

WAR AND THE WRITING OF HENRY GREEN

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by

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War and the Writing of Henry Green

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Abstract: War and the Writing of Henry Green by Geoffrey Easeman

Henry Green belongs to a generation of English writers formed by the following experiences:

- born in the early years of the twentieth century;
- educated at private preparatory school, public school and Oxbridge;
- their formative years at school coinciding with the First World War;
- having been prepared by their schools to fight in a war which, once it had; settled into a trench bound war of attrition, appeared to have no end;
- schoolboy consumers of stories of the heroism of war but also aware, after the battle of the Somme, of the horror of trench warfare;
- consigned, by the relatively sudden ending of the war, to be the generation just too young to have fought.

These experiences led Green's generation to develop a dichotomy of heroism and horror as their reaction to the First World War. Henry Green embodied the dichotomy into the form of his writing, producing a complexity and ambiguity of expression. This thesis argues that the dichotomy of heroism and horror as a reaction to war, learned by Green at school, present, in varying degrees, in the writings of the contemporary writers that form his generation, can be found in the form and subject matter of all his novels and his interim autobiography, *Pack My Bag*. The dichotomy remains constant, deriving its force of expression from the changing historical context in which Green's writings were published, similar to a musical motif, which remains constant as the underlying chords change.

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Preface

This thesis will examine the extent to which war is reflected and represented in Henry Green's nine novels and interim autobiography. War, in the context of this thesis, is a general concept - comprising preparation, experience on combat and home fronts, and aftermath – arrived at from a specific historical process experienced by Green and his generation. This historical process takes Green's generation from their childhood during the First World War, experienced whilst at private preparatory school; to their adolescence during the war's aftermath, experienced whilst at public school and Oxbridge; and into their adult years - comprising the inter-war years and the growing anticipation of death in a second world war, their experience of that war and its aftermath. These experiences led Green's generation to desire a paradise of war heroism lost whilst simultaneously recoiling from the horrors of the First World War as represented in the poems, novels and memoirs of combatants such as Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon. George Orwell, a contemporary of Green's described their generation both writing off the First World War as 'meaningless slaughter' and being 'conscious of the vastness of the experience they had missed.'¹ This dichotomy produced an ambiguous stance towards war, which is foregrounded in both the content and style of Green's writing. This foregrounding of war-influenced ambiguity positions Green as the foremost representative of his generation.

¹ George Orwell, 1940, "My Country Right or Left" from Orwell, 1968, *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell: Volume 1 An Age Like This 1920-1940*, p.589 (Penguin, 1970).

Green published nine novels and an interim autobiography between 1926 and 1952. This thesis concentrates upon these texts but also refers to Green's other writings - mostly literary journalism and some short stories published in literary journals during the Second World War. The novels and the interim autobiography represent a chronology of the influence of the twentieth century's two world wars. They move through a historical process determined by these wars: from the aftermath of the First World War, through the anticipation and actuality of the Second World War to the early post-war years in London. Green was aware that he represented his time in his writing, telling Terry Southern, 'After all, no one knows what he is like, he just tries to give some sort of picture of his time'.² Green's early novels were published in milestone years in the transition from First to Second World War: *Blindness*, published in 1926, the year of the General Strike; *Living*, published in 1929, the year of the Wall Street Crash; *Party Going*, published in 1939, the year of the declaration of the Second World War. In these novels a chronology can be traced leading up to the Second World War. *Pack My Bag* (1940), Green's interim autobiography, revisits, and reinforces, the chronology of the first three novels. *Caught* (1943) takes the timeline from the outbreak of war to the Blitz; *Loving* (1945) represents the war immediately after the Blitz had ended; *Back* (1946), represents the war coming to an end in the latter half of 1944. In the years following the Second World War Green struggled to find first a new subject in *Concluding* (1948), then a new style in *Nothing* (1950) and *Doting* (1952). These last three novels represent the unsatisfactory nature,

² Terry Southern, 1958, "The Art of Fiction XXII - Henry Green" *Paris Review* 5, Summer 1958 (in Plimpton, George (ed.), *Writers at Work: The Paris Review Interviews Second Series*, p.207 (Secker and Warburg, 1981)).

for Green's generation, of life in England in the years immediately after the Second World War. Thereafter Green's writing dried up. For the last twenty-one years of his life he published only a few short pieces in magazines, mostly literary journalism.

Green was not a combatant. His experience of the First World War was as a child at school and home. At school he was prepared for action in the war through rifle practice and military drill. His family home became a convalescent hospital for wounded officers where, during school holidays, he could listen to these soldiers telling their war experience. His experience of the Second World War was as a fireman in the Auxiliary Fire service (AFS). However, Green did experience war, vicariously as a child and on the home front as an adult. My thesis builds upon the generally accepted notion that wars do not end cleanly on the day that peace is declared, to take a wider definition of war than simple combat experience and its effects upon soldiers and political arrangements in the aftermath of a war. There have been many studies, in recent years, of the influence of this century's two world wars upon English culture. For example: Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (1975) and *Wartime: Understanding and Behaviour in the Second World War* (1989); Modris Eksteins, *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age* (1989); Samuel Hynes, *A War Imagined: The First World War and English Culture* (1992); and Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning* (1995). Samuel Hynes describes the impact of war as I consider it affected Green's generation:

All wars divide - divide not only *our* side from *theirs* but soldiers from civilians, men from women, one generation from another, war-lovers from war-haters. These divisions don't end with the war's last shot: they continue into the following years, and constitute those other conflicts, the wars after the war. These war-created divisions gave English culture of the Twenties its characteristic tone ... The war was a presence in imaginations, even those that had not experienced the war

directly; and it was a presence in society, dividing, separating, imposing oppositions.³

The war combatant who still appears to be living the war in peace time has been a staple character in novels since the First World War, be it modernist high literature: Septimus Warren Smith from the First World War in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), popular literature: Lucien from the Second World War in Nigel Balchin's *My Own Executioner* (1945); or detective fiction: Arnold Cockerell & Edward Langdon-Davies from the Second World War in John Lawton's *Old Flames* (1996). I would argue that a similar effect - of being so influenced by war to continue living it into peacetime - can be observed in those for whom vicarious experience of war at school and actual experience of its aftermath spanned their formative childhood, adolescent and early adult years. As Green pointed out, 'everyone under the age of forty and in some cases many for the rest of their lives are influenced by what they went through at school'.⁴

Shared vicarious experience of the First World War whilst at private preparatory school, its aftermath whilst at public school and Oxbridge, and adult anticipation and experience of the Second World War, formed a distinct generation of English writers. This generation includes Henry Green (born 1905), Anthony Powell (born 1905), Graham Greene (born 1904), Evelyn Waugh (born 1903), George Orwell (born 1903), Cyril Connolly (born 1904), Christopher Isherwood (born 1904), John Lehmann (born 1907), W.H. Auden (born 1907). These writers were educated at private preparatory schools during the First World War. They entered public schools as the war was

³ Samuel Hynes, 1990, *A War Imagined: The First World War and English Culture*, p.337 (Pimlico, 1992).

ending. With the exception of Orwell, they moved on to university – Oxbridge - at a time when the horror of the First World War was being narrated in a wave of published memoirs, novels and collections of poetry. Throughout this thesis I will refer to this group of English writers as Green's generation, an umbrella term taking in those who had been prepared by their schools to fight in the First World War but just too young to have had combat experience in Orwell's description, a description that encompasses the general and specific definitions of war for Green's generation:

...the 'just too young' had been trained for war. Most of the English middle class are trained for war from the cradle onwards ... Even before my public-school O.T.C. I had been in a private-school cadet corps. On and off, I have been toting a rifle ever since I was ten, in preparation not only for war but for a particular kind of war, a war in which the guns rise to a frantic orgasm of sound, and at the appointed moment you clamber out of the trench, breaking your nails on the sandbags, and stumble across mud and wire into the machine-gun barrage.⁵

This generation does not exclusively comprise the group of English male writers that I listed at the beginning of this paragraph. However, it does exclude generations too young to have had vicarious experience of the First World War at school.

The generation that immediately follows Green and his contemporaries had a simpler view of war, tending to despise Brooke and praise Sassoon and Owen. This generation

brought up on the anti-war feeling engendered by the aftermath of the First World War, a generation that knew the poetry of Wilfred Owen

⁴ Henry Green, 1940 *Pack My Bag*, p.162 (Hogarth, 1992).

⁵ Orwell, *Collected Volume 1*, pp. 589-590.

and Siegfried Sassoon and had read *All Quiet on the Western Front* was deeply pacifist in feeling.⁶

Stephen Spender (born 1909), just young enough to be a member of this later generation, does not share the ambiguity of Green's generation. He recorded his perception of a historical process forming a distinct generation reacting unambiguously to contemporary events:

Perhaps, after all, the qualities which distinguished us from the writers of the previous decade lay not in ourselves, but in the events to which we reacted. These were unemployment, economic crisis, nascent fascism, approaching war, which I have described. The older writers were reacting in the 'twenties to the exhaustion and hopelessness of a Europe in which the old régimes were falling to pieces. We were a 'new generation', but it took me some time to appreciate the meaning of this phrase. It amounted to meaning that we had begun to write in circumstances strikingly different from those of our immediate predecessors and that a consciousness of this was shown in our writing. According to this familiar use of the phrase 'new generation', every important historic change produces its generation of young talent whose sensitive reactions to a new set of circumstances separate their work from what has gone before. In this century, generation succeeds generation with a rapidity which parallels the development of events. The Georgian poets were a pre-1914 generation. The war of 1914-18 produced a generation of War Poets, many of whom were either killed by the war or unable to develop beyond it. The 1920's were a generation to themselves. We were the 1930's.⁷

There were members of Green's generation who concentrated on the horror of war, diverting admiration of war heroism into anti-establishment political commitment, most famously in W.H. Auden's phrase from his poem *Spain*, 'the necessary murder'. Auden and, to some degree, Isherwood are the most notable exponents of a political attempt to transcend the dichotomy of horror and heroism amongst Green's

⁶ David Daiches "Whose war is it anyway?", *London Review of Books*, vol. 17 no. 16, 24th August 1995 p. 22.

⁷ Stephen Spender, 1953, *World Within World*, pp.119-120 (Readers Union).

generation.⁸ However, these writers, when faced with the reality of a new world war, emigrated to the USA.

As Samuel Hynes points out, any definition of war is subjective, defined not only by time but also cultural positioning:

It is not true, as is sometimes assumed, that a general wartime enthusiasm for war and its values was overwhelmed and replaced at the war's end by a total disillusionment that informs and defines English culture of the Twenties. Rather, both existed throughout the decade - two cultures, separate and mistrustful of each other, a conservative culture that clung to and asserted traditional values, and a counter-culture, rooted in rejection of the war and its principles.⁹

Green's generation spanned both the cultures that Hynes identifies while also being influenced by a third culture informed and defined by a belief that the war had been fought to sweep away a decadent pre-war culture, a culture most famously expressed in the war poetry of Rupert Brooke. The influence of Brooke's attitude to the war can be found in the early writings of Green's generation, for example Brian Howard's poem "To the Young Writers and Artists Killed in the War: 1914-18", published in *The Eton Candle* (1922). John Lehmann who published a biography of Brooke

⁸ Whilst Orwell pursued a left-wing political course he did not attempt to turn his back on the horror of war. He commented on writers of his generation who simultaneously condemned the horror of the First World War whilst idealizing the republican cause in the Spanish Civil War: 'The thing that, to me, was truly frightening about the war in Spain was not such violence as I witnessed, nor even the party feuds behind the lines, but the immediate reappearance in left-wing circles of the mental atmosphere of the Great War', Orwell, 1940, *Inside the Whale*, p.38 (Penguin, 1982). Orwell was 'convinced that part of the reason for the fascination that the Spanish Civil War had for people of about my age was that it was so like the Great War' (Orwell, *Collected Volume 1*, p.590).

⁹ Hynes, *War*, p.283.

demonstrates the lasting effect of Brooke upon Green's generation.¹⁰ Lehmann, in another work, aligns Brooke with the structure of feeling in relation to the war that I identify in Green's generation:

Brooke was a highly sensitive and intelligent young man; and it is difficult to conceive that, if he had not been killed by sun-stroke and blood-poisoning, and had survived the Gallipoli massacre to fight in the war of attrition on the Western Front, he would not have written poetry so far removed from that of Sassoon and Owen.¹¹

The years between the First and Second World Wars, as represented in Green's writing, can be divided into the following periods: the after-war,¹² that is the immediate aftermath of the First World War lasting from the Armistice of 1918 to the General Strike of 1926;¹³ the period of optimism between the General Strike and the Wall Street Crash; and the 1930s comprising the Depression and the approaching certainty of the Second World War.

Green's generation expected to fight in the First World War as, once it settled into a trench war of attrition, the war was expected to last for decades:

Even in September 1918 Northcliffe, the great newspaper proprietor, and presumably a well-informed man, said to one of his subordinates: 'None of us will live to see the end of the war.'¹⁴

¹⁰ John Lehmann, 1980, *Rupert Brooke: His Life and His Legend* (Quartet, 1981).

¹¹ John Lehmann, 1982, *The English Poets of the First World War*, p.28 (Thames and Hudson, 1984).

¹² The term is Orwell's, given to George Bowling, a First World War combatant in Orwell, 1939, *Coming up for Air*, p. 149, (Penguin, 1983)

¹³ This dating is used by Wyndham Lewis: 'I find a good way of dating after the war is to take the General Strike, 1926, as the next milestone. I call 'post-war' between the War and the General Strike.' (Wyndham Lewis, 1937, *Blasting and Bombardiering*, quoted in Hynes, *War*, p.418).

¹⁴ A.J.P. Taylor, 1963, *The First World War*, p.211 (Penguin, 1966).

Combatants also experienced this belief.

One of the first ideas that established themselves in my enquiring mind was the prevailing sense of the endlessness of the war. No one here appeared to conceive any end to it¹⁵

It was also experienced by Green's generation, fuelled by their schools preparing them to fight and the romanticised image of the war represented in boys' popular fiction.¹⁶

Harold Acton recorded in his autobiography,

During my second half at Eton I wrote home: 'I am overwhelmed by the news of Peace, but can it possibly last?' A state of war had come to seem as normal as recurrent thunder and lightning.¹⁷

Green, like most members of his generation, would have experienced the mixture of disappointment and relief at the war's sudden and unexpected end, and would be receptive to the post-war reaction against the war. The first reaction, which lasted in Britain more or less up to 1926, the year of the General Strike, was to commemorate the war as a means of signifying its close. These commemorations, as Jay Winter points out in *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning* usually either portrayed the heroism and valour of war to give meaning to the sacrifice or provided some means of closure of grief. Both types of commemoration signified the end of a war in which Green had been prepared to fight, increasing his psychological need to keep the war alive. After 1926, the publication of novels, poems and memoirs that dwelt upon the reality of war, such as Edmund Blunden's *Undertones of War* (1928), Erich Maria Remarque's

¹⁵ Edmund Blunden, 1928, *Undertones of War*, pp. 29-30 (Collins, 1978).

¹⁶ See Michael Paris, "Boys Books and the Great War", *History Today* Volume 50 (11), November 2000, pp.44-49 for a review of the romanticised image of war in boys' popular fiction prior to 1914 and at the sustaining appeal of the genre in spite of the realities of the First World War.

¹⁷ Harold Acton, 1948, *Memoirs of an Aesthete*, p. 84 (Methuen).

All Quiet on the Western Front (1929) and Robert Graves' *Goodbye to all That* (1929), unleashed a sense of the horror of war to which Green would have been receptive, given his childhood experience of war. The sense of heroism persisted after 1926. For example Aldous Huxley had one of his characters express liberation through the heroism of war in *Point Counter Point* (1928):

'And yet,' Mrs Quarles had concluded after a pause, 'in a certain way I wish he had gone to the War. Oh, not for fire-eating patriotic reasons. But, because, if one could have guaranteed that he wouldn't have been killed or mangled, it would have been so good for him - violently good, perhaps; painfully good; but still good. It might have smashed his shell for him and sent him free from his own prison. Emotionally free; for his intellect's free enough already.'¹⁸

The Armistice marks the beginning of the after-war for Green's generation through creating an abrupt end to the likelihood that they would fight in the war and the beginning of a search for substitutes for war. It was during this time that Green's generation, as represented by Green in *Pack My Bag*, came to perceive war as masculine and peace, by contrast, as feminine. Furthermore, the feminine, following the official encouragement of women to return to the home, became associated with domesticity. Hence disruption of domesticity became associated with war, a theme that Green explores in his war novels, *Caught*, *Loving* and *Back*.

The General Strike signified the end of the after-war for Green's generation. It allowed them to briefly replay the war as a conflict between pre-war and post-war values. Hence there was a brief period of optimism between the General Strike and the Wall Street Crash of 1929. Keith Laybourn, for example, provides socio-economic evidence for a relatively high degree of optimism between 1926 and 1929 as

¹⁸ Aldous Huxley, 1928, *Point Counter Point*, p.233 (Penguin, 1967).

relationships improved between employers and employees, signified by an eight-fold reduction in strike days lost contrasted with a return to pre-1926 strike levels between 1929 and 1932.¹⁹ The Wall Street Crash marked the beginning of a severe and lengthy recession and, thus, the end of the optimism produced by the resolution of after-war conflict and disorder signified by the General Strike.

I have a personal interest in both Green and the vicarious experience of war. I feel a strong kinship both to Green's method of writing - having written this thesis whilst working full time in an office - and his experience - having been brought up in the aftermath of the Second World War and the expectation of death in a nuclear Third World War. I first read Henry Green in the Picador triple editions published in Britain in the late 1970s.²⁰ I was attracted to Green's prose style, the way in which it slipped and slid around the subject, adding a sense of ambiguity and complexity to the representation of the ordinary and the everyday. This reflected, to a large degree, the life I then lead. I could empathise with the split in personality implied by Green's two names: Henry Vincent Yorke pursuing a full-time office career while Henry Green pursued his career as a writer. However, it was not until I read Green's interim autobiography *Pack My Bag* (1939) that I realized we also shared vicarious experience of war. I grew up in the shadow of the Second World War, its mixture of heroism – fighting against totalitarianism – and horror – the Concentration Camps, the bombing of cities - as represented in countless comics, films and novels. Overlaid upon this was the expectation of the Cold War turning hot, and a widespread questioning of authority, determined at least in part by the expectation of a nuclear war, as

¹⁹ See Keith Laybourn, 1993, *The General Strike of 1926*, p.111 (University of Manchester Press).

²⁰ *Living, Loving, Party Going* (Picador, 1978); *Nothing, Doting, Blindness* (Picador, 1979).

represented in books such as Jeff Nuttall's *Bomb Culture* (1968). Green grew up with a similar questioning of authority in the 1920s, determined by the memory of The First World War, as represented, for example, in war poems, such as: Siegfried Sassoon's "The General" or Wilfred Owen's "Dulce et Decorum est". This sense of shared experience has influenced my research and writing of this thesis.

I must mention one final similarity between Green and me as this has determined the research and writing of my thesis. Green wrote during lunch hours and evenings whilst working full time in an office. I, too, work full time in an office and have fitted my research and writing into the nooks and crannies of office life. I also frequently travel abroad on business. Hence much of my work on this thesis has been done on aeroplanes and in hotel rooms. This has led me to concentrate on a close reading of Green's writings and a comparative analysis of Green with his contemporaries and historians of the period covered by Green's writings. I have not spent vast tracts of time in research libraries. Although this approach has been forced upon me by necessity it is in keeping with the spirit of Green's writing and has allowed me to stay close to Green through sharing and adapting his writing practice. It has also given me time and space to consider Green as the foremost representative of the influence of war upon the writing of his generation.

My thesis, then, will examine the influence of this definition of war upon a specific cultural product: the writing of Henry Green. In order to do this I will undertake a close study of the texts that Green produced - of their structures, of the ways in which they work where I believe that these are determined by the influence of war. In this thesis I have used the paperback editions of Green's novels recently published by The Harvill Press and the paperback edition of *Pack My Bag* published by The Hogarth Press in 1992. All page numbers refer to these editions.

Given the ambiguity and complexity that Green so readily deploys in his writing it is often necessary to resort to the writings of his contemporaries and of historians to fully interpret Green's writings. This is not a definitive reading of Green's writings but a study of the ways in which war has influenced his writings. I intend to produce a detailed reading of the relationships between war and Green's writing, interpreting Green through this reading. Other readings, of course, may produce other interpretations. Through my reading, I will argue that Green is the foremost representative of his generation in that he embodies the dichotomy of their reaction to war - of heroism and horror - into the content and style of his writing. In so doing he produced novels and an interim autobiography, which, rich in complexity and ambiguity, provide a language for imagining war for his generation. Edward Stokes says of *Loving*, 'Henry Green does not tell us; he is content to present only what Raunce himself says in all its contradictions, and to permit the reader to interpret for himself'.²¹ Green's ambivalence, representative of the ambivalence of his generation, does 'permit the reader to interpret for himself.' I have assumed this liberty in my analysis of all Green's writings whilst doing my best to acknowledge my subjective position.

²¹ Edward Stokes, 1959, *The Novels of Henry Green*, p.55 (Hogarth).

Chapter 1: *Pack My Bag*: shame remembered

Pack My Bag (1940), Green's interim autobiography, contains in its title the mental journey that Green's generation undertook from the First World War through the inter-war years to anticipation of death in the Second World War. As Sebastian Yorke points out, these 'were the last words uttered by the philosopher Bradley on his death bed'.¹ The notion of a journey, suggested by packing a bag, evokes Auden and Isherwood's contemporary text *Journey to a War* (1938), indicating the destination of the journey implied by *Pack My Bag* and recalling the implied destination of the stalled travellers in Green's third novel *Party Going* (1939). The starting point of this journey, the First World War, is evoked through the echo of the soldiers' song "Pack Up Your Troubles in Your Old Kit-Bag".² This military link is emphasized by the imperative mood of 'Pack', which suggests a military order. This, in turn, suggests both the heavy pack³ that First World War soldiers carried into attack and that the bag is being packed in the present of military necessity. *Pack My Bag* delivers, what its title suggests, a complex narrative about Green's changing perceptions, both conscious

¹ Sebastian Yorke, "Introduction", *Pack My Bag*, p.v (Hogarth, 1992).

² For example: 'Basil Liddell Hart's 9th Battalion of the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry marched up to the battle of the Somme, in July 1916, eight hundred strong, singing "Pack Up Your Troubles in Your Old Kit-Bag." A few days later seventy men and four officers marched back. Again they sang "Pack Up Your Troubles"', Modris Eksteins, 1989, *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age*, p.220 (Bantam).

³ 'Every man carries two hundred rounds of ammunition, three hand-grenades, three sandbags, wire-cutters, rockets, and flares, a sign-board and forty-eight hours rations', Frank Hawkings, 1974, *From Ypres to Cambrai the diary of an infantryman 1914-1919*, p.96 (The Elmfield Press).

and unwitting, of the First World War, written at a time when a new war was approaching. In so doing it summarizes Green's previous novels and anticipates the novels he was still to write, while rooting Green's beliefs about war in the fertile ground of the prolonged after-war adolescence of his generation lived in the lengthening shadows of the First World War.

Pack My Bag begins by stating the disturbance of war for Green's generation:

I was born a mouthbreaker with a silver spoon in 1905, three years after one war and nine before another, too late for both. But not too late for the war which seems to be coming upon us now and that is a reason to put down what comes to mind before one is killed, and surely it would be asking much to pretend one had a chance to live.⁴

The first sentence merges destruction and good fortune into an ambivalent expression that could be loss or relief or guilt at having missed death in The First World War.

Later Green records that the feelings he believed he should have had towards death were haunting him so that what he now recalls 'is shame remembered, a run across familiar country' (p.149). This disturbed country was familiar to other writers of his generation. Cyril Connolly recalls that at school during The First World War, 'The example of brothers or cousins now in the trenches was then produced to shame us.'⁵ Christopher Isherwood observes: 'we young writers of the middle 'twenties were all suffering, more or less subconsciously, from a feeling of shame that we hadn't been old enough to take part in the European war.'⁶ Shame arising from their experience of The First World War was both central to this generation - just too young to fight in

⁴ Henry Green, 1940, *Pack My Bag*, p.1 (Hogarth, 1992). Hereafter page references from *Pack My Bag* will appear in the body of the text of this chapter.

⁵ Cyril Connolly, 1938, *Enemies of Promise*, p.162 (Andre Deutsch. 1973).

⁶ Christopher Isherwood, 1938, *Lions and Shadows*, p.74 (Pegasus, 1969).

The First World War - and, for the most part, outside the range of this generation's conscious awareness, as Isherwood indicates by locating shame predominantly in the subconscious. In Green's case shame is expressed, for the most part, ambivalently, a mode of expression that Green adopted from an early age, as he wrote to Nevill Coghill, a young Oxford don, in 1925, '...you know me sufficiently by now to know how incapable I am to express anything directly'.⁷ This mode of expression creates the need for interpretation. Anthony Powell engages with the opposing phenomena of 'a mouthbreaker' and 'a silver spoon' to conclude that '*Pack My Bag* constantly emphasizes an interior tumult'.⁸ In Isherwood's case, a sense of shame as interior tumult is more directly expressed, and linked to war. He has a schoolboy, Eric, in *The Memorial* (1932) remember ignoring his friend's suggestion that they join up, then fantasize about having died heroically after attending a memorial service for the fallen - amongst them his father - before dismissing it as 'bloody trash'.⁹ In *Lions and Shadows* (1938) Isherwood attributes inner turmoil to himself as first person narrator:

"War," in this purely neurotic sense, meant The Test. The test of your courage, of your maturity, of your sexual prowess: "Are you really a Man?" Subconsciously, I believe, I longed to be subjected to this test; but I also dreaded failure. I dreaded failure so much - indeed, I was so certain that I *should* fail - that, consciously, I denied my longing to be tested, altogether. I denied my all-consuming morbid interest in the idea of "war." I pretended indifference. The War, I said, was obscene, not even thrilling, a nuisance, a bore.¹⁰

⁷ Letter to Nevill Coghill, 1925, Eton College Library.

⁸ Anthony Powell, 1976, *To Keep the Ball Rolling: Memoirs, vol.1 Infants of the Spring*, p.66 (Heinemann).

⁹ Christopher Isherwood, 1932, *The Memorial*, p.127 (Methuen paperback, 1988).

¹⁰ Isherwood, *Lions*, p.76.

Green writes of the shadow that the First World War cast over what came after.

This is a historical process, not necessarily unique to the First World War:

Coming after the great time, coming on the scene when everything is compromising or slowly degenerating, one may yearn to have been part of an original action, a spectator of the first time. In Behn, as in Milton, such a yearning is often ultimately expressed as a yearning for a time of primitive innocence.¹¹

The First World War was perceived by Green's generation as the 'great time' because, at school during, and after, the war, they had been led to believe that it was supremely important. Green describes 'the habit preachers grew into when they came down to school chapels, a habit which lasted well into what we called the Peace, of reminding boys every Sunday of the fathers, brothers and uncles who had died for them' (p.79). Orwell states, 'As the war fell back into the past, my particular generation, those who had been 'just too young', became conscious of the vastness of the experience they had missed. You felt yourself a little less than a man, because you had missed it.'¹² Green records that he went up to Oxford 'soon after the fabulous generation ... who fought in the war' (p.192).

Green enters into a dialogue with the feeling of coming after 'the great time', which is more ambivalently expressed than that of other members of his generation. The narrator of this dialogue, the adult Green, is representing the general historical process of coming after 'the great time', which he applies, to particular situations from childhood, adolescence and young adulthood. For Green, recalling his university life

¹¹ Margaret Anne Doody, "Very very she", *London Review of Books*, 22nd April 1993, p.5.

¹² George Orwell, 1940, "My Country Right or Left", from Orwell, 1968, *The Collected Essays Journalism and Letters of George Orwell: Volume 1 An Age Like This 1920-1940*, p.589 (Penguin, 1970).

at Oxford, the ability to start from the general is what distinguishes an adult from an adolescent view of the world:

this was the blessed time of summing up what we imagined we were to find when the world was to fall at our feet upon our entry. We talked forward from the particular to the general whereas we are wise enough now after dinner when there are no women present to talk back, instancing the way friends have changed ... (p.205).

In interpreting Green's ambivalent expressions of his relationship to war it is his contemporaries, more ready than is Green to represent the particular, who provide much of the 'instancing'. They tended to write within the shadow cast by the First World War, so their work is full of detail about the war. Green's tendency is to take a step back and write of the shadow, providing less detail about the war but more detail on a sense of life bereft after the war for Green's generation. He was also aware that the shadow was about to be diminished by the Second World War. Indeed the first sentence of *Pack My Bag* demotes the First World War from the unique status of 'Great' to being first within a sequence, a process that Green emphasizes by refusing to name it.

