :</b> | cosmic, comprehensive | <i>T. HARDY</i>                                | <i>G. GREENE</i>                       |
|   | social, political     | <i>J. CONRAD</i>                               | <i>W. GOLDING</i>                      |
|   | personal, intimate    | <i>E. M. FORSTER</i>                           | <i>M. SPARK</i>                        |

The basis for the first component rests in the assumption that

[w]hile all of the discourses agree that the present state of places and of the relations of people to them in the culture are faulty and that these faults have consequences for human moral and spiritual well-being, they disagree about which kind of place-relation needs most to be corrected.<sup>33</sup>

What further distinguishes these discourses from one another is their “giving prominence to one of the three kinds of place-relations.”<sup>34</sup> First of the three kinds of human place-relations, subsumed under the heading cosmic/comprehensive, refers to “a sense of placement within a space that precedes, outstrips, and includes humans and their constructions.”<sup>35</sup> This notion predominantly implies the inclusion of the concept of nature. However, as Kort observes, it is the discrepancies and problems of identification of nature as opposed to the concept of culture that have predominated literature since the end of the nineteenth century. The second category is characterized “by the relations of people to one another, the structure of those relations, and the laws and mores that regulate them,”<sup>36</sup> especially concerning the urban space as a significant concept of modernity. The triptych completes the personal or intimate kind of space.

Concerning this threefold distinction between human place-relations, Kort argues that

[w]hile each kind has its own defining characteristics, the three clarify one another by reason of their differences. [...] The particular qualities of places, qualities both positive and negative, become discernible [...] for three reasons: by means of the qualities of the place with which a relation occurs, by means of comparing this kind of place with places of the same kind, and by means of comparing this place

32 The third umbrella component applies to both the first and the second component, hence it is not mentioned in the table.

33 Kort, 19.

34 Ibid.

35 Ibid.

36 Kort, 20.

with places of the other two types.<sup>37</sup>

In other words, it is the intertextual interconnection which also involves certain extratextual knowledge and idiosyncratically conceptualized perception of reality. And, importantly, Kort emphasizes that juxtaposition of two different kinds of places is much more influential as to its effects than mere similarity.<sup>38</sup> When this comprehensive kind of space is related to the two representative authors, Thomas Hardy and Graham Greene, Kort argues that “[i]t is a space encountered as unexpected,” hence “both a threat and a gift.” The other two kinds of places are viewed as “confining, despite their magnitude, and coercive, despite their latitude.”<sup>39</sup> It is so because

[c]omprehensive space counters the pretentiousness of social spaces, [... and it] can also allow human beings to feel a degree of kinship with one another. [...] [C]osmic or comprehensive space [...] is not perceived as structured by lines that include and exclude people. [...] The] actual accesses to cosmic or comprehensive space are located at the margins of social, political space, within interstices unincorporated by social and political structures, or at sites exposed by transition [...] because] social space [became] so inclusive and powerful.<sup>40</sup>

According to Kort it is vital to draw our attention to a phenomenon, often present in fiction with comprehensive space represented, known to architects and landscape designers as SLOIP,<sup>41</sup> or ‘space left over in planning.’ This phenomenon

lies at the edges or between planned spaces. [...] It is noticeable at moments of transition, in gaps between structures, at the limits of institutions, and, especially in the fiction of Greene, at points of opposition between institutions.<sup>42</sup>

*The Heart of the Matter* fully complies with this statement of Kort’s. The plot is set into a further unspecified West African town (corresponding presumably to Greene’s personal observations during his service in Freetown, Sierra Leone), or rather ‘no-place’ without any graspable positive qualities; the broken-apart structures match not only with the racially segregated society, but also Major Scobie’s personal rift between duty and plain humanity, between church doctrine and his personal belief in god. Eventually, according to Kort, Greene manages “to loosen cosmic or comprehensive space from identification with and dependence on nature” by depicting “nature in retreat.”<sup>43</sup> By nature is meant that “which precedes human constructions and upon what our constructions depend.”<sup>44</sup> Kort thus arrives at the conclusion that “[w]hile nature

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37 Kort, 150.

38 Ibid.

39 Kort, 151.

40 Kort, 151-152.

41 Sometimes also called SLOAP, or ‘space left over after planning.’

42 Kort, 152.

43 Ibid.

44 Kort, 153.

suggests something that precedes and outstrips human constructions, margins, interstices, and transitions suggest the limits of human constructions, their incompleteness and mutual dependence.”<sup>45</sup> Nonetheless, he adds that

all human constructions create margins, leave gaps, and cannot wholly contain transitions. These points or sites form potential accesses to comprehensive place-relations because they grant persons the possibility to get out from under or stand aside from the dominance and presumed inclusiveness of space determined by human constructions.<sup>46</sup> (156).

The general conditions for accessing comprehensive/cosmic space, as defined by Kort, are fulfilled “when something has not been anticipated, when a human possibility or interest cannot be included, or when structures subvert their claims for totality by their dependent, contrary relations to one another.”<sup>47</sup> Particularly pertinent to most of Greene’s fiction is Kort’s remark that the significance of unfamiliar and alien locations is that of gaining distance sufficient for judging one’s cultural and social values more critically.<sup>48</sup> In conclusion, the language of (not only comprehensive) place and space in general requires that, firstly, any kind of space should be considered potentially significant, and that homogeneity of space is not the objective if superimposed on otherwise heterogeneous space. Kort in the end calls for outstripping human constructions.<sup>49</sup> Secondly, it is imperative that social and personal spaces are not accented at the expense of cosmic space.<sup>50</sup> And thirdly,

it requires narrative. That means accounts of why and how people hazard the risks of retrieving and searching for comprehensive place-relations. Narratives can revitalize the language of comprehensive space, and they can designate the sites of, accesses to, and relations with it.<sup>51</sup>

As for the twofold distinction, resting on the assumption that there is physical and spiritual side to human place-relations, Kort claims that it is precisely the dominance of either of these which in a text “will be perceived or presented as more needed and valued than the other.”<sup>52</sup> Whereas the early modernists tend to reach out for solutions to contemporary problems of human place-relations to “values and orientations located in the past”<sup>53</sup> and put more or less implicit emphasis on the stifling deficiency of physicality, their later successors focus on the future and pay comparatively more

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45 Ibid.

46 Kort, 156.

47 Kort, 152.

48 Kort, 153.

49 Kort, 156.

50 Kort, 156-157.

51 Kort, 157.

52 Kort, 20.

53 Kort, 21.

attention to the spiritual side of place-relations.<sup>54</sup> Put differently, the earlier modernists “looked backwards to retrieve kinds of place-relations characteristic of an earlier period but still viable, and [...] diagnosed the problem as the loss of tangible, physical aspects in place-relations.” The later modernists then “responded teleologically” owing to “the disillusionment caused primarily by the traumas of the war,” hence preferring the orientation towards the future.<sup>55</sup> Having said that, however, Kort warns that in order to avoid too rigid an interpretation of his propositions, it has to be borne in mind that neither the earlier nor the later modernists covered exclusively the realm he is attributing to them. He insists that it is the matter of prevalent tendencies as found in their texts that determine their categorial affiliation to either more physical or spiritual nature of the human space-relations.<sup>56</sup> In order to justify the need for physicality, Kort asserts that such place-relations “ground and steady human life and support modes of relationship between people, bodily identities, and the physical contexts of people’s lives.”<sup>57</sup> On the other hand, to consider a place somehow significant guarantees the presence of spirituality in positive place-relations.<sup>58</sup> In relation to the work of Greene, Kort says that

[c]omprehensive space in Greene’s work, a space that his characters desire and seek, is located at the edges of constructed spaces and in the interstices between competing human institutions. However extreme in location and partial or fleeting in actualization, comprehensive place-relations in their spiritual quality are positive alternatives to the controlling, conflicted, and inadequate constructions particularly of politically and religiously defined spaces.<sup>59</sup>

Kort assumes that only the balance in theoretical terms between these two aspects, the physical and the spiritual one, can insure the expedient all-inclusive nature. Neither of these two is more important than the other, even if there is a clear prevalence of either in a particular work of art. He concludes by saying that

[t]he narrativization of space [...] represents a project of uncovering the interrelation between places and their human significance before those relations are broken apart and the spiritual and physical sides of place-relations are projected as basically separated from and contrary to one another.<sup>60</sup>

The last component – the single norm of human place-relations – provides the overall grounds for this theory, in the discussion of which Kort considers the deficient

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54 Ibid.

