SACRED AND REGENERATIVE SPACE IN THE MODERN NOVEL

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ABSTRACT

Leanne R. Wieland

SACRED AND REGENERATIVE SPACE
IN THE MODERN NOVEL

Thesis under the direction of Scott Klein, Ph.D., Professor of English

The works of E.M. Forster, Virginia Woolf, and Evelyn Waugh focus on domestic spaces as sacred and regenerative loci where characters retreat to make sense of the political, social, and moral upheaval surrounding them. I argue that Forster employs the space of the house as a womb like enclosure that protects its inhabitants from industrialization and urban flux. Woolf, on the other hand, portrays houses as a distinctly female space where women can escape gender confines and come to terms with their individual identity. Finally, Evelyn Waugh employs the home as a space for spiritual reflection and regeneration. Despite their differences, however, all of these authors represent houses as the one space that is free from the devastating effects of two World Wars. Domestic spaces allow Forster’s, Woolf’s, and Waugh’s characters to find their identity in the midst of global upheaval.
INTRODUCTION

ARCHITECTONIC CONSIDERATIONS IN THE MODERN NOVEL

The goal of this thesis, in the broadest of strokes, will be to examine the ways in which architectonics infiltrate the language of modern narratives. Of course, the definition of architectonics in this study is limited. For my purposes, architectonics first and foremost refers to the unifying structural design of the narrative. As the Victorian Era gave way to the aches of Modernism, the style and focus of works of literature changed. Novels, rather than being dominated by the language of plot and character (hallmarks of Victorian realism) became the medium for exploring the impact of space and place on human consciousness. Instead of anchoring narratives in reference to time and historicity, modernist writers “emphasize[e] the particularity of places and of people’s relations to them” (Kort, 10). In so doing, space and place become the medium through which the “language of action and events, of time and history” are orchestrated (10). More simply put, in texts where place and space are the dominant language of the narrative, they become the elements which determine and organize all other aspects of the novel.

This is not to say that all modernist writers chose spatial language as the dominant language of the text; this thesis does not argue that place and space suddenly become the central focus of all literature. However, the modern period does show writers creating narratives that are not necessarily rooted in the traditional languages of plot and temporality. Henry James, reflecting on the nature of modern literature, suggests that “the house of fiction has...not one window, but a million—a number of possible
windows...every one of which has been pierced, or is still pierceable...by the need of the individual vision and by the pressure of the individual will” (James, 8). It is most appropriate and, considering the topic of this thesis, ironic that James chooses a house as the image best suited for describing the construction of a novel. Furthermore, in the following three chapters, the narratives that are discussed all have the same unifying structural design (or architectonics): the space of houses. However, we must bear in mind that architectonics does not only refer to the way in which something is designed. In its simplest definition, architectonics also means the artistic study of architecture. Although I will devote space within each chapter to discussing the architectonics of the novel itself (the way the author organizes and structures the narrative), the majority of the thesis will be close reading and textual analysis of the ways in which each author is using the architectural space of the home for his or her own purposes.

EM Forster’s *Howards End*, Evelyn Waugh’s *A Handful of Dust* and *Brideshead Revisited*, and Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs. Dalloway* are all organized around the domestic spaces the characters inhabit. Although Forster, Waugh, and Woolf are similar since they each choose to center their works around the particular locus of the home, they also define these spaces in terms of their architectural components. Again, this is an important distinction; it is the structure of the home that illuminates meaning. The objects and even the inhabitants enclosed within the architecture do provide a kind of evidentiary support of the author’s messages, but they are subservient/complementary to the literal framework of the building.

Over the course of the next three chapters, I hope to show how each of these authors treats the architectural space of the home as a sacred space that promotes mental,
emotional, and spiritual regeneration. Within the context of this paper, “sacred” does not necessarily carry religious or spiritual implications. Rather, my definition of sacred follows on the heels of theorists such as Gaston Bachelard who define home as a space which is safe “for the analysis of the human soul” (Bachelard, xxxvii). In other words, a space can be defined as sacred because it allows for processes like personal regeneration to take place.

In his work, *The Poetics of Space*, Bachelard argues for the transcendent and transformative power of the home, building upon the idea that “the ancient function of the architect or artist was to express, in material form, insights into a higher spiritual reality, thus making those insights available to others” (Bangs, 2). According to Bachelard, the house is “a privileged entity for a phenomenological study of the intimate values of inside space” (Bachelard, 3). More specifically, he focuses in on those spaces which exist in literature or the imagination. These imagined spaces are so detailed with “poetic shadings” that they can better be called “eulogized spaces”(xxxv). Indeed, this is exactly what Forster, Waugh, and Woolf do; they create houses that, although they are representations of space, attempt to recreate the “intimate values” that we associate with real homes (3). The investigation of these spatial images (a process Bachelard terms “topophilia”) reveals that imagined spaces have the same “protective” values as the structures they imitate (xxxv). Thus, the “house image would appear to have become a topography of our intimate being;” that is to say, house images belie an internal need for a space which is simultaneously protective and “felicitous” (xxxvi; xxxv). On these grounds, we can assert that the home is a “sacred space,” since it ministers to and is an “analysis of the human soul” (xxxvii).
Ultimately, I am using the term “sacred space” to communicate the capacity of the home to become a refuge from the literal and figurative devastation of the First and Second World Wars. The womb-like space of the home provides the characters of the novels with a place to regress from physical action and engagement with the world and turn inward. Thus, the effect of the home is to give the characters a regenerative locus in which they can work out and rebuild from their own political, social, and/or religious devastations brought about by the collapse of Europe. As Hannah Arendt asserts: “the four walls of one’s private property offer the only reliable hiding place from the common public world” (Rosner, 5). However, the regenerative space of the home is not in and of itself an answer to the problems facing the characters in these novels. Rather, it is a threshold—a liminal space. Homes “mark a boundary, a transition from something controllable and safe to something larger...attractive but potentially dangerous” (deLange, xv). Therefore, domestic spaces only provide the medium through which change can happen. The characters in Forster, Waugh, and Woolf all encounter sacred, domestic spaces and feel the impressions of these places on their conscious, yet they are all effected in drastically different ways.

It would perhaps be beneficial to qualify here the ways in which the terms “space” and “place” are being used. In this thesis, the term place carries with it the meanings imbued, again, by Gaston Bachelard: “place is affiliated with the question of when and how, an empirical person.. is situated in a given place” (deLange, xiv). Space, on the other hand, is an entity that is not dependent upon time or recognition for its existence; as Immanuel Kant observes, “one can never represent that there is no space, although one can very well think that there are no objects to be encountered in it” (xiv). According to
these definitions, it can be said that in the following pages I will be dealing primarily with place since the majority of my analysis will be devoted to examining the architectural structures that literary characters inhabit. However, for the sake of greater and more general accuracy, I want to suggest that these domestic places are really regenerative spaces since they are not dependent upon the conditions of temporality and/or character development within the novel.

To explain, Gerard Genette defines the narrative as “the representation of an event or sequence of events” (Kort, 11). However, this definition of narrative is incomplete. The accompanying and essential component of narrative is description, and it exists independent of the temporal. In other words, “because [description] lingers on objects, [it] seems to suspend the course of time; [it] forms a sort of cyst that is very easy to recognize and to locate” (12). Therefore, when talking about place in a novel, we are essentially pointing to an image that is made out of description and set amidst prescribed narrative rules of plot, action, and sequence of events. However, these descriptive places are also “cysts”-they are images effective in and of themselves. For example, in *Howards End* the confining and depressing nature of London’s tenement sprawl is a spatial image which communicates a truth independent of Leonard Bast’s inhabitance of it. Likewise, Howards End, Brideshead, and the Dalloway home are regenerative spaces since they both exist and impact the reader independent of temporal conditions of the narrative. However, character, plot, and other languages of narrative facilitate the spatial language of the text, and it is at these moments that space becomes place. Indeed, since “place is an element” or a narrowing of the definition “of space,” it should be assumed
that any use of the word space in this thesis potentially carries with it the additional meaning of place (deLange, xiii).

Ultimately, by studying the regenerative capacity of these domestic spaces, a panoramic of the social, religious, and political climate between the First and Second World Wars emerges. As the characters in *Howards End*, *A Handful of Dust*, *Brideshead Revisited*, and *Mrs. Dalloway* retreat to the relative safety of the novels’ houses, the reader is given a wide and varying sampling of the mental, emotional, and spiritual obstacles that plagued Britain between the two World Wars. Indeed, critics have begun looking back to representations of private life in Modern literature in an attempt to better understand how Western Europe especially Great Britain dealt with the redefinition of empire, nation, and home during the first half of the Twentieth century. In his seminal work *The Great War and Modern Memory*, Paul Fussell theorizes that “there seems to be one dominating form of modern understanding...and it originates largely in the application of mind and memory to the events of the Great War” (Fussell, 35). The immense loss of life as well as the ruined urban and pastoral landscapes across Europe was accompanied by a collective cynicism; individuals treated ideologies of faith, politics, and social mores with skepticism and a critical eye. Accordingly, writers were attempting to make sense of the destruction of the tangible and intangible aspects of modern existence.

The rapid, seemingly chaotic changes to Britain “began to be read as taking a toll on the well-being of English life, including its moral and spiritual well being” (Kort, 4). This “growing sense of foreboding” manifested itself in a cultural belief that “society was becoming complex, destabilized, and dislocated” (Kort, 4). However, the connection
between the problem of British unrest and space may not seem readily apparent. Nevertheless, place is necessarily “linked to identity, and not only to identity-formation but also, under given circumstances, to a sense of threatened identity” (deLange, xiii). Thus, if places are destroyed, so is individual and collective identity. Accordingly, works of literature shifted to accommodate authors’ sensibilities as to the effects of this destabilization in public and private life; Forster, Waugh, and Woolf sought to ameliorate these individual and collective anxieties through the regenerative locus of the home.

In her book *Modernism and the Architecture of Private Life*, Victoria Rosner points out that Forster, Waugh, and Woolf had predisposed affinities for examining private spaces. Both Forster and Woolf dabbled in the genre of the “household memoir” (Rosner, 60-62). For Woolf, the household memoir provided a literary space to examine the “invisible presences” or “the social forces that impinge on the subject” (62). Paying attention to “architectural details and domestic routines” revealed “the inner life of thoughts and emotions, and the intimate details of embodiment” (62).

However, it is important to understand that Woolf and other modernist writers were not only concerned with constructing memories of spaces. As Rosner points out: “many of the writers who now make up the canon of British literary modernism were connected with groups of artists and designers who were seeking to re-imagine the British home” (Rosner, 10; italics mine). Virginia Woolf took an eager interest in the new forms of architecture that were emerging in Britain; for her, “British design reform constituted a spatial counterpart to human reforms” (9). It is unsurprising, therefore, that she commissioned the famous architect Roger Fry to decorate her own domestic space. Evelyn Waugh, in his younger years, gained a certain amount of notoriety writing
architectural journalism. His knowledge of the scientific and artistic construction of buildings comes to the forefront in *Brideshead Revisited*; the novel’s protagonist makes his living as an “architectural painter” drawing pictures of both old and newly embellished country houses (Waugh, *Brideshead Revisited*, 227). Like Charles Ryder, Waugh understood the capacity of domestic space to shape and reflect individual, and by extension, national identity. Furthermore, the house was seen by Forster, Waugh and Woolf as a retreat- a locus where individuals could come to terms with the mental, emotional, and spiritual turmoil induced by an unstable world. And yet, Forster, Waugh and Woolf are all using the epiphanic revelations precipitated by the space of the home for contrasting purposes.

Forster uses the titular home in his novel *Howards End* to champion the ability of domestic spaces to forge relationships between individuals of different social, economic, and moral standing. The phrase “only connect” summarizes Forster’s belief that interpersonal relationships can provide social and emotional stability in a world of chaos and flux. And although his aims are much less dogmatic and political than those of Waugh and Woolf, Forster acts as a kind of middle ground between the left and right poles of these two authors. Like Waugh, he views urbanization as a threat to spiritual and personal growth, and yet he is similar to Woolf in that he advocates political reforms and social and gender equality.

In the first chapter, I show how Forster employs architecture in order to promote spiritual growth and meaningful relationships that cross social boundaries. Furthermore, I argue that the pastoral setting in *Howard’s End* symbolizes the regenerative nature of architecture itself. Throughout the text, Forster champions the natural world by placing
Howards End in close proximity with the earth. Because the manor is fashioned out of the raw materials and landscape which surround it, the house promotes the cyclical, regenerative nature of the earth. By extension, architecture is also regenerative since it is a product of the natural world that protects and promotes human life.

The second chapter will be devoted to Virginia Woolf and her treatment of domestic spaces which is markedly different from Forster. Unlike her predecessor, Woolf rejoiced in urbanization and the space of cities, especially London. In their recent work *Locating Woolf: The Politics of Space and Place*, Anna Snaith and Michael Whitworth argue that the “unknowability” of London that began to emerge at the beginning of the twentieth century was really the result of a “diversity of social classes” that accordingly had a “diversity of ways of knowing [the city]” (Snaith, 17). In London, the identity of place and space becomes relative and can therefore be defined differently according to perspective. Thus, the unknowability of London provides Clarissa Dalloway with the opportunity to re-define the space of her home on her own terms.

Throughout *Mrs. Dalloway*, Clarissa’s works to make her urban home a place of freedom rather than confinement. Woolf turns the traditional images of domestic spaces on their head; rather than homes serving as prisons for female inhabitants, they possess the potential to be places where women can escape the confines of gender politics. As Rosner suggests, Woolf saw that “modernist spatial poetics” could be “attuned to architectural dynamics of privacy and exposure, spatial hierarchies demarcating class, the locations and routines surrounding the care of the body and the gendering of space” (Rosner, 2).
Thus, the second chapter arrives at the conclusion that Woolf uses architecture to reveal and rectify problems of social injustice and gender inequality. Indeed, Woolf and her circle of Bloomsbury intimates believed that individual, cultural, and artistic revolution could be born out of the ideological voids the Wars created. Although the regenerative effects of domestic spaces are different from those in Forster or Waugh, Woolf nevertheless imbues the home with the sacred task of transforming and perfecting political and social relations. Through *Mrs. Dalloway*, Woolf moves into a new understanding of the potential of space to create gender equality that maintains the difference and unknowability of each sex.