Green's ambivalence encompasses also the boundaries between prose fiction and autobiography. He writes that *Pack My Bag* would have been a novel had there been 'time to write anything else' (p.1). This ambivalence, this blurring of boundaries between prose fiction and autobiography is found also in Isherwood's novelistic autobiography, *Lions and Shadows* (1938) and Stephen Spender's contention that in the 1930s he was an 'autobiographer restlessly searching for forms in which to express the stages of my development.'¹³ In *Pack My Bag* Green states that it is his intention

¹³ Stephen Spender, 1953, *World Within World*, p.119 (Readers Union).

to seek an answer to 'how one changed from boy to man, how one lived, things and people and one's attitude' (p.1). As Francis Hart points out, 'Every autobiography can apparently and usefully be viewed in some degree as a drama of intention ... The total emergent reciprocity of situation and activity and pattern is what is formative or distinctive.'¹⁴ There is a similar pattern in these autobiographical novels and novelish autobiographies written by Green's generation during the 1930s, a representation of the shame of not having fought in the First World War. The drama of intention in *Pack My Bag*, as a novelish autobiography, creates, in effect, a late 1930s *Great Expectations*. The two texts share a three part structure of growth through childhood, adolescence and adulthood, and the theme of having expectations that will be denied.

Green begins - having predicted his death in war, given this as the reason for writing an autobiography, and essayed some Proustian thoughts on the subjectivity of memory - with childhood innocence. This starts with his pre-school childhood, where he valued the eccentricities of adults - such as his mother shooting at mangel wurzels - while finding that adults could not enter into a childhood world containing such wonders as 'the coal cellar door, a wooden frame covered with wirenetting, and when I had discovered it and went to warn Poole it was there so full of treasure and menaces, he said he had always known. I suppose he had not much use for children' (p.2). It was preparatory school which gave a more complete experience of childhood innocence because, containing 'purer types, more perfect examples of liars, thieves and crooks' (p.13), it was a place where lying, theft and criminality had not yet

¹⁴ Francis R. Hart. "Notes from an Anatomy of Modern Autobiography", in Ralph Cohen (ed.), *New Directions in Literary History*, quoted in Avrom Fleischman, 1983, *Figures of Autobiography: The Language of Self-Writing in Victorian and Modern England*, p.10 (University of California Press).

attained an aura of evil.¹⁵ This state of schoolboy innocence is linked to war for 'when war was declared in 1914 our hysteria became a fair copy of what could be found outside the grounds only larger, we displayed it in purer form' (p.35). It is the experience of the schoolboys, not school that is linked to war, and, because it is here that Green locates innocence, away from parents, in the nooks and crannies that evade the control of the school and its headmaster, innocence also becomes linked to war.

Green's linking of school experience, innocence and war is characteristic of the generation that just missed the war. Isherwood, for instance, writes of W.H. Auden's sense of austerity. Innocence, in the sense that it is depicted in *Pack My Bag*, is primitive, rejecting the civilized comforts that distract from purity, in keeping with the sense of primitive innocence engendered by the feeling of 'coming after the great time'. Hence Green states that he always keeps his rooms 'bare of possessions' (p.175). Isherwood links Auden's austerity to the First World War and school, through being mixed up with his 'feelings about the heroic Norse literature - his own personal variety of "War"-fixation ... These warriors, with their feuds, their practical jokes, their dark threats conveyed in puns and riddles and deliberate understatements ... I recognized them now: they were the boys at our preparatory school.'¹⁶ Austerity was also a war-determined ideal as expressed by Edmund Gosse at the beginning of the war:

¹⁵ Stephen Spender makes a similar point, in a journal entry dated 5th September 1939, of young men in Weimar Germany: 'Sometimes they let one down - sometimes the poorer ones stole, for example - but there was no Sin', Spender, 1985, *Journals 1939-1983*, p.26 (Faber). Spender links this to post-war passivity growing out of the sense of sorrow which is the response of these young men to the First World War.

¹⁶ Isherwood, *Lions*, p.192.

Our wish for indulgence of every sort, our laxity of manners, our wretched insensitiveness to personal inconvenience, these are suddenly lifted before us in their true guise as the spectres of national decay; and we have risen from the lethargy of our dilettantism to lay them, before it is too late, by the flashing of the unsheathed sword.¹⁷

Green had his own source of war myths - the wounded officers at the convalescent home his family house became in 1917. These officers told of their practical jokes - a gloss of innocence over the horror of war. Practical jokes suggest the childish, a suggestion reinforced by the story Green recalls, combining brutality with toilet humour, of an artillery officer who calculated how to blow up a middle-aged German at his regular morning defecation and succeeded at first attempt.¹⁸ These stories are also linked to school in an oppositional sense because they provide an escape from the authority of boarding school, being told by the 'fresh faces every holidays' (p.60) who became 'heroes to me' (p.68). An innocent perception of war, where heroes fight for ideals, is conflated with the spirit of holiday, an alternative to school, becoming an extended version of war-time school Sundays when, Green remembers, 'we went within earshot of the guns, chattering and happy through loveliness' (p.38).

However, in addition to bringing the spirit of holiday the convalescent soldiers also bring a vivid realisation of mutilation and death in war. As a First World War soldier

¹⁷ Edmund Gosse, 'War and Literature', *Edinburgh Review*, vol. 220 (October 1914), p.313, quoted in Samuel Hynes, 1990, *A War Imagined: The First World War and English Culture*, p. 12 (Pimlico, 1992).

¹⁸ This type of story is corroborated by the memoirs of artillery officers. For example: 'German telephonists were chased by our shrapnel as they repaired their lines around the crudely pink 'Doll's house' by the road, or bathing parties of plump Teutons scattered naked out of the Douve's clear waters', R.B. Talbot Kelly, 1980, *A Subaltern's Odyssey: Memoirs of the Great War 1915-1917*, pp. 78-90 (William Kimber).

recalled, 'I realised vividly now that the real horrors of war were to be seen in the hospitals, not on the battlefield.'¹⁹ Green records his experience of the Air Force officers who 'had been so close to death they had a different view of life' (p.61) and the shell-shocked Australian soldier, who later committed suicide, 'no longer human when he came to us' (p.62). The soldiers provide a powerful contrast between death and life: 'while I lived in this convalescent home in the sort of favoured position a mascot may be in, I was aware of these things I did not know which turned out to be sex and drink and which in fact, as it was war time, were the urge to life down there where we made men well to die' (p.72).

The timing of Green's encounters with these soldiers and their stories is important in the schema of changing perceptions of the First World War revolving around a turning point of the battle of the Somme in July 1916. As Samuel Hynes notes,

By the end of 1916 there was a new realism evident in the ways in which some English men and women thought about the war. It had been going on for more than two years then, and most people had been touched by it - young men they knew, sons or brothers, had been killed or wounded, half a million in the Somme offensive alone.²⁰

Hynes's estimation of the impact of the Somme is supported by eyewitness evidence:

'The Battle of the Somme created the first of the real deserts in the war'.²¹ John Masefield wrote to his wife in October 1916,

We went into a wood, which we will call Chunk-of-Corpse Wood, for its main features were chunks of corpse, partly human, partly tree. There was a cat eating a man's brain, and such a wreck of war as I did never see, and the wounded coming by, dripping blood on the track, and one walked on blood or rotten flesh, and saw bags of men being

¹⁹ John Glubb, 1978, *Into Battle: A Soldier's Diary of the Great War*, p.191 (Cassell).

²⁰ Hynes, *War*, p. 120.

²¹ Talbot Kelly, p.118.

carried to the grave. They were shovelling parts of men into blankets ...
²²

The Somme remained for Green's generation a signifier of the horror of the First World War. For example, the historian A.J.P. Taylor (born 1906), writes in his history of the war:

Idealism perished on the Somme. The enthusiastic volunteers were enthusiastic no longer. They had lost faith in their cause, in their leaders, in everything except loyalty to their fighting comrades. The war ceased to have a purpose. It went on for its own sake, as a contest in endurance. Rupert Brooke had symbolized the British soldier at the beginning of the war. Now his place was taken by Old Bill, a veteran of 1915, who crouched in a shell crater for want of 'a better 'ole to go to'. The Somme set the picture by which future generations saw the First World War: brave helpless soldiers; blundering obstinate generals; nothing achieved. After the Somme men decided the war would go on for ever.²³

The Somme was an important milestone for Green's generation, marking the beginning of their attempt to reconcile heroism and horror:

The English poetry of the First World War can, roughly, be divided into two periods: the early period, from the outbreak of war to about 1916, the time of the Battle of the Somme; and the latter period from 1916 and the Armistice. The two periods are very different in mood. In the earlier period the poets, like the mass of non-combatants (on both sides of the fighting lines) believed in a simple, heroic vision of a struggle for the right, of noble sacrifice for an ideal of patriotism and country. As the war dragged on, and dreams of an early conclusion to the hostilities faded, the mood changed and darkened.²⁴

Two divergent ways of seeing the war, as heroism and horror, come together in *Pack My Bag*. For example Green represents the convalescent officers who were

²² Letter from John Masefield to his wife, 22 October 1916, quoted by Christopher Martin, "British prose writing of the First World War", *Critical Survey*, Volume 2, Number 2, 1990, p.142.

²³ A.J.P. Taylor, 1963, *The First World War*, p. 140 (Penguin, 1966).

²⁴ John Lehmann, 1982, *The English Poets of the First World War*, p.8 (Thames and Hudson, 1984).

'Desperately bored, terrified of going back to France' (p.60) and his schoolboy experience of war ideals of the sweetness of duty and sacrifice, shared with his peers, to whom was 'brought no louder than as seashells echo the blood pounding in ones ears noise of gunfire through our windows all the way from France so that we looked out and thought of death in the sound and this was sweeter to us than rollers tumbling on a beach' (p.36).

A way to resolve this dichotomy of horror and heroism was to differentiate between directing and doing, between authority and experience. This worked for combatants who could retain anti-war views by allocating the responsibility for the war to those in authority. For example Siegfried Sassoon wrote to Robert Graves,

I was passed General Service at Craiglockhart on November 26. The Board asked if I had changed my views on the war, and I said I hadn't, which seemed to cause surprise. However Rivers obtained, previously, an assurance from a high quarter that no obstacles be put in the way of my going back to the sausage machine.²⁵

Craiglockhart was a hospital for shell-shocked officers where Sassoon came under the care of the psychologist W.H.R. Rivers. Sassoon's "views on the war" were set out in a letter published in the *Bradford Pioneer* on July 27 1917, *The Times* and the *Daily Mail* on July 31 1917, and read into the record of the House of Commons on the 30th July. The letter protests that 'a war of defence and liberation, has now become a war of aggression and conquest' and as such is being needlessly prolonged through an act of deception practised upon the soldiers.²⁶ Indeed authority came to be depicted as obstructing experience. In Edmund Blunden's *Undertones of War* (1928): 'the order of

²⁵ Letter to Robert Graves, 7th December 1917, reprinted in Siegfried Sassoon, 1983, *Diaries 1915-1918*, p.196 (Faber).

²⁶ The letter is printed in full in Hynes, *War*, pp. 174-5.

events may be confused, no doubt a reference to the battalion records would right it; yet does it matter greatly? or are not pictures and evocations better than horology?²⁷ In Blunden's narrative, chronology belongs to authority, to those responsible for the war and can be set aside. In the war diary of Enid Bagnold, *A Diary Without Dates* (1918), the representation of her impressions of war as a Voluntary Aid Detachment (VAD) nurse is privileged over the authoritative naming of time and place. Part of the complexity and ambiguity of Green's writing comes from the need to privilege authority over pleasure. This point is picked up by Anthony Powell who identifies in *Pack My Bag* 'the problem (observable in Gertrude Stein's 'straight' autobiographical works) of how, if writing 'experimentally', to make the reader reasonably clear about the facts of the autobiographer's own direct experience, while at the same time forgoing literal description.'²⁸ Powell reads *Pack My Bag* as a setting aside of the authority of literal description to get to direct experience.

Green grants to himself the status of participant schoolboy, and to the school an extreme authoritarianism: 'the leather horse with its jumping board was the useless torture one is put through in fascist states' (p.26); Green recalls being 'punished by our being made to wear coloured buttonholes, one colour meaning I am a thief another something else' (p.15). Valentine Cunningham objects that such references amount to:

a convention among the writing ex-public schoolboys in the '30s that their prep schools and public schools had been prisons, and fascist prisons at that, totalitarian places presided over by militaristic dictators

²⁷ Edmund Blunden, 1928, *Undertones of War*, p. 34 (Collins, 1978).

²⁸ Powell, *Infants*, p.106.

of headmasters who made their pupils wield destructive weapons in the Officers' Training Corps ...²⁹

Taken at a literal level Cunningham's objection is valid. There are clear differences between fascist prisons and schools, however authoritarian the latter may be. Yet there is one important similarity between school - especially the boarding school - and the totalitarian state: both act in loco parentis, the latter by replacing family with state obligations, the state being named as fatherland or motherland. Green's generation used the symbol of totalitarianism to forge a link between school and war via authority. This was in large part determined by their vicarious experience of war whilst at school: 'Now we did no more gym but were drilled instead, no more boxing but dummy bayonet fighting. We formed fours twice a week, we shot with rook rifles on a miniature range' (p.36). 'The rest of my time at St. Wulfric's was spent on a war-time basis. The school thrived; its *raison d'être* apparent in the lengthening Roll of Honour.'³⁰ School and the totalitarian state both elicit a similar emotional response. In *After Midnight* (1937), written by Irmgard Keun, a young German woman with experience of the German Nazi state, the heroine Sanna listens to Göring on the radio:

I still don't know what it is all about, or what they mean. And it's far too dangerous to ask anyone. Judging by things I've picked up from what I've heard and read, I could be either criminal or of chronically unsound mind. Neither of which must come out or I'll be done for. If I'm criminal, I'll go to prison and if I'm of chronically unsound mind they'll operate on me so that I can't get married and have children.³¹

Here is Green being warned against homosexuality by his prep school headmaster, represented as evoking a similar state of apprehension to that experienced by Sanna:

²⁹ Valentine Cunningham, 1988, *British Writers of the Thirties*, p. 79 (Oxford, 1989).

³⁰ Connolly, *Enemies*, p.161.

³¹ Irmgard Keun, 1937, *After Midnight*, pp.57-58 (Sceptre, 1987).

The first day of term we were called in one by one to see him in his study, a room we hardly ever saw. He had started on the school list taking the top boy first and so on down and as he got nearer my own position so my apprehension grew. Those who had seen him would not say what it was about ... by such time as I was called I was in a state I hardly knew what he was saying his face was so grim and it had been so long to wait. I came away from him stupefied with apprehension I did not know of what (p.32).

The link between school and war lasted beyond adolescence. Stephen Spender, recalling how he had imagined the Second World War would be, describes the 'participants in war - a generation then at school, training, if one viewed things in this way, to be shot down by machine guns.'³² Green's generation used school as a symbol of totalitarianism, which in turn was, for them, a symbol of the horror of war, the authority that could be blamed for war. Hence if this was written as a simple equation it would be horror of war = authority, school = authority, therefore school = horror of war. As Isherwood wrote in 1938,

I was rapidly forgetting the inconveniently prosaic truth about my old school. I was deliberately forgetting because "war," which could never under any circumstances be allowed to appear in its own shape, needed a symbol ...³³.

When Green states, 'A private school is a fascist state' (p.18) he uses fascism as representative of an irresistible and mysterious authority that associates school with war. Green describes the headmaster of his prep school during the war who

began by striking terror, then when we had learned his ways so as to avoid his worst outbursts, we respected him until in my case at least I went further and came to reverence him (pp.21-22).

³² Spender, *World*, pp.115-116.

³³ Isherwood, *Lions*, p.77.

The headmaster depicted as dictator and Green as adoring and obedient child conjures a favoured contemporary image in the propaganda of totalitarian states. The dictator as father figure removes responsibility for action from the child. This particular dictatorial father figure, being headmaster of the school that prepared Green for war, can, by association, be made responsible for the horror of war which begins 'by striking terror' but eventually produces respect and reverence. Upon realisation of this, Green, and his generation, can oppose the authority that they perceive to be responsible for the horror of the war.

Public school, cut off from the outside world, became a private sphere for Green's generation in which a war determined conflict between horror and heroism could be continued after the war had officially ended.³⁴ The war ended in Green's first half at public school. Green perceives the end of the war as a release from authority: 'we all thought authority was at an end with the war ... the whole school stayed out after hours without permission, we broke windows, we bought flags and fireworks, we assaulted a master' (pp.99-100). Orwell draws a general conclusion from his particular experience: 'By 1918 everyone under forty was in a bad temper with his elders, and

³⁴ This was not confined to Green's generation. Frank Kermode (born 1919) recalled the school boy insularity, and sense of disappointed waiting, evident in two ex-public school colleagues during war time service in the Royal Navy: 'The other exceptions were the doctor and a midshipman, who had been at Winchester together. These Wykehamists contentedly passed the hours walking the deck together, rarely speaking to anyone else, and then only with an evident effort of tolerance. They admitted to one mild regret ...at their not being involved in the fighting; but Winchester had no doubt hardened them to such disappointments, and anyway, they seemed sure this privation, like that of their schooldays, could only be temporary' (Frank Kermode, "My Mad Captains", *London Review of Books*, vol.17 no.23, 30th November 1995, p.27).

the mood of anti-militarism which followed naturally upon the fighting was extended into a general revolt against orthodoxy and authority.³⁵ It is significant that Orwell ties anti-militarism to opposition to those in authority rather than opposition to the war. Green's initial anti-militarism which followed naturally upon the end of the war led him to research Eton's O.T.C. charter to discover that he could resign. Like Orwell, Green presents this as opposition to authority:

There was no valid argument against me, no war was threatened, we lived then in the paradise of a peace the old fools had dictated. The Colonel only remarked, as is often the case with those in authority, conscious they are being unnaturally reasonable, "what would happen if everyone was like you, just tell me that" (p.158).

Green converts the symbol of fascism, which he has applied to prep school, into a literal rendering as applied to public school: 'I believe the whole system of government in Germany is founded on that evolved through centuries at the greater British public schools' (p.90),³⁶ and labels his public school, Eton, a 'humane concentration camp'. Green's generation at public school, as Green relates in *Pack My Bag*, perceive their continuation of war as a binary opposition: young experience versus old authority. Furthermore authority is represented as masculine - the prep school headmaster, the O.T.C. Colonel, the cult of games and the "hearties" who excel at games: masculine authority is represented by the cult of games, linked to both the masculine ethos of public school and war, for example in Sir Henry Newbolt's "Vitae Lampada" (1908):

³⁵ George Orwell, 1938, *The Road to Wigan Pier*, p.121 (Penguin, 1974).

³⁶ This could also be read as a warning that on the eve of a war against fascist Germany, most of the British political establishment had been through an education that, provided they did not rebel against it, would produce a predisposition towards fascism.

The voice of the schoolboy rallies the ranks:

'Play up! play up! and play the game!' ³⁷

The masculine cult of games associated with unthinking obedience and, hence, unthinking acceptance of war could be opposed with the feminine 'because we and a few like us were no good at games and so there was nothing else for us to do but rebel, they were feminine motions' (p.109). A new binary opposition has been set up opposing masculine authority with the feminine. The feminine becomes endowed with the freedom of imagined experience: 'the boys imagined women as one dreams now at one's desk of a far country unvisited with all its mystery of latitude and space' (p.112). The feminine provides a mode of self expression which masculine authority does not allow:

We were feminine not from perversion, although it is true that we were preoccupied by sex, but from the lack of any other kind of self expression ... we screamed and shrieked rather than laughed and took a sly revenge rather than having it out with boxing gloves as parents will still imagine (p.109).

This is a legacy of the nineteenth century as Duncan Bythell points out:

The ideology of 'separate spheres', with its contingent ideas - 'the angel in the home', 'the sanctity of the family' and the 'cult of

³⁷ The importance of Newbolt in the public school tradition was inculcated at prep school as Connolly recalls: 'our beliefs, if the muse of St. Wulfric's could have voiced them, would have been somewhat as follows: "There is a natural tradition in English poetry, my dear Tim, Chaucer begat Spenser, Spenser begat Shakespeare, Shakespeare begat Milton, Milton begat Keats, Coleridge, Shelley, Wordsworth, and they begat Tennyson who begat Longfellow, Stevenson, Kipling, Quiller-Couch and Sir Henry Newbolt ..."' (Connolly, *Enemies*, p.166).

domesticity' - is now commonly regarded as one of the fundamental social values of nineteenth-century Britain.³⁸

Once Green's generation leaves school their perception of a binary opposition between masculine and feminine becomes associated with a binary opposition between, respectively, war and peace. There was a similar movement amongst women with experience of the war, for example Vera Brittain's conversion of war-found idealism in *Testament of Youth* (1933) to pacifism in the sequence of anti-war essays she wrote for the Peace Pledge Union or the sentiments Helen Zenna Smith gives to the VAD nurse Edwards in her novel *Not So Quiet* (1930):

Our enemies are the politicians we pay to keep us out of war and who are too damned inefficient to do their jobs properly. ... It is time women took a hand. The men are failures . . . this war shows that. Women will be the ones to stop war, you'll see.³⁹

Green explores this movement from masculine authority to feminine domesticity in *Blindness* (1926) where the schoolboy John Haye, forced out of school by a symbolic war wound which has left him blind, enters the feminine domesticity of his family home, run by his stepmother, a hired nurse and his nanny. Separate spheres in Green's writing revolve around peace - which becomes associated with the feminine sphere of a pre-First World War Victorian determined domesticity - and war which becomes associated with the masculine sphere of work and authority. Green explores the post war impact of these separate spheres in *Living* (1929).

Other writers posited an adolescent 'us' against an adult 'them'. Elizabeth Bowen, recalling her memories of the First World War in 1934, sought an explanation for a

³⁸ Duncan Bythell "Women in the Workforce", published in Patrick O'Brien and Ronald Quinalt (eds), 1993, *The Industrial Revolution and British Society* (Cambridge University Press, 1998).

³⁹ Helen Zenna Smith, 1930, *Not So Quiet*, p.55 (Virago, 1988).

separate and privileged position of adolescence in the post-war world in a seal of approval given to adolescent behaviour by the war:

the whole world's behaviour seemed to be travestying our own: everywhere, everyone was behaving as we were all, at our ages, most anxious not to behave. Things were being written and said constantly that would have damned any one of us: the world seemed to be bound up in a tragic attack of adolescence and there seemed no reason why we should ever grow up, since moderation in behaviour became impossible.⁴⁰

Spender represented the years in between the wars as a time of adolescent uncertainty, dissolving the solid authority of the adult world:

I thought of public events as happening more or less incalculably, as the result of clashes of interests, economic factors, the influence of outstanding personalities in political life. The future was always uncertain: and this made it unreal to me ... As all political events, solid as they might seem today, appeared to liquefy in the uncertainty of tomorrow, it seemed to me enough that I should preserve a guileless attitude in relation to them.⁴¹

Connolly formulated the 'The Theory of Permanent Adolescence'⁴². Another writer, Herbert Read, with experience of the war as a combatant, believed that the post-war world was undergoing 'a crisis of adolescence, of a young world that must now break through the parent-bondage and test its own independent virility.'⁴³

Well before its end the First World War became a phenomenon so vast in scale that it became impossible to envisage it in its entirety: 'What the infantryman in France knew about the war as a whole was seldom worth knowing, and we had little time or

⁴⁰ Elizabeth Bowen, in Graham Greene (ed.), 1934, *The Old School*, pp. 43-4 (Oxford University Press, 1984).

⁴¹ Spender, *World*, p.115.

⁴² Connolly, *Enemies*, p.253.

⁴³ Herbert Read, 1940, *Annals of Innocence and Experience*, p.10 (Faber, 1946).

taste for studying the probable effect upon us of events beyond the skyline of immediate orders'.⁴⁴ Orwell worked the sense of being dwarfed by the vastness of war into a general literary theory:

If one looks at the books of reminiscence written about the war of 1914-18, one notices that nearly all that have remained readable after a lapse of time are written from a passive, negative angle. They are the records of something completely meaningless, a nightmare happening in a void. That was not actually the truth about the war, but it was the truth about the individual reaction. The soldier advancing into a machine-gun barrage or standing waist-deep in a flooded trench knew only that here was an appalling experience in which he was all but helpless. He was likelier to make a good book out of his helplessness and his ignorance than out of a pretended power to see the whole thing in perspective.⁴⁵

As belief in omniscience declined so did belief in the possibility of objectivity. Even 'one's own autobiography' could not be considered objective as it operated within the post-war convention of subjectivity that Bowen applies to her memories of school: 'Memory is, as Proust has it, so oblique and selective that no doubt I see my school days through a subjective haze.'⁴⁶ As Green puts it, 'what does come back, has been over-painted and retouched enough to make it an unreliable account of what used to be' (p.4).

There was an increasingly widespread belief as the war progressed, especially amongst the troops, that newspaper reports of the war were deliberately misleading:

Don't believe the newspapers. In the fighting of April 23-24th the Division took getting on for 1000 prisoners. Incidentally, my own Brigade (alone) had about that number of casualties. The battalion which most distinguished itself lost 10 officers killed, and 5 wounded. I don't say this to depress you, but because I don't want you to be

⁴⁴ Blunden, p.165.

⁴⁵ George Orwell, 1940, *Inside the Whale*, pp.45-6 (Penguin, 1982).

⁴⁶ Bowen in Greene (ed.), *Old School*, p. 50.

mislead by the papers. We all hate the War Correspondents far more than we hate the Germans. For it is more blessed to be misled than to be misleading.⁴⁷

This feeling of wishing to be separated from expressions of falsehood, to maintain one's own individual register of the true, appeared in post-war realisations of the extent of war-time propaganda, of the extent to which lies were taken for truth. Green uses this to associate himself with war via the imagined experience of sex:

the tale of Germans being so short of fats they boiled down their own dead with ours to make food. This lie which we took for truth gave me exactly those awed feelings I had when we talked of sex. Sex was a dread mystery ... We felt there might almost be some connection between what the Germans were said to have done and this mysterious urgency we did not feel and which was worse than eating human fats ... (p.43)⁴⁸

Green is describing how childhood exposure to war-time propaganda taught him to conflate lies with truth and sex with horror and how these conflations became connected such that sex could become equated with lying and 'dread mystery', an approximation of the horror of war. In his war-time novels Green links adultery with war through disruption of the peace of domesticity and the associated need to lie.

Green acknowledges a contribution made by his social class to the poor health of after-war society through the propaganda that his class promoted: 'In the war people in our walk of life entertained all sorts and conditions of men with a view to self-

⁴⁷ Lt. E.F. Chapman, letter to his mother, 7th May 1917, (Imperial War Museum).

⁴⁸ Paul Fussell offers an explanation of this propaganda story in the subjective interpretation of a German phrase: 'The legend probably originated in an intentional British mistranslation of the phrase Kadaver Anstalt on a captured but routine German administrative order about sending all available cadavers - in German animal remains - to an installation in the rear to be reduced to tallow', Paul Fussell, 1975, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, p.116 (Oxford University Press).

preservation to keep the privileges we set such store by, and which are illusory, after those to whom we were kind had won the war for us' (p.64). After the war kindness was overshadowed by economic reality: 'of those unemployed between the ages of thirty and thirty-four in Britain at the end of the twenties, 80 percent were ex-serviceman'⁴⁹. In one of the rare uses of dates in *Pack My Bag*, Green describes the slump of 1923 as a division between idealism and realism. Here the idealism produced by propaganda, raising expectations built upon four years of war, comes into conflict with a post-war movement to restore the privileges of Green's social class, and the profits from industrial ownership that supported these privileges, by cutting wages, causing widespread social discontent:

We had four years of a life and death struggle when every argument able propagandists could put forward to spur the people on to win had been rammed down each individual throat by the loss of life ... "For what?" was the cry in 1923. It will be the same this time (p.190).

It will be the same this time - the binary oppositions of heroism and horror, of life and death, along with the extreme subjectivity of propaganda, are built into a general historical rule, a cycle of war and post-war disillusion which, in this case, allows Green to ignore the contribution made by his social class to the arousal of expectation during the war and its denial after the war: 'All this is common ground and none of my business. But it had its effect on my contemporaries and is of interest for that reason' (pp.190-1).

Green's expression of isolation, of being cut off from the common ground of both a shared humanity and public events, was shared by other writers in the 1930s. Herbert

⁴⁹ Eksteins, p.292.

Read labelled the period 'the no-man's-years'⁵⁰. Bowen's characters in *The Death of the Heart* (1938) express the belief that they were cut off both from the future and the past:

'I do think history is sad.'

'More shady, 'said Thomas. 'Bunk, misfires and graft from the very start. I can't think why we make such a fuss now: we've got no reason to expect anything better.'

'But at one time weren't people braver?'

'Tougher and they didn't go round in rings. And also there was a future then. You can't get up any pace when you feel you're right at the edge.'⁵¹

These post-war binary oppositions operating in an unhealthy insular, subjective, adolescent society, produces the conditions for Green to develop, from the practice of separating idealized experience from authority that he learned during the war, an attitude of non-cooperation in the historical process, a non involvement in public events, encouraged by a belief that the world after the war had become sick. Thus the adolescent Green turns his sense of being cut off into a virtue that embodies his sense of idealism such that idealism becomes ignorance of public events. Green describes this being put to the test by the General Strike, which Hynes, in a chapter heading of *A War Imagined*, designates 'The Ten Days' War':

No one will suppose with the attitude I thought I had won that I could take a hand. The moment it happened, striking just where I had been most afraid as for some time I had been unable to look a labourer in the eye, I had to get away at once ... (p.230).