55 Kort, 173.

56 Ibid.

57 Kort, 174.

58 Kort, 180.

59 Kort, 179.

60 Kort, 188-189.

concepts of placelessness and ownership, as opposed to their suggested reconciliation through the concept of attachment, to finally arrive at a crucial concept of his devising called ‘accommodating.’ In order to justify the necessity to introduce this umbrella category, sheltering the so far discussed concepts and various aspects of human place-relations, Kort explains that

[e]mphasis on the three kinds and the two sides of place-relations reveals the complexity and instability of human spatiality. When we turn to evaluating place-relations, we also face instability. To a large degree the quality of a place-relation is judged by comparisons with other possibilities or experiences, either associated with the other kinds or with the other side of place-relations.<sup>61</sup>

Two to a degree deficient or otherwise questionable kinds of place relations as dealt with by Kort are placelessness and ownership. A line is drawn between other-imposed placelessness as opposed to self-imposed placelessness. The self-imposed placelessness, on the one hand, may be springing from our occasional desire to

create and maintain stances of detachment from places because we don’t want the responsibilities and limitations resulting from identification with them; [...] it is also the result of our own decisions, decisions often made out of a desire for the mobility, freedom, and variety that detachment offers.<sup>62</sup>

On the other hand, there can be three causes for the latter, namely, first, when considered as a taken-for-granted consequence of social life, second, when the place is such that prevents creation of attachments but encourages repetition instead, and third, when such superimposed dislocating and disorienting events as wars, social movements, or technological advancements like e-communication are in question.<sup>63</sup> Related to the imposed placelessness is the notion of ownership, further divisible into chosen and required sub-types. Kort believes that ownership can turn around the negative impact of imposed placelessness. Nevertheless, he admits that neither is it a wholly positive quality:

While exclusion and detachment are not entirely negative, ownership of place is not entirely positive. [...] Therefore] ownership and placelessness stand, then, as mutually clarifying, contrary attitudes toward places, attitudes that, while not without positive characteristics, are noticeably deficient.<sup>64</sup>

There are in particular two points of friction, namely their ability to “determine our relations to places” and the very fact that “they act as contraries, their negative aspects, which are largely attached to power, securing and aggravating one another.”<sup>65</sup> In order to

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61 Kort, 190.

62 Kort, 192.

63 Kort, 191.

64 Kort, 194.

65 Kort, 195.

mitigate the struggle between these antitheses, Kort offers a golden-mean solution “to reduce the dominating, even defining, roles of placelessness and ownership in our spatial repertoire so that more complex and resonant relations to places can emerge.”<sup>66</sup> The result is what Kort calls ‘attachment,’ defined as “a center range of place-relations,” or negatively by bracketing the two previously mentioned concepts of placelessness and ownership.<sup>67</sup>

The function of a place in terms of the concept of attachment is that of a bearer of significance, or as Kort puts it, any “of the kinds of human places [...] – comprehensive, social, and intimate – can be the repository of locus of significance and the object of attachment.”<sup>68</sup> And significance of neither of the three kinds of place-relations is fixed; it is prone to shift between its positive and negative extremes. Thus while comprehensive space can be on the one hand exhilarating and expanding, its negative effect can be disorienting or even intimidating. Similarly, the positive side to social spaces equals inclusion and being given a certain direction, whereas in its other extreme it will induce the feeling of exclusion and control. As far as the intimate space is concerned, the positive impact may result in the perception of freedom, giving such a place the quality of a haven, but its negative effect will turn space into prison, or loneliness felt in isolation. Yet everything, albeit seemingly negative “can become a stimulus for finding alternative or complementary attachments with a place of that or another kind.”<sup>69</sup> Kort adds that “[people] may have negative relations to places not only because of the nature of those places but also because of [their] inability to relate positively to them.”<sup>70</sup> However, what may one find hard to take for granted in this concept is Kort’s assumption that “[p]lace-attachment [...] is largely positive, and it is viewed as a normal, desirable aspect of persons’ lives.”<sup>71</sup> The reason for the doubt is the certainty about whether a place is really a prerequisite for ultimate happiness. What if such a place is destroyed or one is forced to leave it? Would that imply the end of happiness? When our attachment to a place has been changed against our will, we would perceive it as something painful, perhaps feel sorry for all our wasted investments of emotions, money, labour and so on. In contrast, there is also the question of “[l]ack of place-attachment of any of the three kinds [... which] is taken to have

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66 Ibid.

67 Ibid.

68 Ibid.

69 Kort, 197.

70 Ibid.

71 Ibid.



disabling consequences for human development, interrelations, and identity.”<sup>72</sup> Finally, the last reason for devising the ultimate concept for positive place-relations, ‘accommodating,’ is that the obvious implication of an attachment to a place creates the concept of home. The feeling of being at home is typical of positive place-relations,<sup>73</sup> while although

[negative] places and placelessness are preliminary [in the work of the authors discussed] to the more important task of retrieving [...] positive place relations [...], [these texts] counter either implicitly or explicitly the problem that places and place-relations have become with positive alternatives.<sup>74</sup>

However, “‘home’ [...] stresses too heavily arrival and completion [...], [and] those who use ‘home’ as a norm tend to give too much authority in place-relations to the place itself,”<sup>75</sup> which gives rise to the more flexible and relatively flawless solution.

What Kort arrives at in his discussion of the notion of ‘accommodating’ corresponds roughly with the overall outcome of the below analysis of Greene’s *The Heart of the Matter*, that is to say, that the place-relations as a result of mutual interaction between the characters influencing the place, or space, and the place as forming the characters. Kort assumes there are all in all four features of ‘accommodating’ which “serve to give content to the norm for positive place-relations that runs throughout kinds.”<sup>76</sup> (205). It is, firstly, reciprocity (“a fittingness and adaptability of persons and places to one another, an adjustment by both so that they are mutually suitable and appropriate”<sup>77</sup>), secondly, capaciousness (“Optimal place-relations are accommodating [...] because they are multidimensional and inclusive, capacious enough to evoke and sustain a range of factors and dimensions, some in tension with one another, in a complex unity.”<sup>78</sup>), thirdly, temporariness, for “there are no permanent placements,”<sup>79</sup> and lastly, unexpectedness as “something gratuitous and surprising in positive place-relations.”<sup>80</sup>

In Kort’s view, Graham Greene as a novelist conforms generally to all symptoms of later modernist writing. Namely, especially due to the two world wars in the first half of the twentieth century, there are palpable imprints of “traumatic cultural changes,” “a

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72 Kort, 198.

73 Kort, 21.

74 Ibid.

75 Kort, 198-199.

76 Kort, 205.

77 Kort, 199.

78 Kort, 200.

79 Ibid.

80 Ibid.

sharper discontinuity with [...] the recent past,” and hence the “greater sense of abandonment” and the need to “narrativize from more improvised sources.”<sup>81</sup> Furthermore, Greene also shows tendencies towards orientation to the future<sup>82</sup> and, lastly, focuses more on the “spiritual than [...] the physical aspects of place-relations.”<sup>83</sup>

In addition, Kort stresses that in his work Greene never falls into cynicism despite his deep disappointment regarding the cultural past because of his “rigorous desire for and confidence in truthfulness.”<sup>84</sup> Moreover, in spite of the rather apt term “Greeneland” coined to describe the kind of worlds represented in Greene’s texts, Kort argues that the novelist’s personal aversion to the term was due to his belief that “his fiction reveals what he took to be true about the present state of human affairs.”<sup>85</sup> Greene also held that

present conditions, traumatic as they may be, disclose truth about human beings and the world they inhabit, [...] and saw] taking refuge and finding certainty in religious or political institutions or ideologies as tantamount to avoiding truth and losing moral integrity.<sup>86</sup>

This poses then the question of responsibility for the development and consequences of one’s own life as given up or handed over to be administered by some social, political, or religious body instead of dealing with it personally. By setting protagonists into seemingly realistic positions which are not exclusive of painful experience Greene covers also the realms “institutions tend to exclude.” Thus what is implied is then that “the present situation stimulates a need and search for comprehensive space.”<sup>87</sup> As to the overall assessment of Greene’s characters, or as Kort calls them “the normative figures,” they are “rootless and resemble the religious ascetics who separated themselves from the world and deprived themselves of its supports. [...] His characters abandon domestic security and choose a state of ‘hopeless exile.’”<sup>88</sup> In consequence, then, as to the course of behaviour adopted by Greene’s protagonists, spiritual disciplines often arise from “[b]eing abandoned by society and culture and eschewing their comforts and securities,”<sup>89</sup>

Not less interesting are Kort’s views of places in Greene’s fiction. Where Greene

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81 Kort, 89.

82 “His work assumes a separation from, even a negative attitude toward, the prewar culture. [He views culture ] as betrayed by and disconnected from a past that was unable to prepare people for World War I, postwar dislocations, and, later, the violence of World War II.” (Kort, 90).