In contrast to Woolf, Evelyn Waugh employs the home as a place for fervent spiritual revelation and regeneration. He creates sacred spaces whose structures promote religious, specifically Catholic, renewal. In the final chapter of the thesis, I argue that Evelyn Waugh views the end of Forster’s novel as apocalyptic; he fears that industrialization and the war will indeed encroach upon and destabilize not only the home, but the political, social, and most dramatically and importantly, the religious structures of Britain. The third chapter will deal with two of Waugh’s most domestically centered novels *A Handful of Dust* and *Brideshead Revisited*. Both of these works show the extent to which Waugh believes in and is deeply troubled by the disintegration of traditional religion in Britain. Thus, his protagonists (although not as fervently or directly) are also troubled by the disappearance of meaning and spiritual significance. However, the houses in *A Handful of Dust* and *Brideshead Revisited* offer spaces for grappling and coming to terms with both doubt and faith. Thus, Waugh treats the space of the home as a sacred space in the truest sense of the word.
Furthermore, Waugh follows the thinking of architectural theorist John Ruskin insisting that cultures can look to architecture as a kind of mirror of the morals of society. Indeed, the characters within the world of Waugh often inhabit spaces which were once literally sacred spaces themselves. For example, in *A Handful of Dust, Brideshead Revisited*, and to a lesser extent *Decline and Fall*, major and minor characters live in houses made from quarried abbeys and churches. Waugh is essentially taking buildings which were once actual sanctuaries, tearing them down, and re-appropriating them for his own spiritual aims.

Ultimately, Forster, Woolf, and Waugh all portray houses as sacred spaces, and yet each author argues that they are used for different regenerative purposes. While Forster believes domestic spaces have the capacity to bring together individuals from different social spheres, Waugh imbues architecture with spiritual properties that promote reconciliation with religion and God. Woolf uses the home as a space for feminine independence and creativity. Ultimately, houses come to the forefront of modernist texts because they are protective spaces in which individuals can retreat, turn inward, and confront the devastation that plagued Europe at the beginning of the Twentieth century.
CHAPTER ONE

URBAN FLUX AND REGENERATIVE SPACE IN *HOWARDS END*

In the introduction, I posited that novels are architectural creations since they have a unifying structural design, and elements such as plot and character are deliberately crafted to highlight other aspects of the text. Thus, chapter one will begin with an examination of the architectonics of Forster’s novel, *Howards End*. I argue that the language of the plot is paradoxically unstable which creates a sense of narrative tension and uncertainty. Instead of relying on plot, Forster stabilizes his text through his representations of space and place, particularly Howards End. Thus, spatial language becomes the dominant language of the narrative and the house is the image around which problems of plot, character development, and character relationships resolve. Furthermore, the architectural features of Howards End reveal that domestic spaces have the capacity to heal the spiritual and emotional rifts that result from urbanization and social tensions.

For this reason, *Howards End* has become associated with the aphorism “Only connect.” This phrase informs the plot of the novel and reveals Forster’s belief in the human capacity to move outside of oneself and connect with others on a physical and spiritual level. Indeed, the characters in *Howards End* are cut from dramatically different social and moral fabric, and yet they are drawn to one another by forces that seem to be beyond their control. Over and over again, chance throws the Schlegels, Wilcoxes, and Leonard Bast together. For example, the Schlegel sisters meet Mr. and Mrs. Wilcox while on holiday during a return boat ride from the ruins of the Cathedral at Speyer. The
Schlegels then meet Leonard Bast in a similarly coincidental manner when Helen accidentally takes Leonard’s umbrella, instead of her own, from the symphony in Queen’s Hall. The final link in the chain that connects the three families together is a plot device that teeters on the edge of Deus ex Machina: Margaret Schlegel discovers, only days before her marriage to him, that Mr. Wilcox is guilty of an extra-marital affair with Leonard’s lover, Jacky.

*Howards End* is categorized as a modernist novel and yet the convergent plot lines accord more with Victorian conventions of novelistic construction; the novel appears to be situated somewhere between the realism of Hardy and the pre-determinism of Dickens. And yet, *Howards End* is a distinctly modern work. Although the characters are manipulated to the extent that the plot appears contrived, the narrative feels as if it is outside of the author’s control as well.

Unlike in Dickens and Hardy, the orchestrative authorial hand disappears in *Howards End*. Indeed, the very first words of the text assure the reader that he or she is entering a world in which the movements of the characters are outside the narrator’s control as much as they are outside the control of the characters themselves. The narrator’s tone is one of resignation when he suggests that, in an attempt to convey the story of the Schlegels, “one may as well begin with Helen’s letter to her sister” (Forster, *Howards End*, 1). It does not matter the order or manner that the story is told in because “It isn’t going to be what we expected” (1). Although the word “we” here refers to Helen and her sister Margaret while “it” is in reference to the architectural stylings of the Wilcox manor, the meaning of “we” also extends to the reader and the narrator. Since any expectations held by the Wilcoxes, the Basts, or the Schlegels are sure to be upset,
the reader is likewise certain to remain in the dark. Furthermore, the narrator himself
cannot locate or predict the direction of the narrative; authorial omnipotence is undercut
at the outset of the novel. As narrative authority diminishes from the text, narrative chaos
and flux emerge.

Indeed, the sense that the characters are manipulated by forces outside their and
the author’s control is reinforced throughout the novel. Although it is never overtly
stated, the legitimacy of fate is questioned. Neither the Schlegels, the Wilcoxes, nor the
Basts pretend towards religion in the traditional sense, and yet every character is
compelled to confess that their movements are subject to some extraordinary force. For
example, after the dissolution of Helen and Paul’s engagement, the Wilcox family takes a
flat in a recently constructed building across from the Schlegel home. Helen, looking out
of the window, remarks to her aunt: “it’s funny that we just don’t lose sight of them”
(Forster, 165). On a literal and figurative level, the paths of the two families are fated to
intersect. Like Helen, Margaret comes to the realization that her life is “hovering as
usual between...Love and Truth” (241). Love and Truth, apart from being abstractions,
operate outside the realm of human control. Furthermore, “their warfare seems
eternal...(and yet) the whole visible world rests on it” (241). However, if the powers that
control the fates of human beings are embroiled in a war without end, the effect is chaos
on earth. Therefore, it only makes sense for the language of the narrative to be in a
constant state of flux. Instability is a prominent theme in Howards End; the characters
cross economic, emotional, and even moral boundaries. And yet, this instability creates
the catalyst for the characters to connect with one another.
Throughout the novel, the characters are anxiously attempting to make meaningful connections with one another in the midst of a chaotic and constantly changing urban landscape. Forster repeatedly portrays London as a space that thwarts human connections and spiritual growth. The actions of and relationships between the characters are determined, not by elements of the plot, but by places. Thus, the narrative technique which figures most prominently in the novel is not plot but space. In his recent work *Place and Space in Modern Fiction*, Wesley Kort notes that “a sharp rise in prominence of the language of space over the other languages of narrative occurs in modernist writing” (Kort, 18). Unlike novels of the Romantic period in which “places...are shaped to support the needs and interests of characters,” modernist works like *Howards End* show how “the environment exerts force on the characters and complicates their relationships” (18).

Indeed, in Forster’s novel, the language of plot is no longer sufficient for explaining characters or their actions. Instead, the Schlegels, Wilcoxes, and Basts are products of their environment; in the midst of chaos, they can only look to and find meaning in their surroundings. Although, they are “all affected by aspects of their locations that they neither control nor understand,” the characters find significance in the particular locus of the home, since it is the space that acts as a conduit for reconciliation with the instability that exists in human relationships (Kort, 66). Thus, “[h]ouses and other intimate spaces are central to *Howards End*” since they act as “living symbols of an emotional and spiritual security” (66).

*Howards End* prompts Margaret’s meditations on and belief in the potential for interconnectedness that exists between individuals. When she visits the Wilcox manor
for the first time, she is overjoyed by the beauty of the landscape and the house itself. Furthermore, she cannot understand why the Wilcoxes do not make the house their permanent residence. For Margaret, the house is more than bricks and mortar. She wonders at “how petty the names...drawing-room, dining-room, and hall...sounded” (Forster, 210). The rooms are more than that; they are places “where children could play and friends shelter from the rain” (210). Although she is cloistered within the confines of the house walls, she feels a freedom that things like the motorcar, London, and her urban home at Wickham place “had tried to rob from her” (210, 213). When she is forced to return to the city, she escapes the “sense of flux” inspired by the “phantom bigness of London” by remembering the “sense of space, which is the basis of all earthly beauty” that exists at Howards End.

    London is diametrically opposed to Howards End. The city is as a place of flux where spatial relationships are constantly changing, thus upsetting the lives of its inhabitants. For example, the privacy of the Schlegel sister’s home at Wickham Place is upset by the construction of Wickham Mansions. These luxury flats are described by Forster as “mutations” rising out of the earth to “cut off the sun” (58). The shifting shape of London appears to be a “foretaste of...[a] nomadic civilization which is altering human nature so profoundly” and throwing “upon personal relations a stress greater than they have ever known before” (272). This “stress” on relationships is emphasized by the discomfort both Helen and Margaret feel upon the realization that the construction of Wickham Mansions has once more thrown them into an uncomfortably close physical proximity with the Wilcoxes.
The plot tensions created by this shift in space are obvious: Margaret and Mrs. Wilcox fear the reuniting of Helen and Paul, and Helen herself ponders the inability to “lose sight” of the family. Less noticeable, however, are the metaphysical tensions created by the Mansions. A quiet battle rages there and elsewhere in the novel: the war between the natural world and urbanization.

Throughout the novel, London is consistently portrayed as a fickle amalgamation of structures at war with the earth. For example, when Leonard Bast returns home from the symphony, he is described “glanc[ing] suspiciously to right and left, like a rabbit that is going to bolt into its hole” (48). The naturalistic imagery of a rabbit seeking its burrow is at odds with the urban surroundings. Instead of inhabiting a pastoral space, Leonard lives in “a block of flats, constructed with extreme cheapness” (48). The architecture of the tenement housing is unsettling since it is concerned with neither form nor beauty but is built to function only in a temporary capacity. And although surrounding houses are being “demolished to accommodate another pair” of the concrete dens Leonard and his fellow urban rabbits inhabit, in “a few years... all the flats...might be pulled down, and new buildings...might arise where they had fallen” (49).

Unlike Howards End, neither the architecture nor landscape of the tenement sprawl can protect Bast’s home, and therefore, he is forced to live in a space that is unstable. Considering this instability, the simile that Bast is “like a rabbit that is going to bolt into its hole” is not entirely discordant. His suspicion and anxiety as he approaches his flat makes perfect sense since his home is constantly being threatened by forces outside of his control. Unlike his animal counterpart, Leonard Bast is neither maker nor master of his home; he is powerless to create or protect the space around him.
Bast’s flat is less like a home and more like a threshold; it is a liminal space subject to the chaos and fluctuations of London. Furthermore, its architectural components are devoid of beauty. Living in a home which is neither stable nor beautiful, Bast attempts to escape to a world dictated by spaces which are aesthetically and even morally transcendent by reading Ruskin’s *Stones of Venice*. For Ruskin, it was imperative that “design...embody a social mission and contain social value” (Rosner, 25). This value is socialist in its moral and political bent; buildings, especially homes, should be constructed in such a way so that “all parts of society could live surrounded by beautiful objects” (25). And yet, Bast’s reading is a fruitless endeavor since reading Ruskin does not provide him a practical means of changing or escaping his bleak surroundings. The instability of his physical location is a fixed truth; he will always be subjected to private spaces that are in a continual state of poverty and flux.

However, the narrator is careful to point out that the instability experienced by Bast is pervasive; it does not discriminate between the wealthy and the poor.¹ He asserts that “London was but a foretaste of this nomadic civilization which is altering human nature so profoundly.” Furthermore, the narrator prophesies that “under cosmopolitanism...we shall receive no help from the earth” (Forster, 272-3). London is only an example of the widespread, cultural move to replace the natural world with the artificial. Even the seemingly impenetrable peace of Howards End is threatened by

¹ Wesley Kort, in his chapter on Forster, highlights the issues of class and social tensions in *Howards End*. More particularly, he argues that (for the poor) physical locations (like Bast’s flat) are constraining spaces that prevent social mobility. Thus, homes have the capacity to connect people on a personal, but not on a social, level. For the sake of brevity, this essay will not attempt to fully discuss the effects of sacred spaces on class relationships. However, I would like to affirm that the main force of Kort’s argument is valid and issues of class are true and prominent themes in Forster’s work. However, I take issue with Kort’s failure to acknowledge that *Howards End* provides remediation for social (class) as well as personal relationships. After all, Bast’s own son will move outside of the physical and social confines of poverty, living within the walls of the Wilcox manner.
encroaching industrialization. For example, Mrs. Wilcox laments to Margaret that her husband and children tore out a horse paddock to make room for a new garage (74). After Mrs. Wilcox’s death, her son reflects on the “trouble they had had to get [the] garage” and that his mother had fought to preserve every bit of the landscape she could (97). The garage is a foreign structure at odds with the historic and pastoral setting of the manor. Furthermore, it is a space that separates Mrs. Wilcox from her family. It is “in the other rooms...and the garden, that they felt her loss;” in the garage however, Charles feels disconnected from the memory of his mother (96).

Indeed, Howards End is not fully capable of protecting its inhabitants from the fluctuations of human emotions and relationships. Although Helen and Paul meet, are attracted to one another, and even become engaged within its walls, the house is also the space in which they break off their connection. Most importantly, the house is subject to the passage of time including physical decay and death. It is on the very threshold of Howards End that Leonard Bast dies of heart failure only moments before his body is brutalized by Charles.