Orwell describes two approaches to non-cooperation:

As a rule, writers who do not wish to identify themselves with the historical process at the moment either ignore it or fight against it. If

⁵⁰ Read, p. 9.

⁵¹ Elizabeth Bowen, 1938, *The Death of the Heart*, p. 32 (Penguin, 1962).

they can ignore it, they are probably fools. If they can understand it well enough to want to fight against it, they probably have enough vision to realize that they cannot win.⁵²

The cause of the General Strike lay in that which Green would like to conceal - the desire to restore pre-war profits amongst the coal mine owners by cutting the wages of their workers. Green represents himself as ignoring the General Strike by physically getting away from it. However, as *Pack My Bag* is written on the eve of the Second World War, Green provides an illustration of the impossibility of non-cooperation during a time of war. The General Strike was perceived by Green's generation as war with the same test of self and character that they had been prepared for whilst at school during the First World War. For example Christopher Isherwood wrote of the General Strike:

I couldn't laugh at the strike. From the first moment I loathed it and longed for it to end. It wasn't that I seriously expected street fighting or civil war. But "war" was in the air: one heard it in the boisterous defiant laughter of the amateur bus drivers, one glimpsed it in the alert sexual glances of the women. This was a dress rehearsal of "The Test"; and it found me utterly unprepared.⁵³

Hence Green represents himself easily persuaded by a neighbour to become involved: 'Within three days I had learned that where this attitude lets one down is on those rare occasions when we are all caught up in the action, it is then that non-cooperation or the keeping silent becomes a cross' (p.230).

For Green, it is not the General Strike itself that is a revelation. The General Strike is, for Green, a catalyst. It produces a realisation of the inadequacy of his attitude of non-cooperation when confronted by events that catch him up in their actions, as war

⁵² Orwell, *Whale*, p.41.

⁵³ Isherwood, *Lions*, p.179.

threatens to do. This realisation is foreshadowed in the narrative by a sense of what the historical process means to Green and his generation: 'It is wrong in the state the world is at the time this is written to assume that other generations have not had quite such forebodings about the immediate future' (p.205). Here the general historical rule is not used to absolve Green from a consideration of his particular situation: 'The war well won for us it appears we forgot those who had lost their lives and that we sat back like victors who had themselves successfully borne arms. It seems in a way as though we have been falsified by the turn events have taken' (p.205). Here is the key to the shame that Green remembers, that of the adolescent Green who preserved his sense of idealism by ignoring the historical process.

Orwell argues that in the writing of the late 1930s,

The passive attitude will come back, and it will be more consciously passive than before. Progress and reaction have both turned out to be swindles. Seemingly there is nothing left but quietism - robbing reality of its terrors by simply submitting to it. Get inside the whale - or rather, admit you are inside the whale (for you *are*, of course). Give yourself over to the world-process, stop fighting against it or pretending that you control it; simply accept it, endure it, record it.⁵⁴

Following the realisation that he cannot ignore public events, Green accepts, and prepares to endure and record, the future as a prospect of death and the return of propaganda: 'It is interesting to see how these atrocity stories are coming back today ... a month or two ago in September 1938 there was that authentic note of wild hysteria ... ' (pp.68-9). Green is recording a process of development from insularity towards some acknowledgement of the public events of the First World War and after-war.

⁵⁴ Orwell, *Whale*, pp. 48-9.

Green charts the key moment in his development, of his movement from private to public spheres, as being his departure from Oxford for work in Birmingham. Hence he wrote to Nevill Coghill:

people who have continued to live there for some time lose their sense of touch on ideas. And by that I mean they become too intellectual they lose their feeling for what will do & what won't.⁵⁵

In *Pack My Bag* he claims the decision to leave this place where people 'lose their sense of touch' as a defining moment:

The moment I left Oxford to go to Birmingham was the bridge from what had been into what is so much a part of my life now ... it was an introduction to indisputable facts at last, to a life bare of almost everything except essentials and so less confusing, to a new world which was the oldest (p.232).⁵⁶

Green is describing his rejection of the attitude of non-cooperation. This rejection is represented by the abandoning of an insular, subjective adolescent world signified by Oxford, the place where adolescents, dreaming of their entry to the adult world, talk forward from the particular to the general.

⁵⁵ Letter to Neville Coghill, (undated) Eton College Library.

⁵⁶ The bridge has been used as a humanist metaphor for communication and understanding: 'Accompanying the efforts at international détente after 1925 was a wave of humanism that swept the west. A wishful rather than assertive humanism this was, however. In 1927 Thornton Wilder ended his Pulitzer Prize-winning novel, *The Bridge Of San Luis Rey*, with the sentence: 'There is a land of the living and a land of the dead and the bridge is love, the only survival, the only meaning.' Melancholy, sentimentality, and wish constitute the dominant mood here. Two years later, in 1929, the disastrous economic slump brought the underlying doubt starkly to the surface' (Eksteins, p.290).

Green links war to the need to explain: 'the threat of war which drives one into a last attempt to explain objectively and well' (p.161). Hynes posits that, in the late 1930s

one might expect that the imaginations of writers would turn away from the immediate present, for the present would no longer seem a dramatic moral battlefield, but only a vacant space between the past and the future. They would turn instead backward, toward nostalgia, and forward toward apocalypse. To do so would not be escapist, but merely preparative: if you examined the past honestly, as a displaced person might examine his belongings before he fled his home, you might find what was worth saving; and if you imagined the future fully and without flinching, you might be able to survive it.⁵⁷

The character that Green presents in *Pack My Bag* is that of Hynes displaced person, examining the past honestly, before fleeing his home, providing a means of analysing Green's pre-Second World War novels. When faced with a new war Green in *Pack My Bag*, Connolly in *Enemies of Promise* and Isherwood in *Lions and Shadows*, explore war and after-war during childhood and adolescence at school. The expectation of a new war threatens a return of the authoritarianism which Green has attributed to school and war. This, in turn, prompts the remembrance of childhood escape - signifying a turning away from war - into holiday, an ideal of English pastoral signified by summer, countryside, the English oak and the country pursuit of fishing:

Holidays spell summer days and they still mean evenings in August very hot, a mist in the elms about. Where we lived had once been forest land and in each hedgerow grew magnificent trees while down by the river, by the place they used to ford over, there was a giant's orchard of poplars. Higher up were oak trees, old as the forest, broken down and hollow although beautiful still, an order of old trees which at one time had formed a glade. They were on a hill and standing on it to look across at Tewkesbury Abbey rising clear above the town from a huge flat meadow which has always lain between, over the weir which adds to the Severn's stream, looking down right-handed between those riven

⁵⁷ Samuel Hynes, 1976, *The Auden Generation*, pp.340-1 (Faber, 1979).

oaks to what was once a ford, it is a ferry now, I could see where I was to start fishing ... (pp.45-6)

As Orwell's George Bowling, in *Coming up for Air* (1939), says, 'I wanted peace and fishing is peace.'⁵⁸ Orwell has Bowling attempt, and fail, to physically escape from the modern world, which contains within it the seeds of a new war, into the past, just as Green attempted, and failed, to physically escape from the General Strike.

For the adult Green, who realizes that he cannot ignore that which he considers to be part of the historical process, it is the exploration and sharing of memory in full awareness of the present danger of public events, that is valuable:

if there are things we seek to share, hunched now on the office stool, facing a slow death in the shelter they have made our basement into, we might as well turn back to when we stumbled home through the dark, our faces still burning with the day's sun and then tell ourselves as the syren goes and frightened we begin to forget, because we do not know if we are going to be killed, how we did once find this or the other before we go to die to take with us like a bar of gold (pp.49-50).

The exploration of memory both acknowledges and diminishes the threat of war which ebbs and flows, like the tidal river upon which Green remembers fishing: 'As I write now a war, or the threat of war, while still threatening seems more remote; a change of wind and the boat is blown in, there is nothing to do but tie up and call it a day' (p.50).

In the period 1938 to 1939, the dates printed on the last page of *Pack My Bag*, a period which as John Lehmann observed, 'destroyed the independence of two small countries and undermined European security',⁵⁹ Green's contemporaries were publishing - in addition to autobiographies - works whose titles spoke of endings:

⁵⁸ George Orwell, 1939, *Coming Up for Air*, p.170 (Penguin, 1983).

⁵⁹ "They Will Live Again" *New Statesman and Nation*, 19th August 1939.

Isherwood's *Goodbye to Berlin* (1938), Bowen's *The Death of the Heart* (1938), Orwell's *Coming up for Air* (1939). These titles, speaking of farewell, death, and drowning, reflect a feeling of change, and not for the better. In the historical context of their time of publication change and death suggest that the fragile between-the-wars-peace is ending, that war is about to begin. The beginning of war raises the possibility of the personal ending of death, as expressed at the beginning of T.S. Eliot's *East Coker* (1940): 'In my beginning is my end'. Rod Mengham in his study of Green⁶⁰ points out that *Pack My Bag* begins with an ending - more accurately the expectation of an ending, of death in war - and ends with a beginning as the adult Green reconciles previously opposed private and public spheres of love and work. The ending of *Pack My Bag* is a rehearsal for the reconciliation of the private and the public that the approaching war would demand for writers like Green. Green's narrative finally expresses a sense of preparing to endure, accept and record a new war, a preparation informed by the past. In 1939 Green was not alone in needing such a preparation, such a careful packing of bags:

When war began in 1914 Englishmen then knew nothing of war and had no recent memories and images to dry up on their lips the idealistic phrases always used to justify it. To-day if there is war no one will think we are fighting for gallant little Poland or for any abstract cause; it will simply be a preference for national self-preservation and a determination that the Nazis shall not crush the life and thought and civilisation out of Europe.⁶¹

Green, although he claims not to go beyond 1928 in his autobiographical narrative, shows much about his reaction to the period of war crisis during 1938-9, the time of writing of *Pack My Bag*. Green deploys what Mengham describes as an obsessional

⁶⁰ Rod Mengham, 1982. *The Idiom of the Time* (Cambridge University Press).

⁶¹ "London Diary", *New Statesman and Nation*, 26th August 1939.

rather than a chronological structure. Green's obsession is with idealistic heroism and the remembered shame of the ignorance that he deployed to preserve his idealism. An obsessional structure is used, to some extent, in all autobiographies as Fleischman argues, 'The autobiographer gives an order to the facts of history, an order not inherent in them but necessarily of his own devising and therefore a reflection of himself that is more profoundly informative than the data he manipulates.'⁶² *Pack My Bag* orders the facts of history into a three-part structure: the innocence of childhood, a protracted adolescence founded upon idealism, and adult realisation of his generation's obsession with the heroism and horror of war. Green had previously used a similar tripartite structure in *Blindness* and retained it in the novels he wrote during the war. The shame that Green remembers is not that, expressed by some of his contemporaries, of having been too young to fight in the First World War. Green expects to die in the new war and this expectation diminishes the shadow cast by the First World War. In the diminished shadow Green narrates the shame of having been led by his obsession with innocence into the position of attempting to ignore the historical process to preserve his sense of the heroism of war in the private adolescent spheres of public school and university. The process of remembering, and diminishing, this shame in the present tense of his autobiographical narrative is how Green packs his bag to prepare for his journey through the historical process of the new war.

⁶² Fleischman, p.11.

Chapter 2: *Blindness*: it isn't the war that matters, it's the after-war

Blindness (1926), begun when Green was at Eton and completed at Oxford, is rooted in the after-war, bounded by the Armistice and the General Strike, a time of public school and university for Green's generation. This period represents, as *Pack My Bag* indicates, a prolonged adolescence for Green, lived in the lengthening shadows of the First World War, stretching from Eton - which he entered in 1918 just before the Armistice - to Oxford - which he left in 1926 just after the General Strike. It was during this time that Green's generation's initial relief at being released from the obligation to fight in the war became overshadowed by consciousness of the vastness of the experience they had missed. The continuing importance of the after-war for Green's generation, and its link to the First World War, appears, for example, in Orwell's *Coming Up For Air* (1939) where he has a First World War veteran declare, 'It isn't the war that matters, it's the after-war'.¹

The after-war, this prolonged adolescence, was characterized for Green's generation by their use of substitutes for war, where the paradoxes in their relationship with war, the dichotomy of heroism and horror, could be played out during the after-war. It is by representing these characteristics that *Blindness* remains within the after-war. It does this through the character of John Haye, a representative member of

¹ George Orwell, 1939, *Coming up for Air*, p. 149, (Penguin, 1983).

Green's generation.² John experiences two major substitutes for war. The first is his public school, the second his being blinded.

John Haye's public school, Noat, corresponds to after-war Eton, fixed in that time and place by allusions to the Eton Arts Society - of which Green was a founder member - and the Eton arts review, *The Eton Candle* (1922), which in *Blindness* becomes *Noat Lights*. *Blindness* grew out of an earlier, unpublished, story "Adventure in a Room" (1923).³ The unpublished story is set at a public school, Note - Eton reversed. In *Blindness* the school becomes Noat - a homophone of Eton reversed. There are other resemblances. The story features a schoolboy journeying home by train from his public school blinded by a boy throwing a stone. His blindness confines the boy to his room at home 'made just as it had been at Note',⁴ preserving his schoolboy state of being. This theme is further developed in the novel to explore vicarious experience of war.

The second major substitute for war, John Haye being blinded, suggests the image of blinded soldiers being led away from gas attacks in John Singer Sargent's painting

² Cyril Connolly believed that fictional counterparts of Green's generation appear in *Blindness*. He describes Brian Howard as belonging 'to a set of boys who were literary and artistic but too lazy to gargle quotations and become inoculated with the virus of good taste latent in Eton teaching and too disorderly and bad at games to be overburdened with responsibility and who in fact gained most from Eton because of the little they gave. There was Harold Acton, a prince of courtesy, his brother William, Robert Byron who was aggressive and played jokes on the Corps, the two Messels; Anthony Powell, the author of *Afternoon Men* and Henry Green who has since described them in his novel *Blindness*', Cyril Connolly, 1938, *Enemies of Promise*, p.248 (Andre Deutsch, 1973).

³ The story is printed in *Surviving: The Uncollected Writings of Henry Green*, pp.6-13 (Chatto and Windus, 1992).

“Gassed”.⁵ Through this iconic connection to the First World War the blinding becomes a symbolic war wound. In 1925, while at Oxford, Green was still brooding on train accidents and making connections to war:

Don't you hate French trains? After the smash I had in one I still shudder when the brakes are put on. It is never the actual accident that counts, I think, it is what your imagination makes of it afterwards. But the war disproved that perhaps.⁶

The word ‘perhaps’ signifies Green’s relationship to the war. Green wants to believe that war experience is more vital than imagination. However, having not experienced war at first hand, he cannot validate his belief and, furthermore, can only experience war in his imagination.

Green’s generation imagined the war as a great time, but this great time encompassed both the appeal of heroism and the repulsion of horror. Brian Howard, a contemporary of Green's at Eton, represented the appeal of war as heroism in a schoolboy poem which praises the generation that fought the war as ‘a great Young Generation’ and promised to ‘fight for your ideals’.⁷ Harold Acton, another contemporary of Green's at Eton recalled the horror:

Thousands of young painters and poets were dead: in France and Belgium incalculable beauty had perished. In the wilderness of war's

⁴ Ibid., p.8.

⁵ Imperial War Museum. ‘The British War Memorial Committee commissioned Sargent and several other artists to make works for a future Hall of Remembrance. Sargent observed life in the trenches at the front line in France. In his London Studio he worked with models and re-imagined a scene outside a treatment center’, Trevor Fairbrother, 1994, *John Singer Sargent* (Harry N. Abrams).

⁶ Letter to Nevill Coghill, 1925, Eton College Library.

⁷ "To the Young Writers and Artists Killed in the War: 1914-18", published in *The Eton Candle* (1922).

paradoxes many thinkers had lost their way. Apparent truths had died like flies.⁸

The paradox of heroism and horror is represented in *Blindness* by John Haye's heroism at school as he stands up for his beliefs and the horror of his blindness, which places him in convalescence.

Deprived of one of his senses John is plunged into uncertainty and the need to find new ways to make sense of the world. The after-war was a time when pre-war belief in the certainty of the future⁹ had been undermined both by the war itself and by conflict between those who wanted to preserve pre-war values and those who felt that they had been promised that the war was being fought to create a new society. These conflicts appear in *Blindness* in the guise of binary oppositions channelled through the character of John Haye: young against old, children against parents, hearties against aesthetes, country against city, past against future. These conflicts came to a head in the public sphere in 1926, the year of publication of *Blindness*, through the General Strike, a significant event in *Pack My Bag* in that it triggers Green's realization of the inadequacies of the private adolescent sphere that he had built during the after-war to protect his sense of the heroism of war. *Blindness*, both in its time of production and in its subject matter, fits into the second of the implicit three parts of *Pack My Bag*: the building of an adolescent private sphere in the after-war, a period whose end it

⁸ Harold Acton, 1948, *Memoirs of an Aesthete*, p. 91 (Methuen).

⁹ I am referring to pre-war perceptions of the possibility of certainty. As Eksteins observes: 'there was a frame of mind common to the Victorian and Edwardian eras. Of course, neither age was one of certitude, the latter much less so than the former, but both were ages seeking certitude', Modris Eksteins, 1989, *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age*, p.128 (Bantam).

anticipates in John Haye's resolve to break out of his prolonged adolescence by becoming a writer.

Blindness has an explicit tripartite structure. The three parts are formally entitled "Caterpillar", "Chrysalis" and "Butterfly", signifying an explicit structure of growth. This growth represents a rite of passage, a journey, for the novel's hero between the individualism of being a rebel at school through blindness and convalescence to the goal of becoming a writer. Ford Madox Ford used tripartite structure after the war to represent growth stunted by war as, for example, in *No More Parades* (1924) and *A Man Could Stand Up* (1926), which chart Christopher Tietjens' progress through the war to the after-war. Tripartite structure works in a similar way in *Blindness*. John Haye, on being blinded endures the structured order of a convalescence ordered by his step-mother, his nurse and his old Nanny. Here is a feminine domesticity enforced upon John Haye by his wounding. He has been taken, by his symbolic war wound, out of the private adolescent sphere of school - where vicarious experience of the war can be propagated - into a domestic sphere associated by Green's generation with peace. However, his step-mother is shown to understand that this is a temporary measure, a means of transition. She dismisses the nurse and moves from their country home to London, leaving the old servants behind, so that John can begin to realize his goal of becoming a writer and escape the influences that would stunt his growth. As Green wrote to Nevill Coghill, 'Mrs Haye will end by being the only person to understand life. Thank God I don't, it would be the end'.¹⁰

¹⁰ Letter to Nevill Coghill, 1925, Eton College Library.

The first part of *Blindness*, "Caterpillar", set at public school, takes the narrative form of John Haye's 'informal diary ... just a pipe to draw off the swamp water'.¹¹ The diary novel is a suitable form for the public schoolboy who wanted to retreat from public events, which would remind him that he had not fought in the war, to his own private sphere in which war can be experienced vicariously. School, the setting of the diary part of *Blindness*, provides a suitably insular location for the creation of a private sphere that the diary narrates. Noat is a typically insular after-war public school based on the Eton that Anthony Powell recorded:

... Eton, historically and architecturally, was unusually well placed to indoctrinate the romantic mystique; her antique towers, beside the still unpolluted Thames, offering a dreamlike sanctuary.¹²

In 1920 Evelyn Waugh observed, 'the extraordinary boom of youth, which everyone must have noticed during the last few years. Every boy is writing about his school ...'¹³ Waugh alludes to the public school novel written by his elder brother Alec, *The Loom of Youth* (1917). Alec, a war combatant, provides a link between war and school. As Martin Stannard points out in his biography of Waugh: 'His brother's direct involvement in the fighting provoked undiluted admiration',¹⁴ an admiration that transcended Waugh's intense feelings of sibling rivalry. Alec Waugh through taking part in the public event of the First World War, was a part of that generation

¹¹ Henry Green, 1926, *Blindness*, p. 3 (Harvill, 1996) . Hereafter page references from *Blindness* will appear in the body of the text of this chapter.

¹² Anthony Powell, 1976, *To Keep the Ball Rolling: Memoirs* , vol.1 *Infants of the Spring*, p.125 (Heinemann).

¹³ Evelyn Waugh, 1976, *The Diaries of Evelyn Waugh*, p.103 (Wiedenfeld & Nicolson).

¹⁴ Martin Stannard, 1986, *Evelyn Waugh: The Early Years 1903-1939*, p.44 (Grafton, 1988).

whose very public experience provided a vivid contrast to the lack of experience of the succeeding generation. Indeed such war experience not only prompted admiration but also trauma as Christopher Isherwood demonstrates in his relationship with Lester, a First World War combatant:

He never suspected, I think, how violently his quietly told horribly matter-of-fact anecdotes affected me ... Always, as I listened, I asked myself the same question; always I tried to picture myself in his place. But here, as ever, the censorship, in blind panic, intervened, blacking out the image.¹⁵

The trauma is caused by the shame of not having fought and, in a typical reaction to trauma, the memory that causes it is repressed. Public school provided a substitute for war, a private sphere, where Green's generation could deploy their untested ability to have fought for their ideals,¹⁶ a private place where 'B.G.'s unrivalled powers of invective were used with great effect. His face, his voice, everything combines to make him a most formidable opponent in wordy warfare' (p.13).

The lack of war experience of Green's generation, represented by John Haye, is signified in *Blindness* by both the relative brevity of "Caterpillar" and its diary form.

Lorna Martens argues:

The diary novel ... emphasizes the time of writing rather than the time that is written about. The progressive sequence of dates on which the diarist writes gives the narrative its temporal continuity. This present-tense progression tends to dominate the subject matter, so that the

¹⁵ Christopher Isherwood, 1969, *Lions and Shadows*, pp.255-6 (Pegasus, 1938).

¹⁶ This is a reversal of the comparison made by Ford Madox Ford's Sylvia Tietjens: 'She saw Christopher buried in this welter of fools, playing a schoolboy's game of make believe ... The crashings of the gun and of all the instruments for making noise seemed to her so atrocious and odious because they were, for her, the silly pomp of a schoolboy-man's game', Ford Madox Ford, 1926, *No More Parades in Parade's End* p.437 (Penguin, 1982).

diarist usually writes about events of the immediate past - events that occur between one entry and the next - or records his momentary ideas, reflections, or emotions.¹⁷

The narrative form of "Caterpillar", by emphasizing the present and immediate past, shuts out almost all direct reference to the First World War and the inconvenient need to recognize that it has ended. Indeed, there is only one reference to the war in this part of the novel. This occurs after John's involvement in electioneering, shown as a form of war game, a substitute for war experience:

we found all the Socialist working-men-God-bless-them drawn up in rows on either side of the street, so we three went down the rows haranguing. We each got into the centre of groups, and expected to be killed at any moment, for there is something about me that makes that type see red (p.19).

Having demonstrated a tangible form of bravery he can be allowed to make a link to the war in which he had not fought by concluding, 'I now understand why men are brave in the war; it was because they were afraid of being cowards, that fear overcoming that of death.' (p.20). It is, thus, present experience, as narrated in a diary, that provides a substitute for, and an understanding of, war experience.

As school provides substitutes for war experience, and it is this experience that is recorded by John, his diary is a substitute, an alternative war diary. Hence experience alternative to that of war combatants is recorded: 'Holidays: 10 April. Back again to peace, even if it is cotton wool and stagnation ... ' (p.27). Peace is perceived as stagnation in opposition to war which Green's generation been actively prepared at prep school, and continued to live vicariously at public school. This differentiates

¹⁷ Lorna Martens, 1985, *The Diary Novel*, pp.4-5 (Cambridge University Press).

them from war combatants who, having experienced the reality of war, longed for peace:

One of the first things that I was asked in C Company dugout was "Got any peace talk?"¹⁸

when we get home again we shall have the happiness of men who have seen such terrible things, who have been in hell, and have come back to a blessed heaven of peace.¹⁹

There was a contemporary belief that the after-war period was lacking in ideals, that the war had created a world lacking in ethics and predominantly interested in making quick money. This belief existed across a range of ideologies. Ford Madox Ford, for example, has his Tory Christopher Tietjens, scion of a wealthy land-owning family compare his pre war conception of 'the Almighty as, on a colossal scale, a great English Landowner' with his vision of the after-war: 'And God? A Real Estate Agent with Marxist views'.²⁰ Maude Royden, editor of the feminist newspaper, *Common Cause*, expressed her disillusion with the after-war by stating 'that the passions created by the war are uncontrollable, that you cannot master your own civilisation.'²¹ Disillusion with the values of the public after-war world was strengthened by the parlous state of the economy, produced in part by the irrationality of the post-war speculative boom:

Initially the end of the war released a frantic speculative boom fuelled by rising prices ...The collapse began in 1920 with an increase in

¹⁸ Edmund Blunden, 1928, *Undertones of War*, pp. 29-30 (Collins, 1978).

¹⁹ Lt. E.F. Chapman, letter to his mother, 14th February 1917, Imperial War Museum.

²⁰ Ford Madox Ford, *No More Parades* in *Parade's End*, pp.365-6.

²¹ Quoted by Dinah Birch in "Back Home", a review of *Making Peace: The Reconstruction of Gender in Inter-War Britain* by Susan Kingsley-Kent in *The London Review of Books*, 12th May 1994, p.6.

government borrowing rates, a fall in prices and the beginnings of a rise in unemployment. By 1921-2 the impact of post-war trading conditions was making itself felt both in the reduction of exports and levels of production ... The effects were demonstrated in the rise of unemployment to almost two million by June 1921.²²

John Haye is shown to express post-war disillusion. He fumes, 'Down with Science.

Romanticism, all spiritual greatness is going' (p.25).

By opposing science John Haye is shown to express another of war's paradoxes - that empirical, rational Science had, by making possible a long war of attrition, ushered in an after-war period of irrationality. To protect Green's generation's sense of war heroism, science and irrationality are given to a figure of authority at Noat:

Dicky Maitland, who used to try and teach me science, has been writing to the Adjer to say that my Volunteer's uniform is always untidy; the Adjer says he has several notes: did you ever hear such cheek? But then the poor man is a military maniac (p. 4).

Here the authority of war and the authority of school are connected through the figure of science that made the war of attrition possible:

This was the war of attrition ... A mug's game! A mug's game as far as killing men was concerned ... That was what happened if you let yourself get into the hands of the applied scientist.²³

The 'romantic mystique' for Powell, romanticism for John Haye, offers a form of sanctuary, of opposition to, and protection from, the irrationality, the immorality, the cynicism of the public after-war sphere. For Green's generation, war both determined the decline of romanticism, through its destruction of ideals, and preserved a form of romanticism as a reaction to the after-war public sphere that the war was perceived to have produced. The attempt by Green's generation to preserve romanticism was a

²² John Stevenson, 1984, *British Society 1914-45*, p.107 (Pelican).

²³ Ford Madox Ford, 1928, *A Man Could Stand Up - in Parade's End*, p.618.

rearguard action as Connolly recognized when he observed that the thread running through his autobiography, 'A Georgian Boyhood', 'is an analysis of romanticism, that romanticism in decline under whose shadow we grew up'.²⁴ The war had undermined pre-war belief in the possibilities of order and certainty. This belief had been romanticist in that it essayed the order of progress towards a better world and the certainty of the infinite possibilities of man. Modern historians reaffirm this belief:

from the vantage point of 1900-14 there seemed to be no need to be anything but optimistic about prospects for the future. Growth rates had attained record levels. New technologies and more efficient forms of business organisation appeared year after year. Unacceptable and potentially destabilising aspects of competitive capitalism, including the maldistribution of income and wealth, were coming under political regulation. International economic relations continued to operate smoothly and core economies were adjusting to the realities of foreign competition.²⁵

T.E. Hulme defined 'the root of all romanticism; that man, the individual, is an infinite reservoir of possibilities; and if you can rearrange society by the destruction of oppressive order then these possibilities will have a chance and you will get Progress'.

²⁶ The First World War had pointed out the limits of man, drowning the romantic ideals with which the war began in the mud of the Somme. By clinging to romanticism John Haye is attempting to preserve the ideals with which the war began.

²⁴ Connolly, *Enemies*, p.168. Connolly was doubtless aware of the argument of T.E. Hulme 'that after a hundred years of romanticism, we are in for a classical revival', "Romanticism and Classicism" in David Lodge (ed.), 1972, *20th Century Literary Criticism*, p. 93 (Longman, 1992). Hulme's essay was first published in 1924 although probably written in 1913 or 1914. Hulme died fighting in the First World War in 1917 but 'acquired an almost legendary posthumous reputation as the key thinker behind the Pound-Eliot revolution in English poetry in the second decade of the century' (Ibid., p.92).

²⁵ Patrick O'Brien "The Economic Effects of the Great War", *History Today*, December 1994, p.25.

²⁶ "Romanticism and Classicism" in Lodge, *Literary Criticism*, p.94.

For Connolly, the romantic mystique was provided by opposition to modernity, Eton being 'not a democracy for the system was feudal ... On the whole the feudal system worked well'.²⁷ Connolly protected himself from the public spheres of the after-war by building 'a private civilisation of reason and love at a temperature warmer than the world outside.'²⁸ Within his similar private sphere John Haye can relax:

Sometimes I think it is better to be just what one is, and not be everlastingly apologising for oneself in so many words. To be rude when you want to be rude - and how very much nicer it would make you when you wanted to be nice. I am sure it is all a matter of relative thought ... It is a very good principle at Noat (p.25).