83 Kort, 89.

84 Kort, 90.

85 Ibid.

86 Ibid.

87 Ibid.

88 Kort, 90-91.

89 Kort, 91.

positions his characters is what Kort terms the “transitions or gaps between human constructions, [...] [the] interstices within culture or [...] its edges.”<sup>90</sup> Put differently, Greene is obsessed about a place

clarified by its noninclusion within human structures. [...] By being unconstructed and uncontrolled, therefore, these negatively defined locations provide positive access to comprehensive space and gather an alluring spiritual significance and force.<sup>91</sup>

But because “in Greene’s fiction [...] Western culture has extended its control almost over the entire globe, [h]is characters, therefore, must travel far in their quest for locations relatively free from its determinations.”<sup>92</sup> The downside normally is, however, that

[t]he quest for distance from the dominant culture causes lack of certainty, subversion of identity, and even loss of life. While distant and dangerous, these locations, by being exceptions to the dominating structures of modern culture, grant these exiles a new sense of moral and spiritual possibilities. These possibilities are not projected by characters onto places but are revealed in and by the places themselves. This potential in places arises from the access they grant to a reality that comprehends and transcends human constructions and that Greene refers to as ‘mystery.’<sup>93</sup>

The interstitial kind of space as depicted by Greene emerges in particular between the religious and the secular realms; Major Scobie would be a typical example, balancing on the edge of his secular duty of an officer and a husband confronted with the pressure put upon him by his religion. The place which is then created in the abyss, however, offers yet another access, or way out of what has the potential to develop into an interstitial trap, resulting for instance in suicide. Greene’s protagonists “recognize these spaces betwixt and between as more real and truthful than human constructions, spaces where unanswered needs and desires can look for something other or more.”<sup>94</sup> The advantages of these borderland areas “grant a person the possibility of confronting reality and achieving personal integrity”<sup>95</sup> without actually having to fall prey to the confines of social structures, whether religious or secular. These interstitial places “make settings defined by institutions and ideologies less real,”<sup>96</sup> no matter how real they appear to be.

In his theoretical analysis Kort does not forget to comment on the impact of the

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90 Ibid.

91 Ibid.

92 Ibid.

93 Ibid.

94 Kort, 92.

95 Ibid.

96 Ibid.

foreign settings on characters. Greene's settings are "often exotic and produce almost palpably forceful atmospheres" which matches the fundamental problem of search for answers within the domain of an interstitial comprehensive space. The protagonists are thus affected in several respects. Firstly, they "are positioned in these locations as outsiders," which conditions them to be, secondly, "lonely and rootless," which in turn is complemented by their being "under external pressures, most of the time as objects of pursuit." The interstitial place is not a canvas for the characters to project on it "their internal needs or desires," in fact it is the characters who "are attracted by something in them not of their own making."<sup>97</sup> To sum up these attitudes to the kind of space in Greene's fiction, Kort stresses Greene's critical eye for the hopeless network created by human institutions and ideologies, and points out that precisely only a place like the out-of-human-construction-and-control interstitial one can actually provide a refuge for the twentieth century man to perceive the truth and reality without any superimposed bias.<sup>98</sup>

A brief attempt to apply Kort's conclusions to *The Heart of the Matter* will now be made in order to suggest the workings of his theoretical concepts of the three-kind, two-side, and one-norm structure of human place-relations as outlined above. The cosmic, or comprehensible nature of space is realized through setting the novel into the wartime Africa, whose status is due to the evident colonial ties rather uncertain. All characters seem to be misplaced, in particular the protagonist whose at least double alienation from both the natives as well as his own European compatriots is evident. From the macro-level perspective, the continent had been over the time gradually alienated from the native peoples and superseded instead by the white European hegemony. However, the micro-structures of individual lives sometimes seem to prove instrumental, such as in the case of Major Scobie who succeeds in securing himself such a position which allows him to establish a (however controversial) dialogue between the different races. This link on the one hand compromises himself, but on the other hand demonstrates the otherwise lacking humanity in these hostile parts of the black continent.

Secondly, although Kort relies on the later modernists' orientation towards the future, in this particular novel this tendency is mitigated by at least two interfering factors. While Scobie is mostly reluctant to allow his past to interfere with the present, always lurking in the background of his consciousness, it is in particular his daughter's death which he would like to get over and tries hard to focus rather on the future.

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97 Ibid.

98 Kort, 107.

Nonetheless, one should not forget the temporal location of the novel, which is World War II. The uncertainty whether one will actually live to see the sun rise next morning, accompanied by a certain sarcasm about life's real worth, makes it extremely difficult to think about the future as positively as Kort may have observed. Greene in this particular novel perhaps more than anywhere else stresses the character of the present moment as a very fickle phenomenon, having a significant impact on one's sanity, especially when coupled with the inhospitable atmosphere created by both the place as well as its inhabitants.

Furthermore, *The Heart of the Matter* seems to conform to Kort's observation that spirituality prevails in later modernist texts. Whereas the characters' physical reactions to the climate, animal and instinctive understanding of life, or Scobie's physical relationship with Helen Rolt, do have a significant role in the structure of the text, the personal spiritual rift in the psyche of the main hero seems more central to the development of the plot, albeit in negative terms. Scobie's spirituality is distorted, undermined by doubts about fundamental concepts of humanity, guilt, self-pity. Most importantly, the trigger to start off the chain reaction which eventually destroys Scobie is the climate which in a maddening way enhances all of his otherwise latent inner conflicts.

The last aspect of Kort's theory, the single norm of human place-relations, materializes in the novel on many different levels. Firstly, the African colony is by the European administration taken in general as a temporal, short-termed post; hence there is little or no question or desire too look for the feeling of at-homeness. Nevertheless, it is Scobie again who shows extreme impact of the whole situation. Consider his minimalist requirements, or the non-existent personal touches and objects that could be found in places of his abode, whether it be his impersonal office, or his own house where he could be mistaken for a mere lodger owing to the total lack of any personal objects. This may be telling a lot about his concept of home, related to his inner conflicts including guilt and self-pity. It is as if he were chastening himself for not being present at the deathbed of his only child many years ago, resulting now in self-imposed punishment of uprooting anything that would only evoke the feeling at home. Scobie prefers himself as if ready to leave for somewhere at any moment, for instance judging by his for more than fifteen years unpacked suitcases.

In conclusion, several 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century approaches to the spatial element in narrative have been discussed with respect to their treatment of the problem of setting in

narration in order to provide some theoretical context for a subsequent practical analysis of Graham Greene's novel *The Heart of the Matter*. It has been shown that in the core methodological points the selected approaches tend to share little of their theoretical bases, even though the development in time – the building on the findings of earlier formalist theories and developing towards functional, synthetic, or multidimensional approaches – is obvious. Each theory is motivated by the pursuit of different goals. While Mikhail Bakhtin seeks to lay grounds for determining the spatio-temporal relations as a unique configuration of any piece of art and thus deciding even generic membership of a work of art, and Jurij Lotman and Mieke Bal employ the principle of binary oppositions in order to identify possible structural relations operating within a text to determine the importance and extent of influence of the spatial element in fiction, Wesley Kort uses the results of his own study of six representative twentieth-century novels so as to postulate a set of criteria for examination of human space-relations. Although the formal, or structural methods prevailed, for example those of the two Russian formalists Mikhail Bakhtin or Jurij Lotman, a largely functional approach to analyzing this particular aspect of narrative has been shown on the example of Wesley Kort's recent theory of human place-relations.

## 2. The Transforming Power of Places in Greene's novel *The Heart of the Matter*

### **I Introduction**

That places with all that can be associated with them significantly contribute to shaping people's lives is a commonsensical inference. In his novel *The Heart of the Matter* Graham Greene makes use of this general fact and builds up an intricate series of clashing structures precisely on the fact that people become affected by the environment they find themselves in. The aim here is to perform a textual analysis of some of the aspects that seem relevant with respect to the reciprocal relationship of characters and setting in this piece of fiction as well as its overall impact on the underlying semantics of the text.

The fundamental assumption is that places in the broadest sense of the word condition characters' lives, their ways of thinking about reality, their moods, actions, feelings, and thus transform them. Characters, correspondingly, perceive, respond to, and eventually adjust to places in a way relevant to their nature. This brings about their inevitable adaptation to a particular place.

One of the most essential discrepancies in this text is bound to be discerned at first sight: although the setting as such is in a further unspecified coastal port in Western Africa, the main characters, around whom the novel revolves, are virtually all of an European origin. These "albinos" (10, 1.1.1.2)<sup>99</sup> are naturally less well equipped to face the harshness of the place both physically and mentally. To convey the unsuitability of the white race in this continent alongside some more elaborate semantic structures, Greene exploits the hostile nature of the climate both literally as well as metaphorically.