Ironically, death is the key to understanding the relationships between flux and sacred space in Howards End. Death is simultaneously the greatest chaos and the greatest peace; it is the single state in which the condition of human life is the most unstable and yet the most fixed. This dichotomy was one which the early modernists grappled with, especially as death began to manifest itself on a global scale with the encroaching World War. Indeed, after 1914, writers, like the rest of Europe, were faced with incredible destruction. Physical, mental, emotional, and even spiritual death were inescapable. The world was rapidly mutating and shifting, with the bent of the change
towards extinction. Although Forster wrote *Howards End* four years before the start of the First World War, he was nevertheless aware of the European tensions caused by the arms race, ethnic rivalries, and entangled alliances. Furthermore, like his contemporaries, Forster was attempting to make sense of rapid industrialization and the subjugation of natural space that accompanied the years immediately preceding the war. The future was as unstable as the present, and writers like Forster were questioning how Britain was to progress and move forward in the face of chaos. The answer lay in the idea of regeneration.

Regeneration is the creation of new matter, but the genesis of this new material is dependent on the death of another compound. It is literally the growth of something new from the decay of that which has died. This process of tearing something down to build something new in its place made sense to the modernists confronted with the conflict between the natural and the artificial world. The image of a wilting flower dropping its seeds to give rise to new flowers is appropriate for explaining the concept of regeneration. For Forster, however, sentimental, pastoral representations of the world disappeared with the Romantics. Britain at the turn of the century was a post-naturalistic world, and it could not be treated otherwise. However, the rhythms and laws of the natural world could be transposed onto a modern, material landscape through the medium of architecture.

Architecture is the process of taking raw materials from the earth and using them to plan and build a structure that protects its inhabitant from the destructive elements of the natural world. Although it acts against nature, architecture is also dependent upon nature to the point that it is literally formed from the earth. Houses, therefore, can be
seen as a link between the natural and the artificial worlds; they take elements from the earth and re-appropriate them for the sacred purpose of protecting their inhabitants from the aspects of the natural world that would injure and harm. Of course, it is necessary to address the fact that, in order for a house to be built, the land must be torn down to create the building blocks of the structure. And yet, death and destruction are in and of themselves natural processes; they are essential for regeneration.

Ultimately, architecture is a process which reflects the cyclical nature of the earth. Houses are both natural and artificial, thus providing modernist thinkers with a visible representation that a symbiotic relationship can exist between urban and pastoral spaces. Furthermore, the cyclical pattern of death giving rise to new life helped modernists such as Forster make sense of flux; although they could do nothing to stymie urbanization or even warfare, the hope remained that even out of such devastation, the world could be rebuilt.

Despite narrative language that suggests otherwise, Forster’s novel clings to the hope for a better world born out of chaos. For example, the end of the novel is punctuated with apocalyptic undertones. Margaret, looking across the meadow towards the “red rust” of suburban London, fears that life will be “melted down, all over the world” and that “logically they [have] no right to be alive” (Forster, 355). However, her anxiety disappears when she remembers that the “craze for motion” is only a moment in history and that “it may be followed by a civilization that…will rest on the earth” (355). Since Howards End has remained rooted in the pastoral while simultaneously adjusting to the rhythms and cycles of nature (Mrs. Wilcox’s death, the birth of Helen and Bast’s
Helen is the central figure of the novel and her thoughts and actions are crucial to the themes of the book. Her decision to leave the safety of Howards End and enter the harsh realities of London is a turning point in the story. This moment is not only a physical transition but also a metaphorical one, reflecting the broader themes of human existence and the cyclical nature of life.

Howards End is a physical and metaphysical structure which promotes the continuation of the earth and human existence. Rather than foreshadowing a dark future, the image of the harvested hayfields at Howards End is a promise of the earth’s sacrifice and regeneration. As Helen rushes away from the protective space of the home and into the fields, she is effectively running “into the gloom” of London. Yet, she is able to report with “shouts of infectious joy” that the “field’s cut” and she has “seen to the very end, and it’ll be such a crop of hay as never!” (359). Although this may at first appear to be another image of the apocalypse, the relationship between Howards End and the earth usurps such a reading; the land has been effectively broken down and refashioned to create a womb like space for human habitation and the continuation of life.

Furthermore, the physical structure of Howards End symbolizes the cyclical, regenerative nature of the earth while it also serves as a sacred space, protecting its inhabitants from the instability of human relationships. The best example of the ways in which Howards End represents the binding of individuals to one another can be seen, again, in the hayfields which surround the estate. The house, which used to be a farm, is constructed out of red brick. The connection between the natural surroundings of Howards End and its architecture are important. In ancient times, mud bricks were actually bound together by hay and straw. Therefore, in the architectonics of Howards End there exists a literal binding of the natural with the human. Furthermore, the cutting of the field symbolizes that Howards End is fashioning for itself a new matriarch to bind its inhabitants to one another.
At the outset of the novel Mrs. Wilcox is the character most closely linked to Howards End; she is represented as both the earth mother and gate keeper of the estate. She is depicted wandering the grounds of the estate constantly carrying a stalk of hay. Helen describes Mrs. Wilcox as being in love with the garden and the meadows of Howards End. She recounts the matron trailing “over the sopping grass [and returning] with her hands full of hay” which she constantly smells. Mrs. Wilcox’s mystical connection to the earth sets her apart from the rest of her family, who Helen reports are always sneezing and coughing from hay fever. Mr. Wilcox, Evie, and Charles do not belong to the peace of the pastoral, but rather the industry and advancement of London. Even Mrs. Munt, the daft aunt of Margaret and Helen, senses Mrs. Wilcox’s power as pseudo-earth mother. Upon reaching Howards End, Mrs. Munt finds that Mrs. Wilcox “seemed to belong not to the young people and their motor, but to the house, and to the tree that overshadowed it” (22).

Thus, it makes sense that instead of bequeathing the home to her children at her death, Mrs. Wilcox leaves the house to Margaret Schlegel who recognizes the space for what it truly is: a sanctuary intended to bind its inhabitants to one another and shield them from the instability of a London on the verge of war. Therefore, Mrs. Wilcox designates Margaret as the “spiritual heir” of Howard’s End (10). And yet, this act of transference is one the Wilcoxes cannot understand, since they “could not know that to [their mother the house] had been a spirit” rather than a pile of mortar and bricks. Only Mrs. Munt observes that “one knew that [Mrs. Wilcox] worshipped the past, and that the instinctive wisdom the past can alone bestow had descended upon her….she cared about her ancestors, and let them help her.” (23) And just as Mrs. Wilcox is the guardian of
Howards End’s past, Margaret is designated by her predecessor to become the guardian of its future.

Ultimately, Howards End ceases to be a just a material construction and instead becomes a symbol for the forces which bind individuals to one another; it is the structure in which the fluctuating relationships of the Wilcoxes, Schlegels and Basts all come to rest. However, as the novel progresses, the relationships that Margaret and her sister have worked to solidify seem to crumble: Helen and Paul’s romance is extremely short lived; Mrs. Wilcox dies, leaving Margaret to attempt to reconstruct the Wilcox family by marrying her widowed husband; Leonard Bast and Helen come together in a moment of passion, but the former is soon struck down by heart failure. The final blow comes after Margaret learns of her husband’s infidelities with Jacky. Margaret decides to escape from him and meets Helen at Howards End where she pronounces that “the house is dead” (308). Yet the emotional death both women experience within the house is necessary since it is “[d]eath [that] amplifies the sense of a comprehensive spiritual space” (Kort, 72). Although the father of Helen’s unborn child has died and Margaret’s marriage is suffering its own metaphorical death, these physical and emotional burdens must be experienced for a sense of resurrection and hope to occur. As Kort suggests: “[w]hile death itself destroys, awareness of death, the idea of it, creates a container for personal life” (72). Indeed, Margaret reflects on the brokenness around her and realizes that although “[d]eath destroys a man, the idea of death saves him”(72). Thus, Margaret learns that “their salvation was lying around them” within the walls of the house (Forster, 313). The revelation of the redeeming bond between herself and her sister leads her to exclaim that the house “has wonderful powers…It kills what is dreadful and makes what
is beautiful live” (314). It is the “intimate space” of the house that “allows for continuity to be recognized between the unseen and the seen, death and living, past and future” (Kort, 73).

This continuity binds the individual inhabitants together as well. At the close of the novel, the two Schlegels are joined by Leonard Bast’s son and Mr. Wilcox at Howards End. Helen and Leonard’s infant son represents the promise of regenerative life and the truth that “there would after all be a future, with laughter and the voices of children” (Forster, 313). Furthermore, the connections between the Schlegels, Wilcoxes, and Basts are a promise that fluctuations, even those which give way to death and decay, are necessary, and they ultimately result in physical, emotional, and spiritual regeneration.

Thinking back to the beginning of the novel, the reader is reminded that Forster promised that the text “will not be what we expect” (1). The space in which the Schlegel sisters first meet the Wilcoxes is Speyer Cathedral which is described as a “dead house of worship”. In isolation, this piece of information appears to foreshadow that the relationship between the characters will likewise lack emotional vitality. Indeed, when the Schlegels find themselves inhabiting the “dead” house of Howards End, it seems as if the plot of the novel has progressed according to the architectural imagery of the dissolved Cathedral. However, the regenerative power of Howards End throws the cathedral at Speyer into relief as a positive rather than negative moment of foreshadowing. Just like Margaret could not anticipate the qualities of Howards End, the reader could not have guessed that the disemboweled cathedral points to the ability of sacred spaces to regenerate themselves and those who inhabit them.
CHAPTER TWO

THE RE-APPROPRIATION OF SPACE AND IDENTITY IN VIRGINIA WOOLF’S 

MRS. DALLOWAY

As was briefly outlined in the introduction, this chapter will look at the ways in which Virginia Woolf and her treatment of domestic spaces builds upon and diverges from that of Forster. Victoria Rosner, in her book *Modernism and the Architecture of Private Life* asserts: “If modernism and the domestic have often seemed like antithetical categories, Woolf weaves them together as she locates modernism’s origins squarely in the spaces of private life” (Rosner, 4). While Forster most certainly began to diverge in both subject and style from the Victorian novel, Woolf experimented with the form of the novel to an even greater degree. Like Forster, she believed that modernity (as it relates to art) and the desire to “make it new” was essentially a process of regeneration- of taking things which were established and refashioning them to reflect and coincide with the changes of the early twentieth century. Furthermore, Woolf mirrored her predecessor by treating domestic spaces as the touchstone from which social, political, and artistic change sprung. Although Woolf did not pen *Mrs. Dalloway* until 1925, she revealed in the essay “Mr. Bennet and Mrs. Brown” her belief that “On or about December 1910 human character changed...All human relations have shifted” (3).

Rosner argues that multiple events precipitated this observation including the 1910 publication of *Howards End*. For Woolf, Forster’s work served to highlight her growing awareness of social unrest resulting from class tensions. And yet, in *Mrs. Dalloway* Woolf does not reinvent the disparity between the rich and the poor as
exemplified by Leonard Bast and the Wilcoxes. The Smiths, although not as wealthy as the Dalloways, nevertheless keep “admirable lodgings off the Tottenham Court Road” (Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*, 86). And yet in a way, Woolf does attend to the problems of domestic space that arise from monetary restrictions; throughout her novel, Rezia’s attempts at securing a space of her own are frustrated by economic concerns. Although *Mrs. Dalloway* predates *A Room of One’s Own*, it mirrors the latter text since it draws connections between gender equality and economic viability. Thus, Woolf is keenly aware of the unstable, relational dynamics that exist, not only between the rich and the poor, but between the sexes.

As both the Victorian novel and the Victorian household became a thing of the past, women’s relationship to literature and domestic structures likewise changed. The early twentieth century bore witness to “the renewed clamor for women’s suffrage” (Rosner, 3). Accordingly, society began to rethink the position of women, not only in the political arena, but in the private spaces of the home. In *Howards End*, we can see Forster implicitly attempting to work out some of the tensions in the spaces where the public and private spheres collide. For example, Leonard Bast is destabilized upon entering the home of the Schlegel sisters. Apart from the obvious discomfort brought about by his feelings of economic inadequacy, Bast also crosses a sexual threshold when he enters Wickham Place. After seeing Helen moving about the hall “all her hair flying” and her clothes disheveled, he is compelled to seize his umbrella before he “fled” (Forster, 42, 43). Woolf expands on this idea of a distinctly feminine space, imbuing it with the power to exist, not only as a haven from masculine penetration, but as a locus for self discovery.
Thus, the bent of the following pages will be to analyze how Woolf’s novelistic architectonics and the spatial representation of the homes in *Mrs. Dalloway* reveal domestic loci as places which are regenerative and by extension, sacred. They are sacred, not because they bring individuals together like in Forster, but rather, because they isolate. For Woolf, homes posses the ability to function as personal, individualized spaces that allow for the distinctly feminine creative thought. Ultimately, the aims of regenerative, domestic spaces are to form and protect women’s consciousness and identity by isolating them from masculine influence.

Therefore, in examining *Mrs. Dalloway*, supporting references must be made to *A Room of One’s Own*. Although Mrs. Dalloway is not a struggling artist robbed of her studio space like Shakespeare’s sister in the aforementioned text, she is nevertheless attempting to carve out for herself a niche that will allow for meditative, aesthetic thought. And yet, this process is neither simple nor straightforward. The Dalloway home is alternately a place of freedom and confinement. Clarissa’s position within the home as a partial rather than the sole owner is both empowering and limiting; she is economically capable of retaining her property, but the space is not totally hers to manipulate as she chooses. In *Mrs. Dalloway* as in *A Room of One’s Own* questions of gender and space are bound to economy and ownership. Thus, Rosner is accurate in her assessment that Woolf constructs her “modernist spatial poetics” so that they are “attuned to architectural dynamics of “privacy and exposure, spatial hierarchies demarcating class, the locations and routines surrounding the care of the body and the gendering of space” (Rosner, 2). By comparing and contrasting the urban landscape of London with the Dalloway home, the remembered space of Burton, and the house of Rezia and Septimus Smith, the reader
is given a comprehensive look at how Woolf takes domestic spaces that are confining to women and refashions them into regenerative spaces for their independence.