The first and second parts of *Blindness* are separated by a letter from one school friend, B.G, to another, Seymour, reporting the accident that has caused John's blindness. This letter suggests transition both through its separation of the first two parts of the novel, the details that it reports - the wounding of John during a train journey - and the sense of movement that it provides for the reader who, in the space of a few pages, is taken from one first person novel form - the diary - to another - the epistolary - then on into the third person novel. This sense of movement in form is matched by narrative movement. John Haye moves from one state of being to another - from schoolboy to blind young man - and from one private sphere to another - from school to blindness. The second part of *Blindness*, "Chrysalis", represents an after-war transition between romanticism and a form of classicism made necessary by the demonstration of human frailty on a massive scale during the war, a frailty that, in the after-war, John Haye's blindness represents. The movement from "Caterpillar" to

²⁷ Connolly, *Enemies*, p.179.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p.252.

"Chrysalis" can be read as movement from Green's generation's view of war from heroism to horror.

"Chrysalis", the second part in the tripartite structural scheme of growth, comprises the body of *Blindness*, the place where the transformation from caterpillar to butterfly, from a private sphere of school to a new, more public, sphere of engagement with the outside world through the mediation of writing, occurs. "Chrysalis" is characterized by the appearance of stasis, which suggests, in keeping with its title, that the transformation is occurring beneath the surface. Its first two chapters - "News" and "Her, Him, Them" - contain John Hays within the news of his blindness and the insularity of his convalescence. Its third chapter, "Picture Postcardism" contrasts the private sphere of John's convalescence with the public sphere of the countryside represented by a decrepit house occupied by a defrocked clergyman and his daughter:

There were no curtains to the house, and no blinds but one, torn, hanging askew across a dark window swinging loosely open on the ground floor. A few panes of glass were broken, and brown paper was stuck over the holes (p.83).

This description indicates that the chapter title is ironic. Furthermore, it positions the house as a war symbol by evoking the ruined houses of war-time France, an evocation which is strengthened by the detail of the rat in the stable - suggesting the rats in the trenches of France. Time has stood still in the house, a stasis linked to the war for on the kitchen cupboard

is an almanack from the iron monger in Norbury, ten years old, with a picture in the middle of a destroyer cutting rigid water shavings in the sea, with smoke hurrying frozenly out of its funnels, and with a torpedo caught into eternity while leaping playfully at its side (pp. 91-2).

Here both movement and stasis are represented in the 'smoke hurrying frozenly' suggesting that below the frozen surface transformation is occurring – here of fuel into

smoke which produces movement. Hence growth in the public sphere is all but impossible in this representation; the public sphere is characterised by a war-determined stasis that leads to decay. Only in the privacy of a chrysalis can growth take place.

"Chrysalis" duplicates the tripartite structure of the novel by being divided into three chapters. Each of these three chapters further duplicates the tripartite structure by being subdivided into three sections. This suggests both stunted growth – which is taken from the significance of the overall structure of the novel as discussed earlier – and a classical, balanced order. B.G.'s letter, which separates "Chrysalis" from "Caterpillar", brings the notions of stunted growth and classical order together by describing John's accident as a 'tragedy', evoking the classical dramatic form. Indeed John fulfils the requirements of classical tragedy by creating the circumstances of his entrapment. The horror of his blindness is linked to school where he was shown, in the first part of *Blindness*, to have created substitutes for war so as to vicariously experience war heroism. John's blindness has been caused by a boy throwing a stone at his train. This echoes his earlier assertion at school that "'It is the thing to do now" to throw stones at me as I sit at my window' (p.6). The tragedy of his blindness is associated with his experience of school. In occupying a private sphere in which he can vicariously experience war heroism John Haye must also experience the horror that is the other side of Green's generation's perception of war.

Blindness creates a link to both the general experience of war combatants - which Green's generation could classify under heroism - and the horror of wounding and death in war. Wilfred Owen's poem "Dulce et Decorum est" associates blindness with a general state of being for soldiers, being gassed and death:

Men marched asleep. Many had lost their boots
But limped on, blood-shod. All went lame; all blind;
Drunk with fatigue; deaf even to the hoots
Of tired, outstripped Five-Nines that dropped behind.
Gas! GAS! Quick, boys!²⁹

The stone-throwing boy is made equivalent to an enemy soldier, a child's substitute for an adult war where young men slaughtered, and were slaughtered by, other young men. John wishes to throttle the boy, as his enemy:

if he had the child, he would choke him. One's fingers would go in till they would be enveloped by pink, warm flesh. The little thing would struggle for a while, and then it would be over, you know, just a tiny momentary discomfort for an eternity of pleasure (p.52).

Yet this enemy who is, in part, himself is another substitute for war. Indeed this enemy, by giving John a symbolic war wound, is merely fulfilling his part in the tragedy that John has created for himself in his need to approach a state of being that can provide a substitute for his lack of war experience.

Michael North, in his study of Green³⁰ points out that the wound is a form of compensation for those who have not fought in the war. Such wounds made appearances in the after-war writing of Green's generation, for instance, Auden's "Letter to a Wound" (1934) and Philip Lindsay's rheumatic fever in Isherwood's *All the Conspirators* (1928). However, in *Blindness* the wound is more than compensation, it gives John substitute experience of the horror of war. This is captured in the reaction of John and other characters to his blindness. John's stepmother is shown to think that John should be found some work: 'Making fancy

²⁹ Wilfred Owen, *Selected Poetry and Prose* (Routledge, 1988).

³⁰ Michael North, 1984, *Henry Green and the Writing of his Generation* (University of Virginia Press), pp.28-9 & p.43.

baskets, or pen-wipers, all those things blinded soldiers did' (p.57). This echoes Siegfried Sassoon's war poem "Does it Matter":

Does it matter? - losing your sight? ...
There's such splendid work for the blind;³¹

To emphasize the seriousness of his wounds, blindness is not the only form of wounding suffered by John Haye. His school friend B.G. reports to Seymour that 'the broken glass caught him full, cut great furrows in his face' (p.31). However, the most direct association of his wound with war is made by John who thinks of the glass that wounded him as a projectile which, bullet-like, 'entered his head and caused the white-hot pains there ... and now all chance of retreat was cut off' (p.49).

His wound imprisons John in an insular sphere of convalescence at his family home, Barwood, a place from which 'there was no escape, none' (p.81). This also serves to bring John Haye's experience close to that of combatants. It recalls the use of Green's family home, Forthampton Court, as a convalescent hospital for wounded officers during the war. Edith Bagnold, a war-time VAD nurse - as is John's stepmother - noted in her diary on nursing a wounded soldier, 'the completeness of his imprisonment'.³²

However, imprisonment does not serve solely to associate John with the war. Imprisonment, usually unjust and arbitrary, also appears in literature as an after-war

³¹ Siegfried Sassoon, "Does it Matter", written Craiglockhart, 1917, published in the *Cambridge Magazine*, 6th October 1917.

³² Edith Bagnold, 1918, *Diary Without Dates*, p. 76 (Virago, 1978). A war correspondent equates war with illness by defining war as 'a malignant disease, an idiocy, a prison, and the pain it causes is beyond telling or imagining; but war was our condition and our history, the place we had to live in', Martha Gelhorn, 1959, *The Face of War*, p.374 (Granta, 1993).

state of being. This is most obviously so in the work of Kafka. It also appears in the work of English writers and is not confined to Green's generation. Aldous Huxley's short story "The Gioconda Smile", in *Mortal Coils* (1922), features a Mr Hutton incarcerated and executed for a murder he did not commit.³³ This sense of imprisonment can also be implicit. In *A Passage to India* (1924) Forster uses the Marabar caves as an image for 'the spirit of the Indian earth, which tries to keep men in compartments'. In each cave, 'A tunnel eight feet long, five feet high, three feet wide, leads to a circular chamber about twenty feet in diameter. This arrangement occurs again and again throughout the group of hills'.³⁴ A similar repetitive prison-like compartmentalisation occurs in Virginia Woolf's *Jacob's Room* (1922). Jacob Flanders - who will fight and die in the war - sits beneath the dome of the British Library Reading Room, 'one of the many hundreds of the living sat at the spokes of a cart-wheel copying from printed books into manuscript books; now and then rising to consult the catalogue; regaining their places stealthily while from time to time a silent man replenished their compartments'.³⁵ Paul Pennyfeather in Evelyn Waugh's *Decline and Fall* (1928) realizes in prison that pre-war values are inappropriate in the after-war: 'there is something radically inapplicable about the whole code of ready-made honour that is the still small voice, trained to command, of the Englishman all the world over'.³⁶ Prison offers a safe haven for Paul, he specifically requests a prolongation of his solitary confinement. For John Haye his prison-like

³³ Aldous Huxley, 1922, *Mortal Coils*, p.48 (Chatto and Windus, 1931).

³⁴ E.M. Forster, 1924, *A Passage to India*, pp.141 and 138 (Penguin, 1989).

³⁵ Virginia Woolf, 1922, *Jacob's Room*, pp.112-3 (Grafton, 1976).

³⁶ Evelyn Waugh, 1928, *Decline and Fall*, p.113 (Heinemann, Secker & Warburg, and Octopus, 1977).

convalescence means: 'he was alive, how alive he was! Alive! Alive? And blind, a tomb of darkness, with all the carbuncles of life hidden away!' (p.43). The prison denies but also protects - hence the ambivalent image of the carbuncles: both precious stones and severe abscesses. Paul Pennyfeather must undergo a feigned death, an echo of death in the war, before he can emerge from public school/prison into the outside world. Similarly John Haye must first be blinded, then undergo a fit at the end of the novel before he can enter the public sphere as a writer.

Within his prison John has three warders - his step-mother, his old Nanny, and a hired nurse. His step-mother represents traditional order, urging John to take up his responsibilities as a landowner. His old nanny represents the romanticism of the past, her impulse being to treat John as a child which would preserve his schoolboy status. The nurse with her training, her rules, her distrust of Mrs Haye as an ex-V.A.D. nurse, represents a modern, after-war order. John is shown to dismiss her through imagining writing a short story 'on the nurse, with her love of white wards and of stiff flowers, they were sure to be stiff if she had any, and of a ghastly antiseptic sanity' (p.76). She is part of the scientific after war world that John Haye fumes against in "Caterpillar". "Chrysalis" represents a transition from the romanticism of "Caterpillar" to an after-war neo-classicism as expressed, for example, in T.S. Eliot's "Tradition and the Individual Talent" where the traditional order both accommodates and is modified by the new. This is where John needs to be if he is to realize his goal of being a writer. However, this sense of integration is not being achieved in the first two parts of *Blindness*. The result of this non-integration is three private spheres - the romanticism of school, the traditional classicism of the land owning gentry amongst whom John undergoes his convalescence and the imprisoning insularity of convalescence. These private spheres are enclosing compartments, Marabar caves, prison cells, a part of the

horror that is necessarily linked to heroism for Green's generation in their perception of war.

Blindness is a useful symbol suggesting both the war, through wounding, and after-war states of being where it is impossible to see ahead. In this sense blindness represents a maimed world which neither preserved the values of pre-war Britain, nor brought into being the promises of a better world to be fought for which were made during the war. In addition to the paradox of war heroism and war horror for Green's generation, the after-war was characterized by binary oppositions. For Green's generation these binary oppositions made sense of the unresolved conflict between those who argued that the war was fought to preserve old values and those who argued that it was fought to create a new world. In *Blindness* these appear as young against old particularly where the old is associated with authority, children against parents, aesthetes against hearties, the future against the past, the city against the country. Where these oppositions can be directly related to the war John Haye is shown to be on the side that Green's generation associates with war combatants, for example on the side of aesthetes against the hearties who unthinkingly accept the authority of the school. Otherwise he is ambivalent.

An earlier title for *Blindness* was *Young and Old*,³⁷ and this sense of binary opposition is embedded in the novel. John Haye's diary expresses opposition to the obstructiveness of old men:

³⁷ 'the despicable firm of Chatto & Windus had not been sufficiently interested in *Young & Old* to publish it. Would you be too busy to send it off to Dents. May Dents prove as courageous as they would be foolhardy to publish this loathsome thing, which has begun to nauseate me' (letter to Nevill Coghill, 1925, Eton College Library).

Seymour, B.G. and I were seriously discussing the production of a revue here next term, as they do at the universities, but as Seymour said, the difficulties were insuperable, too many old men to surmount (pp.3-4).

The opposition between young and old is derived from the war where combatants came to blame the killing on the old men in charge of the war effort. In "The Parable of the Old Man and the Young" Wilfred Owen rewrites the biblical story of Abraham and Isaac to depict the abandonment of Christian morality by the 'old men' so that when God offers Abraham the 'Ram of Pride' as a substitute sacrificial victim for his son, 'the old man would not so, but slew his son, / And half the seed of Europe, one by one.' "The Parable of the Old Man and the Young" was selected by Siegfried Sassoon and Edith Sitwell for publication in *Wilfred Owen: Poems*, (1920). It would have been familiar to Green's contemporaries at Eton, not least through their connections with Edith Sitwell.³⁸ Brian Howard,³⁹ for example, demonstrates the influence of Owen's binary opposition between old and young in his poem "To the Young Writers and Artists Killed in the War: 1914-18", published in *The Eton Candle* (1922):

a parcel of damned old men
Wanted some fun, or some power or something.
Something so despicable in comparison to your young lives ...⁴⁰

War-generated opposition between old and young appeared also in contemporary popular novels, for example in Helen Zenna Smith's *Not So Quiet* (1930):

³⁸ These connections are described in Acton, pp. 98-9 & p.108.

³⁹ Published as a poet by Edith Sitwell in *Wheels* in 1921 under the pseudonym Charles Orange.

⁴⁰ Reprinted in M.J. Lancaster (ed.), 1968, *Brian Howard: Portrait of a Failure*, p.579 (Blond).

I see in the years to come old men in their easy chairs fiercely reviling us for lacking the sweetness and softness of our mothers and their mothers before them ... what I do not see is pity or understanding for the war-shocked woman who sacrificed her youth on the altar of the war that was not of her making, the war made by age and fought by youth while age looked on and applauded and encored.⁴¹

Green's generation expressed a notion of old, foolish, and male authority consistently using the term 'old men' to convey their opposition. Evelyn Waugh writes in his diary in 1920,

These grotesque, decaying old men, with the supreme arrogance of the impotent take upon themselves to dictate to their youngers and betters how they should paint their pictures and write their sonnets and lay down their lives.⁴²

The complete diary entry is a transcription of Waugh's speech in a school debate in which he opposed the motion that 'This house deplores the disrespect for age by modern youth'. Cyril Connolly writes in *Enemies of Promise* (1938):

The war and the corresponding increase of militarism had affected the freedom of Eton boys. Emergency measures had been enforced and not repealed ... Those responsible were the ushers, among whom were certain Vile Old Men who wished to wrest from the boys all liberty and independence ...⁴³.

A.J.P. Taylor writes in 1966 of World War One generals as foolish old men: 'who prolonged the slaughter kept their posts and won promotion'.⁴⁴ In *Blindness* the opposition to figures of authority both inside and outside school is represented by John Haye's housemaster who obstructs him, and his step-mother who tries to divert

⁴¹ Helen Zenna Smith, 1930, *Not So Quiet*, p.166 (Virago, 1988).

⁴² *Diaries of Evelyn Waugh*, p.103. The quoted extract is from a diary entry for Saturday 25th September to Thursday 30th September 1920.

⁴³ Connolly, *Enemies*, p.194.

⁴⁴ A.J.P. Taylor, 1963, *The First World War*, p.84 (Penguin, 1966).

him by asking him to become involved in village affairs. In *Pack My Bag*, Green describes the after-war as 'the paradise of a peace the old fools had dictated'.⁴⁵ When John moves to London he tells himself, 'all the old people were being left behind to die, and Nan was dead. There would be a new start in London' (p.189). By taking the part of the young John is shown to be associated with war combatants.

There was also binary opposition amongst the young, between hearties and aesthetes. Hearties, by participating in the organized cult of games at school in the after-war, signalled their acceptance of the authority of 'old men'. Green's generation opposed this authority through lack of interest in games and a corresponding interest in the arts: 'I took every opportunity to escape into the universe of art ... my Eton friends and I were voluptuaries of the imagination'.⁴⁶ *The Eton Candle* was an act of opposition, when 'literary activity at school was still regarded with disfavour',⁴⁷ just as *Noat Lights*, and the Noat Arts Society are acts of opposition to the 'hornet's nest of rabid footballers' (p.22). The opposition, as Green noted in *Pack My Bag*, lasted into university:

if I had tried in deference to what pleased my friends to put up some unusual curtains these would have proved a waste of money. By knowing the people I did the hearties in college would almost inevitably have wrecked them.⁴⁸

John Hays records in his diary:

⁴⁵ Henry Green, 1940, *Pack My Bag*, p.158 (Hogarth, 1992).

⁴⁶ Acton, p.82.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p.97.

⁴⁸ Green, *Pack*, p.214.

all except T.D. and possibly E.N. are so distressingly the athletic type, who sink their whole beings in the school and its affairs, and are blind and almost ignorant of any world outside their own' (p.9).

This also suggests some ambiguity in the binary opposition between hearties and aesthetes as it anticipates John's physical blindness. In an after-war world of binary opposites John must be an aesthete because his lack of physical vision means that he cannot be a heartie as Stephen Dedalus discovered before him:

He kept on the fringe of his line, out of sight of his prefect, out of the reach of the rude feet, feigning to run now and then. He felt his body small and weak amid the throng of the players and his eyes were weak and watery.⁴⁹

Stephen Dedalus rejects conventional spheres - of the family, of Catholicism, of Irish Nationalism - for what he perceives to be the more rewarding sphere of aesthetics and literature, as John Haye wishes to do: 'He would write. At Noat he had thought about it, at Barwood he had talked about it' (p.202). To become a writer in the after-war, John Haye must follow the path mapped by T.E. Hulme:

I must avoid two pitfalls in discussing the idea of beauty. On the one hand there is the old classical view which is supposed to define it as lying in the conformity to certain standard fixed form; and on the other hand there is the romantic view which drags in the infinite.⁵⁰

This path will take John Haye away from both the romanticism of school, and the traditional order that his step-mother offers him as a means of coping with his post-school blindness.

In "Adventure in a Room", Green's 1923 forerunner to *Blindness*, Armstrong combines sport with music and art. The cult of games could not be opposed

⁴⁹ James Joyce, 1916, *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, p.8 (Penguin, 1971).

⁵⁰ "Romanticism and Classicism" in Lodge, *Literary Criticism*, pp.100-1.

completely because it was also associated with war-idealism, a part of war heroism, as is indicated by the title of Jerome K. Jerome's article in the *Daily News and Leader* of January 5 1915: "The Greatest Game of All: The True Spirit of the War". To preserve ideals the aesthetes had to separate out and appropriate this idealism from the cult of games: 'Anyhow, you were glorious ... / And we will do our best to do what you would have done. / Oh, we will fight for your ideals - we who were too young to be murdered with you ... ' ⁵¹. It is in terms of glory that John Haye sets out his after-war career: 'What fun if I could write ... a vista of glory ... superb!' That glory can be abstracted from the cult of games, is indicated by a conversation that John Haye reports with Mayo, a heartie leaving early to go into the army: 'What adds fuel to his fire is a person who glories in his eccentricity, which of course is true of all of us, in that we glory in ourselves' (p.5). John Haye partakes of glorying in himself as substitute war experience, determined by his shame at not having fought in the war, by dressing up as an eccentric and thereby bringing himself into opposition with authority:

Have bought the most gorgeous sun hat for a horse in straw for sixpence, and have painted it in concentric rings. Shall wear it at Camp, and have fixed it up so that it will bend when worn like a very old-fashioned bonnet. In the ear-holes I am going to put violently swearing colours, orange and magenta, in ribbons (p.7).

The camp is the O.T.C. camp, representing the sphere of old men and the kind of organized team work that the cult of games was intended to promote.⁵² The cult of

⁵¹ Brian Howard, "To the Young Writers and Artists Killed in the War: 1914-18", published in *The Eton Candle* (1922).

⁵² 'Sports, then were to serve both a moral and a physical purpose; they would encourage self-reliance and team spirit; they would build up the individual and integrate him into the group' (Eksteins, p.121).

games is rebelled against by a display of eccentric behaviour which, like romanticism, emphasizes individualism, de-emphasizes the team. Eccentricity, then, is a weapon that the aesthetes use both against the hearties and the 'old men' in a transformation rather than a replacement of the cult of games in the private sphere of school where war is a game: 'Two people in my absence just had a water fight in my room' (p.3). Thus opposition to war, as a game, becomes an alternative cult of games, which rebels against, by ridiculing, the authority of the school:

This morning, so I am told, Seymour and B.G. dragged a toy tin motor car along the pavement on the end of a string. How I wish I had been there: it is quite unprecedented, and seems to have outraged the dignity of the whole school, which is excellent. (p.16)

However, where one side of the binary opposition cannot be related to the experience of war combatants John is shown to take an ambivalent position. This can be seen in the position that he takes in the binary opposition between past and future. He reads a range of first person narratives, epistolary and autobiography - the letters of Carlyle, Moore's *Ave* - and third person narratives, biography, history and the novel - Churchill's biography of his father, Carlyle's *French Revolution*, Gogol's *Dead Souls*, Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* and *The Idiot*, Turgenev's *Father and Sons*. This reading is all pre-war. In part this supports John Haye's represented view that the pre-war is of higher value than the after-war and that, in consequence, he should remain within a private sphere like Ford Madox Ford's Sylvia Tietjens who 'spends nearly all her time in retreat in a convent reading novels of before the war.'⁵³ It is also a project of after-war re-integration within his private sphere, similar to that put forward by T.S. Eliot in "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919): 'No poet, no

⁵³ Ford Madox Ford, 1924, *Some Do Not*, in *Parade's End*, pp.232-3.

artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists. You cannot value him alone; you must set him, for contrast and comparison, among the dead'.⁵⁴ John Haye is not only associated with that powerful after-war concept 'the dead', busily being remembered in the after-war but also provided with a literary tradition that supports his view of the after-war, providing an alternative form of authority to that of the despised 'old men', and a means of moving away from the romanticist private sphere of school into the after-war neo-classicism of modernism.

John's pre-war reading also supports his opposition to the old, here represented by the father. Dostoevsky's Prince Myshkin observes: 'how quick children are to notice that their fathers consider them to be too little to understand, while they understand everything'.⁵⁵ In *Fathers and Sons* the decline of the father becomes a historical rule: 'Your father's a good man,' said Bazarov, 'but he's old fashioned, he's had his day'.⁵⁶ Paternal decline as historical rule is confirmed by Churchill's biography of his father which contains, and finally buries the father in the narrative form, an intention stated by Churchill in his preface: 'this account will, I think, be found to explain in almost mechanical detail the steps and forces by which he rose to the exercise of great personal authority, as well as the converse process by which he declined'.⁵⁷ It is significant that both John Haye's parents are dead. Later in the novel he will ignore his dead father but idealize his dead mother - she becomes 'nearer than she had ever

⁵⁴ Reprinted in Lodge, *Literary Criticism*, p.72.

⁵⁵ Fyodor Dostoevsky, 1869, *The Idiot*, p.94 (Penguin, 1974).

⁵⁶ Ivan Turgenev, 1862, *Fathers and Sons*, p.118 (Penguin, 1975).

⁵⁷ Winston Churchill, 1906, *Lord Randolph Churchill*, volume I, p.xii (Macmillan).

been before, now that he was blind' (p.137). John Haye achieves an ideal state for a after-war writer - he is without biological parents. Unlike Philip Lindsay in Isherwood's *All the Conspirators* there is no parent to prevent him writing by keeping him to a conventional ordered life. Instead his stepmother decides that John must move to London and puts this decision into effect, enabling him to realize his ambition of becoming a writer.

Gogol supports John Haye's view that the fathers have produced an after-war public sphere that is amoral, lacking in ideals, lacking in heroism: 'We no longer have villains nowadays. We have right-thinking and agreeable people, but you might find only two or three men who would run the risk of disgracing themselves by thrusting out their faces to be slapped in public, and even they now talk of virtue'.⁵⁸ Here the writer becomes a kind of soldier, battling to expose the wrongs of society, attacked by the old men who take upon themselves the mantle of patriotism to conceal their self interest. Such a writer, who 'will be censured by the so-called patriots who sit quietly in their homes and busy themselves with quite different matters, amassing private fortunes and making sure of their own future at the expense of others',⁵⁹ provides a romanticist model for the after-war schoolboy. John Haye opposes what he perceives to be the decline in the moral order with a romanticism which runs as a thread through "Caterpillar". Gogol provides an implicit model for this romanticism. Carlyle provides an explicit model: 'Romanticism, all spiritual greatness is going ... Oh, for a Carlyle now! Some prophet one could follow.' (p.25). Carlyle is adopted as a romanticist prophet because he is associated with opposition to a modernity without

⁵⁸ Nikolai Gogol, 1837, *Dead Souls*, p. 253 (Penguin, 1961).

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 255.

ideals, an opposition to a state of being in which 'we have taken up the Fact of this Universe as it *is not*. We have quietly closed our eyes to the eternal Substance of things, and opened them only to the Shows and Shams. We quietly believe this Universe to be intrinsically a great unintelligible PERHAPS'.⁶⁰ John Haye's blindness will reverse this process by enabling him to ignore 'Shows and Shams' and approach, as close as he can in the after-war that has deprived him of certainty, 'the eternal Substance of things'.

John Haye's reading supports the separatism of after-war fragmentation into private spheres: 'my place is not in society ... There are certain ideas, certain great ideas, which I mustn't start talking about, because I'm quite sure to make you all laugh'.⁶¹ It is John Haye's experience of understanding the after-war through his reading of pre-war texts - of experiencing the public sphere vicariously - that determines him to be a writer - to become a producer rather than a recipient of vicarious experience. That this will be another private sphere is indicated by John's reading of *Ave* where George Moore describes a life dedicated single-mindedly to literature. To achieve entry to a private sphere of after-war writing John Haye is identified explicitly with Dostoevsky. He records in his diary, 'What an amazing man he was with his epileptic fits which were much the same as visions really' (p.29), foreshadowing his own fit at the end of *Blindness*. The appeal of Dostoevsky to John Haye, hungry for vicarious experience within his insular adolescent sphere, is as a rebel and a sufferer,

⁶⁰ Thomas Carlyle, 1843, *Past and Present*, p.189 (Ward Lock and Bowden, 1897).

⁶¹ Dostoevsky, *Idiot*, p. 378.

accused of "taking part in conversations against the censorship, of reading a letter from Byelinsky to Gogol, and of knowing of the intention to set up a printing press".⁶²

Imprisoned, condemned to die, reprieved within minutes of execution, Dostoevsky provides an appropriately romantic role model for the schoolboy seeking a substitute for war experience within the insular sphere of school.

There is also binary opposition in *Blindness* between country and city. These become associated respectively with past and future and John's relationship here is similarly ambivalent. The country is where he convalesces and this associates him with soldiers wounded in the war. The chapter title "Picture Postcardism" in "Chrysalis" is ironic. This is far from the kind of picturesque rural scene shown on postcards. Indeed it can be read as an ironic comment on the desire for the pre-war which led to the expression of English ruralism, for example in Mary Webb's *Precious Bane* (1924). Valentine Cunningham, in *British Writers of the Thirties*, argues that "Picture Postcardism" satirises *Precious Bane*. The irony, which emphasizes the decay of the house, in turn re-emphasizes the ironic comment, contained in the structure of *Blindness*, upon the possibility of growth in the after-war. The reader is invited to make this connection because not only does "Picture Postcardism" depict decay but its structure mimics the three part scheme of the novel. The chapter's three physically divided sections are an explicit beginning, middle and end structure, comprising morning, midday and evening in a decaying rural household. Within the house, the defrocked clergyman, blind to the public sphere in his drunkenness, and his daughter live in a private sphere, separated from the public sphere by the clergyman's

⁶² Translator's Preface to Fyodor Dostoevsky, 1866, *Crime and Punishment*, p.v (Heinemann, 1974).

shame, a label specifically applied to him by Mrs Haye. The impossibility of growth, associated with the house, is linked to John Haye. The house,

with its wistful mauve patterns, looking so deserted and forlorn although it was lived in. Nobody loved, and, though by nature so very feminine, it had to remain neuter and wretched. No one cared two farthings and it felt that deeply (pp.83-4).

This recalls both John Haye's opposition to masculine values at school and his after-school belief that no one cared for him: 'They did not seem to realise that he was blind and would never see again. Nothing but black. Why it was absurd, stifling. He was blind and they did not mind that he was blind and would never see again' (p.44). The house and John are linked through being shown to feel unloved, uncared for, lacking sympathetic companions in the after-war.

The third part of *Blindness*, "Butterfly", departs from the internal tripartite structure of "Chrysalis". It charts John Haye's progress out of the enclosing after-war structure of convalescence and, thus, out of the tripartite structure that would stunt growth. An alternative view is provided by Rod Mengham who reads *Blindness* as tending 'towards retardation; so that the [tripartite] scheme canvassed by the description of contents is a kind of ruse'.⁶³ As either a ruse or departure, "Butterfly" completes a representation that growth, in the after-war, is only possible for Green's generation through escaping the paradoxes and constrictions of the after-war. However, the image of the butterfly implies escape into another private sphere by suggesting another literary escapee from adult responsibility: Harold Skimpole in Dickens' *Bleak House* who wishes to be as free as the butterflies.