### **II The Pervasive Flavour of Africa**

Greene's Africa is a space created for a particular reason, that is, to provide adequate grounding for the plot of the novel which in turn depicts a carefully selected group of characters who act the story out. In order to construe the spatial backing for the story successfully, an interplay of many significant details and elaborate textures is

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99 Numbers in brackets provide a page and chapter reference. First number, before the comma, refers to the page in the edition used for the purpose of this paper: Graham Greene, *The Heart of the Matter* (London: Vintage, 2004). The key to the next four-digit decimal number is as follows: here 1.1.1.2 indicates that the quotation comes from Book 1 – Part 1 – Section 1 – Chapter 2.

necessary to achieve a satisfactory degree of verisimilitude. First and foremost, there is the climate leitmotif, a fundamental element interwoven in the text which unifies the lives of the characters and the overwhelming quality of the place. It stresses the undeniable relativity of all basic human values on various levels, ranging from personal to social, mental, emotional, momentary or long-lasting. It demonstrates its all-pervasiveness throughout the text. For example, one of the aspects which are related to this theme is the ambiguous binary comfort-discomfort. This can be plainly illustrated in the way Henry Scobie treats the few seemingly comfortable articles in his otherwise bare office, the leather cushions and the easy chair: he gets rid of them because he “soon discover[s] how comfort of that kind down in the airless town mean[s] heat” (7, 1.1.1.2). The reason behind his action is perhaps his disgust at the otherwise natural bodily (yet protective) reaction of sweating. Sweat as such arouses in him such aversion that creates a specific Scobie prism resulting in a permanent feeling of loathing, aimed at his friends and his own wife. Scobie’s dislike of perspiration actually acts as a means for conveying his current feelings towards his wife Louise, which at first sight appear kind and consoling, yet if juxtaposed to the presence of sweat give exactly the opposite picture:

[H]e put his hand under the net and touched [her hand]. Little beads of sweat started where their skins touched. [...] He withdrew his hand: it was dripping with sweat. [...] He lifted the moist hand and kissed the palm; he was bound by the pathos of her unattractiveness. (19, 1.1.1.4)

Or later,

[h]e lay coiled like a watch-spring on the outside of the bed, trying to keep his body away from Louise’s: wherever they touched – if it were only a finger lying against a finger – sweat started. Even when they were separated the heat trembled between them. (32, 1.1.1.8)

The latter quotation also implicates the possible extent to which Scobie desires marital sex. It is certainly worth noticing that the narrator ceases to observe the particulars concerning sweat when Louise departs for Africa and does not return to this habit until Scobie’s later stages of his relationship with Helen Rolt, which to him eventually turns out to resemble his relationship with Louise.

Another side to the relative idea of comfort is the way the remnants of English habits enter the character’s mind and turn the once acquired English tendencies into ones suitable for the current place and situation, just like when Louise addresses Scobie on their way from the club: “Hurry up, dear. It’s so hot in the car. I’ll be glad when the rains come.” (17, 1.1.1.4) These characters, English by origin, do go on in their habit of



complaining about the weather, but now obviously tailored to the African reality. Scobie's reply to Louise's plea follows: "Will you?" And Louise concludes: "If only they just went on for a month or so and then stopped." Scobie thus makes her reconsider her original claim and literally leads her to admit that her English upbringing conditioned her so much as to complain about more or less any weather whatsoever, barely for the sake of complaining about anything at all. But Scobie does not hesitate to employ even more powerful psychological methods to literally brainwash his wife and blame her chronic depression precisely on the climate despite being well aware of its true cause: "Don't be silly, darling. It's just the heat: it makes you fancy things." (33, 1.1.1.8) Though he himself occasionally finds it hard to "concentrate because of heat" (14, 1.1.1.3). But it is not only the difficulty with long-term effects of African climate on one's psyche. Behind the numerous momentary emotional surges the characters go through is not rarely the very culprit:

[Scobie's] vision moved jerkily back into focus, but sweat dripped into his right eye. The fingers that wiped it free shook like a drunkard's. He told himself: Be careful. This isn't a climate for emotion. It's a climate for meanness, malice, snobbery, but anything like hate or love drives a man off his head. (22, 1.1.1.4)

Even sexual lust is directly affected by the climactic conditions. At one moment, when Scobie is with Helen prior to their becoming lovers, the shift in Scobie's ways of thinking is clearly demonstrated. One might expect him to be brimming with sexual desire, having a wrecked marriage and the wife a long way off, but he is not, and instead gives way to near philosophical thought concerning the transitory nature of human life:

He was more than thirty years the older; his body in this climate had lost the sense of lust; he watched [Helen] with sadness and affection and enormous pity because a time would come when he couldn't show her around in a world where she was at sea. (146, 2.1.3.1)

The sensual stagnation as induced by the climate not indigenous to the Englishmen parallels the stale state of affairs which characterize this god-forsaken corner of the black continent at such a time. Once again the close correspondence between the emotional states of the characters and the rottenness of the place reinforces the impact of utmost hopelessness, and induces pity for them, similar to that which leads to the protagonist's eventual death.

It has been suggested that climate can also be discerned behind many an excuse the characters invent, whether the cause be true or, for the sake of convenience, just made up. Because it is so convenient, and because it readily appeals to the low morals exercised there, the climate also interacts with the operating of official religious

practices and authorities. For example, during Scobie's confession, Father Rank uses climate as an excuse for sinning:

“I feel – tired of my religion. It seems to mean nothing to me.” “It's easy [...] to worry too much about that. Especially here. The penance I would give to a lot of people if I could is six month's leave. The climate gets you down. It's easy to mistake tiredness for – well, disbelief.” (140, 2.1.2.5)

This passage could make one think of Father Rank as a great humanist, understanding the true nature of people, yet on the other hand, bearing in mind his role of a local religious authority, he totally fails to react according to the Church doctrines. He obviously disparages Scobie's concerns, hence could be thought of as partly responsible for Scobie's final inner rift with the Church leading to his eventual suicide. Father Rank refuses to take Scobie seriously, failing to perform his duty as a priest. Perhaps the reason why he acts so may be the climate itself too: “Don't mind me, Scobie,” he tells him on one informal occasion, “don't listen to me. It's the rains – they always get me down about this time.” (168, 2.3.1.2) So not even the supporting pillars of institutionalized morality in society can provide support which would not flicker under the influence of the climate.

It is then the hot and humid climate then which underlies and closely corresponds to human emotionality as demonstrated in the text. On the one hand, it stirs and intensifies undesirable feelings which surface and interfere with human relationships. On the other hand, negative emotions are generally blamed on it despite their real triggers. The fundamental contrast played with is geographical and cultural. Different notions of comfort, sexual relationships, personal and social habits, as well as ways to deal with momentary emotional lapses clash on the level of identity: whether to stick with values the Englishmen had acquired in England, or whether to conform with the new situation. The outcome is mostly negative as none of the characters is entirely capable of separating each of these two realms, European and African, to avoid the inevitable conflict of values.

Not only the climate but also further separate facets of Africa imprint their marks on the non-native population. Presented in a relation to each other, they corrupt the people's minds, behaviour, and language. These various aspects give rise to a number of puzzling questions, such as the apparent occurrence of the opposition of sanity and insanity. Wilson, the newly arrived intelligence officer, is a case example of such repercussions. A clear manifestation of this reason-based binary is the rather peculiar

sport invented by Harris, the cockroach hunt. In fact, it is a miniature contest of two heat-dulled males who are in search of some outlet for their confusion, problems, despair, all originating in their spatial displacement. On one occasion, Harris invites Wilson to join in a “Cockroach Championship” (60, 1.2.1.3), yet Wilson’s inability to control his rising temper soon causes his original verve for competition transform into uncontrollable surge of emotions since “the lust of the hunt touche[s his] imagination” (60, 1.2.1.3). This shows a certain pattern of Africa’s operating in the human mind: people come to Africa relatively sane, but sooner or later become stigmatized. This is clearly evident from the way certain traits latent in their personalities either develop and surface, or are suppressed and transformed into a different kind of whim. The tendency of these changes is towards beastliness and takeover of one’s self-control by animal instincts. The characters thus lose their civilised polish so painstakingly cultivated when in Europe where they functioned to conceal precisely their inborn animal instincts. The metaphorical African wilderness slowly takes over the formerly socially cultivated individuals.

Due to his having arrived only recently, Wilson is then the most illustrative example as far as his transformation due to the influences of Africa is concerned. Other people can easily discern his recent arrival from his language, being aware of no African-marked features in it, which is conspicuous:

The words vibrated with sincerity: it gave them the sound of a foreign language – the sound of English spoken in England. Here intonations changed in the course of a few months, became high-pitched and insincere, or flat and guarded. You could tell that Wilson was fresh from home. (32, 1.1.1.7)

According to Greene his uniqueness is, however, to a significant degree unintentional. In *Ways of Escape* he explains that “in most of my books [...] there is one lay character who obstinately refuses to live, who is there only for the sake of the story,”<sup>100</sup> listing instances of such characters with Wilson among them. His refusal to live could be seen as manifested in the way he refuses to adapt himself openly same as the others often admit to, and instead undergo a subconscious transformation of his innate passions and desires which he conceals behind his professional, yet spineless secret-agent self (154, 2.2.1.2). In other words, Wilson fails to develop any obvious mimicry, evident in the narrator’s comments such as “[h]owever diligently Wilson practised, the slang phrase[s] sounded unnaturally on his lips” (155, 2.2.1.3). Nonetheless, on the inside he grows animal, of which he is partially aware. For an illustration, that “[h]e remembered there

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100 Graham Greene, *The Ways of Escape* (London: Bodley, 1980), p. 36.

was a time when he had not noticed a black skin” (158, 2.2.1.3) is what immediately comes in his mind while vigilantly watching a black girl naked to the waist go by in a downpour, paying attention to such sensuously motivated details as “the water trickling down between [her] two thin wing-like shoulder blades” (ibid.). Wilson eventually succumbs to his intense sexual urges, despite his anxious concern about being spotted near the local brothel. His worries are a sign of nothing less but an open hypocrisy to himself and the others alike:

Some time or another if one lived in a place one must try the local product. It was like having a box of chocolates shut in a bedroom drawer. Until the box was empty it occupies the mind too much. (159, 2.2.1.4)

That Africa-induced states of mind take their toll perhaps on every single character is best encapsulated in Wilson’s brothel experience. As to its effect, this place, the brothel, could be metaphorically described as an Africa within Africa without exaggeration, only condensed under a single roof. Positioned half way between the wharf and the Cathedral, it lies in an unkept road to deter drivers from using it (160, 2.2.1.4). But the major and universal significance of the place is that of neutralization, or stripping one of any identity whatsoever:

Here a man’s colour had no value: he couldn’t bluster as a white man could elsewhere: by entering this narrow plaster passage, he had shed every racial, social and individual trait, he had reduced himself to human nature. If he had wanted to hide, here was the perfect hiding-place; if he had wanted to be anonymous, here he was simply a man. Even his reluctance, disgust and fear were so common to those who came here for the first time that the old woman knew exactly what each moment would be. (161, 2.2.1.4)

This odd character, this secret agent unprotected by any mask of Africa-conditioned pretence is here stripped naked. Yet it appears to suit him precisely because of his inability to successfully acquire any social mask. On the other hand, he has his innate professional mimicry thanks to which he can successfully work as a secret agent, apparently inherent in his slick nature. The conclusion is that no matter what one does or signifies in a broader context of human relationships against which he may himself define, the true nature of a man in Greene’s Africa lies just under the socialized surface, and only little suffices to uncover it.

Analogically to Wilson’s double self, that is to say, his professional and the dormant animal one, the trained eye of Major Scobie the policeman is another kind of professional self-adaptation conditioned by the place and literally essential for his survival. For instance, he does not hear the gossip, but is at the same time capable of penetrating through people’s assumed masks and guessing quite accurately the motives

behind their actions, such as in the case of the Captain of the *Esperança*'s deception (38, 1.1.2.1). But unlike the testimony of Wilson's incapability of adjusting his language to the environment, Scobie keeps his professional face by resisting the temptations of African lure, avoiding any deeper stigmatization towards fecklessness and corruption. Alas, the very contrary applies to his personal life. What the location succeeds to affect in Scobie is his feeble self-consciousness which bends under Africa's pressure and grows to nurture devastating and self-consuming feelings of all-encompassing pity, responsibility, and love of failure. Scobie "in this region of lies" (214, 3.1.3.1) thrives to sense the underlying pattern behind Africa's strategies that gradually corrupt the minds of the white non-native population, without yielding his own professional, analytical mind to it, maintaining undistorted sight to orient himself in the intricate labyrinths of African harsh reality which has become his new home.

### **III The Peculiarity of 'Home'**

The notion of home can hardly go unnoticed as far as the pervasive influence of Africa as a symbol of depravity in the novel is concerned. It is showed as a notion departing from the traditional homey concepts: Africa has twisted it, it has been made controversial. Preventing a reader from getting any general and unbiased notion of home in the text is the fact that the only household the narrator so frequently renders from various points of view is Scobie's. Already early in the book it is defined from the perspective of material possessions, explaining that "[i]f home for him meant reduction of things to a friendly unchanging minimum, home to [Louise] was accumulation" (13, 1.1.1.3). In spite of admitting to having made Louise the way she is, Scobie cannot bear anything she has been involved in, including their own home. As it is, his personal aversion to home changes depending on Louise's presence or absence. Greene seems to employ this kind of complex place metaphor in order to expose the malfunctioning relationship of this central couple in the context of the Africa-altered malfunctioning society. In addition, it is also of some importance that Scobie feels more at home in his office than in their house.

That the building, in which his office is situated, reminds him of hospital, "a great stone building like the grandiloquent boast of weak men" (7, 1.1.1.2), certainly adds to the already hard-to-comprehend inclination of Scobie's to consider his one room there his home. The wind of Africa seems to be directly involved in making characters assume these unconventional views of such key notions as that of home, although in this

case Scobie's aversion to Louise and all that is hers significantly contribute to his deeply felt homelessness. It is even harder to comprehend the office-home relationship in the context of further description of the place, resting on Scobie's sensual perceptions and personal experience:

Scobie could always detect the odour of human meanness and injustice – it was the smell of a zoo, of sawdust, excrement, ammonia, and lack of liberty. The place was scrubbed daily, but you could never eliminate the smell. Prisoners and policemen carried it in their clothing like cigarette smoke. (7, 1.1.1.2)

In fact none of the smells nor their omnipresence would, let us assume in the European context, contribute to anything like a feeling of attachment to a place, not to mention considering it one's home. Yet to Scobie it does, and there seems to be little doubt that the fifteen years of living in Africa did not at least partly contribute to his reasoning in favour of thinking of the place as home. Maybe the more repulsive the environment the more of a martyr Scobie feels, which would supply his ego with sufficient reason for pitying himself and others too.

The office itself, intentionally stripped of all dispensable articles boasts of nothing but a table, two plain chairs, a cupboard, a pair of rusty handcuffs, and a filing cabinet. It is stated that "to a stranger it would have appeared a bare uncomfortable room but to Scobie it was home" (7, 1.1.1.2). Such a blunt delivery of this paradox, peculiar to this character, only further reflects the workings of all sorts of abnormal feelings as stirred by the environment. Scobie's tendency to eliminate the material manifestation of his own existence also resonates in the suicidal theme, aptly ending in his ultimate physical self-removal from this sphere of existence; it is an oblique process of annihilation, reaching its climax in his eventual suicide.

The actual home proper of Mr and Mrs Scobie is a "two storeyed white house beyond the transportation park" (124, 2.1.2.1) in a swampy hollow, originally built for a Syrian. Apparently, the physical description of the building clashes with its location as well as its designed first owner. While on the one hand, having an inside staircase is a local rarity, there are two important facts outweighing this advantage. First, that the plot of land on which it stands turns it into an inhospitable mire during the rains, and second, it was intended to accommodate a Syrian. This sort of prejudices even taint places as such, creating thus racially, or nationally, demarcated zones of access and influence. Namely, it is made fairly clear in the novel that the disreputable stigma of being a Syrian is not, strictly speaking, moderated by religious affiliation. Yusef, the Moslem Syrian, is depicted in no less negatively ambiguous light than his opponent Tallit,

despite his being a Roman Catholic. Thus the Scobie house is labelled by a kind of prejudicial and racial memento, which to a considerable extent biases and diminishes its architectonic prominence. Fancying its uniqueness, Louise sees the house in its positive light only, whereas her spouse is wholly indifferent to any advantages, determined to loathe it and not to create any emotional attachments to it.

Inside the house virtually everything bears the stamp of Louise, whether it be the dressing table cluttered with photographs, rugs, pictures on the walls, or brimming bookshelves (13, 1.1.1.3). But when Louise leaves for South Africa a remarkable shift takes place in Scobie's mind, as if Louise were a mere ghost-like phantom:

[T]here had never been quite this quality of security and impregnability in the silence [...]. [T]here was no sign of Louise's departure or presence. (91, 1.3.1.4)

Her presence makes herself heard after she returns, when Scobie has to face the painful fact that Louise's things, not herself *per se*, have trespassed on his peace again, made him a stranger under his own roof again; that he is now homeless again. His cherished status quo, his contented aloneness, cannot be perpetrated (191, 3.1.1.1). At the end, after Scobie's death, it is Wilson who verbalizes this sad fact that

[i]t was as if [Scobie] had left nothing behind him in the house [...]. [... T]he house was no different: the shelves were as full of books; it seemed [...] that it must always have been *her* house, not his. Was it just imagination then that made their voices ring a little hollowly as though the house was empty? (251, 3.3.1.1)

The relationship between the character of Scobie's nature and his fate, and the external events has then far-reaching and intricate repercussions. The ascetic Scobie prefers inhabiting his workplace to gladly submitting to share a home with his wife. In effect he succeeds in annihilating himself from his bodily and material existence, as if he never really existed. The marriage of a phantom wife and a self-terminated husband has a hapless scenario. It mirrors their respective inner conflicts which originate from their coming to terms with the foreign surroundings. It is the African environment which controls these people's lives whether they like it or not. The powerful influence of Africa takes over their fate because of their individual weaknesses and inability to resist the circumstances.

#### **IV The Familiar Places**

Even a hint of the familiar has a soothing effect on frayed nerves of people. One such is the infiltration of a genuine English element, transposed to Africa by Wilson and Harris who get briefly involved with the *Downhamian* magazine. Harris by means of

writing a letter to the *Downhamian* attempts to get in touch with the outer world, that is outside Africa. It is useful to note the potential problem arising here: his attempt to communicate with England follows England having found him in Africa. There is no complication in the latter aspect, but it is questionable whether Harris would be understood, or whether he would find England fit to comprehend his message from the wilds. Unlike Harris who intends to communicate straight to the editorial board behind the *Downhamian*, Wilson anonymously publishes his love-poem to Louise there, literally shouting his heart out to the whole wide world. By doing so, he can conceal his identity behind his mere initials and therefore neither lose his face nor cause Louise any problems. Moreover, the periodical functions as a textual, virtual meeting place: the poem is written in Africa, published (presumably) in England, dedicated to an Englishwoman currently placed in Africa, and is disseminating Wilson's feeling wherever it is read. In the *Downhamian* meets the amalgamation of at least the two worlds apart.