*Mrs. Dalloway* opens with the spatial juxtaposition of the Dalloway home with the urban landscape of London. Mrs. Dalloway’s desire to “buy the flowers” herself is motivated less by the fact that “Lucy had her work cut out for her” and more by the sense of freedom and possibility that Clarissa feels on the city streets (Woolf, 3). Although she cannot pinpoint that these are the reasons for her emotional response, she nonetheless exclaims: “I love walking in London...Really it’s better than walking in the country” (5).

Woolf undoubtedly shared her protagonist’s passion for urban environments; unlike Forster, she preferred the town to the country. During the World War II bombings on London, Woolf was forced to leave and retreated to Monk’s House, her country home in the Sussex village of Rodmell. From there, she wrote to her friend, composer and suffragette Ethel Smyth: “How odd it is being a countrywoman after all these years of being Cockney! For almost the first time in my life I’ve not a bed in London.... You never shared my passion for that great city. Yet it’s what, in some odd corner of my dreaming mind, represents Chaucer, Shakespeare, Dickens. It's my only patriotism” (Sarker, 1).

As is apparent in Woolf’s letter, the city becomes a synecdoche for Englishness itself.

And yet, a sense of patriotism and pride is only part of what inspires Mrs. Dalloway on her morning walk. The fact that “[t]he War was over” simply makes it possible for Clarissa to enjoy the simultaneous individuality and unity of everyone, herself included (Woolf, 4). She marvels at everyone from “the shopkeepers” to “the fat lady in the cab” feeling as though she is “part of people she had never met; being laid out like a mist between the people she new best” a mist that “spread ever so far, her life,
herself” (9). Like Margaret Schlegel, Mrs. Dalloway longs to connect to those around her, but there is an added dimension of self-sufficiency and isolation. Although Clarissa imagines that a mist connects her to other people, this mist, though it is far reaching, is still ultimately made up of “her life, herself.”

Thus, Clarissa’s walk through London reinforces both her connections to other people and her own sense of isolated individuality. As Snaith and Whitworth point out in the introduction to *Locating Woolf: The Politics of Space and Place*, London became a place with a “diversity of social classes” that had a “diversity of ways of knowing [the city]” (Snaith, 17). The “unknowability” of London reveals that identities of place and space are relative and can therefore be defined differently according to perspective (17). And since place is linked to identity, individual consciousness is also ultimately fluid and unknowable.

Yet, it is this tenuous relationship between the experience of space and isolated consciousness that allows Clarissa Dalloway to make a haven for herself within the confines of her own home. For indeed, the Dalloway home is not always a sacred space for its female inhabitants. Just as London is a “communal urban space,” Clarissa’s private, domestic space is likewise shared with her husband and her daughter. Thus, the qualities of the city and “the question of women’s relationship to the city, particularly its public spaces” extend to the “spatial politics” of the home (Snaith, 2). Like the city, domestic spaces are also problematized by the tensions of “ownership” versus “imposed placelessness” (Kort, 194). As a married woman, Clarissa Dalloway does not have sole ownership of her home. However, ownership is essential since it “counters exclusion not only by the inclusion that [it] secures but also by the power it grants to exclude others”
Since she cannot fully own her house, Mrs. Dalloway is partially excluded from it. This is a direct contrast to the space of the city, which is an inclusive space that is shared between the genders.

In *Mrs. Dalloway*, the domestic picture that emerges is that of a woman attempting to re-appropriate the spaces of her home in defiance of the partial exile that is imposed upon her by the mechanisms of ownership and exclusion. For Woolf, the ultimate goal of the reclamation of one’s house is to provide oneself with a peaceful physical space wherein the motions of the mind can be enacted thus leading to the formation of identity and solidification of self. Put another way, “[i]n order to recreate this passionate state of mind, Woolf strives to fill the void between the perceiving self and the external world, reconnect mind with matter, and in short, return to the edenic harmony between the individual and [her] environment” (McCartney, 171). For Clarissa, this process begins in her bedroom. As she approaches her bedroom, the promise of solitude makes her feel “like a nun withdrawing, or a child exploring a tower” (Woolf, 30). The images of a nun and a child highlight the fact that Clarissa views herself as retaining a kind of inward “virginity” that the space of her bedroom reinforces by occluding masculine penetration (30). Indeed, the bedroom is an intimate yet protective space since she and Richard no longer sleep in the same room. She is free from both sexual and emotional penetration within its walls.

And yet, her bedroom is still a problematic space. Upon entering the room, Clarissa is struck by a sense of isolation, feeling that “there was an emptiness about the heart of life; an attic room” (30). The only sign of life within the bedroom is the sound of a leaking faucet. Clarissa, reflecting on the noise, muses that her life has become
prescriptive; the tap in the bathroom drips, she must continually rest as a result of her illness, “women must put off their rich apparel[,] at midday they must disrobe” (30). However, Clarissa sees potential and freedom in the sterile, attic space to which her husband (wanting her to “sleep undisturbed”) has exiled her (30).

Although she described her bed as growing “narrower and narrower,” the absence of Richard from her bedroom allows her to use the space for the indulgence of memories of former passions (31). Lying on her bed, Clarissa plumbs the depths of her memories of Burton and, more specifically of being in that house with Sally Smith. She remembers the excitement and potency of the realization that the two women shared a domestic space; she rejoices, “[S]he is beneath this roof...She is beneath this roof!” (34). One night, the two girls find themselves alone in the Burton garden. It is in this space where Clarissa “was alone with Sally [that] she felt that she had been given a present, wrapped up...a diamond, something infinitely precious” (35). And yet, the moment is shattered by the appearance of Peter. Clarissa remembers feeling that his presence “was like running one’s face against a granite wall in the darkness! It was shocking; it was horrible” (35). Whereas Clarissa experiences a kind of ecstasy in living in a communal space with Sally, these passionate feelings do not extend to Peter. Nor do they extend to her husband. She remembers the times in her convalescence when he would clumsily climb the stairs to be intimate with her and the thought elicits both laughter and “resentment” that she, “through some cold contraction...of spirit...[,] had failed him” (31). Her inability to fully connect sexually to her husband and her love for Sally reveal truths about Clarissa to herself. This knowledge is “a sudden revelation, a tinge like a blush which one tried to check and then, as it spread, one yielded to its expansion” (31). And yet, it is important
to remember that this revelation of self, this deepening of identity, occurs within the solitary space of her bedroom. Clarissa must re-appropriate a space which she does not own into a sacred space that allows for the regeneration of identity and individual thought. Ultimately, she defies her “imposed placelessness” and works to create a kind of mental ownership of her home.

Thus, it can be asserted that in *Mrs. Dalloway*, there is an “inseparability of ‘real’ and imagined space” (Snaith 4). However, “Just as... ‘social space folds into mental space’, Woolf’s emphasis on the space of lived experience does not mean that those spaces are not understood in terms of changing social and political dynamics” (Snaith 4). Indeed, the remembered past is necessary and essential for Clarissa to understand the realities of her present existence. Her relationship with her husband, her sexuality, even her age and health are all understood through comparison with her relationship with Sally Smith in her youth. These parallel experiences create tensions that elucidate her ever fluctuating consciousness as well as her personal and social identity.

Indeed, shifts in space, consciousness, and identity dominate the scene in Mrs. Dalloway’s bedroom. The layering of the past and the present reinforces the observation that *Mrs. Dalloway* is “like a ballet...[with] All the movements in different directions both in time and space” (Snaith, 6). Just as Mrs. Dalloway is renegotiating her domestic space, Woolf is continually renegotiating the structure of the novel. The architectonics of *Mrs. Dalloway* are never fixed; Woolf fluidly re-appropriates the style and form of the text to allow for the co-mingling of character’s thoughts, movements, and emotions. The “alternative formal [and structural] aesthetics” of Mrs. Dalloway “mirror Woolf’s unsettling of fixed spatial formations” and the ways in which “the unity of [both] physical
spaces and the continuity of the narrative are constantly being interrupted” (2). And yet, the novel is not a haphazard construction; there are continuous and identifiable trends such as the “link [between] narrative and physical space” (2). Since the physical spaces of the novel shift, so must Woolf’s prose. Ultimately, the fluidity of her style is justified by the subject matter which it imitates.

Indeed, the architectonics of *Mrs. Dalloway* constantly point back to the architectonics of domestic space. Woolf agrees with Immanuel Kant’s observation that these spaces are not dependent upon time or human inhabitants for their existence, and she proceeds along the lines that the “spatial is metaphorically everywhere but oft-times nowhere” (Snaith, 5). Thus, she chooses to portray domestic spaces as “timeless” loci that inspire “timeless, passionate states of contemplation and communion, largely unattached to ‘before’ and ‘after’” (McCartney, 171). This is why Burton is such a powerful space for Clarissa; it exists just as potently in remembered time as in actual time. Furthermore, like Clarissa’s bedroom, Burton is a locus which is transformed and sanctified by the past and present experiences it provides.

Through this examination of the relationship between the architectonics of *Mrs. Dalloway* and the spaces it presents, we can see the extent to which Woolf departs from Victorian representations of domestic space which rely mainly on realism. For Woolf, a home is neither made real nor imbued with transformative power by accurate representations of the objects or inhabitants within it. Instead, both real places such as twentieth century London and the imagined spaces of literature are made vital when they provide a locus for individuals to experience their own consciousness. Furthermore, since Woolf felt that the Victorian novel had failed to fully realize the power of space on
women, all the “novel’s conventional methods of representation” had to be discarded (McCartney, 69).

And yet, Woolf is not only set on reclaiming spaces for women; she is also interested in what happens when imagined spaces fail their female inhabitants. In her essay “Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown,” Woolf wonders at Mr. Bennett as he attempts “to hypnotize us into the belief that, because he has made a house, there must be a person living there...[and yet] has never once looked at Mrs. Brown in her corner” (Rosner, 69). Although Mrs. Brown is in fact a part of the domestic landscape, Mr. Bennett does not notice her and the space does not promote her. Effectively, it is as if Mrs. Brown does not exist. Indeed, this fear of one’s existence being compromised by the problems of space informs much of Mrs. Dalloway and especially applies to Rezia and Septimus Smith.

Like Mrs. Dalloway, Rezia Smith is constantly struggling with the gendered renegotiation of space and questions of ownership versus exclusion. Because she too is married, Rezia lacks total ownership of her home; her “imposed placelessness” is also part and parcel of her gender. However, the attempt to re-appropriate a space within the home is more problematic for Rezia than it is for Clarissa. Unlike Mrs. Dalloway, Rezia lacks the domestic and economic advantages which can empower her to create a regenerative space for herself; her marriage to Septimus has robbed her of her emotional freedom and financial viability. She laments that once “she had had a beautiful home” that she shared with her sisters and which served as a work space for making hats (Woolf, 64). Although the link between money and personal space may not be readily apparent, the concern here is an economic one. In *A Room of One’s Own*, Woolf emphasizes the
fact that “money [can] secure personal space” (Kort, 137). Furthermore, she contends that it in cases such as Rezia’s, it is “economic factors [that] have prevented women from having places of their own” (169). Because Rezia must care for Septimus emotionally, the time and energy she can spend making hats is limited. Thus, Septimus’s catatonic state not only prevents him from being an economically viable individual, but it also subverts his wife’s ability to provide, not only for her family, but for herself. Her chances at purchasing a room of her own are thwarted by monetary and emotional demands.

Indeed, in *A Room of One’s Own* Woolf reinforces the image she first presents to her readers through Rezia and her relationship to her husband: “women have not had the benefit of personal space...because their work was thought to be insignificant and therefore interruptible” (Kort, 169). Interruption is part of Rezia’s daily existence and occludes her ability to enact her creative and economic impulses. Indeed, it is important to understand that, in addition to being a source of monetary satisfaction and independence, Rezia’s hat making is also a creative impulse. Therefore, although Rezia technically has a home with her husband, that shared space becomes a prison rather than a free, artistic space. Throughout *A Room of One’s Own*, Woolf argues that women should attempt to make an artistic space for themselves, and yet, through the character of Rezia, she shows the extent to which a “room of [one’s] own can easily become a tomb of one’s own for the penniless, deracinated” woman (deLange, xx).

DeLange’s observation accurately describes Rezia; she is literally deracinated-torn up by her roots and placed in a kind of spatial exile. Woolf introduces the reader to Rezia as a woman who is “suffering” (Woolf, 64). Although the source of her pain is at first
ambiguous, Woolf reveals that Rezia’s frustration is rooted in her sense of liminality and displacement. Even as she attempts to rationalize that “Everyone gives up something when the marry,” Rezia cannot move beyond the realization that “She had given up her home. She had come to live here, in this awful city.” (64). Rezia’s displacement and spatial exile is a consequence of her marriage. In marrying Septimus, she relinquishes her independence and individuality, and so her identity becomes a conjoined one. In order to understand the ramifications of Rezia’s dependent identity, we must consider deLange’s observation that “place is affiliated with the question of when and how, an empirical person.. is situated in a given place” (deLange, xiv).