⁶³ Rod Mengham, 1982, *The Idiom of the Time: The Writings of Henry Green*, p.1 (Cambridge University Press).

John Haye will emerge from the cocoon of his blindness to fly into a private sphere where he can be as free as a butterfly - that of being a writer. Here apparent truths can be protected from the perceived immorality and cynicism of the public after-war sphere because, as I.A. Richards taught in the after-war - his work having been influenced by his conception of war-time propaganda - truth becomes 'the acceptability of the things we are told, their acceptability in the interests of the effects of the narrative, not their correspondence with any actual facts'.⁶⁴ However, as the image of the butterfly suggests, this is not an enclosed private sphere (as are the spheres of school and convalescence) but one which acknowledges and selects from other spheres, both public and private. This sense of breaking free from insularity, through acknowledgement, is similar to that represented in *Pack My Bag* where the impact of the General Strike forced Henry Green to acknowledge that his stance of non-cooperation with the public sphere was not feasible. In "Butterfly" John Haye acknowledges other private and public spheres to build his private sphere of writing.

This building of his private sphere of writing, then, is shown as a process of John Haye positioning himself in relation to other after-war spheres, of selecting and rejecting from these. The butterfly is not insular like the schoolboy or the convalescent. He exists amongst other spheres, whose existence he must acknowledge if he is to take what he needs. Initially John chooses a relationship with Joan - the daughter of the drunken defrocked clergyman introduced in "Chrysalis" - as a means of growth: 'there was something new today; he had met her; he would meet her again, and the wind was lighter for it, the branches danced almost' (p.125). She is

⁶⁴ I.A. Richards, 1924, *The Principles of Literary Criticism*, reprinted in Lodge, *Literary Criticism*, p.113.

brought into "Butterfly" with a wound - her cut and poisoned thumb, which Mrs Haye dresses at Barwood. This emphasizes Barwood's status as a representative convalescent hospital within the novel, and gives Joan a substitute war wound which, in addition to the similarity of their names, links her to John. He pursues a relationship with her because 'she must have suffered living in that cottage that was falling down' (p.129), the cottage that both represents the war and provides a contrast to the order and traditions of Barwood. Yet this is also a coming together of the private sphere of Joan and her father - a private sphere that has been signified by the separate chapter, "Picture Postcardism" devoted to Joan and her father in "Chrysalis" - and the private sphere inhabited by John Haye. Thus Joan becomes an ideal that John pursues in the after-war: 'one day a fairy prince may spirit you away to a place of luxury' (p.155).

John selects what he requires from his version of the feminine, represented by Joan, that which he considers will enable him to become a writer:

she would not be sickly, but rather like a sunflower, absorbing from the sun, and so proud, so still. Women were like flowers; it was silly, but they were. The sudden flutter of wings of a bird who was going elsewhere to drink more in and pour it out again to the sun brought the grass and trees together, and the earth that kept them both. Women understood like that. Their intuitions exalted them to the simple understanding of the trees, for trees were so simple; there was no remoteness in them as of mountains and their false sublimity (pp.130-1).

However, there are aspects of the feminine that John must reject, in particular those associated with school:

There were days when everything was a toy, and when even the big flowers with heavy scents condescended, except the wooden lilies, and they stank of pollution. Violets were silly; they were not bold enough; they nestled simpering and were too frightened. But the others would play with you if you would only let them, gay exquisite things (p.135).

This passage recalls school through the idea that 'everything was a toy', a reminder of the toy motor car that Seymour and B.G. drag along on a piece of string to outrage the school establishment. Yet school is also being rejected in the image of the 'wooden lilies', lilies being the emblems on Eton's coat of arms.⁶⁵ This rejection of school symbolized by the lily is emphasized in the last chapter of *Blindness* where John has a dying lily moved away from him, a move noted as significant by his stepmother: 'one would have thought he'd like it, it had cost quite a sum being so early in the year, but he had pushed it away' (p.212).

Joan is shown to awaken a longing in John to escape the confines of his convalescent chrysalis: 'There were many things to do, all the senses to develop ... To sit still and be stifled by the blackness was wrong; he had done that long enough' (p.134). John's development of all the senses enables him to reach out to Joan: 'they would talk of everything and he would find out her life' (p.129). Joan provides a way of escape because, being associated with an ideal femininity through her connection with flowers, she is associated with peace, a connection that Green makes in *Pack My Bag*. In particular Joan is associated with roses, for the cultivation of which, his father neglected both his parish duties and his wife, leading to his banishment into the decrepit cottage. The decrepit cottage is another private sphere, linked to war, indicating that Joan will not ultimately provide a way of escape.

In the second chapter of "Butterfly" progress is evoked in the chapter title "Walking Out". That this will not be John's route towards being a writer is conveyed by the re-emergence of a tripartite structure - in this chapter's three, physically separated

⁶⁵ Connolly writes of Eton: 'the culture of the lilies, rooted in the past, divorced from reality and dependent on a dead foreign tongue, was by nature sterile' (Connolly, *Enemies*, p.219).

episodes - which recalls the sense of stasis evoked by the repetitive tripartite structures of "Chrysalis". Two of the episodes are of John walking out with June, as John has renamed June. These two episodes revolve around the central episode of Nanny in her room. She is both a similar and an opposite figure to John. Her room is her version of his "Chrysalis". In it she sits, stiffened by pre-war Victorian whalebone, disliking John's renewed sense of freedom, opposing his idealizations of Joan and his dead mother with her own worldly stories. She wants to keep John as a child, and recalls a memory of him creating a substitute for war, 'sitting on his heels and getting excited over the soldiers as if they was real and fighting a real battle' (p.145). Nanny is part of the traditional order of "Chrysalis", an order that is stifling, life-denying: 'The room was thick with warmth. A lifeless pennant of steam came from the spout of the teapot' (p.147). This chrysalis, if it hatched, would seek to retain John within the private sphere of substitutes for war.

John Haye's path to being a writer through blindness has literary antecedents, as he is shown to recognize: 'Writing means so much to me, and it is the only thing in which the blind are not hampered. There was Milton' (p.161). Indeed *Paradise Lost*, evoking, when considered in relation to Green's generation, a lost paradise of pre-war idealism and war heroism, could be a subtitle of many of the after-war writings of the generation that John Haye represents. Blindness also links John Haye to Homer, through John Keats' poem "To Homer":

Aye on the shores of darkness there is light,
And precipices show untrodden green,
There is a budding morrow in midnight,
There is a triple sight in blindness keen.

Here are the twin poles of after-war consciousness, romanticism and classicism, as derived from the writing of T.E. Hulme. Homer represents classicism and Keats

romanticism. The latter representation is made, for instance, by Connolly who links Keats to romanticism through an allusion to "Ode on a Grecian Urn":

Romanticism I would call the refusal to face certain truths about the world and ourselves, and the consequences of that refusal. It is a refusal which can be both splendid and necessary, this pretence that truth is beauty and beauty truth, that love is stronger than death, the soul immortal and the body divine.⁶⁶

Connolly's romanticism is that which John Haye has left behind him at school but must somehow adapt and fuse with the after-war neo-classicism of modernism if he is to gain the 'triple sight in blindness keen' that will enable him to enter his private sphere of writing.

"Butterfly" is more explicit in remembering the First World War than the two other parts of the novel. However, this is not an acknowledgement of the public sphere but rather representation of memories and myths formed into private spheres, derived from the originally public sphere of the war. Nanny, for instance, remembers her 'four nephews killed in the war, one after the other' (p.149). This connects *Blindness* with other after-war fictions, for example *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), where the war is not over for Mrs Foxcroft and Lady Bexborough because they remember their dead sons, and *Antic Hay* (1923) where Myra Viveash remembers her Tony Lamb killed in the war. Such myth making is necessary in the after-war when the war cannot be forgotten, when it is the great time, dwarfing after-war experience through its idealism, its heroism and, paradoxically, the horror of its immense scale of death and destruction. The third chapter of "Butterfly", "Finishing", begins by alluding to this sense of being dwarfed, in the after-war, by the war:

⁶⁶ Ibid., p.168.

"How minute we are."

"Why?"

"Well, this does not seem to be a time of great feelings ... " (p.164).

John Haye's move into a private sphere of writing appears to be completed at the end of "Butterfly" when he crosses another barrier of illness by having the epileptic fit which identifies him with Dostoevsky, an identification which is foreshadowed in his school diary. Indeed, one of the books that John Haye reads at school, *Crime and Punishment*, has its ending with Raskolnikov's sense of liberation in prison in Siberia, having become as a dead person to his family, a scene that John Haye summarises in his school diary: 'the final episode, in Siberia, by the edge of the river that went to the sea where there was freedom, reconciliation, love' (p.30). Indeed, *Blindness* begins an exploration of themes of imprisonment and flight in Green's pre-war novels, *Living* and *Party Going*, where flight is into private spheres.⁶⁷ Escape in *Blindness* is celebrated in the final paragraph of "Butterfly": 'As they carried him to his room, the bells suddenly broke out again from along the street. Probably they were practising for some great event. It was the first thing he heard as he came back to the world, and he smiled at them' (p.213). John Haye's crossing of the final boundary towards being a writer is, then, celebrated as a substitute for the great time that war represents. All that is left in the novel is for John Haye to write a letter to his old school friend B.G. pointing out this boundary crossing into his private sphere of writing: 'I have had some sort of fit ... my father was liable to them ... I am so happy to be in the centre of things ... I have had a wonderful experience. I am going to settle down to writing now' (p.214).

⁶⁷ By contrast, in the war novels flight is either impossible - *Caught, Back* - or flight is from private spheres into a public sphere of war as in *Loving*.

Blindness belongs to a body of work associated with adolescence, a type of

'cradle-to-coming-of-age' narrative which young men like myself were producing in thousands of variations, not merely in England but all over Europe and the United States.⁶⁸

This body of work belongs to a genre of after-war fiction, not solely written by young men, concerned with the development, or lack of development, of young men after the war. There are various categories within this genre, although the categories are interconnected to some degree. There is the fiction which looks back to the war, to the young man doomed to die as in *Jacob's Room*, or Huxley's short story 'Farcical History of Richard Greenow'. There are the young men who survive but are maimed by their experience, for example Edward Blake in *The Memorial*. There is the after-war struggle of the young against the old as in *All the Conspirators* where Philip Lindsay can only achieve his ambition to become an artist through his breakdown and illness which overcomes the obstacles put in his way by his mother. There are the young men too young to have fought in the war but nevertheless mentally scarred by the experience of the First World War, for example Eric in *The Memorial*. John Haye belongs in the third and fourth categories. The thread that runs through these categories is that young men, whether of the war or the after-war generation, live in private spheres in the after-war, cut off from the 'old men' and public spheres.

Blindness suggests that the young man in the after-war cannot escape living in private spheres. This analysis of *Blindness* depends, of course, upon reading John Haye's blindness as a symbolic representation of both a war wound and an after-war state of

⁶⁸ Isherwood, *Lions*, p.74.

being, having previously read his public school as a symbolic representation of the First World War, a reading strategy determined by my reading of *Pack My Bag*.

Blindness was published at a time when attempts were being made to overcome the sense of after-war fragmentation inherent in living in private spheres, to 'Only connect' in Forster's famous pre-war phrase. Similar attempts occur, for example, in I.A. Richards' work on communication and meaning as means of helping fragmented spheres understand each other and in the work of T.S. Eliot in forging a literary tradition. The work of Richards and Eliot, along with that of Hulme on Romanticism and Classicism, would have been familiar - and, as a theoretical underpinning of literary modernism, attractive - to those who, like Green, considered themselves aesthetes at Eton and Oxford. It is not surprising to find contemporary literary theories supporting modernism underpinning a novel, whose hero is a public school aesthete, written by an author who, while at public school and university, considered himself - if somewhat equivocally - an aesthete. However, *Blindness* explores the notions of growth and repair offered by such theory only in so far as to enable John Haye to traverse the labyrinth of fragmented private spheres in the after-war. Although John Haye's projected growth is towards being a writer the nearest he gets to this state of after-war being is to write to B.G. stating that he will now settle down to writing. However, John Haye does not need to be shown to write as *Blindness* explores, not the means of repairing after-war fragmentation, but the boundaries between fragments of an after-war world, an exploration that is continued in Green's next novel *Living*.

Chapter 3. *Living*: we stand between two worlds

The end of the after-war anticipated in the private spheres of *Blindness* (1926), signified in the public sphere by the General Strike, is where *Living* (1929) begins, albeit implicitly. Contained within the period it represents are two voices of Green's generation. The most obvious is that of Dick Dupret, aesthete son of a Birmingham foundry owner. In contrast to John Haye's fear of the working class, Dick Dupret expresses admiration: "What a beautiful face", he says to Bridges, the works manager, of Jim Dale who works for Craigan, 'the best moulder in Birmingham'.¹ Dick Dupret is a representative of Green's generation, similar to Evelyn Waugh:

the only diary entries to reveal enthusiasm are those describing aesthetic excitement - a visit to Serzincote with Betjeman and Frank Pakenham; another to Henry Yorke's Birmingham factory. 'I was chiefly impressed by the manual dexterity of the workers', he remarked. 'Nothing in the least like mass labour or mechanization - pure arts and crafts. The brass casting peculiarly beautiful: green molten metal from a red cauldron.'²

Waugh expresses a sentiment similar to that of Dick Dupret in *Living* to whom it seemed "these iron castings were beautiful" (p.5). Dick Dupret is shown to gain, and use, the power to sack Bridges, Craigan and the other older foundry workers. He is an ambivalent figure, straddling two worlds – of the foundry and his rich family – and thus faced with the dilemma that John Lehmann recorded in his diary,

¹ Henry Green, 1929, *Living*, p.3 (Harvill, 1991) . Hereafter page references to *Living* will appear in the body of the text of this chapter.

² Martin Stannard, 1986, *Evelyn Waugh: The Early Years 1903-1939*, p.218 (Grafton, 1988). The diary entry is for 23 June 1930.

the dilemma of hundreds of others like me. On the one hand I see the moribund state of the culture I have been brought up in On the other hand I have been educated in and accustomed to the old culture Go and live among the workers, take part in their activities, make friends with them, work with them if you can, refuse to have anything to do with the bourgeois world, says one voice. And another: but practically all your friends belong to that world, you cannot break all the old ties So we stand between two worlds . . .³

The other voice comprises the working class perspective and setting of *Living*. These constitute the narrative voice of the novel, a voice representing the other world that Lehmann and others like him wanted to enter. Green was considered by his generation to have resolved the dilemma expressed by Lehmann. Indeed Lehmann wrote that '*Living* was the solution to many of the problems that had exercised us about "proletarian" writing'.⁴ However, this narrative voice of *Living*, like that of Dick Dupret, is ambivalent, it also straddles two worlds. As such it would be more accurate to speak of narrative voices, or a mixed narrative voice. This is indicative of ambivalence on Green's part as to how fully he, or any other member of his generation, could engage with a working class sphere of living. Indeed, there is a thread of pessimism running through *Living* suggesting that Green's second novel is set in a post-war period of brief optimism ended by the Wall Street Crash of 1929. As Stephen Spender retrospectively observed:

The Wall Street crash which was to spread shock waves of economic collapse and unemployment throughout the world and which would soon make Germany the scene of struggle between Communist and

³ Diary entry for 1932, self quoted in John Lehmann, 1978, *Thrown to the Wolves*, pp.42-3 (Weidenfeld and Nicolson).

⁴ John Lehmann, 1955, *The Whispering Gallery*, p.329 (Readers Union, 1957).

Fascist did not happen until 1929 ... 1929 was the turning point of the *entre deux guerres* ...⁵

Living, and Green, became, for Green's generation, solutions to the problems of proletarian writing partly because both were fortuitous in their timing, partly because the novel's narrative voices span the two worlds that Lehmann identifies. *Living* is located in a relatively brief period of optimism from the General Strike to the Wall Street Crash of 1929, the year of publication of *Living*. This was a particularly safe time to enter a working class sphere, a time of reduced conflict. As Keith Laybourn points out, employers could afford to be magnanimous after the victory that the General Strike represented for them:

... after 1926 a softer attitude began to emerge from some sections of the employers. Many were happy to see the number of strike days lost, which had been about eight millions in 1925 and 162 millions in 1926, fall to 1,174,000 in 1927 and 1,388,000 in 1928.⁶

The General Strike is shown in *Pack My Bag* to provide the stimulus to enter into a working class sphere of living because its resolution provided Green with the confidence to engage with working class life at a time when other members of his generation were either still at university or in the type of bourgeois occupations that they thought would allow them, like John Haye, to realise their ambition of becoming writers. Green believed himself to be entering into a new sphere of work, a belief that he retained and expressed in *Pack My Bag*:

The moment I left Oxford to go to Birmingham was the bridge from what had been into what is so much a part of my life now ... it was an introduction to indisputable facts at last, to a life bare of almost

⁵ Stephen Spender, 1988, Introduction to *The Temple*, pp.x&xii (Faber).

⁶ Keith Laybourn, 1993, *The General Strike of 1926*, pp.110-1 (University of Manchester Press).

everything except essentials and so less confusing, to a new world which was the oldest.⁷

Green uses experience gained in the sphere into which he has crossed, the adult sphere of work, to write of the possibility of transition in *Living*, of living a different life.

This was the opinion of Green's contemporaries. For example W.H. Auden wrote in 1938:

There was a iron foundry in Tysely. The son of the owner, after being educated at Eton and Oxford, went into the works as an employee to learn the business. *Living* was the fruit of that experience. In this novel, Mr Green has attempted to give a cross section of life in all the classes connected with the factory, from the big employer down through the works manager and the skilled workers to the unskilled hands; their hopes, their loves, their failures.⁸

This is not to propose *Living* as a direct autobiographical expression of Green's experience as a Birmingham foundry worker. It is representative experience for his generation, distilled from his experience in Birmingham.

The General Strike in *Living* is said to be the finest hour of Miss Hannah Glossop, like Dick Dupret a representative of Green's generation, who 'had enjoyed enormously General Strike' (p.96). Samuel Hynes argues that the General Strike was a replay of the war in the nation's imagination, a replacement of the First World War as England's most recent traumatic conflict, entitling the chapter he devotes to it "The Ten Days' War".⁹ This public event provided the opportunity for Green's generation to do what it had been prepared for at school, to fight a war. Indeed this was a most

⁷ Henry Green, 1940, *Pack My Bag*, p.232 (Hogarth, 1992).

⁸ "Ironworks and University", *Town Crier*, 21st October 1938, p.2.

⁹ See Samuel Hynes, 1990, *A War Imagined: The First World War and English Culture*, chapter 20

"The Ten Days' War" (Pimlico, 1992).

suitable conflict for Green's generation to become involved in as it had a similar sense of purposelessness to the post-Somme First World War recorded in the wave of war memoirs and novels published after 1926.¹⁰ G.A. Phillips in his 1976 study of the General Strike summarises it thus:

If the TUC fought the General Strike with little semblance of purpose, the government fought it with none at all, save the sterile and pointless satisfaction of punishing an apologetic militancy and the freedom gained to continue to ignore responsibilities it found too laborious to assume.¹¹

Dick Dupret, a representative of Green's generation, and, therefore, potentially a combatant from the General Strike, generates an image that might come from a war damaged mind:

you sat sweating here in daytime when you might be dodging enemies in the Park or receiving rudeness impassively there, here you were dying of it, the badly managed intrigues (p.51).

This image is similar to those shown to be generated by the war-damaged mind of Septimus Warren Smith, sitting in Regent's Park, in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* (1925): 'There was his hand; there the dead. White things were assembling behind the railings opposite'.¹²

Another determinant of *Living* becoming a model of a proletarian novel for Green's generation is the mixture that constitutes its narrative voice. This is a complex, ambivalent set of voices comprising parts that can be interpreted as both modernist

¹⁰ For example Siegfried Sasoon's *Memoirs of a Fox Hunting Man* (1928), Edmund Blunden's *Undertones of War* (1928), Richard Aldington's *Death of a Hero* (1929), Robert Graves's *Goodbye to all That* (1929).

¹¹ G.A. Phillips, 1976, *The General Strike*, p.133 (Weidenfeld & Nicolson).

¹² Virginia Woolf, 1925, *Mrs Dalloway*, p.28 (Penguin, 1967).

and proletarian, and each of these made up of different voices. The modernist voices are achieved by a willingness to experiment.

The abrupt shifting of the discourse from narrative to dialogue and back to narrative, without smooth transitions or explanatory links, is analogous to, and perhaps directly influenced by, the cubist compositions of Picasso, the cinematic jump-cuts of Eisenstein, the fragments T.S. Eliot shored against his ruins in "The Waste Land". Fragmentation, discontinuity, montage, are pervasive in the experimental art of the nineteen-twenties.¹³

Fragmentation, discontinuity and montage were a part of a modernist artistic currency used by Green's generation, characteristics of voices that they could recognize and identify with. David Lodge argues that the proletarian voices of *Living* are achieved by Green closing

a painfully obvious gap between authorial speech and character's speech in *Living* by deliberately deforming the narrative discourse - giving it, as he said himself, something of the compactness of Midland dialect and avoiding "easy elegance".¹⁴

The closeness to working class experience is read into *Living's* famous omission of the common articles - 'a' 'an' and 'the'. It is tempting to claim that the omission of the articles emulates working class factory speech, a claim encouraged by Green's retrospective 1958 statement, 'I wanted to make that book as taut and spare as possible, to fit the proletarian life I was then leading'.¹⁵ However, at the time Green was using metaphors drawn from his old world of Oxford, which tell a story of

¹³ David Lodge, 1992, *The Art of Fiction*, p.105 (Secker and Warburg).

¹⁴ Ibid., p.107.

¹⁵ Terry Southern, 1958, "The Art of Fiction XXII - Henry Green" *Paris Review* 5, Summer 1958, from Plimpton, George (ed.) *Writers at Work: The Paris Review Interviews* 5, p.212 (Secker and Warburg, 1981).

growing up rather than entry into a working class sphere of living. He wrote, in 1926, to Nevill Coghill,

What I want metaphorically speaking, is to sip at a long series of cocktails & then by a process of mental digestion, to refine them into a long drink of a potency that is more even than their cumulative effect if they were merely mixed up. At Oxford one takes nothing but long drinks through a straw. I am afraid this is wholly obscure but you know me sufficiently by now to know how incapable I am to express anything directly...¹⁶

The differentiation here is between a childish world, associated with Oxford, where drinks are taken through a straw and an adult world of cocktails. However, cocktails are associated with Lehmann's 'old culture ... the bourgeois world' rather than the working-class world of a Birmingham foundry in the 1920s. His letter indicates that Green proposed to take much of his old style of life with him to his new world of foundry work in Birmingham.¹⁷

Green also took from his old world the style of writing that was to mark out *Living* as a proletarian novel for his contemporaries. He had been 'busy experimenting with the definite article'¹⁸ since at least 1923 when he was still at Eton.¹⁹ In *Living* Green

¹⁶ Letter to Neville Coghill, (undated, believed to be early 1926), Eton College Library.

¹⁷ John Updike claims, '[*Living's*] style's source, strange to say, or at least the source of its innovative courage, is Arabic, as transmuted to English by Charles M. Doughty in his *Travels in Arabia Deserta* (1888). Doughty's style originated, he wrote to his biographer, in "my dislike of the Victorian English; and I wished to show, and thought I might be able to show, that there was something else". Arabic, as it was absorbed by Doughty on his travels, was a language of the ear, spoken by illiterates ...', John Updike, 1978, Introduction to *Living, Loving, Party Going*, p.11 (Picador).

¹⁸ Letter to Nevill Coghill, 10th April 1926, Eton College Library.

¹⁹ See for instance the short story "Monsta Monstrous" (unpublished c.1923) in Henry Green, 1992, *Surviving: The Uncollected Writings of Henry Green* (Chatto and Windus). Also W.H. Auden, writing

found a subject matter to match his existing style rather than a style to match his found subject matter. As Anthony Powell recalled of Green's move to Birmingham, 'the motive specifically given as wish to write a novel about factory life from first-hand experience'.²⁰ Powell's memory is supported by a letter that Green wrote immediately before his departure from Oxford:

If one is going to write at all decently one must get down to it. After all this, there will probably be a terrific & rather amusing anticlimax when I come back from Birmingham after 3 weeks, but still the attempt must be made. I think it is the right thing to try even though it may last on into several years if it succeeds.²¹

A language derived from Eton and Oxford, combined with a subject matter derived from Birmingham, produces a mixed voice both modernist and proletarian, a

liberatingly ingenious voice, that voice so full of other voices, its own interpolations amid the matchless dialogue twisted and tremulous with a precision that kept the softness of groping, of sensation, of living.²²

The modernist parts of *Living*'s narrative voice were also an escape from the subject that it purported to represent and the form that Lehmann, speaking for Green's generation, took it to represent. Modernist literary novels were not, in 1929, generally read by proletarian readers. This represents a departure from the biographical path mapped in *Pack My Bag* which represented Green's experience of the Birmingham

in 1938, proposed literary precedents for the style of *Living*: 'The use of reported speech as in the later George Moore, and the omission of the definite article as in Anglo-Saxon poetry' ("Ironworks and University", *Town Crier*, 21st October 1938).

²⁰ Anthony Powell, *To Keep the Ball Rolling: Memoirs, vol.1 Infants of the Spring*, p. 197 (Heinemann).

²¹ Letter to Nevill Coghill, 12th December 1926, Eton College Library.

²² Updike, "Introduction" to *Loving, Living, Party Going*, p.7.

foundry as a journey into populism, for example in the sharing of shop floor stories.

Green, interviewed in 1958, recalled a factory worker's reaction to *Living*: '... as I was going round the iron foundry one day, a loam moulder said to me, "I read your book Henry ... I didn't think much of it"'.²³ The loam moulder is another Craigan, the character in *Living* whose preference is for the mass culture of radio²⁴ and the narrative forms of the nineteenth century novel, the latter represented by Craigan's reading of Dickens. Similarly modernism was not, in 1929, a literary form used by proletarian writers. Contrast *Living* with *Love on the Dole* (1933), written by Walter Greenwood (born 1903), a writer from a proletarian background. Both novels depict living as a struggle within a closed economic circle but deploy radically different narrative structures and styles. For example, whereas *Living* locates narrative time and place in its first two short fragmented sentences - 'Bridesley, Birmingham. Two o'clock.' - *Love on the Dole* takes a more traditional narrative space - two chapters - to explore and represent the time and place of its setting. *Living* embodies the paradox of a populist subject matter wedded to the modernist forms of Picasso, Eisenstein and Eliot. The mixed narrative voice of *Living*, which seemed to Green's generation to be proletarian, straddled the two worlds of Lehmann's dilemma rather than fully entering into the new sphere of work, as Green claimed for himself in *Pack My Bag*.

²³ Southern, p.101.

²⁴ Malcolm Muggeridge described radio as bringing a uniform mass culture into being: 'the same gentle persuasion washed against the nine million, patiently wearing away angular opinions; like waves on a beach, ebbing and flowing, transforming rocks and stones into smooth round pebbles, all alike, into a stretch of yellow sand' (Malcolm Muggeridge, 1940, *The Thirties*, p.68 (Collins, 1967)).

The modernist form of *Living* is also derived from the subject matter of the novel.

Bert Jones preparing to elope with Lily is given a metaphor derived from the factory:

And now for Mr Jones his position was this: that as it might be foreman had given him a job out of which, if he did it right and it was not easy to do, would come advancement and satisfaction for him (p.161).

Here the metaphor entwines satisfying work with satisfactory living. Because Bert is an unsatisfactory worker, he will not make a success of living, thus his elopement with Lily will end in failure. The paradigm of unsatisfactory living offered in the figure of Bert Jones is extended to writing, which offers disappointment, both actual and metaphorical:

Mr Gibbon said after he had done the Holy Roman Empire he felt great relief and then sadness at old companion done with. Mr Dale wanted to feel relief but felt only as if part of him was not with him, and sadness of a vacuum (p.99).

Green echoes this sentiment in *Pack My Bag*: 'how little literature counts, that overblown trumpet ... I write books but I am not proud of this any more than anyone is of their nails growing'.²⁵

As writing is not so important as factory work, it is factory work, rather than a conventional novel form, that provides a paradigm for the structure of *Living*. A traditional novel form, the division of text into chapters, is fragmented through breaking each chapter into a varying number of short sections, each containing a different scene and sometimes containing contrasting scenes within a section. Green reported work in progress on *Living* to Coghill: 'Its written in a very condensed kind of way in short paragraphs, hardly even much larger than 1½ to 2 printed pages & very

²⁵ Green, *Pack*, p.234.

much short'.²⁶ In analysing this condensed structure Rod Mengham argues that *Living* is

generated out of a tension between loyalty to one class and the conventions of thought derived from another. The theme of class division draws attention to the way the text is constructed on a basis of discursive oppositions ...²⁷

Mengham points to both the movement from one class to another and the wrought feel conveyed by the structure adopted in *Living* to express this movement. It is as though the raw material of Green's factory experience has been stacked up, moulded, cut up, and then assembled as a finished product, the text of *Living*.²⁸

Claims have been made for *Living* as deployment of cinematic form,²⁹ a popular, mass art form. Indeed Green described *Living* as 'A kind of very disconnected cinema film'.³⁰ This is using a mass form but, through being 'very disconnected', in a way that the mass would be unlikely to appreciate. This can be seen in the cinematic style of cutting between people and families, home and work, and between classes:

So their strength ebbed after the hard day. Mr Craigan's face was striped with black dust which had stuck to his face and which the sweat in running down his face had made in stripes. He put hands up over his face and laid weight of his head on them, resting elbows on his knees.