Also further allusions to England vibrate throughout the text, and that straight from the beginning. The story opens in Bond Street on the terrace of the Bedford Hotel, whose unpretentious name sounds common enough to think of Africa at all. The Cathedral bells are ringing, and just down the road there is a High School with girls in dark-blue uniforms. Only they are blacks, and the crowd below in the street is a mixture of races and cultures. Harris provides perhaps the most apt account of the population of the unnamed port when he refers to it as the "original Tower of Babel," with "West Indians, Africans, real Indians, Syrians, Englishmen, Scotsmen in the Office of Works, Irish priests, French priests, Alsatian priests" (6, 1.1.1.1). There is a sense of deficiency and despondency in that description, implying the fear of present chaos, disorder and immorality rather than the opposite positive aspects of a multiethnic and multicultural society. It is not surprising that Europeans' xenophobia is targeted mostly at the natives, both the blacks and the Muslims. Such partiality is quite likely supported by the colonists' self-assuredness that they are under no threat whatsoever from these indigenous peoples who in this dark continent are currently not in full command of their own affairs, being supposedly mentally and culturally inferior to the ruling white men.

Apart from patriotism, the refuge found in the imaginary space of one's religion may serve as yet another solace. Religious space in the novel is a special kind of reality of its own, especially to the protagonist, who experiences several episodic insights prior to the fatal resolution to take his life:



The priest had reached Louise in his slow interrupted patrol, and suddenly Scobie was aware of the sense of exile. Over there, where all these people knelt, was a country to which he would never return. (197, 3.1.1.2)

This new 'space' Scobie has just entered creates an imaginary exile from England and Catherine, from Africa and Louise, and, most importantly, from himself and his consciousness. The only identity that he resolves to keep is his public professional and personal appearance, behind whose guise he plots his ultimate fall, having alienated himself not only from the others but also from his religion:

When he walked beside her into the church it was as if he had entered this building for the first time – a stranger. An immense distance already separated him from these people who knelt and prayed and would presently receive God in peace. He knelt and pretended to pray. [...] He was the unknown guest at a party who is introduced to no one. (207, 3.1.1.2)

The usage of concrete spatial metaphor to indicate his felt distance from the church aptly resonates with the context of the whole novel which rests, as has been shown, largely on precisely spatial conditions related to characters. This religious place within his soul is where Scobie commits his first suicide only to crown it with the termination of the manifest, bodily existence.

## **V On the Neutral Grounds**

Realms of their own, affiliated neither to Africa nor any other spot on the earth, the ships that come and go always bring in a bit of the outer world with them to the otherwise stale waters of the port, and consequently pick up some of the local flavour to add to their ever growing collection. They could thus be read symbolically, always meaning an end and an instant beginning of something else. The liner which is to take Louise to South Africa is one of such symbols, obvious from the moment when the couple "hand in hand [...] watched *their separation* anchor in the bay" (italics added; 87, 1.3.1.3). The oncoming passage indicating their (physical) parting shows the gradual, yet superficial improvement of the relationship between the Scobies. It is another binary because neither absence nor presence of a person alone can be understood positively without one's awareness of the opposite. The down-hill going marriage is thus only temporarily reconciled, so long as the influence of the power of the binary lasts.

Not only Africa but also the neutral place on board the ship transforms characters, which shows that the trend of places interfering with lives of individuals is not applicable exclusively to the African continent but universally to any particular place. Prior to their departure

the two women [Louise and Mrs Halifax] took stock of their cabin. They stood there in the shadow like cave-dwellers; they spoke in undertones that the men couldn't catch: they were no longer wives – they were sisters belonging to a different race. “You and I are not wanted, old man,” [Mr.] Halifax said. “They’ll be alright now. Me for the shore.” (89-90, 1.3.1.3)

The impact of the metamorphosis is far-reaching. The wives turn to cave-dwellers, sisters of a different race speaking a foreign language, unwanted on shore, ‘needed’ on board the ship. The husbands transform into unmarried men of a different race, unable to comprehend their up-to-the-moment spouses. They actually end up disconnected from any ties they have had so far, they are unwanted on board and needed on shore. The spheres of influence are redistributed by the group’s presence on the ship and will last until their reunion after the rains are over. The views, perspectives and even overall perceptions are suddenly changed by this place, also discernible from Louise’s consequent taking leave of Scobie when the port is suddenly viewed as in possession of some special quality observable only from the deck of an anchored ship:

They kissed and went up on deck. *From here the port was always beautiful*; the thin layer of houses sparkled in the sun like quartz or lay in the shadow of the great green swollen hills. (italics added; 90, 1.3.1.3)

Is this seemingly causeless transition from loathing the town for the whole of the twenty four hours but five caused by the occasion, or by the ship’s presence being the couple’s tentative ground for their farewell? How come the town can be beautiful, even poetic, peaceful, and welcoming only from the deck of a ship? Perhaps it is because the ship merely stops there and never stays too long to become saturated with the vibe of the place, hence remaining neutral and unchanged. Would the same as is true for the ship apply to the hapless Scobie, his emotionally labile wife and the rest of the characters that make the novel? It seems likely, although the book would then be below recognition. The reason for the easiness of such switching is that the places depicted, whether the physical or abstract, are such universal ones, that can be found at any country, and even inside the mind of any person.

## **VI Scobie as a Keystone to the Novel**

Major Scobie has proved an immensely controversial character ever since the book was published. A critic once encapsulated the development of the novel with Scobie at the centre as “a very decent colonial policeman in West Africa, who is unfaithful to his wife with a young girl [...] and, in the end, [he] betrays them all and

God as well by killing himself.”<sup>101</sup> Graham Greene himself was many times confronted with the question of this particular character, especially to explain his intended role in the novel. Greene refuses that Scobie should be taken for a hero, saying that

“he’s a weak man with good intentions and doomed by pride: no satanic pride, but the kind of pride that lots of us have, which makes him feel that he can manage lives.”<sup>102</sup>

But it is not as much the question of Scobie’s flaws in isolation as the problem of looking at the whole interplay of those singular weaknesses, pity and responsibility in the first place, that constitute this character and set him into the general context.

In order to interrelate the individual points so far made on the subject of spatial setting and its impact on the characters, it is vital to realize that the major glueing element, bonding the cast and the spatial properties together, is precisely the protagonist. Moreover, there are several important couplings on the micro and macro-level of different elements present in the story which essentially complement one another and in result create the overwhelming impact on the reader as to the understanding of the spatial conditions as described in the novel. If Scobie impersonates the micro-level and the overall setting represents the macro-level, then the qualities and properties of the character of Scobie are projected onto the canvas of the setting and vice versa. Hence for instance his mental and emotional disturbances as opposed to his professional calmness and analytical abilities are reflected in the rugged environment and inhospitable living conditions, albeit on the surface sufficiently Europeanized in order to survive there.

On yet another level, after zooming in to focus just on the character of Scobie, his inner state of being and his outer self-expression can be taken as correlatives with higher levels of the setting, that is, those materially more manifest. Thus whereas his plain office can be read as an essential bareness of character, the baroque and rich surroundings of the hot and temperamental African environment match with Scobie’s intense, though deep-lying, emotional layer which occasionally subverts the tidy outward polish of his, eventually ending in “his corruption by pity.”<sup>103</sup>

Having considered various aspects of the spatial setting in general as well as with respect to particular characters, it became clear that the fundamental discrepancies

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101 Gloria Emerson, “Our Man in the Antibes: Graham Greene,” in *Conversations with Graham Greene*, Henry J. Donaghy, ed. (Jackson: U P of Mississippi, 1992) 137.

102 Christopher Burstall, “Graham Greene Takes the Orient Express,” in *Conversations with Graham Greene*, Henry J. Donaghy, ed. (Jackson: U P of Mississippi, 1992) 55-56.

103 Greene (1980), 85.

between the country of birth of the main characters as opposed to their current abode gives rise to manifold inner and outer conflicts and a whole range of untypical reactions springing from their subconscious. What is it then, apart from the professional obligations, that has kept Scobie in the African port for so many years despite its unwelcoming nature and hostile atmosphere? From what the reader can find out, the protraction of his stay can be understood as an excuse for himself to keep acting like a martyr in between the world of the African peoples and their white administrators. The former contribute to his eventual corruption as a professional man, whereas the company of the latter in turn mitigates the outward effects of any such corruption because it is the common practice among them. But the sacrifice proper is on the level of his own conscience which fails to resist the total impact of these multiple channels of ill-morals and depraved humanity. Or Scobie's refusal to leave can be a pretext for his dysfunctional marriage. In extreme, it allows him to stay clear of his wife while at the same time go on pitying her for having to suffer the severe conditions bound to him in marriage.