Place, although it is constantly fluctuating due to time and human inhabitants, is also a destabilizing entity. Not only is place changed by things, it also changes things. It can act upon and form identity. Thus, if place is “linked to identity” it is also linked to “identity formation [and] also, under given circumstances, to a sense of threatened identity” (deLange, xiii). This applies directly to Rezia who, like Mrs. Brown, is threatened by the loss of her identity. The confines of her shared space are not easily subverted because they are foreign to her. After marrying Septimus, Rezia leaves her home in Milan and moves to London. Now in a foreign place, she feels “exposed” in the different and “indifferent world” of post war London (Woolf,64). Without the womb like space of her original home to protect her, Rezia, standing in the middle of Hyde park, likens herself to a “bird sheltering under the thin hollow of a leaf” (64). Although Clarissa’s attic room is described in terms of an exile, Rezia’s life in London can be thought of as diasporic. Not only must she work to reclaim the space of her home, she must do so in a landscape that is foreign and hostile to her.
Ultimately, Rezia looks to her marriage as the source of her spatial problems. Although she loves and cares for Septimus, her marriage has effectively made her the foreign property of someone. Thus, her marriage can be reduced to an economic equation in which she does not have the freedom to acquire and enact ownership over property which is solely hers. Furthermore, Rezia experiences a kind of double imprisonment since she is bound to emotionally and physically care for Septimus. As such, she is the manager of that “dull...servile house” to which Woolf refers in *A Room of One’s Own* (Woolf, *A Room of One’s Own*, 59). The bond between character and shared space is further problematized by the fact that Rezia is tied to someone whose identity is in jeopardy. Since Septimus has lost all sense of himself, his lack of identity destabilizes Rezia as well. Standing by the Thames, Septimus, in a fit of madness, tells Rezia that “now [they] will kill themselves” (Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*, 65). Although Septimus’s thought is errant, it is nevertheless revelatory; he and Rezia share an identity as well as a home. His status as an outcast makes his wife an outcast by association.

And yet, Woolf does not allow Rezia to linger in passive acceptance of her “imposed placelessness.” After seeing that her attempts to distance herself from her husband by removing her wedding band do not relieve her of her matrimonial duties, Rezia acts in defiance of her fate by clinging to her hat making business. Pouring herself into the creation of art that acts as a viable monetary source, Rezia clings to the possibility that she can somehow fashion a home or space of her own. In this sense, her constant hat making can be seen as a kind of victory. Even though she has no promise of a future that includes the spatial surroundings that would allow her talents to flourish, she is nonetheless pursuing what is, for Woolf, a sacred space. She is looking towards a
domestic locus that allows her feminine, creative impulses to be isolated, nourished, and 
exercised. Like Clarissa, she continues to attempt to carve out this place within the 
shared, threatened space of her home. For this reason, Woolf describes Rezia’s 
needlework in architectural rather than artistic terms: “she built it up; first one thing, then
another, she built it up sowing”(142).

However, unlike Clarissa and Rezia, a sacred space that protects identity is no
longer available to Septimus. In a turn of bitter irony, Woolf shows how the very people 
and nation Septimus has fought to protect cannot, in turn, provide him with a protective,
regenerative space to recover from the War. Woolf, herself distrustful of doctors, inserts 
sarcasm into the text of Mrs. Dalloway through the character of Dr. Holmes. Dr. Holmes,
whose name is startlingly similar to the word “home,” is sent to cure Septimus of his 
mental turmoil and restore peace to his and Rezia’s life. And yet, Dr. Holmes obfuscates 
any and all chances for Septimus to find a sacred space. Despite the protestations of 
Rezia, he tells Septimus that he believes he “should go into a home” where they “will 
teach [him] to rest (95). Of course this “home” is a sanatorium which Septimus 
designates “Holmes’s home” (95). Even in his illness, Septimus is perceptive enough to 
see that the space he is being offered is not a regenerative locus nor will it be able to 
provide him with peace and restore his identity. Instead of being a true “home,” it is a 
hellish prison which will only exacerbate the fact that he has lost his grasp of himself and
his existence.

2 Also note that the name Dr. Holmes is a play on the image of the famous detective Sherlock Holmes. 
Like the condescending and dogged detective, Dr. Holmes pretends to have all the answers for Septimus’s 
ilness. Furthermore, Septimus begins to imagine Holmes as being a kind of spy, eliciting his refrain 
“Holmes is on us” (137). Indeed, this cry also has the effect of drawing the reader back into the spatial 
concerns of the narrative. He and Rezia are localized and trapped in the tense, shared space of their home.
Yet, it is not only the threat of Holmes and mental institutions which frustrate Septimus. He comes to the realization that there is no space—past, future, or even the present space of his home with Rezia—that can shield him. He is fond of his “admirable” lodgings at Tottenham Court, and yet he cannot escape the impression that the walls which surround him are pushing him towards the brink. Even in the quiet of the living room, “he would look over the edge of the sofa down into the sea” (137). Though Rezia attempts to convince him that “it was a dream” and that “they were alone in the room,” he “would lie listening until suddenly...he was falling down, down into the flames” (137). Whereas Clarissa Dalloway’s attic bedroom transforms into remembered spaces of a peaceful past, the Smith home can only transport Septimus’s mind to places of damnation.

Ultimately, Septimus's decision to kill himself precipitates from his desire to have a space free of the likes of Holmes. Although he “[does] not want to die,” he cannot submit to live in a false place that pretends to provide regeneration (146). Furthermore, although he and his wife love each other and think that “nothing should separate them,” both of the Smiths are aware that Septimus's death will free Rezia from partaking in his mental purgatory (145). After she realizes he has gone, Rezia reflects that “it seemed to her...that she was opening long windows, stepping out into some garden” (146). Effectively, Septimus’s suicide frees them both; he is at peace and Rezia is left with the knowledge of her husband’s happiness and a space of her own. Indeed, the method of Septimus’s suicide seems to suggest that he is exiting the space for the sake of Rezia. He chooses to end his life, not by stabbing himself with a bread knife as he first considers, but by throwing himself out of a window atop his house. In an instance of dark and
tragic irony, Septimus vacates the domestic space he and his wife shared, permanently leaving her as the sole owner of their home.

Rezia is left in independence; her identity is no longer threatened by being bound to someone who has lost their sense of self. She no longer has to struggle to re-appropriate her home for her own purposes. Mrs. Dalloway, however, is not so lucky; she is continuously forced to live on a threshold, perpetually renegotiating the spaces which surround her. And yet, it is essential that she continue to do this. The final scene of Mrs. Dalloway is the strongest reinforcement of Woolf’s belief in the necessity of an independently owned space to validate and nourish identity. In order to understand this, one must see that the diction, setting, and the spatial orientation are essential textual components of the scene.

As the novel draws to a close, the setting is the Dalloway’s living room which continues to empty of people as the guests leave. In a reverse scenario of the night at Burton, Sally Smith is left alone, not with Clarissa, but with Peter. However, instead of Peter exiting the room and leaving Sally alone to encounter Clarissa once more in a solitary space, she decides to leave. Peter is then the only person left in the room since he chooses to “s[il]t on for a moment” (Woolf, 190). Although he is not looking directly at the doorway to the living room, the reader can safely assume that it is at least in his peripheral field of vision. Sitting in isolation, however, he suddenly wonders “what is this terror? what is this ecstasy?..What is it that fills me with extraordinary excitement?” (190) Immediately, we discover that at least part of the source of his emotional upheaval is the presence of Clarissa Dalloway, who is in the process of entering the room. Before examining the full significance of her presence, however, it is important to notice that
Peter’s thoughts are extra-sensory perceptions. They are beyond the realm of tactile senses, and yet they are problematic feelings that Peter cannot very readily justify or define. What his reactions do signal, however, is a shift in the atmosphere of the space he currently inhabits. It is only secondarily that he can identify that the source of that shift is Clarissa’s emerging presence in the room.

The order that Peter’s emotions happen in is very important. Peter feels “terror,” then “ecstasy and excitement.” If we place the emotion “terror” with the nearest action in the narrative, we see that this is the first thing Peter feels after the room is completely empty. For him, being alone is accompanied by fear. However, as soon as he perceives (at least implicitly or partially) that he is no longer alone, he feels “ecstasy” followed by the “extraordinary excitement” that “It is Clarissa” who is entering the room (190).

The choice of words in the phrase “It is Clarissa” is both subtle and deliberate. Woolf does not end the novel by referring to its titular subject by her last name. Here, she is not “Mrs. Dalloway;” she has been stripped of her identity as a married woman and is simply Clarissa. Furthermore, the present tense verb “is” can be interpreted as a positive, even hopeful statement in light of Septimus’s suicide. Unlike Septimus, Clarissa is alive; she will continue to exist in a state of being. And yet, as Woolf has already shown, embodiment is not necessarily the most peaceful or promising state. Clarissa, by continuing to exist, is still tied to the world around her, especially and most noticeably the space which surrounds her.

Like Rezia, Clarissa must continue to struggle for ownership, living for those moments when she can fully posses the space around her. Since, as deLange asserts, space is necessary for the formation and protection of identity, the moments when
Clarissa is alone in her home are the times when she can fully experience her own mental and physical embodiment. In discussing the ending of the novel, I have been careful to always describe Clarissa as being in the process of motion. This is an important distinction; if Clarissa is in the process of entering the room, she is effectively in a liminal state being neither here nor there. And yet, this is only a partially accurate description of what happens in the text.

Peter, sitting in the living room, perceives that “It is Clarissa...For there she was” (190). This change in verb tense signals the physical, spatial changes that are occurring within the world of the narrative. Although Clarissa is approaching Peter, she is not yet in the room with him. On the opposite side of the threshold, she too is in a space which provides her with isolation. As I have already attempted to show, it is these moments, when Clarissa can most fully have a space of her own, that she can experience the fullness of her existence. In a room of her own, Clarissa fully “is.” In contrasting moments, however, when her isolation is broken, she inevitably loses this sense of embodiment and being. Thus, when Peter sees her complete the process of entering the room, he is forced to edit his thought to “for there she was” (190). Although Peter cannot quite understand the reason for the shift in his perception, he is nevertheless aware that Clarissa is somehow altered by his presence; it is as if she suddenly ceases to exist. Like a man seeing a flicker or an eclipse, Peter subconsciously understands that whoever Clarissa really is inaccessible to him. His presence occludes her identity and true embodiment. She is unknowable.

Although this scene plays out at the very end of the novel, its truths are implied from the very first pages of the text. Reflecting on the beauty of the morning, Mrs.
Dalloway is plunged into a reverie of her time at Bourton. She recalls the peace she would experience standing alone at the windows in the early morning with nothing but the “fresh...calm...air” blowing into the house (3). This tranquility is interrupted, however, by the feeling “that something awful was about to happen” (3). In a scene of inversion, Clarissa wonders what could be the reason for her sudden, “solemn” mood and continues to ponder, “standing and looking until Peter Walsh said, ‘Musing among the vegetables?’” (3). Like at the end of *Mrs. Dalloway*, Clarissa’s peace and autonomy are jeopardized when Peter encroaches upon her solitary space. Where Peter experiences fear in his loneliness, Clarissa finds “ecstasy” (190). And though Peter feels “excitement” at Clarissa’s approach, she interprets his entrance as a “tragedy” (190).

The parallel scenes at the beginning and end of *Mrs. Dalloway* serve to further underscore the fact that Clarissa is constantly struggling to find a space of ownership. Likewise, the complexity of the scene at the end of the novel mirrors the difficulty of the task at hand; Clarissa’s attempts to transform the space around her are obfuscated by the fact that these spaces are shared loci. Thus, the scene in the living room is written in such a way to reveal the tensions between “ownership” and “imposed placelessness” that occur here and throughout the rest of the novel. As Woolf suggests in *A Room of One’s Own*, “whole flights of words would need to wing their way illegitimately into existence before a woman could say what happens when she goes into a room” (Woolf, *A Room of One’s Own*, 87).

Thus, *Mrs. Dalloway* reveals an “an ongoing question, perhaps beyond the power of the English language...to resolve. It entails a continual renegotiation of space” (Snaith, 48). Because Clarissa (unlike Septimus) has chosen to remain within the spatial confines
of lived experience, she must continually work to reclaim the spaces around her. It is for this reason that, after hearing the news of Septimus, she thinks that “she felt somehow very like him...She felt glad that he had done it” (Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*, 182). By killing himself, Septimus has placed himself outside of the confines of spatial politics, and yet Clarissa knows that she cannot follow in his footsteps. Instead, “she must go back. She must assemble” (182). Clarissa cannot truly be like Septimus and free herself from the constant battle between ownership and imposed placelessness. Instead, she is much more like the elderly woman who lives in the building across from the Dalloway home. As the party ends and the guests leave, Clarissa looks out of a window in her house and sees the woman “in the room opposite...star[ing] straight at her” (181). The image is one of a face reflected in a mirror, and indeed, Clarissa identifies with the woman who is in the process of going to bed. She concedes that “it was fascinating to watch her, moving about...quite quietly going to bed” (181). Like Mrs. Dalloway, the elderly lady sleeps in an isolated, peaceful space. For an instant, the identities of the two women are joined in their search for spaces that are their own.

Ultimately, both Clarissa and Rezia resemble the elderly woman in the window. All the women in *Mrs. Dalloway* long for solitary spaces within their homes where they can connect with their interiority. These loci are free from issues of ownership and masculine penetration and as such, they allow for independence and self discovery. Furthermore, their thoughts, and by extension their identities, are isolated from the opposite sex. Sally and Clarissa, like Rezia and her sisters, have the ability to connect with one another in a shared space, while Peter, Richard, and Septimus retard rather than promote these women’s ability to fully experience their embodiment and being. By re-
appropriating the domestic spaces they inhabit, Clarissa and Rezia not only transform their houses into sacred rooms that nurture and protect identity, they also use these rooms to maintain the difference and unknowability of the female sex.
CHAPTER THREE

THE SEARCH FOR SACRED SPACE IN *A HANDFUL OF DUST* AND *BRIDESHEAD REVISITED*

Evelyn Waugh began his novelistic career almost a decade after the publication of *Howards End*, and although he was a contemporary of Woolf’s, he did not pen *Brideshead Revisited* until twenty-years after the publication of *Mrs. Dalloway*. The intervening years had seen the continued proliferation of industry and urban expansion, a second World War, and the destruction of another generation of British men. Waugh, like Woolf, was drawing on the work of predecessors such as Conrad, Ford, and Forster while striving to create a new style of literature that would reflect the political and social unrest of the “lost generation.” Waugh’s treatment of domestic spaces is similar to Forster and Woolf in that each author portrays houses as refuges and “men as something much less than the buildings they made and inhabited” (McCartney, 73). Like Forster, Waugh favors pastoral rather than urban spaces. However, unlike Forster, Waugh viewed urban spaces with an added dimension of skepticism and distrust. Whereas Forster viewed London as cutting its inhabitants off from the regenerative power of the earth and widening the distance between social classes, Waugh was among those writers who saw London’s unchecked growth and modernization as “a ‘modern babylon,’ a place offering ‘manifold opportunities for Sin’” (Kort 4).