²⁶ Letter to Nevill Coghill, 8th October 1927, Eton College Library.

²⁷ Rod Mengham, 1982, *The Idiom of the Time: The Writings of Henry Green*, p.19 (Cambridge University Press).

²⁸ This may explain the chronological discrepancies of *Living*, for example Lily being introduced to Bert Jones after she has been going with him to the cinema.

²⁹ See for example, Mengham, pp. 15-16, Oddvar Holmesland, 1986, *A Critical Introduction to Green's Novels: The Living Vision* (Macmillan), Valentine Cunningham, 1988, *British Writers of the Thirties*, p.332 (Oxford, 1989), Edward Stokes, 1959, *The Novels of Henry Green*, p.85 (Hogarth).

³⁰ Letter to Nevill Coghill, 8th October 1927, Eton College Library.

Continuing conversation Mrs Dupret said to her son well she was sorry it could not be then, she had so wanted they should have one quiet evening together, well it would have to be another time. He said some other time. Immediately he thought: "When I am with her I echo as a landscape by Claude echoes." (p.29).

Deployment of cinematic style can also be traced to similarities in forms of production in cinema and factory. Raymond Williams points out that

the late nineteenth century was the occasion for the greatest changes ever seen in the media of cultural production. Photography, cinema, radio, television, reproduction and recording all make their decisive advances during the period identified as Modernist.³¹

The media that Williams identifies offer forms of mechanical cultural production made possible by industrialism. It is these forms of mechanical cultural production, and the industrialism that they signify, that *Living* adopts for its structure, thus reinforcing the process of letting satisfying work provide formal devices of metaphor, writing and structure. This is, in turn, represented in the narrative of *Living* where cinema and other forms of mechanical cultural production are consumed by the characters. However, *Living* can be read as a move toward wedding modernist form to mass culture, a step towards a later outcome that Raymond Williams describes:

Many of the direct forms and media processes of the minority phase of modern art thus became what could be seen as the common currency of majority communications, especially in films ... and in advertising.³²

The wrought cinematic feel of *Living* gives it a form as a novel 'that ostentatiously deviates from the received ways of representing reality - either in narrative organization or in style, or in both - to heighten or change our perception of that

³¹ Raymond Williams, 1989, *The Politics of Modernism: Against the New Conformists*, p.168 (Verso).

³² Ibid., p.47.

reality'.³³ This connects Green to those who were perceived to be, in the 1920s, the first practitioners of artistic and literary modernism, writers such as Joyce, T.S. Eliot, Proust, Woolf. Indeed Evelyn Waugh made this connection in a review written in 1930 for *The Graphic*:

Modern novelists taught by Mr James Joyce are at last realizing the importance of re-echoing and remodifying the same themes.... I see in *Living* very much the same technical apparatus at work as in many of Mr T.S. Eliot's poems - particularly in the narrative passages of *The Waste Land* and the two *Fragments of an Agon*.³⁴

Writers such as Joyce and Eliot formed a literary generation immediately prior to that of Green's.³⁵ This, in turn, provides a chronological link to the war, for Green's generation, as the generation immediately prior to theirs had fought the war.

Modernism became conflated with war because it became the artistic expression of war experience. In Hynes's view this was not merely chronological conflation:

The past would have to be reassessed, and history revised, before a theory of art could be formulated that would accommodate it to this horrific present. This process of historical revision would occupy English artists and critics throughout the war, and for many years after. Out of that reassessment would come post-war Modernism and the dominant moods of the inter-war years ...³⁶

³³ Lodge, *Fiction*, p.105.

³⁴ Stannard, *Waugh: The Early Years*, p.225.

³⁵ For a different view of the literary history of modernism see Williams who argues that modernism was an industrial and urban phenomenon whose first practitioners were the industrial novelists of the 1840s, amongst them Dickens who, in *Living*, is Craigan's favourite author. This does not invalidate my argument which rests upon a contemporary perception in the 1920s that modernism was a new phenomenon, being practised for the first time in the field of literature by writers such as Woolf, Eliot, Proust and Joyce.

³⁶ Hynes, *War*, p.11.

This reassessment can be seen in the extent to which the language of war entered literary language after the First World War. Virginia Woolf wrote in 1919:

We do not come to write better; all that we can be said to do is to keep moving, now a little in this direction, now in that, but with a circular tendency should the whole course of the track be viewed from a sufficiently lofty pinnacle. It need scarcely be said that we make no claim to stand, even momentarily, upon that vantage ground. On the flat, in the crowd, half blind with dust, we look back with envy to those happier warriors, whose battle is won and whose achievements wear so serene an air of accomplishment that we can scarcely refrain from whispering that the fight was not so fierce for them as for us.³⁷

What was being fought for? In *Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown* (1924), Woolf wrote, 'Mrs Brown is eternal, Mrs Brown is human nature, Mrs Brown changes only on the surface ... there she sits and not one of the Edwardian writers has so much as looked at her'.³⁸ This accusation that Edwardian writers were superficial provides a link to the widespread feeling at the beginning of the First World War that superficiality was being cast off, as expressed, for example, in Rupert Brooke's 'swimmer into cleanliness leaping'. There is, then, a connection between the idealistic heroism in which the war was begun and modernism. The latter transferred the idealistic heroism of the war's beginning to an artistic battleground after the war. The modernist style of *Living*, and its voices, probing beneath the surface of things, links it via post-war modernism to the idealistic heroism of the early war.

Yet however much the idealism of former public schoolboys matched, and expressed, the popular mood at the beginning of the First World War, the war was not won by such idealism but by the efforts of soldiers recruited from the masses. As

³⁷ Virginia Woolf, "Modern Fiction", reprinted in David Lodge (ed.), 1972, *20th Century Literary Criticism*, p.86 (Longman, 1992).

³⁸ Virginia Woolf, 1924, *Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown*, p.16 (Hogarth, 1928).

such, the war was a very public demonstration of the power of the mass. However, the war also demonstrated a paradox - this mass which had so much power was essentially passive; it allowed itself to be led into battle and death in horrific circumstances by an officer class, a military hierarchy. Similarly literary modernism demonstrates a form of military hierarchy where only those at the top can be expected to understand the battle plan, but where they have recruited the mass, the Mrs Browns, in their modernist fictions, to fight the battle. John Carey, in putting together evidence for his argument of a rift between intellectuals and the masses, captures this sense of literary officers and the mass they recruit to their literary colours in Joyce's *Ulysses*:

One effect of *Ulysses* is to show that mass man matters, that he has an inner life as complex as an intellectual's, that it is worthwhile to record his personal details on a prodigious scale. And yet it is also true that Bloom himself would never and could never have read *Ulysses* or a book like *Ulysses*. The complexity of the novel, its avant-garde technique, its obscurity, rigorously exclude people like Bloom from its readership. More than almost any other twentieth-century novel, it is for intellectuals only. This means that there is a duplicity in Joyce's masterpiece. The proliferation of sympathetic imagining, which creates the illusion of the reader's solidarity with Bloom, operates in conjunction with a distancing, ironizing momentum which preserves the reader's - and author's - superiority to the created life. The novel embraces mass man but also rejects him. Mass man - Bloom - is expelled from the circle of the intelligentsia, who are incited to contemplate him, and judge him, in a fictional manifestation.³⁹

Similarly *Living* immerses itself in mass culture. A crowd forms in a kind of communion 'transfixed with passion' to watch a football match. The cinema is a mass cultural phenomenon that transcends class bringing together the son of the factory owner and the working class Lily Gates:

A great number were in cinema, many standing, battalions were in cinemas over all the country, young Mr Dupret was in a cinema, over

³⁹ John Carey, 1992, *The Intellectuals and the Masses*, pp.20-1 (Faber).

above up into the sky their feeling panted up supported by each other's feeling, away away, Europe and America, mass on mass their feeling united supporting, renewed their sky (pp.48-9).

It is through the popular, mass art of cinema that 'young Mr Dupret', the direct representative of Green's generation achieves a remote connection with his workers, whom the narrative recruits into military 'battalions': they are in the same place but leading different lives similar to officers and men.

Dick Dupret does not immerse himself in masculine working class culture in the way that Green represents his own immersion in 'the proletarian life I was then leading'⁴⁰ in *Pack My Bag*: 'On Saturday afternoons I went to see the Villa play, then on to a cinema'.⁴¹ Dupret dismisses the beauty of the castings in the factory - which he is earlier shown as sharing with the works manager Bridges - with the thought that 'Ruskin built a road that went nowhere with the help of undergraduates and in so doing said the last word on that' (p.6). He sacks Bridges, Gates and Craigan in his determination to sweep away the old men, destroying the different degrees of satisfaction in work that these characters achieve. Having destroyed satisfaction in work, young Dupret fades from the narrative, which thereafter concentrates on the lives of the main working-class characters. Dupret's action is represented as a legacy of the war. Joe Gates is given the observation that the war had removed a large swathe of the generation who, by 1929, would be approaching middle age: 'there's only men of 'is age and young men in that place, so trouble's bound to be between 'em, the younger lot trying to push the older out of the light' (pp.123-4). Without the middle aged to provide a buffer, a sense of shading between young and old, binary

⁴⁰ Southern, p.108.

⁴¹ Green, *Pack*, p.233.

opposition arises between the young and the old, similar to that which characterised the after-war period, and not completely resolved by the end of the General Strike.

The voices of the working-class perspective in *Living* are grouped along two main binary oppositions: young against old and masculine against feminine. The works foreman, Brides attempts to bridge the oppositions, thus living out his name, by claiming to be both father and mother to the workers. His attempt is unsuccessful. He antagonizes both the workers and Dick Dupret. The oppositions are too deeply engrained into the post-war world to be bridged.

Living's opening in a public place - 'Bridesley, Birmingham. Two o'clock. Thousands came back from dinner along streets' (p.1) - invites the reader to enter into the public and adult spheres of a working class community. Privacy is represented in *Living* as being physically difficult in the thin walled houses of the workers' houses, and socially discouraged within the working class community. Lack of privacy is represented as bringing the benefits of sharing goods and services, as represented in the relationship between next door neighbours, the Eames and those who live in the Craigan household: the Eames do not have to buy an alarm clock, as they can hear the alarm from the Craigan household, Mrs Eames is called upon by the Craigan household to free a bird trapped in the window of the house, and Mrs Eames calls upon the Craigan household to borrow cheese. This is similar to the lack of privacy in the war time trenches where the men were crowded together, forced as a matter of survival to share goods and services, every detail of their lives open to scrutiny, even their letters home read and censored by their officers - who did not themselves have to suffer the same indignity.

The community, like the war, is represented as intrusive and threatening. When Lily Gates elopes with Bert Jones she feels guilt because she is offending against the community and its public openness:

When Lily got to station, bag in hand, she was so tired with strain of walking through streets seeing in each man or woman she passed someone who would ask her where she was going off to with a bag on Sunday morning (p.175).

This paradox whereby the community is both safe haven and omniscient threat defines the story of Lily's elopement. Away from the safe haven of her working class community she pines for it, unable to find a similar community in Liverpool she is sent back by Bert Jones, but at home, imagining that everyone knows her story, she hides in her bedroom.

These two spheres of foundry and home comprise the proletarian voice of the novel. Foundry work is associated with the masculine; the home is associated with the feminine. This is a legacy of the nineteenth century as Duncan Bythell points out:

The ideology of 'separate spheres', with its contingent ideas - 'the angel in the home', 'the sanctity of the family' and the 'cult of domesticity' - is now commonly regarded as one of the fundamental social values of nineteenth-century Britain. From the belief that every woman's destiny was marriage and motherhood, important consequences followed. A married woman's preoccupation with the domestic comfort of her husband and the rearing of her children prevented her from engaging in paid employment. This in turn implied, first, that only *unmarried* women - chiefly young spinsters (widows raised awkward problems) - should be part of the workforce; and second, that a husband's earnings (properly utilized) ought to be sufficient in themselves to support his wife and children . . .⁴²

⁴² Duncan Bythell "Women in the Workforce", from Patrick O'Brien and Ronald Quinalt (eds.), 1993 *The Industrial Revolution and British Society* (Cambridge University Press, 1998).

Femininity, as represented in *Living*, has a new emphasis on domesticity, a separate sphere from that of men, the factory workplace. Tupe is shown to insult Gates by attributing feminine domestic characteristics to him:

Soon as 'e gets 'ome, - on with 'is pinney an' 'e does the 'ousework for 'is daughter, her makes 'im. 'Is gaffer's slops an' 'ers. 'E don't get much rest in the night time neither as 'e's reading fairy stories for the old gaffer to get to sleep by. 'E's a wretched poor sort of a man (p.8).

Craigan will not allow Lily to work. Her elopement can also be read as a failed attempt to escape the feminine sphere of the home. In the immediate after-war there was a renewal of femininity being equated with domesticity. This, in turn, became equated with peace as a reaction partly to the public masculinity of the war, partly as Susan Kingsley-Kent has pointed out, to the threat of violence posed by returning servicemen.⁴³ Kingsley-Kent argues that a new feminism developed from these reactions to the war, which stressed a separate sphere for women rather than absolute equality with men. This resulted in a renewed importance given to domesticity and child rearing for women amongst new feminists.

In February 1914, for instance, Maude Royden, editor of the NUWSS newspaper *Common Cause*, stated in an editorial entitled "Our Common Humanity," "The 'difference of function' which Anti-Suffragists urge as a reason for denying women the vote without insisting on their inferiority, has no reality in the facts of life. The 'functions' of men and women are not divided into political and domestic." By 1917, Royden had markedly altered her stance. Believing "that most women desire to have children, and that motherhood is to them an absorbing duty and not merely an episode," she concluded that "the average woman will generally be in other walks of life but an amateur." While men might be expert in the arts and the professions, women could only be dilettantes; their expertise lay in "human life." This "new" feminist version of separate spheres for

⁴³ See Susan Kingsley-Kent, 1993, *Making Peace: The Reconstruction of Gender in Interwar Britain*, chapter 5 "Post war Disorder" (Princeton University Press).

men and women derived from what Royden described as "a permanent difference between the average woman and the average man, due to their natural qualities and vocations." ... By 1923, fully converted, she lamented "that the world is too great for us, that the passions created by the war are uncontrollable ... the fact that to be a woman gives one a rather different angle of vision to certain things in life," offered the best prospects for peace ...⁴⁴

In *Living* the home, women's separate sphere, is the place where women's skill is allowed to operate. When Gates, Craigan and Dales cannot free a bird trapped in the window of their house they send for Mrs Eames:

Mrs Eames came and she lowered upper frame and put hand in and gathered this bird up and gently carefully lifted it out and opened hand and it flew away and was gone. Mr Gates asked to strike him dead. Mr Dale said it looked easy the way she done it, and Mr Craigan, dignified and courtly, said they had to thank Mrs Eames for what three men could not do (pp.16-17).

The bird can be read as a symbol of peace, an innocent victim, trapped and facing death. The men's attempt to rescue the bird is doomed to failure because the masculine is associated with war. It requires the gentle feminine touch of a woman to rescue the bird because the feminine is associated with peace.

There is opposition also between generations in *Living*. The older generation are aware of disorder but blame it upon the younger generation. Thus, when Bridges discovers the young lathe operator Jones and the old crane driver Connolly smoking, he explodes : 'Firm'll be ruined. Debtor prison. Siam. Bankrupt' (p.22). Yet it is only the young man, Jones, whom Bridges disciplines. However, it is the old men that the narrative blames for the disorder that disrupts the lives of the young. Thus Bridges is shown to conjure up Siam as a symbol of disorder, like a First World War General in the historical writing of A.J.P. Taylor conjuring up an unworkable plan of attack.

⁴⁴ Ibid., pp.125-6.

When Tom Tyler arrives to ruin Dick Dupret's relationship with Hannah Glossop, it is from Siam that he comes. Dick Dupret is shown to anticipate this in the narrative when his

temper began to come up gorgon-headed within him, he flagellated it, words hung across his mind - stupidity, and then - angry, and then - old men. We shall be ruined cried he in mind, business will go bankrupt, "to Siam, Siam," "not functioning to its full capacity for production": the old men are smashing it he cried, something has to be done, must (p.52)

Dick Dupret eventually sweeps away the old men by sacking them, having been forced out of the private sphere of his love affair with Hannah Glossop into the public sphere of work. This legacy of after-war conflicts has been inherited by the post-General Strike world, the General Strike having reaffirmed the political power of the capitalist owning class. Dupret's sackings are represented as new values triumphing over the old values of the old men whom he sacks, unlike the General Strike where it is old values that triumph over the new. Dupret is a representative of Green's generation who switches over from old to new values after the General Strike. As Graham Greene's biographer points out:

The Graham Greene who was to identify later with the victims of society had not yet emerged. Not only was he a strike-breaker and one of *The Times's* shock troops, he also became a special constable.⁴⁵

Historians have traced the cause of the General Strike back to the Government decision in 1925 to revert to the pre-war gold standard.⁴⁶ As such, the outcome of the

⁴⁵ Norman Sherry, 1989, *The Life Of Graham Greene. Volume One 1904-1939*, p.302 (Jonathan Cape).

⁴⁶ For example: 'in 1925 the Chancellor of the Exchequer returned Britain's and the empire's monetary systems to gold at the 1913 parities. While Churchill's overvalued pound pleased the City, it imparted a deflationary bias to economic policy, augmented the already high levels of unemployment and formed

strike can be considered a victory for pre-war values. The triumph of pre-war values after the General Strike, values which Green's generation fought for but later opposed, was signified by the republication in 1928 of Mary Webb's pastoral novel *Precious Bane*, a celebration of rural and pre-dominantly pre-war values. This new edition came with an introduction written by Stanley Baldwin, the Conservative Prime Minister who had presided over the Government's General Strike victory. The extent to which Green's generation detested pastoral literature can be understood by considering Orwell's attack upon it:

War poems apart, English verse of the 1910-25 period is mostly 'country'. The reason no doubt was that the *rentier*-professional class was ceasing once and for all to have any real relationship with the soil ... Just before, just after, and for that matter, during the war was the great age of the 'Nature poet', the heyday of Richard Jeffries and W.H. Hudson. Rupert Brooke's 'Grantchester', the star poem of 1913, is nothing but an enormous gush of 'country' sentiment, a sort of accumulated vomit from a stomach stuffed with place-names.⁴⁷

Old rural values are shown to have infiltrated one of the working class characters in *Living*, the old worker Craigan, who recalls his rural past: "This day" he said "brought me to mind of the days I was in the fields there and the cider we 'ad. The farmer was bound to give us cider . . . " (p.77). Green, like Craigan, considered ruralism to belong to the past, here the pre-war of his infancy, as he wrote to Nevill Coghill while still at Oxford: 'As for the country, it is good to grow up in in infancy, & it is good to

the background to the General Strike of 1926' (Patrick O'Brien "The Economic Effects of the Great War", *History Today*, December 1994, p.27). See also Rex Pope, 1991, *War and Society in Britain 1899-1948*, p.31 (Longman, 1994), on the Conservative Government elected after the First World War, intent on restoring pre-war economic and social order.

⁴⁷ George Orwell, 1940, *Inside the Whale* p.21 (Penguin, 1982).

rest in in old age, but one ought to sweat grimily in between whiles'.⁴⁸ Green also acknowledges that ruralism might belong to his old age in order to contrast it with the newness of the present, the 'grimily' evoking the working-class sphere that he would enter. Hence Craigan is a threat to Dick Dupret, and Green's generation, because he is doubly associated with pre-war values being both old and able to recall his rural past.

Satisfaction in work remains no more than a possibility in *Living*, an ideal to be strived for in contrast to the present state of affairs. This sense of transition is embodied in the title, *Living*. For a contemporary critic, Walter Allen, 'The title of the book is defiant, as though Green had discovered life for the first time'.⁴⁹ For a modern critic, Rod Mengham, 'The title, *Living*, is in itself redolent of process and change, as opposed to the conceptual *life*'.⁵⁰ Transition places *Living* in a similar area of representation to H.G. Wells's General Strike novel, *Meanwhile*, where transition is expressed in both the title and the narrative:

Work. We have to work for the sake of work and take happiness for the wild flower it is. Some day men will grow their happiness in gardens, a great variety of beautiful happinesses, happinesses under glass, happinesses all the year round. Such things are not for us. They will come. Meanwhile -⁵¹

The combination of voices that comprise the narrative voice provide a means of escape at once both new and familiar for Green's generation into a new world, away from the shadow of war. As Walter Allen remarked, 'Green escapes, sometimes through a poetry of incident, sometimes through a daring arrangement of words which

⁴⁸ Letter to Nevill Coghill, 25th March 1925, Eton College Library.

⁴⁹ Walter Allen, "An Artist of the Thirties", *Folios of New Writing*, III, Spring 1941, p.149.

⁵⁰ Mengham, p.20.

⁵¹ H.G. Wells, 1927, *Meanwhile: the picture of a lady*, p.23 (Ernest Benn, 1962).

may be called poetic, often through both at once ...'⁵² The modernist and proletarian voices of *Living* have in common their existence in a period of optimism between two world wars. As such they try, not entirely successfully, to block out reference to war. The proletarian aspects of the narrative voice of *Living* are close to a perceived passivity of the mass prevalent after the First World War. The working-class characters are largely presented as patients not in control of their destiny. Lily's elopement, dependent upon finding Bert Jones' parents, a dependence that she does not question, fails. The older workers, including Craigan, the best moulder in Birmingham, are sacked. Passivity was represented as the typical experience of First World War combatants in the wave of war memoirs and novels published after 1926. These texts told stories of men blindly obeying orders to walk into the line of fire of German machine guns, men who 'made themselves comfortable in cellars and went to and fro in the exact and ordinary manner of the British working man ... they were all doomed.'⁵³

The failure of Lily's elopement, her abandonment by Bert amongst the shabby houses of a poor district of Liverpool, after he has failed to find his parents, produces a sense of pessimism. Lily returns to her substitute father, Craigan, the man in whose house she lives, the man who is shown to have more power over her than her real father, a power that she has failed to escape. The binary opposition of children and parents, young and old, characteristic of the after-war, as present in *Blindness*, has not disappeared from *Living* as we might expect if the post-General Strike period was a period of absolute optimism for Green's generation following the resolution of after-

⁵² Walter Allen, "An Artist of the Thirties", *Folios of New Writing*, III, Spring 1941, p.153.

⁵³ Edmund Blunden, 1928 *Undertones of War*, pp.116-7 (Collins, 1978).

war oppositions represented by the General Strike. Indeed a new opposition has appeared: the feminine associated with domesticity, which is in turn associated with peace, and the masculine which as an opposite must be associated with war, particularly where it has the effect of disrupting domesticity as, for example, in the action of Dick Dupret in sacking Craigan. *Living*, then, is not an idealistic representation of working class life, but a representation of the paradoxes to be encountered in living. As John Updike noted, Green's writing represents 'life itself with its weave of misapprehension, petty confusions, fitful and skewed communications, and passing but authentic revelations ...'⁵⁴ Craigan, having lost his power when he is sacked, ends the novel apathetic, bed-ridden: 'When he had lain in bed, when he should have been at work, then rhythm had stopped for him and he had no motive, as rhythm was stopped, to get out of bed' (p.169). The brief period of post-General Strike optimism is represented in *Living* as relative rather than absolute.

Green's generation, needed once the initial euphoria of having taken part in their own conflict had ended, a sense of after-war ruin to synchronise their experience with that of combatants. It is this feeling that determines for me the sense of relative optimism under threat in *Living*. Indeed if the Wall Street Crash had not happened Green's generation may have had to invent something similar to provide a suitable sense of ruin in the wake of their substitute war, the General Strike. They became part of a myth, which formed at the end of the 1920s to tell a story of what the war did

to history, to society, to art, to politics, to women, to hopes and expectations, to the idea of progress, the idea of civilization, the idea of

⁵⁴ Updike, "Introduction", *Loving, Living, Party Going*, p.7.

England. It expanded as it evolved from a myth of war to a myth of ruination that included life among the ruins.⁵⁵

Direct reference is made in *Living* to post-war ruination by an old worker, the crane driver Aaron Connolly:

"for what d'you get for nothin' not since the war? ... Time was they'd give pint and a 'alf measure when you asked for the usual, but now they put publicans in jug if so 'appen they give yer a smell over the pint" (p.21).

The impact of this statement is increased by its being the only direct reference to the war in the novel. It is made by Connolly, not a representative figure of Green's generation – although a representative name - but an 'old man', a representative figure of the generation that was blamed for the First World War and its effects. Connolly expresses his view of ruination in the practical terms of the material effect it has upon his life, and becomes a personal embodiment of ruination. This is underlined in the narrative by his status of being not only an 'old man' but also an unreliable worker. His expression of post-war ruination is part of a conversation in the factory toilets with the reliable worker Eames. The latter promptly returns to work while Connolly avoids work, smoking in the toilets with another unreliable worker Bert Jones.

Bridges, the old works manager in *Living*, is used as a symbol of a fault-line remaining in existence for Dupret after the General Strike:

Sometimes liquid metal foundrymen are pouring into moulding box will find hole in this, at the joint perhaps, and pour out. Sometimes stream of metal pouring out will fall on patch of wet sand or on cold iron, then it will shower out off in flying drops of liquid metal. To see this once or twice perhaps is exciting. But after twice, or once even, you just go to stop hole up where metal from box is pouring.
So with Mr Bridges.

⁵⁵ Hynes, *War*, p.439.

You were to him speaking, and he began quietly answering, then, suddenly he was acting, sincere in feeling, but acting, and words were out pouring, fine sentiments fine. At first you said, "fine old man" in your mind, at last you were thinking only how to plug him (p.93).

Bridges represents the older generation, the generation associated with the prosecution of, and support for, a war in which the young fought and died. This perception appears in war novels and memoirs being published in waves after 1926 often representing the parents of war combatants as supporting the war while failing to understand it. In *Living* the after-war conflict between father and son spreads from the Dupret household to the factory. Bridges tells young Dupret at the beginning of *Living*, that he is a father and a mother to the workers. He literally attempts to be a bridge and, thus, foreshadows Green's remark in *Pack My Bag* that leaving Oxford to work in Birmingham was 'the bridge from what had been into what is so much a part of my life now'.⁵⁶ However, Bridges representation of himself as a parental figure seals his doom for young Dupret is prevented by his father from having any power in the factory and, continuing a theme represented in *Blindness*, wishes his father dead, 'He felt he could go up now to room and say "die, old fool, die".' (p.91). Young Dupret does not limit his disapproval to old men but includes older women also, to emphasize that he blames the 'father and mother' Bridges for all that is wrong in the factory:

To his friends in London he talked with horror about the cynical attitude of older women towards sex. There was so much horror in the tone of his voice that his friends asked themselves what could have happened to him (p.76).

⁵⁶ Green, *Pack*, p.232.

Once his father dies, young Dupret is free to wield power and will wield it against old men and parental figures. To emphasise the point Bridges repeats to himself, shortly before Dupret sacks him, that he is father and mother to his workers.

In *Living* the ability to work is an important constituent of living. Without work Miss Hannah Glossop is

like the clearness of an empty glass, with the transparency of light. Yet not transparent. You look into crystal globe and its round emptiness makes a core in it you can't see through, there is nothing there only the transparency is confused. That was like Hannah Glossop when someone wasn't talking to her, inoculating ideas (p.110).

From the working class perspective that Green establishes in *Living* he can satirize the idle rich, whilst celebrating work. Dick Dupret is unsuccessful in pursuing a relationship with Miss Glossop and, upon his rejection, throws himself into work, sacking the older workers. Having done this he fades from the narrative. This signifies the tenuous relationship between Green's generation and the working-class. Indeed, in the 1930s, once recession had destroyed the optimism that led to belief in the possibility of satisfaction in work, satirizing the confused transparency of the rich members of his generation was all that was left, as Green's third novel, *Party Going* (1939), demonstrates. Hence the seeds of a character like Julia in *Party Going* can be found in Hannah Glossop, her involvement in work lasting only as long as the 'ten days war' of the General Strike.

David Lodge reads *Living* as 'a wonderful celebration, tender without being sentimental, of English working-class life at a particular moment in time'.⁵⁷

Alongside the thread of pessimism that runs through the narrative of *Living* there is

⁵⁷ Lodge, *Fiction*, p.106.

also optimism. It is the General Strike, by appearing to have resolved the trauma of not having fought in the war for Green's generation, which provides the impetus to celebrate living, even if this is temporary. It is in the opportunities for living that the narrative of *Living* offers this celebration, a celebration that is represented as spanning classes and generations. The Eames can bring up their children in relative peace and security, able to look forward to the future, while enjoying homegrown vegetable and flowers in the present. Joe Gates shrugs off the accident that has nearly killed Craigan, the man he depends upon both for his job and his home, with the phrase, 'It's a funny thing to get a living by' (p.34). Mrs Dupret finds a sense of purpose once old Mr Dupret falls ill, because she is freed from the paternal control and threat of conflict that her husband represents. However, when he appears to recover Mrs Dupret again retreats suggesting a degree of pessimism as though this post-General Strike celebration of living was merely temporary.