In general, this in European terms inhuman place provides him also with a perfect justification for not having to behave like a civilized person. As Wesley Kort aptly observes,

[t]he heat in the African colony is unrelenting and overbearing. The colonial community is marked by jealousy and suspicion. The Syrians and the natives are perceived by the colonists as menacing and untrustworthy. War intensifies the oppressively negative qualities of these social conditions. And the principal character's behavior [...] contradicts his office.<sup>104</sup>

Hence, as far as Scobie in particular is concerned, there is little doubt that in a civilized environment he would have to face his marital problems in full, having neither excuse for avoiding any discussion on this subject with his wife nor any reason to shift the actual heart of the problem from that of hatred towards the fatal pity. Secondly, Scobie would even lose all the wonderful opportunities which abound here in West Africa to pity others as well since in Europe there would presumably be familiar diversions and entertainment enough for anyone to devote their hearts and thoughts to, thus preventing the build-up of tension and inner crises which lack any effective vent there in Africa. Furthermore, Major Scobie of the Port relishes his homelessness. His almost ascetic life would be socially unfit to a man of his situation in any civilized country. The quite likely result of such an option seems to be catastrophic, even more than his actual fate,

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104 Kort, 101.

because it is very likely that sooner or later Scobie would end up literally choked up by the material dummies of his wife's, or discredited by the formal requirements imposed on him by the traditions of the society. In sum, anywhere else would surely be a total absence of the "comfort" the harsh climate provides. And it seems quite plausible that analogous consequences could be thus inferred as valid for the rest of the characters as well.

## **VII Conclusions**

As Mieke Bal and Jurij Lotman argue, the kind of space delineated in fiction is a powerful tool in the hands of a writer. Neither is Greene's Africa in *The Heart of the Matter* a mere setting to the novel. It is one of the main pillars, its heart, its grounds, from which all the rest of the structural components evolve. Most importantly, however, it is the major element tinting the lives of its inhabitants, evident especially in the devious ways of the overseas occupants. The sharp contrasts between the civilized homelands of the European peoples and the harshness of climactic and other natural conditions make the place a hell to those placed there during their wartime service. As the inhospitableness causes emotions to boil, many a fatal consequence occurs as a direct result of biased opinions, hasty conclusions, or passionate actions. But the overall impact is reciprocal: not only does the place cause the characters to alter their lives to submit to the natural conditions, but also the people, or precisely the Europeans, take steps to change their surroundings and habits so as to approximate their remembrances of their home countries. That they lose to the force of the climate is evident – neither the heat nor the rains start to obey their wishes – although some conveniences, such as that of house equipment, the municipal infrastructure, or some social patterns are indeed implemented or observed with some success. The victory of the climate over the population is naturalistically rendered through loathful sensual perceptions of sweat, stench, disintegration of socially conventionalized structures, and visual wretchedness. Further interconnections of the space and characters involve plot as well, including the rise and fall of the personal life of Major Henry Scobie. As was suggested, it is this person which holds keys to the importance of the mutual relationship of setting and characters for its complex semantic implications which closely correspond and reverberate with the natural phenomena and their impact on minds and bodies of men.

It is obvious that the temporal context adds another semantic level to the novel, even though any actual Second World War events, echoing in the background, interfere

only little with the main plotline. But, just as Mikhail Bakhtin observes, there is a great deal of dynamism and liveliness between the temporal and spatial variables which creates a unique framework for a piece of fiction. For it is these that determine what kind of cast will be most likely to appear on thus created stage in order to act out their stories. Even though harmony is nice to read about, it is disharmony which creates contradictory and ambiguous emotional reactions to the sad and pitiful story of Major Scobie. Exactly the degree of disagreement between the socially polished Europeans and the hostile surroundings provokes and entertains in its way. The setting of this novel is that of a tragedy, as it is the asperity of the climate which prevents any positive or happy events to occur. The development of the story is therefore almost from the very beginning determined and confined within a very narrow scope between whose limits only it can consequently fluctuate.

The alien nature of the derelict corner of the African continent is all but homey to Scobie and most of the other characters. It is a spot on earth which is ever surprising those who chose or were sent to inhabit it. This place makes human weaknesses and vices surface, and yet they go unseen because the place is by default immersed in immorality and corruption. In agreement with Wesley Kort's theoretical propositions, the location of the Port is found outside all social structures as known in the western society and far away from the civilized world. The only reserve could be the ships as bearers of no permanent affiliation to neither realm. The lacking of any social frameworks results in morally and spiritually challenging the inhabitants who face new situations and new life conditions. Outweighing all these stimulating incentives is the underlying threat and risk not only to one's life, but also more subtle moral and spiritual deterioration. How and to what extent would the characters involved function back in their native countries is not treated by the text, however, it is quite likely that their integration would not be easy. Even though this applies to the main protagonist in particular, even the rest of the cast is essentially misplaced, already in a way disabled for normal integration into the western society, and shaped by external influences of the African location.

To sum up, this thesis analyzed the role of places in Graham Greene's novel *The Heart of the Matter* in relation to the changes they trigger off in individual characters, and the characters' consequent perception of those places. It was shown that places and their influences can function as excuses from personal, behavioural, sensual, or even professional digressions, allowing the surface of one's consciousness remain only little

disturbed. These and other factors were juxtaposed to either factual or assumed analogical phenomena in civilized society outside Africa, and shown as subversive and harmful to both physical as well as mental state of the people involved. In consequence, having thus tinted people's lives, Africa takes its heavy toll on the life stories of the characters which are symptomatically bleak, pessimistic, and as if in advance delineated to no bright future.

### 3. Resumé

Ve svém románu *Jádro věci*, publikovaném v roce 1948, zachycuje Graham Greene rozporuplnou situaci Evropanů žijících v západoafrickém přístavu jisté britské kolonie, kam je zavedla profesní povinnost sloužit vlasti během druhé světové války. Ačkoli se tato komunita, v čele s hlavním hrdinou majorem Scobiem, potýká v daném kontextu se zcela běžnými událostmi, jak profesními, tak soukromými, jsou tito lidé vystaveni vlivu cizího prostředí, neboť právě Afrika je pozadím všech událostí a skrytým původcem většiny konfliktů. Tato prostorová lokace je zcela nepostradatelným elementem z hlediska dějové linie a především kvůli celkové intenzitě svého vlivu na jednotlivé postavy.

Existuje nesčetně druhů míst či prostorů, které je možno vymezit nejrozličnějšími kritérii, například prostor z hlediska fyzikálního či zeměpisného. Lze ale také hovořit o prostorech, jejichž chápání se mění napříč společenskými a kulturními konvencemi či osobními postoji. Obecně vzato je tedy prostor místem pro existenci věcí a dějů, které může být zcela konkrétní a fyzikálně popsatelné, ale také abstraktní, výsledkem subjektivních mentálních konstrukcí.

Rozmanitostí, kterou s sebou nese pojetí prostoru, se nevyhneme ani v oblasti literární teorie. Z literárněvědného hlediska nelze hovořit o žádné zásadní shodě mezi jednotlivými teoretickými koncepty ani metodami pro analýzu prostorovosti v literatuře. Navíc se zdá, že právě problematika lokace byla donedávna jedním z opomíjených prvků, kterým se dostávalo jen málo pozornosti v porovnání s ostatními strukturními jevy, kupříkladu literárním časem či otázkou postav. Navzdory tomu ale bývá prostor často posuzován právě ve spojení s kategorií času, čímž vzniká komplexní kategorie zakořeněná v principech einsteinovské fyziky. I přes tuto logickou provázanost času s prostorem lze ovšem zkoumat literární prostorovost jako takovou, což je východiskem vlastní praktické analýzy Greenova románu. Pro přehled bylo vybráno několik teoretických koncepcí zabývajících se literární prostorovostí, které ilustrují rozmanitost přístupů a nejednotnost východisek a zároveň kopírují povšechný vývoj myšlení od strukturalismu až po soudobý synkretismus.

Mieke Bal a Jurij Lotman jsou představiteli strukturalistického pojetí literárněvědného bádání. Bal si ve svém díle *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* dává za úkol jednoduše a bez matoucího pojmosloví vymezit základy naratologie. Ve svém pojetí prostoru jakožto nedílné součásti vyprávění zdůrazňuje



důležitost provázat analýzu událostí, postav a lokace. Potenciální výskyt binárních opozic typu město-venkov či volnost-omezení poskytuje údaje o příznakovosti, což napomáhá důkladnému porozumění významů podmíněných strukturou textu. Svou popisnou formalistickou analýzou hodlá Bal dát do souvislostí jednotlivé strukturní složky vyprávění, aby mohla dospět k adekvátní interpretaci významu daného textu. S podobnými východisky pracuje i ruský formalista Jurij Lotman ve své studii *Struktura uměleckého textu*, který také tvrdí, že charakter prostoru spočívá v náležitém rozpoznání binárních opozic v literárním díle. Tím se dospěje k nalezení centrálního organizačního prvku, který je zcela nepostradatelný pro existenci ostatních strukturních součástí. Umělecké dílo je považováno za organickou jednotu, v níž existují mnohé dichotomické subsystemy, které slouží k následné identifikaci příznakových jevů, a tudíž i hlubšímu pochopení funkční a sémantické stránky textu.