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3 The respective publication dates for the texts are as follows: *Howards End* (1910), *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), *Brideshead Revisited* (1945).

4 It should be noted, however, that the importance of religion, specifically Catholicism, develops slowly over Waugh’s career. However, his sensitivity to the declining morals and shallow existence of twentieth century life appears even his early satires. As Jeffery Heath notes, “although there can be no question that [Waugh] became sterner as he aged, it is evident he was a moralist at least as early as *Decline and Fall*” (Heath, xiii).
Waugh’s sinister view of urban spaces polarizes him from Woolf. Where she saw freedom and potential, Waugh saw destabilization and demoralization. And yet, both authors narrative strategies “began in essential agreement: the nineteenth century novel had died” and “there was no point to rewriting it now that contemporary experience belied its assumptions about the ultimate reasonableness of the world” (McCartney, 68). The “tragic wastefulness of the Great War” had undermined social standards, the truths of which were once supposed to be “self evident” (2). Although Waugh and Woolf, like Forster, believed that the modern world could not be adequately portrayed with the tropes and ideologies of the nineteenth century novel, they set about re-writing individual and collective experience in remarkably different ways.

The physical destruction of Europe necessitated a redefinition of all aspects of civilization. For Woolf, the removal of such rigid social restraints allowed for a “jolly tolerance” of new and emerging moral, ideological, and even architectural structures (McCartney, 73). Waugh, on the other hand, clung staunchly to his own sense of “Britishness” which was rooted in tradition and conservatism. Against what he saw as the “profound dereliction” espoused by artists such as Woolf and the Bloomsbury group, Waugh argued: “It is better to be narrow-minded...to hold limited and narrow principles than none at all” (3). This quote is revelatory in that it shows the extent to which Waugh’s staunch traditionalism is part and parcel with his religion. For Waugh, any societal change brought with it a corresponding moral relaxation or constriction. And although he was plagued throughout his life (most noticeably in his youth) by religious and spiritual doubt, the trajectory of his work is toward faith, specifically in the Catholic church.
However, it should be noted that Waugh was an all around conservative; he was religiously, politically, and even artistically rigid. Thus, the discipline which he exercised in his personal life extended to his artistic vocation. His novels are composed with keen attention to structure and the architectonics of narrative. Furthermore, the subject matter of many of his works, most notably *A Handful of Dust* and *Brideshead Revisited* have at their centers literal structures around which the plots, characters, and themes of the novels revolve.

Waugh’s representation of domestic spaces builds on and diverges from the works of Forster and Woolf. Like his predecessors, Waugh imbues homes with protective and transformative properties that act for and upon their inhabitants. However, houses in Waugh are arguably more volatile and fugacious than the relatively stable environments in *Howards End* and *Mrs. Dalloway*. The abbey home of Tony Last in *A Handful of Dust* and even more so the ancestral Marchmain castle Brideshead are spaces which can appear as peaceful refuges only to transform into unsettling even sinister places bent on destabilizing their occupants. And yet, they are nevertheless sacred spaces whose purpose is regeneration.

In this chapter, I will show how Waugh portrays the homes his characters inhabit as sacred spaces in the most literal sense of the word. For example, the ancestral homes in *A Handful of Dust* and *Decline and Fall* were built from quarried pieces of dissolved abbeys. Even Brideshead, which is built from castle rather than church remains, is imbued by Waugh with religious properties. These structures strain against their secular roles as aesthetic spaces and attempt to have a spiritual effect on their inhabitants. The homes push individuals toward emotional collapse so that they must face their own
spiritual voids. It is only when the characters confront their own nihilism that the houses reveal the transcendent and regenerative power that spiritual renewal can bring.

In Waugh’s satire *A Handful of Dust*, Tony Last’s ancestral home Hetton Abbey exposes his spiritual crisis. For Tony, religion is nothing more than a habit. His greatest Sunday pleasure is not the comfort he receives from the liturgical elements such as prayer and reflection. Instead, he delights in the institutions he has created for himself: the after-service chat with the vicar’s sister, the choosing of a button-hole carnation, the few words exchanged with the gardener, and his glass of sherry drunk “rather solemnly” in the library at Hetton (Waugh, *A Handful of Dust*, 35). This “simple, mildly ceremonious order of his Sunday morning” is adhered to by Tony “with great satisfaction”; fulfillment is found in tradition and routine. (35-36). Tony effectively creates a new religion with the rigidity of a Catholic mass, and Hetton becomes the church where he can carry out his worship of tradition.

Indeed, at first the structural aesthetics of Hetton only serve to support Tony’s belief that tradition provides meaning. In the novel, Hetton Abbey is described as belonging to the style of architecture known as late generation Gothic revival, at which point “the movement had lost its fantasy and become structurally logical and stodgy” (44). Although his friends and family view Hetton as stern and ascetic, for Tony, these qualities are the defining characteristics of beauty. In spite of his wife Brenda’s censure of the house as “appalling ugly,” Tony takes pride in “the line of its battlements against the sky,” the stained glass windows, and the “ecclesiastical gloom of the great hall” (45; 13, 14). The line between aestheticism and asceticism becomes paradoxically blurred. For Tony, the most aesthetic art is that which is ascetic. However, the fact that the
structural qualities of Gothic architecture were created to encourage religious devotion and piety is lost on Tony. Rather, the ascetic beauty of Hetton only adds to Tony’s faith in tradition and self-imposed order.

The fact that Hetton was once a religious space is lost on its inhabitants. However, Hetton’s distinction as a re-appropriated abbey is significant. Donald Greene, in his essay “A Note on Hetton and Some Other Abbeys,” points out that at the time of the schism from the Catholic Church in Rome, Henry VIII confiscated the abbeys and redistributed them for secular use among wealthy English landowners. Abbeys and churches not sold to wealthy landowners were torn apart so that the raw materials could be used to construct new country manors, or they were kept as stone quarries or ruins. Although abbey ruins were not able to serve as either religious or residential centers, they “continued to be visited and were thus viewed in ways that transcended their original purposes” (Hall, 31). Thus, abbeys began to serve the British population’s aesthetic, not spiritual, needs.

By setting many of the major scenes in the novel at Hetton, Waugh evokes the memory of the secularization of the church and points to the ways in which religion has been reduced to an empty tradition. Just as Hetton is only the shell of an abbey, Tony Last’s religiosity is an empty shell of spirituality. Furthermore, the “dissolution of the monasteries” into residential homes would have been regarded by Waugh, “a staunch Catholic,” to be “one of the great disasters in English history” (Greene, 2). Indeed, the image of sacred spaces being torn down permeates the text of *A Handful of Dust*. After Tony is forced to sell Hetton Abbey, his “impoverished” cousins take over the estate and remodel it into a “stinkery” or a fox farm. Thus, for Waugh, “the collapse of traditional
structures does not lead, as Woolf had promised, to self-discovery; rather, it reveals the shallow inconsequence of characters who are left to lead absurdly pointless lives amidst the wreckage” (McCartney, 74).

In *A Handful of Dust*, the literal collapse of Hetton Abbey is concurrent with the figurative dissolution of Tony’s marriage. Throughout the novel, Brenda distances herself from her husband by rejecting the house. She deems the space “appallingly ugly” and insists on sleeping in a separate bedroom from Tony that is decorated with modern accouterments (*HoD*, 45). Ironically, her separate bedchamber is named Guinevere. By deeming the room Guinevere, Waugh is alluding to the unfaithful wife of the Arthurian Legend. This is appropriate since it links Brenda to the medieval structure she inhabits while it also foreshadows her infidelity with John Beaver.

Brenda’s rejection of Hetton Abbey is also a refusal to embrace the spiritual overtones of the Gothic architecture. Although “the spires of six church windows are visible from [her] bedroom,” Brenda has no desire to devote herself to the worship of any religious or secular god; she does not care about church and refuses to subscribe to Tony’s belief in the transcendent power of ancestry and tradition. Brenda further rejects the sacred qualities of Hetton by destroying the heart of the house: the great hall. With the help of John Beaver’s mother, the two women gut the living room for the purpose of installing chromium plating. This scene directly parallels the event in *Decline and Fall* where Margot Beste-Chetwynde (who, it is later revealed, runs an collection of South American brothels) “replaces her sixteenth-century home with a ‘surprising creation in ferro concrete and aluminum’ that has been designed to eliminate ‘the human element from the consideration of form’” (Hall, 73).
In both instances, the women reject spaces which are imbued with religious and historical significance, preferring to associate themselves with modern architectural, social and moral conventions governing London high society. This connection between architecture and morality may seem tenuous, but Waugh, another student of John Ruskin, parroted the theorist’s belief that architecture necessarily reflected the morals and values of society. In the first chapter, I pointed out that the other houses in Howards End besides the Wilcox manner (such as Leonard Bast’s London flat) were unstable domestic spaces that were neither restive nor regenerative for their inhabitants. Like Forster, Waugh does not propose that all houses are sacred spaces. In fact, he exerts a considerable amount of narrative effort to show that houses can be either concrete, stable spaces or props-cheap and flimsy imitations that only pretend to provide shelter and stability.

It is therefore unsurprising that the space where Brenda chooses to carry out her illicit love affair with John Beaver is a London flat. The very word “flat” is an accurate and succinct depiction not only of Brenda’s character, but the collective identity of Britain's youth. Reflecting on the collective works of Waugh, George McCartney points out that in “novel after novel, ancestral homes are razed to make way for functional structures, usually apartment buildings comprised of one-room flats suited for an unsettled generation of self-obsessed transients” (McCartney, 74). This, he argues, “is Waugh’s image of a rootless modernity in which people are too preoccupied with themselves to consider anything more than the satisfactions of the present moment” (74). And yet, tearing down the walls that link them to some sacred and meaningful past does not enlighten or change these individuals. Rather, they are left in their primitive moral
state, “blandly and uncritically acquiescing” to spiritual death (74). Thus, the modern urban spaces glorified by Virginia Woolf are, for Waugh, un-regenerative spaces that retard rather than promote spiritual wholeness.

However, this is not to say that Tony Last does not share in his wife’s defilement of their home. Indeed, over the course of the novel, Hetton becomes a problematic space for Tony. He attempts to reconstruct the house to fit his idealistic image of the English country home; he worships the past and wants to set himself up as an echo of the landed gentry. However, the house will not bend to his attempts to manipulate it, and so it becomes an empty signifier of secular conceit and aestheticism. Tony fails to associate Hetton with its spiritual past and instead can only muse on the time, “perhaps in [his son’s] day, when [popular] opinion would reinstate Hetton to its proper place” (HoD, 14, 15). Tony Last’s concern for family notoriety and legacy is a historically characteristic quality; English aristocrats would model their houses after the Gothic revival style in attempts at “asserting their ancestry” (Hall, 18). Waugh recognized the pretentious nature of these endeavors, and thus cast a critical eye toward the Englishman seeking to construct a fictive heritage.

Yet, Waugh does not promote Tony Last as an entirely unsympathetic character since Tony is an extension of Waugh himself. Like Tony, Waugh placed a significant amount of social importance on domestic spaces. Because of this, in 1936 he purchased what he saw as an elegant “gentleman’s house” with extensive grounds that he could lend out to tenants (Carpenter, 308). The house of Piers Court allowed Waugh to play the role of country squire. Indeed, he exerted a considerable amount of time and money
refurbishing the house and was known to wear a dinner jacket every evening “whether or not there were guests” (309).

Eventually however, Waugh’s carefully constructed fiction was thrown into relief against the backdrop of encroaching urban sprawl. The “London overspill” put Waugh in close contact with people and ideas he had attempted to avoid. Although Waugh was annoyed by the encroaching urbanization, it brought a measure of self-awareness and alerted him to his self-constructed farce. Thus, Waugh sold Piers Court which he had taken to derisively calling “Stinkers.” After Stinkers, Waugh’s attitude appears to have changed. Instead of being a prop in a social play, Waugh determined that a house could be a “special province” that shielded its inhabitants from secular influences (Heath, 1). Jeffery Heath contends that Waugh “searche[d] all his life for a refuge where he need not compromise with the world around him” and eventually that “refuge was his house at Combe Florey” (1).

For Tony Last, however, Hetton Abbey fails to be a refuge. It cannot protect him from the pain or consequences of his divorce; Brenda manipulates the divorce settlements so that Tony must sell Hetton in order to meet her alimony demands. The loss of Hetton is devastating, even more so than the death of his son, John Andrew. Since Tony has trusted in the material aspects of his domestic space—the sense of tradition, ancestry, and social stability that the country home represents—he loses all sense of himself when he loses the house. He laments that his “whole Gothic world [has] come to grief” (HoD, 209). Without Hetton to cling to, his world is “suddenly bereft of order” as though “the sum of all he had experienced …were an inconspicuous, inconsiderable object” (189). Unlike Howard’s End which operates as a womb-like space healing relationships and
shielding its inhabitants from the pressures of the world, Hetton pushes Tony to the brink. And yet, the house is still a sacred and regenerative space. By resisting Tony’s attempts to subjugate the space for vain purposes, Hetton forces its owner to examine his own spiritual darkness. Before redemption and spiritual regeneration can occur, there must be repentance, and Hetton forces Tony to confront the meaninglessness of his life. Hetton Abbey works to sanctify Tony Last by pushing him toward the epiphanic void that reveals his need for spiritual re-birth.