The connections that *Living* makes with the war have to be teased out of the text because Green continues to use ambivalent reference to the First World War in the period after the General Strike when a large number of texts making direct reference to the war were being published. In doing so he demonstrates how influential a formative period the after-war was for him. Much of the ambivalence of Green's pre-Second World War novels arises out of his clinging to the types of romantic ideals which flourished at the outbreak of the First World War. The resolution of after-war conflict apparently offered by the end of the General Strike generated optimism and, in turn, the conditions in which a romanticism, associated with believing in eternal ideals, could be revived. Immersion in working class life represented a continuation of a yearning for experience amongst Green's generation that they believed to be similar to that experienced by war combatants. Thus Green experienced 'the deep, the

real satisfaction of making something with his hands'⁵⁸ just as Cyril Asquith, in 1914, claimed of the volunteers in his battalion that 'they felt fulfilment and satisfaction in doing something necessary.'⁵⁹

Living represents a purging of an old life in favour of a new life within a public sphere of satisfying work. This, of course, is the purging and satisfaction experienced by an upper class product of public school and Oxbridge, and is similar to that which Rupert Brooke, another upper class product of public school and Oxbridge welcomed in his 1914 sonnet, "Peace" where he imagines youth 'as swimmers into cleanness leaping / Glad from a world grown old and cold and weary' to find 'safety with all things undying'.⁶⁰ The appeal to upper middle-class young men of the sentimentality attached to Brooke could still be acknowledged, even after the General Strike, albeit protected by the adoption of an attitude of cynicism. For example, Aldous Huxley represents a dialogue between the upper middle-class Spandrell and the working-class Illidge in *Point Counter Point* (1928):

'Poor Rupert Brooke! One smiles now at that thing of his about honour having come back into the world again. Events have made it seem a bit comical.'

'It was a bad joke even when it was written,' said Illidge.

'No, no. At the time it was exactly what I felt myself.'

'Of course you did. Because you were what Brooke was - a spoilt and blasé member of the leisured class. You needed a new thrill, that was all. The War and that famous "honour" of yours provided it.'⁶¹

⁵⁸ Green, *Pack*, p.236.

⁵⁹ Quoted in Kirsty McLeod, 1983, *The Last Summer*, p.133 (Collins).

⁶⁰ From Rupert Brooke's series of five sonnets, "1914" written between November and December 1914:

"I. Peace" and "II. Safety".

⁶¹ Aldous Huxley, 1928, *Point Counter Point*, p.289 (Penguin, 1967).

A purgation of perceived decadence followed by satisfaction with a new sense of spiritual health, followed by disappointment and disillusion is a paradigm set by the First World War which, in its battles of attrition on the Western Front, quickly wore away the satisfaction in fighting for ideals which the outbreak of war had seemed to offer. Thus the image of the First World War became that of horrific destroyer perpetuated by cynical old men on idealistic young men. In *Living*, both the satisfaction in work enjoyed by Craigan and his economic strength, which defines him as a man, are destroyed by Dick Dupret's determination to sack the old men and replace them with younger less costly workers. Indeed those who in *Living* gain most satisfaction from work - the new substitute for war experience that Green posits in *Pack My Bag*, and represents in *Living* - will experience disappointment through being sacked and, therefore, removed from the source of their satisfaction. Only Lily's sense of the romantic ideal of maternity - linking peace to domesticity - is allowed to survive to the end of the novel:

Suddenly with loud raucous cry she rushed at the baby, and with clatter of wings all the pigeon lifted and flew away, she rushed at baby to kiss it. Mrs Eames hid her son's face in her hand, laughing:
"You're too young, that's too old for you" she said (p.223).

However, this too is ambivalent. The full extent of this ambivalence can be gauged by comparing the ending of *Living* to the ending of H.G. Wells's General Strike novel, *Meanwhile* (1927), where Mrs Rylands's philosophical musings on the new world that is emerging out of the strike are brought to a climax with the birth of a son: 'A fine fine boy it is and sparring at the world already with his little fists'.⁶² The ambivalence remains because for Green's generation the disappointment of satisfaction had become

⁶² Wells, *Meanwhile*, p.288.

ingrained: they had been prepared for war at their prep schools only to have it taken away from them by the relative suddenness of the armistice. At the end of *Living*, the question remains, does Lily Gates plunge into the eternal ideal of motherhood or merely attempt to deny its grim reality in a poor working-class district, a denial which will inevitably end in disappointment in a pattern set for Green, and his generation, by the First World War.

Living, shares many of the literary preoccupations of the late 1920s with the First World War. However, it shares these preoccupations not through direct reference to the War but in the ambivalent form characteristic of Green's writing - the mixture and refinement of experiences and feelings 'into a long drink of a potency that is more even than their cumulative effect'. The potency of *Living* is in its preoccupations with paradoxes, reflecting the structure of feeling built by Green's generation after the war in which disappointment at having missed fighting the war had to be reconciled with relief at having been spared its horrors. This is expressed in *Living* through embracing the paradoxes of the period after the General Strike. These paradoxes are themselves linked to the war, arising because the General Strike had appeared to end the conflicts between pre-war and post-war values that ensued in the immediate after-war period up to the General Strike. However, the years after 1926 were also notable for a wave of novels and memoirs representing the First World War. These ensured that the legacies of the War - including the conflicts between pre-war and post-war values - were still active in the post-General Strike period.

Chapter 4: *Party Going*: what targets for a bomb

Party Going (1939) can be interpreted as a story of the journey of Green's generation through the 1930s from the Depression following the Wall Street Crash to the Munich crisis and the imminent prospect of another war.¹ Michael North points out,

it spans the decade, not just chronologically, but in the way it brings the subject matter and the stock imagery of the early thirties into collision with the political realities of 1939.²

The chronology is indicated by the subscript on the novel's final page: 'London 1931-1938', a period 'haunted by the spectres of mass unemployment, hunger marches, appeasement, and the rise of fascism at home and abroad'.³ Indeed the boundaries formed by these dates are significant. In 1931 the National Government assumed power in Britain following the collapse of a Labour Government faced with mass unemployment and financial crisis in the wake of the Wall Street Crash.⁴ In 1938 the

¹ This is one amongst many possible interpretations of *Party Going*. Jeremy Treglown lists various interpretations, see Treglown, 1996, "Introduction" *Party Going*, pp.v-vi (Harvill).

² Michael North, 1984, *Henry Green and the Writing of his Generation*, p.80 (University Press of Virginia).

³ John Stevenson and Chris Cook, 1977, *The Slump: Society and Politics During the Depression*, p.1 (Jonathan Cape).

⁴ This is succinctly summarized by Waugh: 'There was a general election and a crisis - something about a gold standard', Evelyn Waugh, 1934, *Black Mischief*, p.248 (Heinemann, Secker & Warburg, and Octopus, 1977). Within a month of its formation the National Government abandoned the Gold Standard - the symbol of prosperity which had been returned to by the Conservative Government in 1925.

Munich crisis heralded the imminence of a new war.⁵ The story of the journey of Green's generation through the 1930s to a new war is signified by the novel's title, which conveys two activities - going to parties and a party travelling, as Michael North observes.⁶ The journey to war begins for Green's generation in the early 1930s, when party going was represented as being a characteristic activity in the novels of Green's generation. Evelyn Waugh's *Vile Bodies* (1930) - a novel that ends with apocalyptic war - *Black Mischief* (1932) and *A Handful of Dust* (1934) and Anthony Powell's *Afternoon Men* (1931) all feature parties as the primary London social activity of their various characters. As Anthony Powell recalls, these novels were generally representative of the life led by Green's generation in the early 1930s: 'Without being at all a precise record of what actually happened, *Afternoon Men* gives a picture reasonably in focus of the kind of life I was living at this time'.⁷ The latter meaning of *Party Going* - once the narrative reveals that the party's destination is France - evokes the First World War, the journey by boat and train to France being the route taken by British soldiers to the Western Front. For example:

... surely I should recall, from that crisis of my life above all, the evanescence of England beyond the grey waves, and the imminence of France. Surely the usual submarine excitement, and avoidance of the officer selecting victims for duties, marked the crossing. Something about an hotel, and manful drinks, and going down to the saloon for a

⁵ A.J.P Taylor suggests that the sense of crisis could have been deliberately encouraged by the British Government in order to gain support for the Munich conference. See *English History 1914-1945*, p.528 (fn).

⁶ See North, pp. 93-4. Of the latter signification Arnold Kettle observed, "if a tract were made out of [*Party Going*], it would be a tract, quite simply on party going", Arnold Kettle, 1953, *An Introduction to the English Novel Volume 2*, p.172 (Hutchison).

⁷ Anthony Powell, 1978, *To Keep the Ball Rolling*, vol. 2 *Messengers of Day*, p.155 (Heinemann).

plate of ham, and meeting a school-fellow pensively returning to the line, and then the cloak-room at Boulogne Station, flutters dimly for elucidation; there was a train journey between verdurous banks and silvering poplars.⁸

This in turn will evoke the coming war when the narrative presents the going to France as a future, anticipated event. As Jeremy Treglown observes: 'However else you interpret the book, it is not only in a chronological sense that it can be called one of the first British novels of the Second World War'.⁹

The plot of *Party Going* comprises three parts: the partygoers arrive at a London station to travel to France, they are stalled by fog, they prepare to depart when the fog lifts. This recalls the formal tripartite structure of *Blindness* and anticipates the implicit tripartite structure of *Pack My Bag*. Each of the three parts of the plot represents privacy. The partygoers arrive cocooned in the private spheres of their rich lifestyles, they are ushered into the privacy of the hotel, they go to their train by a private route unavailable to the mass on the concourse. *Party Going*, however, cannot be read as a return to the representation, in *Blindness*, of the spiritual compensations of privacy, for here privacy is represented as amoral in a world becoming obsessed with death in war, a world on the brink of destruction. Thus *Party Going* is closer to *Pack My Bag* than *Blindness*, indeed they can be read as companion texts, each being dated with a subscript on their final pages - 'London, 1931-1938' for *Party Going*; 'LONDON. 1938/39' for *Pack My Bag*. The implicit three part structure of *Party Going* maps the movement of Green's generation through the 1930s to the eve of a new war in which it was expected that the civilian population would become 'targets

⁸ Edmund Blunden, 1928, *Undertones of War*, p. 22 (Collins, 1978).

⁹ Treglown, "Introduction", *Party Going*, p.xiv.

for a bomb' (p.154), the point at which *Pack My Bag* starts. This is not necessarily chronological movement. Just as *Pack My Bag* ranges back from its start point on the eve of war to range back over Green's life, so *Party Going* begins with an allegorical representation of the war crisis of 1938 using a device borrowed from cinema, flash back from a present narrative point. The allegorical representation of the present moment in *Party Going* is a precursor to telling the story in flashback, again in allegory, of progression to the present moment and slightly beyond. As it is the implicit three-part structure which conveys this sense of movement, and as this is a central part of my argument that *Party Going* represents movement towards approaching war in the 1930s, the implicit three parts of *Party Going* will inform my analysis of the novel.

The first part of the novel tells the story of the partygoers' various arrivals at, and journeys to, the railway station. The narrative perspective is of review; the narrator is at some future point in relation to the narrative present, which is the halting of the partygoers' journey at the railway station. From this future point, the narrator reviews the various routes taken to the station by the partygoers, and their initial reactions to finding the station fog bound, in four brief chapters, unnumbered in the original Hogarth edition,¹⁰ each of which represents a different route. These routes are, in the order that they appear in the first part of *Party Going*: the war crisis of 1938; immersion in the adult sphere of work represented in *Living* (1929); the echoes of an earlier version of *Party Going*¹¹ in a proletarian setting; and the private world of

¹⁰ In the Harvill Press paperback edition chapters are numbered.

¹¹ Published as "Excursion" in Henry Green, 1992, *Surviving: The Uncollected Writings of Henry Green*. (Chatto and Windus).

adolescence represented in *Blindness* (1926).¹² The partygoers represent Green's generation in the 1930s; these routes represent the various journeys undertaken by Green's generation through the 1930s.

The first route into Party Going represents the last part of the journey undertaken by Green's generation, the war crisis of 1938, providing a sense of immediacy, locking it into contemporary events on the eve of the Second World War. British Pathé News, in a news item entitled "The Crisis" shown in cinemas in October 1938 talked of 'The tragedy of 1938', showed a map of Europe indicating 'the very spots where the threat of war is fiercest' and drew a picture in which 'Radio stations hurl insults across the frontiers. Harsh voices roar threats of force and bloodshed. Men are on the march'. As is more succinctly stated in *Pack My Bag*: 'in September 1938 there was that authentic note of wild hysteria'.¹³ In *Party Going* this is told as an allegory beginning in the first sentence of the novel - 'Fog was so dense, bird that had been disturbed went flat into a balustrade and slowly fell, dead at her feet'.¹⁴ Miss Fellowes, at whose feet the bird falls, feels compelled to pick it up, she carries it into the station, returns to where it died and 'everything unexplained she turned once more into the tunnel back to the station' (p.1). Michael North uses the phrase 'everything unexplained' to support his argument that the pigeon is intended to be a mystery within the text, expressing psychological momentum halted by inexplicable mysteries,

¹² Jeremy Treglown argues that Green's 'first attempt involved a return to the world of his first novel' ("Introduction", *Party Going*, p.viii).

¹³ Henry Green, 1940, *Pack My Bag* p.69 (Hogarth, 1992).

¹⁴ Henry Green, *Party Going*, p.1 (Harvill, 1996). Hereafter page references for *Party Going* will be given in the body of the text of this chapter.

and that any attempt to provide an allegorical meaning for the episode of the dead pigeon misses this point.¹⁵ However, the use of pigeon as metaphor in Green's previous novel prompts a reading of the type of allegorical meaning in *Party Going* that North denies. In *Living* the homing pigeon is a metaphor for the domesticity that Lily Gates cannot escape. Domesticity had become a feminine sphere in the inter-war years, an alternative to the masculinity of war, associated with peace. Miss Fellowes, who combines the everyday with which domesticity is associated and a sense of peaceful co-operation in her name with the feminine in her gender, feels compelled to pick up the pigeon because she is puzzled - 'everything unexplained' - by the portent of war that is represented by the pigeon's death, a death of a symbol of domesticity associated with peace. She is puzzled because, as a representative figure of the feminine and the domestic, war and death lie outside her sphere of knowledge. The point is underlined by extending her puzzlement to other deaths, of her pet dog when she was a child and the recent death of Edward Cumberland. The allegory of the dead pigeon representing war, and feminine domesticity representing peace, is completed when Miss Fellowes performs a characteristic domestic task, although a task made bizarre by its subject and context - she washes the dead pigeon and wraps it in brown paper under ground in the guarded feminine privacy of the "Ladies". Above ground, by contrast, belongs to the approaching masculine spirit of war.

The dead pigeon becomes the centrepiece of an allegory of the war crisis of 1938, the culmination of the period of time represented in the subscript to *Party Going*. Christopher Isherwood writes of the Munich crisis in Britain as a collective despair at the ending of peace and the approach of war:

¹⁵ See North, pp. 84-86.

The last shreds of hope are vanishing down the drain. Wilson came back from Berlin snubbed. The German army mobilizes this afternoon. Parliament meets to introduce conscription ... London is all gas-masks and children screaming.¹⁶

The Munich agreement, which purchased a temporary peace by taking the Sudetenland away from Czechoslovakia to give it to Nazi Germany, made Britain feel guiltily better: 'What do I care for the Czechs. What does it matter if we are traitors. A war has been postponed'.¹⁷ In *Party Going*, the dead pigeon, a symbol of approaching war, is making Miss Fellowes ill:

She felt that if she were going to faint then she would not do it in front of this rude young man and in despair she turned to him and said: 'I wonder if you would mind throwing this parcel away in the first wastepaper basket.' He took it and went off. She felt better at once, it began to go off and relief came over her in a glow following out her weakness (p.5).

Miss Fellowes resolves the allegorically represented approach of war by requesting its removal, just as the Munich agreement was presented by the British Government and news media as removing the threat of war. British Pathé News reported Chamberlain as saying, after returning from his second meeting with Hitler: 'I trust that all concerned will continue their efforts to solve the Czechoslovak problem peacefully because on that turns the peace of Europe in our time'.¹⁸ Miss Fellowes, having rid herself of the pigeon that signifies war, immediately feels better, but soon experiences a post Munich sense of guilt, representing knowledge that war has been postponed rather than prevented, and retrieves the dead pigeon, whereupon illness and the prospect of death, signifying war, return to her.

¹⁶ Christopher Isherwood, 1977, *Christopher and His Kind*, p.240 (Methuen, 1985).

¹⁷ Ibid, p.241.

¹⁸ "The Crisis", British Pathé News, 1938.

The second route is through the adult sphere of work, the territory of *Living*.

However, the location has now moved from Birmingham factory to London office, and the rhythm is that of office life:

innumerable people, male and female, after thinking about getting home, were yawning, stretching, having another look at their clocks, putting files away and closing books, some were signing their last letters almost without reading what they had dictated and licking the flaps where earlier on they would have wetted their fingers and taken time (p.7).

In an echo of the crowd scene at the end of *Living*, Julia Wray, one of the partygoers, almost merges with the crowd of home going office workers as she leaves the privacy of her rich home:

As she stepped out into this darkness of fog above and left warm rooms with bells and servants and her uncle who was one of Mr Roberts' directors - a rich important man - she lost her name and was all at once anonymous; if it had not been for her rich coat she might have been any typist making her way home (p.8).

Julia is shown to experience a brief moment of optimism, recalling the brief period of optimism for Green's generation between the General Strike and Wall Street Crash.

This optimism is created by symbols. Julia sees three seagulls fly through the span of a bridge on which 'struck by misery she had to stand still' (p.11). The seagulls remind her of the first time she met Max Adey, the man she loves. The gulls bring Julia close to Lily Gates, a character from *Living*, via a passage where the image of the gull is used to convey a sense of peace as Lily walks at night over waste ground to meet Bert Jones: 'So, wings folded, as the gull takes on motion of the sea, night flowed over her then in her'.¹⁹ The gulls evoke doves in Julia's memory, conventional symbols of peace and, in turn, a reminder by contrast, and their location in Julia's past, of the

¹⁹ Henry Green, 1929, *Living*, p.108 (Harvill, 1991).

coming war that Miss Fellowes' dead pigeon represents. Julia's merging with the anonymity of the work crowd is both partial - her rich coat marks her out - and temporary. Worried about her charms, signifying the return of adolescence and childhood in *Party Going*, she returns to the privacy of her home to search for them. Julia Wray, through her actions, and the similarity of her name to *Blindness's* John Haye, suggests a movement from the sphere of work, represented in *Living*, to the need for a privacy represented in Green's first novel, *Blindness*, albeit a new version of that adolescent privacy.

The third route emphasizes both the journeying towards the text's present narrative point, the eve of war and the sense of post General Strike public optimism that has been journeyed from. Green was working on an early version of *Party Going* in the period of immediate post-General Strike optimism; he referred to it in a letter to Nevill Coghill written a few months after the General Strike:

It has been raining here for the last two days & I have been trying to put the sound of water in a gutter into the idiom but it won't go. The rest of the time is fishing and writing. The scene in the railway station on the famous Bank holiday. It's going to be severely geometrical. It sounds awful nonsense, doesn't it, but it's not so bad really.²⁰

'The scene in the railway station on the famous Bank holiday' becomes in

"Excursion" (c.1930)²¹ a celebration of working class holiday in a public setting:

Trams came up to the station. They were painted yellow. Black and red letters on their sides read: THE GAY GIRLS DANCE NIGHTLY, LAST WEEK. THE WORKERS' DAILY HAS LARGEST CIRCULATION. DOES IT HURT? TAKE UNCLE'S PILLS THEN. Brass on them caught the sun, and windows on their sides. They were full of people coming down the winding stairs and from inside. Else

²⁰ Letter to Nevill Coghill, July 3rd 1926, Eton College Library.

²¹ Published in Green, *Surviving*, pp. 64-74 where it is dated c.1930.

left tram and stood by lamp standard. She waited for Conn and Jim. She had run along street and caught one up when it was moving and Conn and Jim had waited for another. Else pouted. Those who had come by tram and those who had walked went up the steps into station in waves. Like the tide coming in.²²

"Excursion" is celebration, in contrast to the gloom of *Party Going*; the former being full of colour whereas the latter is wreathed in fog and darkness. Thus the mood of bank holiday celebration in "Excursion" gives way to a sense of illness and death in *Party Going*.

The contrast between "Excursion" and *Party Going* points to a new era, that of war. Indeed at another level the stalled trains of *Party Going* can be contrasted to the streamlined speed of trains in the 1930s.²³ Hence the representation of trains stopped by fog in *Party Going* can be read as an allegory for the disruption of domestic progress in the 1930s. It is approaching war that threatens to disrupt domestic progress, hence the stalled trains can be interpreted as a symbol of a culture mesmerized by the approach of war.

There are links between "Excursion" and *Living*. The occasional dispensing of articles - 'Else left tram and stood by lamp standard' - is reminiscent of *Living* as is its

²² Ibid, p. 64.

²³ For example, Brian Lacey notes the effect of the streamlined locomotives - the A4 designed by Sir Nigel Gresley and the Coronation designed by Sir William Stanier - introduced by the LNER and the LMS railway companies in the mid-1930s: 'Coronation cut 80 minutes off the fastest service from King's Cross to Edinburgh and brought the journey time to six hours; the *Coronation Scot* cut 60 minutes from the Euston to Glasgow service and gave a 6½ hour journey. Proof that Gresley's A4s were free-running and free-steaming came on July 7th, 1938 when No. 4488, *Mallard*, attained a speed of 126 mph, the highest ever achieved by a steam locomotive' ("Transport and Travel", in *Thirties*, Hayward Gallery exhibition catalogue, 1979, p.106).

narrative positioning within the predominantly working class crowd. In *Party Going* the crowd is represented as something apart from the main characters who mostly ignore it, occasionally treating it as an obstacle, for example Julia 'made her way dazedly through crowds which she only noticed, to ask herself what she would do if she could not find the others' (p.21). However, as the main characters are, for the most part, shown as selfish and morally vacuous, there is, by contrast, sympathy for the crowd stranded on the station concourse. There is another link to *Living* in the station bar of "Excursion" which features Mrs Eames in an earlier incarnation, before she settled down to being a good worker's wife and mother in Birmingham. There is also a station bar in *Party Going*, and the sense of public celebration in "Excursion" and private gloom in *Party Going* can be judged by comparing scenes in this setting. In "Excursion"

attendants in black and white, fat women, gave out tea and little glasses to the crowd there. Men had flasks and bottles. They poured spirits out of these into the little glasses. Mr Healy took out flask and said to Mrs Eames if she would have a drop. She said she didn't mind if she did.... Mrs Eames, in hat with three great feathers, leant over marble counter top holding little glass in one hand. Now it had whisky in it. Little finger, crooked, made three sides of square with hand. She said a marriage was in her street that day, in No. 27, and there would be fun there that night, there would said she. She chuckled.²⁴

With the approaching war public celebration gives way to private gloom in the art deco station bar of *Party Going* where Miss Fellowes:

saw an oval counter behind which two sweating females served and round it, one row deep, were chromium-painted stools, like chrysanthemums with chromium-plated stalks ... As time went by and no one came to take her order she knew how tired she was. Although this was her first time out today she thought she might have been through long illnesses she felt so weak (p.15).

²⁴ Green, *Surviving*, pp. 68-9.

Miss Fellowes, like Mrs Eames, has a whiskey - which makes her melancholy and ill in contrast to Mrs Eames.

The end of the first part of *Party Going* is signified by this paragraph with its expression of finality and a new beginning:

So now at last all of this party is in one place, and, even if they have not yet all of them come across each other, their baggage is collected in the Registration Hall. Where, earlier, hundreds had made their way to this station thousands were coming in now, it was the end of a day for them, the beginning of a time for our party (p.29).

The scene is set for the end of the routes taken to this present narrative point, the period 1931-38 and its expected end in a war about to begin. In the allegorical story told in *Party Going*, the various journeys to the station represent the paths taken by Green's generation to approaching war, the station represents the present narrative point, of waiting for war to begin. This reflects the representation of an expected war in the fictions of Green's generation during the 1930s, from Waugh's *Vile Bodies* (1930) which ends in a new apocalyptic war, through Graham Greene's *A Gun For Sale* (1936) where the expectation of war drives the plot, to Orwell's *Coming Up For Air* (1939) whose hero George Bowling faced by the approach of war returns to the town of his childhood. As a character remarks in Rex Warner's *The Professor* (1938), 'War is heavy, sultry, and oppressive, but it over-rides us all.'²⁵ In *Party Going* this sense of waiting for approaching war is represented in twelve chapters (five to sixteen, pp.31-185), approximately the middle of *Party Going*'s nineteen chapters, between the arrival of all the partygoers on the fog bound station concourse, to the announcement that the trains are about to run. In these chapters the partygoers are shown retiring to

²⁵ Rex Warner, 1938, *The Professor*, p.90 (Lawrence & Wishart, 1986).

the steel shuttered station hotel. Inside they manoeuvre amongst themselves, developing various strategies to ignore the illness of Miss Fellowes. Outside, the station concourse fills with an anonymous and vaguely threatening mass of people.

The second part of the narrative of *Party Going* brings together, with the partygoers, three preoccupations of Green's generation in the 1930s. These preoccupations become, in this second part of the narrative, the major themes of the novel. They are the perception of approaching war and reactions determined by this perception: a retreat into insularity which Green's generation use to provide space to establish relationships to war on their own terms, and the adoption of passivity as feminine longing for peace and activity as masculine response to war. These three preoccupations are summarized towards the beginning of the second part of the narrative in the paragraph beginning 'At that three things happened'. The three things are masculine actions, in keeping with Green's generation's perception of war requiring masculine activity: the sudden military style presence of the police: 'A large force of police filed in ... This force of police stamped in and their steps sounded ringing out as though they were on hollow ground ... you could only see the tops of their helmets'; Alex establishing the insularity of the partygoers by returning without his taxi driver who had threatened to call the police; the station master as agent collecting together the partygoers as patients and ushering them into the hotel: 'Miss Wray, your uncle rang me up to say we were to take particular care of you and your party. Now, I don't like to see you waiting about here in all this crowd, can I not persuade you to wait in the Hotel? It belongs to the Company and I am sure you will be very comfortable there' (p.42). The three preoccupations are ordered - approaching war and its subordinated, determined themes: insularity and passivity.

The theme of passivity is explored through the character of Julia: 'Anyone who found herself alone with Julia could not help feeling they had been left in charge'. This passivity is shown to be determined by the prospect of death in the approaching war: 'so much luggage round about in piles like an exaggerated graveyard'. The scene is presided over by Claire's 'porter drooping over his barrow. He told her nothing was being accepted for registration on account of there being no trains running as she could see for herself; he seemed pleased, he spat, and then became more despondent' (p.31). The porter, because he has accepted passivity, is useless to Claire. In this atmosphere of approaching war Claire is shown to need an active masculine presence:

She might easily have got into the state that woman was in there, whose hat had all but fallen over her face, when she saw Alex waving, and smiling to them while making his way ... already her fears had left her and she was joking and he laughed (p.32).

Differentiation is created between passivity and activity, with the suggestion that, as war approaches, masculine activity will once more be unavoidable.

A newcomer to the group of partygoers, Angela Crevy, is used to highlight the group's insularity. The partygoers discuss the story of Embassy Richard. This is a shared myth that binds the group together, expelling outsiders, emphasizing insularity. This process is shown at work when Angela Crevy, as newcomer, tries to use the story to gain entry but is shown to be wanting in her grasp of some of its details, this providing an obstacle to her. The story itself provides an illustration of insularity through its hero - a man who lives by his own rules of conduct - a character who might have stepped out of Waugh's *Vile Bodies*, a novel that ends 'On a splintered tree stump in the biggest battlefield in the history of the world'.²⁶ The partygoers'

²⁶ Evelyn Waugh, 1930, *Vile Bodies*, p.220 (Penguin, 1975).

insularity is further linked to the theme of approaching war through Robert a masculine active presence who, sent out of the insular group to find Max, Alex and Angela, finds Miss Fellowes, the allegorical harbinger of approaching war.

We are told that Miss Fellowes is 'not feeling so well again, all of her turned in on herself, thrusting her load of darkness' (p.37). Miss Fellowes' illness represents the threat to peace, and is linked to the dead pigeon that she still carries with her - 'that woman with the parcel' (p.39), as Max observes. It is this allegorical harbinger of approaching war that Robert is shown to unconsciously seek - he tells Max, and subsequently other partygoers, that he was not looking for her. Robert, as a member of Green's generation, is predisposed by his upbringing to search for war. He is shown pushing through the crowded station bar and is reminded of his childhood:

When small he had found patches of bamboo in his parents' garden and it was his romance at that time to force through them; they grew so thick you could not see what temple might lie in ruins just beyond. It was so now, these bodies so thick they might have been a store of tailors' dummies, water heated. They were so stiff they might as well have been soft, swollen bamboos in groves only because he had once pushed through these, damp and warm (p.37).