Chronotop (neboli 'časoprostor') Michaila Bachtina, jak jej předkládá ve stati "Formy času a prostoru v románu," je, z pohledu literárněvědného bádání, nesmírně důležitým pojmem. Podle Bachtina jde totiž o onen faktor, který určuje povahu ostatních strukturních prvků vyprávění, čímž může například přímo ovlivnit žánr nebo přesně stanovit povahu děje literárního díla. Významné je Bachtinovo rozlišení dvou základních chronotopů, chronotopu skutečného světa a chronotopu uvnitř literárního díla, přičemž oba dva typy je možno dále dělit na další chronotopy v rámci svého druhu. Na tom je dokázáno, že časoprostorová realita popisovaná v románu je naprosto odlišná od časoprostoru světa autora, čímž je vysvětlena nemožnost zaměnit tyto dvě reality pod vlivem znalosti autobiografických prvků ze života autora. Chronotop je tedy oblastí, kde se události odehrávají. Dále je také místem podléhajícím proměnám a lze na něm pozorovat projevy času. A v neposlední řadě se do značné míry podílí na rozlišení žánrů.

Velmi komplexní, ve srovnání s dosud zmíněnými teoriemi, je přístup Wesleyho Korta v práci *Place and Space in Modern Fiction*, kde se pracuje s literárním prostorem jakožto zvláštním druhem jazyka v literatuře z hlediska lidských vztahů právě k různým druhům prostoru. Kort argumentuje, že lidé jsou pod neustálým vlivem prostředí, v němž se vyskytují. Jsou tedy prostorem formováni a stávají se tak nedílnou součástí identity onoho prostoru, čímž mu dodávají objektivní či subjektivní, morální či spirituální náboj. Tato teorie je vystavěna na analýze šesti reprezentativních děl (Thomase Hardyho, Josepha Conrada, E.M. Forstera jakožto zástupců raného modernismu a Grahama Greena, Williama Goldinga a Muriel Sparkové reprezentující

pozdně modernistickou tvorbu), v nichž je prostorovost dominantním prvkem. Právě tato praktická analýza následně slouží k vytvoření teoretické základny pro Kortovu metodologii. Ta spočívá ve třech kritériích pro identifikaci a zařazení díla: za prvé se zde počítá se třemi druhy lidských vztahů vůči místům (všeobecný/kosmický, společensko-politický a osobní), za druhé, dvě podoby těchto lidských vztahů (fyzický, charakteristický pro rané modernisty a duchovní, který je vlastní modernistům pozdním) a za třetí jediná norma pro vztah lidí a míst, tzv. 'accommodating,' představující vrchol pozitivního vztahu lidí k prostoru či místu. Kombinacemi těchto parametrů dospívá Kort k jedinečným konfiguracím charakterizujícím jednotlivá díla. Kortův popis tvorby Grahama Greena se v zásadě shoduje se závěry praktické analýzy této bakalářské práce, tedy otázkou vzájemné podmíněnosti existence postav a míst a problémů, které toto rozporuplné uspořádání přináší.

Vlastní analýza Greenova románu je tematicky rozčleněna podle povahy vztahů lokace a postav, jejichž vzájemné ovlivňování je zde hlavním předmětem pozornosti. Místa do značné míry formují životy lidí, jejich mentalitu, jejich emoce. A tak Greene mistrně využívá ostrého rozporu lokace, tedy rovníkové Afriky a západoevropského původu většiny postav, aby vytvořil příhodné podmínky pro děj tohoto románu. Tropické podnebí a dvě roční období – extrémní sucho či období dešťů – slouží nejenom jako všudypřítomné pozadí dějové linie, ale především podtrhává onu relativitu lidských hodnot, které v těchto podmínkách nabývají, pro jinak civilizované Evropany, nebývalých podob. Tito lidé si s sebou pochopitelně nesou břemeno vzpomínek a zvyků, kterého nabyli ještě doma v Británii, ale právě jejich neschopnost plně se přizpůsobit současným podmínkám či je pouze akceptovat, vytváří společenské krize a niterné konflikty někdy až extrémně zesilované nepříznivými životními poměry. Obojí, nesnesitelné vedro i deště, jsou využívány jako záminky pro iracionální jednání či momentální poklesky. Africké slunce a dusná atmosféra čeří emoce a jinak latentní vášně. Neschopnost plně se adaptovat na dané prostředí je zdrojem kolizí identity, neboť žádná z postav není zcela schopna dostatečného odstupu od afrického prostředí za současného zachování své evropské kulturní totožnosti, a ani zde není nikoho, kdo by dokázal odhodit svou rodnou identitu a plně se přizpůsobit momentálním podmínkám.

Afrika má ovšem vliv i na méně zřejmé jevy mezi evropskými kolonisty. Nejenom emoce trpí pod vlivem podnebí, ale také racionální smýšlení, zdravý rozum, svědomí, činy, jazyk. Všechny tyto projevy se všeobecně manifestují na postojích postav k těm nejobyčejnějším životním otázkám. Například pojem domova je nepřírozeně zvrácený,

neboť je zde mimo jiné metaforicky využíván k vyjádření nefunkčního manželství hlavního hrdiny, který se cítí více doma v kanceláři než ve svém domě, což je jen jeden příklad nenormálních postojů reálně ovlivněných prostředím. Tragédie soužití Louisy a Henryho Scobieho odráží jejich vlastní vnitřní krize, pocházející z individuálních konfliktů s vyrovnáváním se s cizím prostředím. Jejich osud je takto přímo formován Afrikou, neboť jsou oba příliš slabí na to, aby se dokázali vzepřít vlivům prostředí.

Občasný vstup důvěrně známých předmětů či pojmů do života postav působí většinou uklidňujícím dojmem na jejich rozčeřená nitra, jako například události spojené s časopisem *Downhamian*. Na druhou stranu je ale patrné, že tyto záchvěvy jsou přechodné a obvykle naberou dostatek africké příchuti, která tyto jinak příjemné momenty zcela zvrátí. To se týká i hořkosladkého začátku knihy viděného z balkónu Hotelu Bedford či Scobieho zoufalý útěk k náboženství, které mu není útechou v krizi, ale spíše únikem od reality a odpovědnosti, kam si odskočí před svou vlastní smrtí.

I přes vše prostupující vliv, kterým Afrika nasýtila celý román, se zde přeci jen vyskytuje neutrální prostor, který nenáleží žádnému místu na zemi natrvalo: lodě, které připlouvají, aby brzy zase odpluly. Na palubě těchto lodí dochází k magické transformaci postav. Přiváží s sebou vždy kus ostatního světa, aby nabraly něco Afriky a popovezly to opět dál. Postoje lidí a povšechná perspektiva se změní vstupem na palubu, aniž by došlo k onomu typickému zvrácení hodnot, jaké je patrné na africké půdě. Plavidla vždy brzy odplují, aniž nasají příliš místní povahy, takže se zachovávají svou symbolickou neutralitu.

Celý román se tematicky sbíhá v jednom bodě, v postavě kontroverzního majora Scobieho. Nejde ovšem o jeho jednotlivé neřesti jako spíše o souhrn všech těchto vlastností, především pocitu slitování a zodpovědnosti za všechny, které z něj činí právě onen pomyslný styčný bod. Obecně se dá říci, že se v postavě Scobieho odráží nehostinnost a rozporuplnost lokace, neboť je to jeho mentální a emoční labilita v protikladu k jeho profesionální tváři policejního důstojníka, které jsou promítány jako odraz drsných podmínek, byť na povrchu částečně uzpůsobených pro pobyt Evropanů, tedy poskytující alespoň nějaké civilizované společenské struktury. Co se týče povrchní uhlazenosti a morální bezúhonnosti Scobieho i ostatních postav, lze říci, že obojí je pouze zdánlivé, neboť rozkvětu lidských neřestí nestojí na tomto nehostinném místě nic v cestě, pokud je ovšem zachován vnější dojem působící společensky přijatelně. Afrika je vylíčena jako divočina bez jakýchkoli civilizovaných či jiných funkčních sociálních struktur, což je v přímém protikladu k tradičnímu společenskému uspořádání západního

světa.

Vzestup a pád majora Scobieho je tedy zasazen do prostředí, jehož silný vliv nelze snadno překonat. Ostrý rozpor mezi původně civilizovanými Evropany a nehostinností klimatických a společenských podmínek v Africe, kde se děj Greenova románu odehrává, činí z tohoto místa pro Evropany sloužící zde během války peklo na zemi. Dochází k čeření emocí, ukvapeným závěrům a nemoudrým činům. Afrika, dostatečně vzdálená západní společnosti, zde funguje jako jeviště lidských neřestí, na jejichž eliminaci se nedbá. Proto vzkvétají i mezi Evropany zde usazenými, neboť jim známé jinde fungující společenské vzorce chování jsou nahrazeny chaosem a impulzivním jednáním, které jsou živnou půdou právě pro ony latentní nemorální sklony a patologické chování.

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