After Tony is forced to sell his home, he leaves for the Brazilian jungle in search of a new “transfigured Hetton” (222). Although Tony has given up playing the role of country squire, he still cannot relinquish his faith in tradition and order. He deludes himself into believing that in the midst of the tangled wilderness he will somehow be able to find a “landscape filled with heraldic and fabulous animals and symmetrical...blossom” (222). Yet his attempts to find an orderly refuge reveal that Tony is simply substituting this expected arcadia with the “pinnacles, gargoyles, and battlements” of Hetton (222). Even in hindsight, Tony is incapable of seeing that Hetton represented his need for spiritual regeneration. Thus, just as his blindness transforms the once sacred space of the abbey into a prison, so the jungle becomes a spiritual purgatory.

After Tony get lost in the wilderness he begins to suffer from a fever and madness and is left for dead. His salvation appears to come in the form of Mr. Todd who nurses Tony back to health within the spatial confines of his jungle hut. However, the hut, or “Du Cote Chez Todd” as Waugh refers to it in the penultimate chapter, is revealed as a sinister rather than protective space. It is a nightmarish version of Hetton Abbey, just as its owner is a Mephistophelian projection of Tony himself. Mr. Todd is “a man who
exhibits total control” (Johnson, 7). Nothing happens within the confines of his home that he is unaware of; unlike Tony, he has complete control over the lives of his wives and children, and his daily routine is secure and unvaried. Furthermore, by forcing Tony to read Dickens every day, Mr. Todd is essentially providing Tony with the sense of routine and order he has searched for so desperately (paraphrase Johnson, 7). This order and routine which should appeal to Tony instead becomes a prison. At the close of *A Handful of Dust*, Mr. Todd drugs Tony immediately preceding the arrival of a search party looking for news of him. Mr. Todd gives the men Tony’s watch and shows them “the little cross [he] put up to commemorate [him]” (*HoD*, 302). Tony is effectively left in purgatory with no foreseeable hope of escape.

The image of purgatory at the end of the novel suggests that, while Tony is damned for his empty religiosity, he is not yet condemned to hell. According to Catholic tradition, purgatory is a liminal space where the sinner is given time to atone for his sins and reconcile himself to God before entering heaven. Mr. Todd’s hut, therefore, can be seen as purgatorial place which functions in a similar capacity as Hetton. It does not provide Tony with a refuge, but it does give him a space to work towards sanctification. Ultimately, *A Handful of Dust* is a work of black satire, and yet there is a glimmer of hope for Tony provided by the spaces of Hetton and its shadowy reflection, Mr. Todd’s hut.

Sacred spaces in Waugh’s novels are not necessarily safe or peaceful spaces. However, they are nevertheless sacred because they force their inhabitants to confront their sins. They push characters towards an acknowledgment of their spiritual emptiness so that repentance and, by extension salvation, can occur. Homes like Hetton Abbey,
although they may appear to be purgatorial, constrictive spaces, are ultimately regenerative since they prompt spiritual awareness and renewal. Indeed, Jeffery Heath points out that in many of Waugh’s novels, his protagonists begin their spiritual journeys by “typically find[ing] solitary refuges which are false” (Heath, 2). Eventually, these “false refuges” turn out “to be prisons,” and yet “imprisonment emerges as a necessary stage on the road to true refuge” (Heath, 3). This “correct refuge” is the one “which has been adumbrated by the false ones: the Household of Faith” (2).

Indeed, homes such as Hetton Abbey were, in their original forms, houses of worship. In their essentials (stone, brick, mortar) they are houses of faith. Thus, it makes sense that Waugh imbues the raw materials with the same mystic and transcendent power that they are meant to inspire in individuals. Furthermore, it is both ironic and appropriate that characters who need to be incorporated into the metaphorical house of worship are situated in structures that are, essentially, just that.

In *Brideshead Revisited*, Waugh reiterates the tensions that arise when houses of worship are re-appropriated for secular use. Like Hetton, Brideshead is not simply a refuge; it is a space that is both comforting and threatening, sacred and profane. Furthermore, as in Forster’s novel, the sacred effects of Brideshead are best understood through the lens of the novel’s structural organization. In *Howards End*, the peace and stability of the Wilcox’s manor is emphasized by the contrasting, destabilized plot. Waugh also relies on the language of plot in *Brideshead Revisited* to highlight the sacred effects of the Marchmain home. Although the novel is divided into four separate parts (a prologue, books one and two, and an epilogue), Waugh provides the reader with another, more implicit structural lens through which to view the novel. Charles Ryder’s time at
Brideshead can also be divided into four corresponding parts: his time spent at Brideshead with Sebastian, when he lives there with Julia, keeping to the sickbed of Lord Marchmain, and his return to the castle during his encampment. At each of these points in the novel, Brideshead appears to Charles in a different form. And yet the house not only *appears* different to Charles—it is dynamic space. The house transforms according to, not only who Charles is surrounded by, but by the ever changing condition of his mental, emotional, and spiritual state.

Therefore, I argue that over the course of the novel, Brideshead has four specific incarnations. The idea of a sacred space taking on different incarnations is an appropriate one given the fact that Waugh imbues the domestic space with spiritual properties. Although the incarnation usually refers to the embodiment of God in the person of Christ, it can also refer to “a body, person, or form in which a soul, spirit, or deity is incarnated” (*OED* online, “incarnation”). Here, it would be best to point out that the incarnations of spiritual power that take place in Brideshead castle are the manipulations of the author himself. Jeanne Kilde, in her recent work *Sacred Power, Sacred Space*, reinforces that the “line between ‘real’ presence and metaphorical presence” is thin (Kilde, 6). However, a parallel relationship exists between substantive spaces and metaphorical spaces. She argues that just as Catholics believe the “real presence” of Christ transforms the signifiers of bread and wine in the Eucharist, so sacred spaces are “imbue[d] with sacred importance” by the ways in which “people organize...and behave” within them (7). In short: “space is sacralized by human” decision (7). It is this process that is at work in *Brideshead Revisited*. Waugh imbues or assigns Brideshead with sacred importance.
Thus, the house is a spiritually dynamic locus that is capable of effecting its characters to varying degrees.

In the novel, Charles Ryder experiences the first incarnation of Brideshead when he visits the house with Sebastian. It is while staying with the youngest member of the Marchmain family that Charles begins to feel the tensions between the sacred and profane aspects of his own soul. Over the course of the novel, the division between the secular and the spiritual becomes more deeply entrenched as Charles struggles to reconcile himself with a faith he neither wants nor believes. However, at the outset of the novel, this inner conflict is more subtle. Accordingly, Brideshead in its initial incarnation acts as a mirror for Charles’s devotion to aesthetics and materialism while foreshadowing his future spiritual crisis.

The first time Charles sees the house, he likens it to an arcadia. The architecture of Brideshead is aesthetically pleasing and the grounds which surround it not only reflect its beauty but are also protective of it. The “soft hills” appear to be “guarding and binding” the house; they are like a “secret landscape” whose sole purpose is to preserve the structure (Brideshead Revisited, 35). For Charles, Brideshead is not only a restive place, it is a formative one as well. He has ambitions to be a painter, and his obsession with beauty is only reinforced and heightened by the Marchmain’s house. He confesses that “[i]t was an aesthetic education to live within those walls,” and that he would “sit, hour after hour” admiring the beauty of his structural surroundings (80). Charles revels in the material world and Brideshead provides him with the secular desires of “sensuality, solitude, self-indulgence, immaturity, and heterodoxy” (Heath, 5). Sitting by the fountain and “rejoicing in all its clustered feats of daring and invention, [he] felt a whole new
system of nerves alive within [him], as though the water...was indeed a life giving stream” (BR, 82).

Yet Charles’s faith in the transcendent and transformational beauty of Brideshead is problematized by the same physical attributes he so loves. Jeffery Heath notes that the fountain, while it is a focal point of the estate, is described by Waugh with “veiled hostility” (Heath,168). Although it is beautiful, the fountain is also an emblem of paganism and falsehood. The same “stream” which Charles sees as life giving is a “counterfeited spring” (BR 82, 81). The menagerie of stone animals are described as “vomiting” the water from their mouths (81). Furthermore, the center piece of the fountain is “an Egyptian obelisk of red sand-stone” (81). A traditional architectural structure, the obelisk is defined as “a monumental, four-sided stone shaft...mostly covered in hieroglyphics [that was] originally erected as [a] cult symbol to the sun god” (Harris, 382). This secular image is a prominent feature of the Brideshead estate, and the obelisk serves to highlight the worldly temptations that Charles and all the inhabitants of the house encounter.

The spatial relationship of the fountain and obelisk to the rest of the house only reinforces the tensions that exist at Brideshead between the sacred and the profane. When Charles ascends with Sebastian to Nanny Hawkins’s nursery, he can see the layout of the grounds for the first time. Topographically, the house is situated between the protective hills and a lake. However, these pastoral ramparts are interrupted by the additional architectural structures of the fountain and its obelisk and the “temple”. The temple, as Charles refers to it, is actually the chapel that was built for Lady Marchmain so that she can house a daily Catholic mass without leaving the confines of Brideshead.
This sacred space is situated opposite the fraudulent fountain creating a spatial relationship that illustrates the conflicting faiths of the house’s inhabitants.

Like Charles, Sebastian clings to the hedonistic pleasures of life; he is a consummate aesthete as well as an alcoholic. And yet, unlike Charles, Sebastian is keenly aware of his internal depravity. After pointing out the chapel to Charles, Sebastian immediately requests that they leave the estate and return to Oxford. On the return drive, he attempts to explain his eagerness to leave, saying: “I’m afraid I wasn’t very nice this afternoon. Brideshead often has that effect on me” (39). Sebastian’s words reveal that he feels the tensions between the sacred and profane that exist, not only within the walls of Brideshead, but also within his own soul. For this reason, Sebastian tries to disassociate himself from the place; Charles recounts that while he is “rapt in the vision [of the house], [he] felt momentarily...an ominous chill at the words [Sebastian] used-not ‘That is my home,’ but ‘It’s where my family live’” (35).

Sebastian sees what Charles in time will come to grasp: Brideshead is not a static, utopian space. It is a dynamic structure that threatens to expose human weakness. Indeed, Waugh titles the first book of the novel “Et In Arcadia Ego” to emphasize this very point. “Et In Arcadia Ego” translated means “Even in Arcadia I exist” and refers to two Nicolas Poussin paintings of the same name. The paintings are two similar depictions of shepherds examining the titular inscription around a tomb. Although there is debate among scholars as to the exact meaning of the inscription given the context of the painting, both interpretations are appropriate for Waugh’s purposes. The first, more commonly held understanding of the phrase is that the words, “Even in Arcadia I exist” are spoken by death and communicate man’s inability to escape the confines of mortal
flesh. The contrasting meaning suggests that the words were spoken in the past tense by the individual now interred in the tomb. However, this also suggests that, although the person may have enjoyed peace and plenty while on the earth, he is nevertheless a victim of his own mortality. In either case, the reference serves to underscore the thematic trajectory of the novel; Charles, like the other residents of Brideshead, are forced by their surroundings to confront their mortality and by extension, their expectations and chances for a spiritual afterlife.

However, it is essential that Brideshead be a space that is simultaneously sacred and profane; only then can it indulge the secular aspects of Charles’ character while pushing him towards the opposite pole of the spiritual. Furthermore, by placing his characters in such a structure, Waugh is cleverly presenting “Ryder’s ‘profane’ memories in a ‘sacred’ frame” (Heath, 161). Although Waugh’s novel is catalogued and referred to by scholars simply as *Brideshead Revisited*, it is actually called *Brideshead Revisited: The Sacred and Profane Memories of Captain Charles Ryder*; its real title reveals the major themes of the text.

The second incarnation of Brideshead appears years later when Charles moves into the house to live with Julia. Having lost contact with Sebastian and the Marchmain family, a chance encounter re-unites Charles with Julia, and they begin an affair despite the fact that they are both already married. Charles confesses to Julia that, although he was in love with Sebastian in his youth, his feelings for her are even more overwhelming. He thinks back on Sebastian as a kind of “forerunner” of the emotional experiences he will have with Julia (*BR*, 257). Indeed, Charles experiences with Julia are much more
passionate and dramatic, yet they are also more tumultuous and unsettling. It is his relationship with Julia that pushes him to the brink of his religious doubt and frustration.

Accordingly, the Brideshead that Charles experiences while living with Julia is a heightened reflection of the Brideshead Charles discovered with Sebastian. Again, the house appears to Charles as a battle-ground between the sacred and the profane, only this time the profane is more potent and sinister than before, and the sacred seems beyond reach. Charles and Julia have been living in sin away from their spouses at Brideshead for almost two years. Although the house protects them and their infidelity, it also unrelentingly points out the gross extent to which they are indulging in un-repentance.

The scene opens with the two lovers lounging on the terrace “in the tranquil, lime-scented evening” (276). Charles notes that, in the failing light of day, the “world [was] transformed” as “the blossom in the limes...carried its fragrance...to merge with the sweet breath of box and the drying stone” (277). The olfactory imagery is overwhelmingly eroticized and indulgent, qualities which imitate Charles and Julia’s relationship. The Arcadian image is further undermined when Charles reveals that they are experiencing these sensations “in the shadow of the obelisk” (277). The same pagan structure that appeared in the initial incarnation of Brideshead has now subsumed Charles; it is in the shelter of the pagan monument, rather than the shelter of the Catholic chapel, that he finds shelter.

However, the house is not content to let Charles remain in the shadow of the obelisk. The house defies his and Julia’s hedonism when they dine with Bridey in the painted parlour. During his stay at Brideshead with Sebastian, Charles was commissioned by Lady Marchmain to re-paint the eating room according to his own
artistic tastes and indulgences. Decades later, the room that once served as an outlet and sanctuary for Charles’s worship of the aesthetic turns on him. During dinner, Bridey tells Charles and Julia that he has forbidden his future wife to visit Brideshead because he does not wish to expose her to his sister’s infidelity. Although Charles is relatively unmoved by Bridey’s rebuke, Julia is overwhelmed by guilt and cannot stay in the room; she leaves seeking refuge at the foot of the fountain.

The scene between Charles and Julia at the fountain is a climactic moment in which Julia is confronted with her sin and takes her first steps towards repentance. For Charles, this change of heart is problematic, not only because he is in jeopardy of losing the woman he loves, but also because he cannot join her in her journey toward confession and absolution. Lit by the dim light from the terrace, Charles sees that the fountain, which was once a refuge for them both, has become a prison for Julia. He confesses that “the fountain which in that house seemed always to draw us to itself for comfort and refreshment” is now Julia’s “darkest refuge” (286). For her, the fountain is revealed as the false, pagan structure that it really is: a death-dealing rather than life giving stream.

As Julia attempts to explain her spiritual struggle to Charles, she reveals that neither the “shelter of [a] cave or of the castle walls” of Brideshead can protect her from her sins (288).

The melodramatic mood of Julia’s confession and the sinister appearance of Brideshead finally break through all of Charles’s illusions. For the first time, he is able to see the battle between the sacred and profane that is constantly waging around him. He admits this to Julia, saying that their experiences are like characters in a three act play. The setting of the play is “a baroque fountain in a nobleman’s garden” and the first act is
entitled “Sunset” referring two their time spent on the terrace under the heady scent of the lime grove (291). The second act, Charles says, is “Dusk” which marks the beginning of “estrangement and misunderstanding” between the two leads and refers to the dinner in the painted parlour (291). The final act, at the foot of the fountain, is “Moonlight” and signifies an attempt at “reconciliation” (291). And yet, reconciliation between Charles and Julia will prove impossible; Julia has begun to move back towards her faith while Charles refuses to partake of it.

Indeed, Charles’s resistance to the spiritual effects of Brideshead comes to a head as he experiences the third incarnation of the house. When Lord Marchmain returns to Brideshead to die, Charles stays with him at his deathbed. During this section of the novel, the narrative focuses on Lord Marchmain’s need for redemption and his struggle to reconcile himself to the Catholic faith. As a professed atheist, his doubts parallel those of Charles. As Lord Marchmain struggles, the house attempts to convince him of his need for salvation. Ultimately, the false refuge of the Chinese drawing-room propels Lord Marchmain towards spiritual regeneration.

On a “whim,” Lord Marchmain chooses the Chinese drawing-room on the ground floor of Brideshead as the place he wishes to stay while he prepares to die (316). From the first description of the room, Charles notes its fabricated, stage-like appearance. Rather than being a livable space at Brideshead, the room is described as a “splendid, uninhabitable museum of Chippendale carving” (316). Even the bed that Lord Marchmain declares his “death bed” is an “exhibition piece” (316). All the comforts of the drawing room have been created for the benefit of “sight-seers;” the furniture and the decor are simply props in a fabricated narrative that promotes the secular images of
“apotheosis” and “adult grandeur” (316). It is also worth noting that Lord Marchmain, although he has spent the majority of his life attempting to distance himself from the home of his ancestors, clings to the idea of his ancestry as he approaches his own demise. Like Tony Last in *A Handful of Dust*, he latches onto his English heritage in an attempt to gain a sense of control, stability, and even immortality.

Yet Lord Marchmain cannot thwart death, and as his life draws nearer to its close, the farce of his lying in is exposed and the stage of the Chinese drawing-room becomes more and more like a prison. Although at first he is well enough to walk about Brideshead, his body becomes too weak to leave the drawing-room. Furthermore, at the moments immediately preceding his death, the room confines not only his physical body, but his mind as well. Though Lord Marchmain attempts to distract himself by talking with Charles and Julia, rambling on about global events, Charles understands that “his mind was far from world affairs; it was there, on the spot, turned in on himself” (331). The word choice here is important; Lord Marchmain’s corporeality and his interiority are bound to place. The space of the drawing-room forces him to confront himself and physical space becomes responsible for changing and shaping individual identity. For example, the night before his death, Lord Marchmain acknowledges his antagonism towards God as a potential “crime” and wonders if that is “why they’ve locked [him] in this cave” (334).

The drawing-room and by extension the human transformation taking place within it are not peaceful. By referring to the space as “Gethsemane,” Lord Marchmain is likening it to the garden where Christ, fearing death and separation from God yet knowing Himself bound for crucifixion, experiences intense emotional and
physical anguish (319). The image of Gethsemane is an appropriate one since, in the Catholic liturgical tradition, the garden has come to represent the battle between the “flesh and the spirit” or of individuals attempting to reconcile themselves with God. By extension, it is also an image of human frailty and betrayal. The garden is the space in which Christ is handed over to the Sanhedrin by Judas.

In the Chinese drawing-room, a similar betrayal occurs. Over the course of her father’s illness, Julia has become devoted once again to the Catholic faith. She believes that her father must repent if he is to receive salvation, and she tries to convince him to take communion and be absolved. Charles, however, feeling that his own atheism is validated and preserved by that of Lord Marchmain’s, discourages the patriarch from receiving his last rites. When Lord Marchmain does, at the eleventh hour, take communion and make the shape of the cross (thus outwardly confessing his sins), the final rupture between Charles and Julia occurs.

Although Lord Marchmain’s death causes the death of Charles’s and Julia’s relationship, the events which take place within the Chinese-drawing room are ultimately regenerative. Both Julia and her father have been reconciled with their faith. Charles, although he has not come to believe in Christianity, has nevertheless been removed from the temptation of living in sin with Julia. The house, although it has driven a wedge between two individuals, has saved Charles from his own secular desires. However, it is not until the epilogue of *Brideshead Revisited* that Charles is able to make peace with Brideshead for exposing his spiritual darkness and pushing him towards faith. During his encampment, Charles is finally reconciled to Brideshead when it appears to him in its final incarnation.
The epilogue opens with Captain Ryder, as he is now called, attempting to set up camp on the grounds at Brideshead. The house has been deserted by Julia, who gave it up to be of use to the army. The quartering commander, surveying the sight, laments to Charles that it is a “wonderful old place” and that it is a “pity to [have] to knock it about too much” (345). Indeed, the house has been gutted of most of its furniture and the painted parlour has been all but destroyed. Even the resolute fountain “looks untidy” and “a bit worse for the wear” since it no longer provides water and has become a trash receptacle for cigarette butts and leftover meals.

In fact, the only architectural feature at Brideshead that has been left unadulterated is the chapel. Charles, upon entering it, marvels that the “chapel showed no ill-effects of its long neglect; the art-nouveau paint was as fresh and bright as ever; the art nouveau lamp burned once more before the altar” (350). Waugh’s designation of the chapel as a work of the Art Nouveau movement is intentional because of its metaphorical associations. The style is defined as being “characterized by organic and dynamic forms, curving design, and whiplash lines” (Harris, 32). Indeed, throughout the text of *Brideshead Revisited*, the house proves that it is a dynamic space, shifting its appearance to promote spiritual regeneration.

Charles ponders the dynamism of the house, noting that “year after year, generation after generation, [builders] extended and enriched it” without “know[ing] the uses to which their work would descend” (350-1). This is a decidedly pessimistic statement through which Charles communicates his disappointment that the fate of something as beautiful as Brideshead should be subjected to the physical devastation of war. As suggested by the phrase *Et In Arcadia Ego*, no place or individual can escape
tragedy or death; spaces, even ones that are sacred, do not provide immortality. It is upon the realization of this fact within the chapel that Charles finally relinquishes his faith in secular aestheticism, proclaiming: “Quomodo sedet sola civitas. Vanity of vanities, all is vanity” (351).

Yet, the house responds to Charles’s despair, showing him that not all hope is lost. Looking at the flame left burning in the lamp at the altar, Charles realizes that “something quite remote from anything the builders intended has come out of their work...and out of the fierce...human tragedy in which [he] played...: a small red flame” (351). This flame “burning anew among the old stones” is the metaphorical representation of a very real, spiritual faith (351). Although Charles attempts at secular intimacy have failed, Brideshead has preserved another type of intimacy for him-intimacy with God. This “flame,” Charles concedes, has the power to reach “far from home, farther, in heart, than Acre or Jerusalem” (351). While he once searched for a secular promised land, Charles now realizes that peace lies in spiritual rebirth.

Ultimately, the contrasting images of the destroyed Brideshead and the perennial chapel reinforce Waugh’s belief that human sinfulness and frailty are revealed through the collapse of traditional structures. Although domestic spaces are sacred spaces which promote the tenants of faith, the household of faith is the only true refuge. Throughout A Handful of Dust and Brideshead Revisited, the protagonists search for domestic spaces that will indulge and nurture their secular desires. And although these spaces at first appear as refuges, they become prisons, upending the characters expectation and forcing them to confront their own spiritual deprivation. Yet, imprisonment is the first and arguably most essential step along the road toward regeneration. Waugh creates spaces
which entrap their inhabitants and force them to confront their sin and then reveal the path to salvation. Thus, both Hetton Abbey and Brideshead are sacred spaces which are also dynamic: they attract, ensnare, and then lead their inhabitants towards spiritual regeneration. While Tony Last and Charles Ryder search for their personal arcadias, the houses they inhabit reveal to them what Waugh considers the truest arcadia—the house of faith.
CONCLUSION

FINAL WORDS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Over the course of the preceding three chapters, I have attempted to show how spatial issues commanded the consciousness of modernist writers and informed their works to the extent that domestic spaces became a dominate aspect of modern novels. Although Forster, Woolf, and Waugh use houses to reveal different ideas and beliefs about the human state at the beginning of the twentieth century, they all set the image of the home apart as a sacred, regenerative locus. In short, the home is imbued with the power to protect its inhabitants from the mental, emotional, and spiritual devastation that was experienced in an era punctuated by urbanization and two World Wars.

However, I have not attempted to provide exhaustive studies of the presence and purposes of sacred spaces either as it relates to these author’s individually or to the modern novel as a whole. I am keenly conscious of the fact that a book on the subject of domestic spaces could be written for each of these authors. In fact, when approaching this thesis, it was my first inclination to choose only one author and attempt an exhaustive analysis of the ways in which sacred spaces feature in his or her works. However, after careful consideration and scholarly guidance, I decided instead to offer a kind of survey showing first and foremost that the modern narrative was concerned with questions of architectonics and space in equal if not greater part than the more traditional focuses of narrative such as plot and character. Furthermore, I wanted to show that writers were creating spaces, particularly and most often domestic spaces, that had the power to reveal and heal the internal struggles of their inhabitants. Ultimately, I hope that I have
convincingly shown first, that authors were treating houses as sacred spaces, and second, that these spaces can bring about social, political, and spiritual renewal.

But, in the words of Charles Ryder at the close of Brideshead Revisited, “this is not the final word” (Waugh, *BR*, 351). Besides the obvious room for expansion with each individual author, this thesis also opens the door for a larger study of the impact of spatially focused narratives on the social and political landscape of twentieth century Britain. For example, the effects of Forster’s novel *Howards End* are not limited to the world of the narrative. I have already mentioned the effects it had on the artistic and idealistic stylings of Virginia Woolf, but Forster’s concerns over social issues and urban expansion apply beyond the artistic community. As England began to reap the financial rewards of Imperialism, the country had to continually shift to accommodate the influx of trade goods and capital. The growing number of laborers and disenfranchised minorities within London and surrounding areas meant that people began to be equated with economy. Thus, the Marxist idea of the “fetishism of commodities” was not relegated to the material; industrial and urban expansion effected human relationships and group identities (Snaith, 27).

Woolf was also aware of the impact that the growing global economy was having on social identities and space. She understood that “capitalism relies on the conquest of space through the expansion of foreign trade” and yet this global expansion actually “collapses and compresses space” (Snaith, 27). In a world where other countries and loci are growing more easily accessible, isolated and private spaces diminish. Nothing brought this into sharper focus than the First and Second World Wars.
For example, Waugh’s novel *Put Out More Flags* opens with Barbara Sothill walking the grounds of her house, Malfrey, which “had been built more than two hundred years ago in days of victory and ostentation and lay, spread out, sumptuously at ease...a Cleopatra among houses” (Waugh, *POMF*, 4). And yet, Mrs. Sothill feels that “across the sea...a small and envious mind, a meanly ascetic mind, a creature of the conifers was plotting the destruction of her home” (4). Although *Put Out More Flags* is a satire and takes an acerbic look at the war effort and patriotism, Mrs. Sothill’s concerns for her home reveal a larger, social anxiety wherein a sense of security, economic stability, and national identity are tethered to domestic spaces. The fears that Waugh records in this and his other novels are real and impacted society in immediate and tangible ways. People knew that they were no longer living in a world where isolation was possible. Air raids and bombings touched everyone from the city to the country. The collapse of space that had begun with Imperialism was solidified by war.

Looking forward, I believe that the groundwork I have laid in this thesis will prove to be fertile ground for future doctoral study. I am interested in taking the idea of the regenerative space of the home that exists in the works of Forster, Woolf, and Waugh and placing it in dialogue with the larger social, economic, and political environment of Britain in the early twentieth century. I feel that focusing on early modern domestic spaces and representations of those spaces opens up larger social and political issues in modern and even post-modern studies. Although I hope the ideas in this thesis will stand on their own, I am eager to see the possibilities that further investigation of modern spatial politics will reveal.
REFERENCES


SCHOLASTIC VITA

Leanne R. Wieland was raised in Savannah, GA and completed her undergraduate degree at the University of Georgia with a B.A. in English and a minor in Anthropology with a special focus in Native American Anthropology. While at the University of Georgia, she was selected to spend a semester studying at Oxford University due to academic merit. In August 2007, Leanne enrolled at Wake Forest University for the Masters in English program. She was awarded a Wake Forest University Fellowship by the English Department based on her undergraduate academic achievements and consequently received a full tuition scholarship and stipend. While completing her Masters, she worked as a tutor for the Writing Center. She is currently looking to enter a Ph.D. program with hopes of continuing her work on place and space in Modern novels.