Childhood, for Green's generation, was the time of the First World War. The phrase 'romance at that time' evokes a childhood perception of war as romantic adventure. As Green wrote of the convalescent officers at his family home during the First World War:

they were heroes to me and were so kind they would always play ... I played for hours with them, it was as though I were in a university, privileged in spite of my age and listened all the time to those endless stories about Poperinghe, the Marne, the Somme.²⁷

²⁷ Green, *Pack*, p.68.

Green's generation retained into adulthood a perception of war as romantic adventure, as something that could be played at in private substitutes for war. This is what Robert is shown to do, in his imagination, as he pushes through the station bar.

The theme of approaching war is developed as the partygoers withdraw into the privacy of the hotel. Steel shutters come down with a crash, cutting them off from the outside world, protecting them from attack. The steel shutters represent both the approaching war and the First World War. While to evoke two wars with one image may seem paradoxical to us with the benefit of hindsight, at the time the next war was generally anticipated as a more horrific version of the previous war. Thus Waugh's Adam Fenwick-Symes, in *Vile Bodies*, encounters an exaggerated First World War battlefield as his experience of the next war

The scene all around him was one of unrelieved desolation; a great expanse of mud in which every visible object was burnt or broken. Sounds of firing thundered from beyond the horizon, and somewhere above the grey clouds there were aeroplanes.²⁸

In *Pack My Bag*, the Second World War is suggested by the evocation of the free distribution of steel shelters by the government in Britain. Robert Kee views this as part of the means whereby 'Britain, in a characteristically routine mood of orderliness rather than thoroughness, steadily adjusted itself to the thought of war as a normal background to everyday life'.²⁹ The First World War is evoked via the explanation given for the steel shutters: 'Last time there was a bad fog and a lot of people were stuck here they made a rush for this place' (p.50). The justification is determined by

²⁸ Waugh, *Vile Bodies*, p.221.

²⁹ Robert Kee, 1984, *The World We Left Behind: A Chronicle of the Year 1939*, pp.196-7 (Weidenfeld & Nicolson).

past experience, just as Green's generation justified its creation of substitutes for war as determined by their vicarious experience of the First World War. The partygoers have been provided with a defensive First World War type position, as is implied by the term 'Last time', entrenched against the rush attack of the masses milling outside. This position allows the partygoers to experience both triumph - Julia 'wondered if this were what you saw when you stood on your wedding day, a Queen, on your balcony looking at subjects massed below' - and horror - 'Alex came up and said what they saw now was like a view from the gibbet' (p.73). These two views bear a similarity to the dichotomy of heroism and horror, which was Green's generation reaction to the First World War. This dichotomy appears again in the character of Julia who, looking down on the crowd from the fortified hotel, thinks them like 'sheep with golden tenor voices' (p.130), evoking both a sense of beauty and of reaction to war, given that sheep being led to slaughter is a metaphor applied to soldiers during the First World War, often by the soldiers themselves as A.J.P. Taylor describes: 'the exhausted French army was beyond breaking point. Widespread mutiny followed. One regiment went to the front bleating like sheep led to the slaughter'.³⁰

The stalemate and fortified position of the hotel evokes not only the past war but also the coming war, as there was a widely expressed belief in 1938 that the new war was rooted in the old. Thus British Pathé News, in a newsreel entitled "The Crisis" reported that 'The tragedy of 1938 was born in 1919 at Versailles'. This belief in a new war arising out of the ashes of the old is also expressed in fiction, for example, in Henry Williamson's *The Phoenix Generation* (1965). Williamson, a First World War combatant, creates the character of Philip Maddison, also a First World War

³⁰ A.J.P. Taylor, 1963, *The First World War*, pp.176-7 (Penguin, 1966).

combatant, who attempts to make a new life out of the ashes of one war whilst another war is looming. Thus Williamson has Maddison wonder on a visit to Nazi Germany, where his guide creates a vision of Hitler as a Wagnerian hero,

But how did the opera end? Valhalla of the Gods in flames, the world drowning as the Rhine overflowed to sweep all away. Was it the wave of death prophesied by D.H. Lawrence, the honorary soldier of the Western Front, phoenix in his own right³¹.

This notion of a new war arising out of the ashes of the old is established in *Party Going* inside the hotel. The entry into the hotel represents the approach of war, which is now, in the 1930s, beyond control.

There was a hush, everyone in this hall was looking towards that now impenetrable entrance, women held cups half-way to their lips, little fingers of their right hands stuck out pointing towards where that crash had come from. And it was at this moment the individual who could not or would not light his cigar chose to light the match in such a way that every match in his box was lit and it exploded (p.51).

The 'individual who could not or would not light his cigar' represents both the expected conflagration of war and the figure of self-satisfied cigar smoking capitalist, reminiscent of figures in the post-First World War paintings of the German artist George Grosz who profit from a war in which young men face horrific mutilation and death. This, in turn, suggests economic pressure in favour of war. As the blinded First World War veteran in Edward Upward's *In the Thirties* says of the Western democracies,

³¹ Henry Williamson, 1965, *The Phoenix Generation*, p.196 (Macdonald). That Maddison is, for Williamson, a representative post First World War character is indicated in the subscript to the novel, 'Journalised: Devon 1935 - Norfolk 1941 ...' and can be confirmed by reading Williamson's autobiographical novel *The Sun in the Sands* (Faber, 1945) written in 1934.

I think they may be fully aware of the dangers of an inter-imperialist quarrel; but they may be driven to it, all the same, by economic pressures that are far stronger than their mutual good intentions....³²

It is in the second narrative part of *Party Going* that the association of Miss Fellowes' illness with the inevitability of fighting and death in the approaching war is made explicit:

As for Miss Fellowes, she was fighting. Lying inanimate where they had laid her she waged war with storms of darkness which rolled up over her in a series, like tides summoned by a moon. What made her fight was the one thought that she must not be ill in front of these young people. She did not know how ill she was (p.61).

Miss Fellowes is in the front line fighting a war over which she, like a First World War soldier, has no control. The point is emphasized by association through again referring to Miss Fellowes' illness in the same paragraph that Alex evokes the horror of war by describing the view of the crowd to be 'like a view from a gibbet':

And Miss Fellowes wearily faced another tide of illness. Aching all over she watched helpless while that cloud rushed across to where she was wedged and again the sea below rose with it, most menacing and capped with foam and as it came nearer she heard again the shrieking wind in throbbing through her ears. In terror she watched the seas rise to get her, so menacing her blood throbbed unbearably, and again it was all forced into her head but this had happened so often she felt she had experienced the worst of it. But now with a roll of drums and then a most frightful crash lightning came out of that cloud and played upon the sea, and this was repeated, and then again, each time nearer till she knew she was worse than she had ever been (pp.73-4).

As the crisis mounts the partygoers response is to ignore it. Ignoring the mounting crisis is part of a sequence of events that is begun as soon as the partygoers are placed inside the hotel. As Evelyn says to Julia of Miss Fellowes,

³² Edward Upward, 1962, *In the Thirties*, collected in *The Spiral Ascent: A Trilogy*, p. 273 (Heinemann, 1977).

She had a parcel of sorts and as we were getting her on the bed it fell down and came open and there was a pigeon of all things inside ... I'd rather you did not say anything to Claire about that part of it. (pp.59-60).

The attempt to ignore Miss Fellowes and her illness will be unsuccessful as every one of the partygoers except the newcomer Miss Crevy is almost immediately informed and asked not to tell anyone else. Even Miss Crevy eventually finds out. Having been informed of her illness, the partygoers choose to ignore Miss Fellowes by marginalizing her. A doctor is summoned to diagnose her illness as over-indulgence in alcohol on the hearsay evidence of her having had a whisky in the station bar. Although various doubts are raised regarding the doctor's diagnosis, nothing is done except to post two pensioned off nannies at her bedside. Eventually she is so taken for granted that Claire and Evelyn talk about her on the two telephones by her bedside ignoring her completely.

Green's generation has created a new dichotomy, ignoring and accepting approaching war:

How should I live then but as a kind of fungus
Or else one in strict training for desperate war³³

The partygoers are shown choosing to live as a kind of fungus, ignoring approaching war, leaving Miss Fellowes alone with the task of preparation for war. Miss Fellowes argues with death, an argument that turns into a form of military report and reprimand:

And so it went on, reproaches, insults, threats to report and curiously enough it was mixed up in her mind with thoughts of dying and she asked herself whom she could report death to (p.108).

³³ Rex Warner, *Poems*, 1937, quoted by Arnold Rattenbury, introduction to Warner, *Professor*, p.6.

Various references are made to the journey to France in the second narrative part of *Party Going*. The intended destination is the South of France, not the France of the Western Front. Hence while the boat to France recalls the journey made by British soldiers to combat in the First World War the destination in *Party Going* is different. Difference is noted in the narrative, the narrator relates Julia's thoughts that last year's journey is 'so fantastically different from this'. War is approaching this year and Julia now has no control over her destination. At first she is shown to be triumphant, welcoming the change: 'She was now struck by how extraordinary it was their being here in this corridor with the South of France, where they were going, waiting for them at the end of the journey' (p.60). Later Julia becomes anxious about the journey and seeks reassurance:

"Oh, Max," she said, "everything is going to be all right, isn't it?"

"All right?"

"Do you see, I'm wondering about this journey. All the fog and all that," she said, leading him off (pp.139-140).

'All the fog and all that' is a reminder of war, through not only the conventional phrase that it evokes, 'the fog of war' but also the comparison that can be made between fog and poison gas, a comparison made by a member of Green's generation: 'On the whole the fog had lifted in this part of London, but it hung about in wisps here and there like weeks-old poison gas'.³⁴ Julia is passive, expecting Max as a male to be active and positing her uncle as an active male rival. However, Max, like the other partygoers, wants to ignore approaching war. Julia has to search for a symbol to cancel out her anxiety, which is anxiety about the approaching war evoked by the journey to France. She converts one bird symbol - the sea gull - follower of boats, evoking travel

³⁴ Anthony Powell, 1936, *Agents and Patients*, p.4 (Heinemann, 1978).

- to another, the dove - symbol of peace, reasserting that the feminine, for Green's generation, is associated with peace:

And now she remembered those two birds which had flown under the arch she had been on when she had started, and now she forgot they were sea-gulls and thought they had been doves and so was comforted (p.140).

Just as the partygoers cannot ignore war, they cannot ignore the public world outside the hotel. A 'mystery man' (p.68) provides a link to the world outside the hotel. Alex is shown to be unsuccessful in keeping him out:

"Why don't you go away? These are private rooms here."

"Aye, but the corridor's public," this man returned, and without any warning he had used Yorkshire accent where previously he had been speaking in Brummagem. This sudden change did the trick as it had so often done before and Alex, losing his nerve, asked him in to have a drink. He thought he might be the hotel detective (p.67).

He provides a connection to approaching war through his connection to Miss

Fellowes:

At that instant the man who had been with Miss Fellowes in the bar, and had spoken to her and watched her, and who had been followed when she had been carried up, reappeared walking slowly up the corridor (p.67).

He reminds the partygoers of Miss Fellowes' illness, 'saying in Brummagem, she had been cruel bad when he seen her last' (pp.70-71). This man appears able to traverse the hotel and the world outside the hotel both physically and through his wide range of accents, one of which, Brummagem, evokes the public proletarian sphere of Green's previous novel *Living*. He is the antithesis of the insularity of the partygoers. The partygoers' insularity is not solely the physical insularity offered by the hotel. It is physical expression of a state of mind amongst Green's generation in the 1930s that is

being represented in *Party Going*. The text makes this clear by linking social insularity to physical insularity, the rich partygoers

laid more store than most on mutual relationships. Rich people cling together because the less well off embarrass them and there are not so many available who are rich for one rich man who drops out to be easily replaced (p.116).

Insularity, then, comes in many forms for Green's generation. The representation of insularity in *Party Going* can be read as a manifestation of the sense of metropolitan insularity attributed to Green's generation by one of its members:

To nearly all the writers who have counted during the thirties, what more has ever happened than Mr Connolly records in *Enemies of Promise*? It is the same pattern all the time, public school, university, a few trips abroad, then London.³⁵

The mystery man is presented as a contrast to the partygoers:

They saw facing them the little man, with his glass of whisky, and in the other hand a shabby bowler hat. His tie was thin, as thin as him, and his collar clean and stiff, and so was he; his clothes were black, and his face white with pale, blue eyes. Compared to them he looked like another escaped poisoner, and as if he was looking out for victims (p.69).

However, this also links him to the partygoers through Julia who, in her earlier excursion into the public world when she walks to the station, 'might have been a poisoner' (p.8). This link to Julia suggests the impossibility of her retaining the feminine passivity that Green's generation associates with peace.

Indeed the 'mystery man' is linked directly to the First World War and the approaching war when he goes outside:

³⁵ George Orwell, 1940, *Inside the Whale*, p.38 (Penguin, 1982).

To push through this crowd was like trying to get through bamboo or artichokes grown thick together or thousands of tailors' dummies stored warm on a warehouse floor.

"What targets," one by him remarked, "what targets for a bomb."
(p.154)

The bamboo reminds us of Robert's childhood memory of pushing through bamboo which in turn evokes the First World War as this was the event that occupied the childhood of Green's generation. The phrase 'targets for a bomb' evokes the approaching war which was expected to start with an apocalyptic airborne bombing campaign. Orwell in *Coming Up For Air* (1939) has a similar phrase: 'Christ! how can the bombers miss us when they come? We're just one great bull's eye'.³⁶ Stevenson and Cook point out just what a huge bull's eye London was: 'by 1939 Greater London had a population close to 9 million. About a fifth of the population of Great Britain now lived within a radius of 15 miles from Charing Cross'.³⁷

The crowd represents potential victims of the approaching war. Being targets for a bomb promotes a state of being in which civilian and soldier are indistinguishable. Thus when Julia considers the crowd to be like sheep this evokes both the image of soldiers driven to slaughter, and the image of civilians as a mass, powerless, being led

³⁶ George Orwell, 1939, *Coming up for Air*, p. 24 (Penguin, 1983). This phrase is the climax of two previous meditations on bombing and approaching war: 'The great black bombing plane swayed a little in the air and zoomed ahead so that I couldn't see it. I was sitting with my back to the engine. One of the commercials cocked his eye at it for just a second. I knew what he was thinking. For that matter it's what everybody else is thinking. You don't have to be a highbrow to think such thoughts nowadays. In two years time, one year's time, what shall we be doing when we see one of those things? Making a dive for the cellar, wetting our bags with fright' (p.20) and 'Funny how we keep thinking about bombs. Of course there's no question that it's coming soon' (p.22).

³⁷ Stevenson and Cook, p.24.

to war. It is this sense of impelling mass that informs the descriptions of the crowd in this part of *Party Going* as it pushes into and fills the station concourse. It is upon Julia that the crowd has the greatest impact. She sees them as impersonal, is forced to consider them as people, but strives for an impersonal description:

She had forgotten what it to be outside, what it smelt and felt like, and she had not realized what this crowd was, just seeing it through glass. It went on chanting WE WANT TRAINS, WE WANT TRAINS from that one section which surged to and fro and again that same woman shrieked, two or three men were shouting against the chant but she could not distinguish words. She thought how strange it was when hundreds of people turned their heads all in one direction, their faces so much lighter than their dark hats, lozenges, lozenges, lozenges (pp.83-4).

'Lozenges' is a description used also in *Living* for the football crowd. However, Julia cannot contain the crowd by this description, and, thus, concludes that the crowd is 'terrifying' (p.84). The crowd is terrifying for Julia because it represents the threat of war, whose approach is signalled by the increase in volume of the crowd. This, in turn, connects the partygoers to war, as they are described as being 'like airmen in danger of running fatally into earth' while from outside a 'continual dull roar came through' (p.151) which becomes a 'confused hum like numbers of aeroplanes flying by' (p.153).

The contrast between the partygoers in the hotel and the individuals on the station concourse becomes a contrast between passivity and activity. Thomson reflects upon having asked for, and having been given, a kiss:

"No," said Thomson . "No, it's fellow feeling, that's what I like about it. Without so much as a by your leave when she sees someone hankering after a bit of comfort, God bless 'er, she gives it him, not like some bitches I could name," he darkly said, looking up and over to where their hotel room would be. Their porter tapped his forehead. "It's been too much for 'im," he cried at large, "too much by a long chalk. So it is for most of these young fellers, carried away by it," he said (pp.140-141)

Contrast this to the passage where earlier in the narrative Julia refuses involvement in similar activity with Max. However, the full import of Thomson's statement comes when contrasted with what Alex has to say on a similar subject:

Here he pointed his moral. That is what it is to be rich, he thought, if you are held up, if you have to wait then you can do it after a bath in your dressing-gown and if you have to die then not as any bird tumbling dead from its branch down for the foxes, light and stiff, but here in bed, here inside with doctors to tell you it is all right and with relations to ask if it hurts. Again no standing, no being pressed together, no worry since it did not matter if one went or stayed, no fellow feeling, true, and once more sounds came up from outside to make him think they were singing, no community singing he said to himself, not that even if it did mean fellow feeling (p.168).

Thomson, and the crowd on the concourse, are treated sympathetically, they are shown to have retained their humanity, that they are able to respond to human needs. Julia, and the partygoers in the hotel are not treated sympathetically, they seek to deny their humanity, their passivity does not allow them to respond to human need. They are also differentiated from the fellow feeling represented by Miss Fellowes via the image of the bird tumbling dead from its branch.

Passivity was considered by Green's generation to be the appropriate response to war, for example in Orwell's argument that the only war books worth reading were those written from 'a passive, negative angle'.³⁸ Consequently the view was held amongst Green's generation that activity, when associated with war, was the wrong response. To actively pursue war would be to become associated with the authority that, in the view of Green's generation, propagated the First World War. This view was abandoned by some members of Green's generation during the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939, although there is no evidence to suggest that Green was amongst

³⁸ Orwell, *Whale*, pp.45-6.

them. Green's friend, Anthony Powell, in his novel *Agents and Patients* (1936) links his two manipulative agents, Maltravers and Chipchase, to both the war – they are 'post-war types' suggesting that they are by-products of war - and criminality – through Maltravers who 'might have been a better-class gangster figure of any period'.³⁹

Passivity was also the only option for connection with war for members of Green's generation who, at the time of publication of *Party Going*, had no direct experience of war unless they, like Orwell, fought in the Spanish Civil War. Passivity has been adopted as a means of making some contact with the war generation by Green's generation so that they, who had undergone preparation for war but not combat, could be passive victims bringing them in line with their perception of war combatants. However, a real war would threaten to destroy this comfortable passivity cultivated in insular privacy by imposing the public activity of war. Thus Julia, as the epitome of passivity amongst the partygoers having abandoned control over her destiny to her charms and omens such as the birds flying under the bridge, is the character upon whom the crowd has its greatest impact - its activity threatens her passivity.

However, a move away from passivity is inevitable as war approaches. To represent this move from passivity *Party Going*, in its second part, shows development over time in the hotel. When the partygoers first enter the hotel it is described from Julia's perspective, the epitome of passivity:

She was in a long hall with hidden lighting and, for ornament, a vast chandelier with thousands of glass drops and rather dirty. It was full of people and those who had found seats, which were all of them too low, lay with blank faces as if exhausted and, if there was anything to hope for, as though they had lost hope ... Those standing in groups talked

³⁹ Powell, *Agents*, p.2.

low and were rather bent and there was a huge illuminated clock they all kept looking at ... She thought it was like an enormous doctor's waiting room and that it would be like that when they were all dead and waiting at the gates (p.59).

The 'blank faces as if exhausted' suggests war weary soldiers, the 'huge illuminated clock they all kept looking at' suggests that change is expected, and, linking these together, the change through time becomes change from peace to war. Indeed change through time informs *Party Going* from the office workers 'having another look at their clocks' (p.7) preparatory to becoming part of the mass on the station concourse, through the representation of their having become so: 'Those standing in groups talked low and were rather bent and there was a huge illuminated clock they all kept looking at' (p.48). This also affects Miss Fellowes in the station bar: 'As time went by and no one came to take her order she knew how tired she was' (p.15) Because the trains are not going, time has stood still on the station concourse. This is indicated towards the end of the second part of *Party Going*: 'They were beginning to adjust that board indicating times of trains which had stood all of two hours behind where it had reached when first fog came down' (p.197). This will be the prelude to an expected rush towards the train, just as the war crisis of 1938 was expected to herald a rush into war.

Change over time occurs in the figure of Max who has taken over the organisation of rooms in the hotel for the party from the stationmaster. For Julia this is the exchange of her responsibility from one agent to another:

Julia had tried to explain to her station master that Max would not hear of the Company taking a room for them because he was like that, it was very kind of the station master, it wasn't that she was ungrateful, nor was Max being rude, it was most kind of him to have looked after them and she was sure he must be very busy and ought to get back (p.47).

Under Max's leadership the partygoers develop the type of manipulative behaviour that Powell represents in his post-war agents, Maltravers and Chipchase. This is represented in the relationships between the partygoers and the newcomer Angela Crevy. The partygoers keep Miss Fellowes' illness a secret from Angela, whilst Angela tries to use the story of Embassy Richard to become part of the group. Max takes Julia away from this manipulative behaviour to the room where she will refuse to participate in the activity of a kiss. Indeed as she walks to the room she is shown to retain her passivity:

As she walked down that corridor with Max, and he still had his arm around her, she wondered so faintly she hardly knew she had it in her mind where he could be taking her and all the while she was telling him about her charms, her mood softening and made expansive by his having taken her away (p.75)

Max at this point is not much more active than Julia. It is his money that has given him the economic power to take over the direction of the group. However, he does not have complete control over his money, as it is, he explains to Julia, in the hands of his secretary and his accountants. Indeed Max's passivity is associated with Julia's: 'If Julia had wondered where Max was taking her as they went upstairs together Max, for his part, had wondered where she was taking him' (p.91).

The sense of both passivity and change over time linked to approaching war is conveyed in the figures of the nannies. These pensioned-off servants have been introduced into *Party Going* as reluctant observers of Miss Fellowes' ritual cleansing of the dead pigeon in the Ladies toilet. They are shown as following Miss Fellowes into the station bar and from there into the hotel where they are installed outside Miss Fellowes' room 'like the chorus in a Greek play'. Like the chorus, they alone have a

wide enough viewpoint to recognize that Miss Fellowes' condition will deteriorate over time:

Their profession had been for forty years to ward illness off in others and their small talk had been of sudden strokes, slow cancers, general paralysis, consumption, diabetes and of chills, rheumatism, lumbago, chicken pox, scarlet fever, vaccination and the common cold. They had therefore an unfailing instinct for disaster (p.61).

Their 'instinct for disaster' links them to Miss Fellowes', whose illness is in *Party Going* a symbolic representation of war, because they, as a Greek chorus, can note the change over time as war symbolically approaches. Thus their feeling for what is happening is sounder than that of the partygoers: 'Claire sent those nannies in to watch Miss Fellowes telling them there was nothing to worry over in her condition, which they did not believe' (p.69). This is another example of a partygoer passing on responsibility. Claire has passed on responsibility for Miss Fellowes, her aunt, to Evelyn who in turn passes it on to the nannies.

The three themes of approaching war, insularity and passivity versus activity are brought to a climax in the final chapter of the second narrative part of *Party Going* (pp.173-187) as a preparation for departure to war. Henry Williamson described the approaching Second World War thus: 'the night was coming - the deep darkness of men's polluted minds making another war inevitable in Europe, and perhaps throughout the world'.⁴⁰ Similarly, the final chapter of the second part of *Party Going* begins with a representation of change having occurred through time, using images of night, darkness and pollution as symbols of an approaching disaster which, given the allegorical story told by the narrative, is approaching war:

⁴⁰ Williamson, *Phoenix*, p.170.

Night was coming up and it came out of the sea. Over harbours, up the river, by factories, bringing lights in windows and lamps on the streets until it met this fog where it lay and poured more darkness in.

Fog burdened with night began to roll into this station striking cold through thin leather up into their feet where in thousands they stood and waited. Coils of it reached down like women's long hair reached down and caught their throats and veiled here and there what they could see, like lovers' glances. A hundred cold suns switched on above found out these coils where, before the night joined in, they had been smudges and looking up at two of them above was like she was looking down at you from under long strands hanging down from her forehead only that light was cold and these curls tore at your lungs.

It was not comfortable and there were signs that this long wait was beginning to fray tempers (p.173).

This is the point at which the femininity associated with peace - coils of 'women's long hair' and 'lovers' glances' - is transformed into cold light and poison gas that 'tore at your lungs'. This is in turn contrasted to domesticity:

And when fog was joined to night who was there to dream of that cruel oblivion of sight it made when they had in mind chintz curtains waiting to be drawn across shut curtains (p.174)

This suburban domestic life is threatened by approaching war which brings the appearance of ruin: 'They were like ruins in the wet, places that is where life has been, palaces, abbeys, cathedrals, throne rooms, pantries, cast aside and tumbled down with no immediate life' (p.175). The ruins are in turn linked to death: 'But at one point no movement showed where, like any churchyard, gravestone luggage waited with mourners, its servants and owners, squatted in between' (Ibid.). The concourse becomes transformed into a nightmare landscape of war as the man who Alex mistook for the hotel detective, now Robert Hignam's man,

was making his way from one grieving mourner to another or, as they sat abandoned, cast away each by his headstone, they were like the dead resurrected in their clothes under this cold veiled light and in an antiseptic air (p.177).

The image of 'the dead resurrected in their clothes' recalls Stanley Spencer's *Resurrection of Soldiers* (1928-9), one of his paintings commissioned by Louis and Mary Behrend for the war memorial at Burghclere Chapel.⁴¹ By the end of the chapter Miss Fellowes has recovered, the threat of war that her illness represents has abated just as the resolution of the Munich crisis in September 1938 had appeared to temporarily abate the threat of war. However, now even the partygoers, as represented by Claire and Evelyn, realize that this is a temporary abatement: 'She was better, but they could not help feeling that she was improving only to get worse. She lay fretful and conscious, propped up in bed' (p.184). Thus the scene is set for the final stage of the allegory told in *Party Going*, departure, representing departure to war.

In the last chapter of the second narrative part of *Party Going* the departure board is being adjusted, the trains are about to run: war is imminent. The third narrative part of *Party Going* (pp. 187-220) develops this sense of change to imminent war in its three chapters. Thus in the first chapter of the third part of *Party Going* (pp.187-198) Amabel takes Max to

that room upstairs where Julia had asked him not to muss her about, Amabel's first words were "kiss me" and this more than anything showed the difference between these two girls (p.187).

The difference is between passivity and activity; a binary opposition: Julia's passivity versus Amabel's activity. Within the theme of passivity versus activity Julia represents peace, Amabel represents war. This change from Julia to Amabel is also linked to the imminent approach of war by the repetition, in part, of a passage from the end of the second narrative part of *Party Going*:

⁴¹ See Richard Carline, 1978, *Stanley Spencer at War*, pp.176-199, "Chapter Twelve: The War Paintings at Burghclere" (Faber).

... a huge wild roar broke from the crowd outside. They were beginning to adjust that board indicating times of trains which had stood all of two hours behind where it had reached when first the fog came down. This woke him so that he started and this in turn woke her (p.197).

Max realizes that he is waking to the changed conditions of the trains about to run again, signifying the imminence of war. He awakens, rouses himself to action and ignores Amabel an alternative, feminine, representative of activity. Max takes control by adopting towards Amabel the 'passive negative angle' ⁴² that Orwell argued was the appropriate individual response to war. Max's response to Amabel is equivalent to his individual response to approaching war, to having to become actively involved in war.

In the second chapter of the third narrative part of *Party Going* (pp.199-214) the symbolic imminence of war has brought about confusion, fear, and excitement. Alex is shown to find this 'intolerable', 'insane' and 'hopeless'. Meanwhile Evelyn and Claire are excited by the prospect and are prepared to lie in an attempt to ignore Miss Fellowes' illness, in order to go with the party. The effect upon Julia is one of panic as her fear of the crowd erupts:

they've broken in below, isn't it too awful ... they're all drunk naturally.
But what are we to do? ... they'll come up here and be dirty and violent
... They'll probably try to kiss us or something (pp.203-204).

Julia's fear is of being forced into activity, represented by her fear of being forced to be involved in an activity, kissing, that she has previously refused with Max. The fear of activity is the fear of being forced to abandon passivity in the face of approaching war. It is Julia, the epitome of passivity, who hears 'the authentic threatening knock of

⁴² Orwell, *Whale*, p.46.

doom' (p.211). Here sense of doom echoes that expressed by Edward Thomas, a First World War combatant and poet:

Now all roads lead to France
And heavy is the tread
Of the living; but the dead
Returning lightly dance.⁴³

Fear and excitement are often associated. Julia is shown to experience the latter, rushing into Miss Fellowes' room to tell Claire and Evelyn the news that trains are running. A similar sense of wondrous excitement was captured by Enid Bagnold, a First World War VAD nurse, in her diary '... the shining ribbon tracks in the mud on the road ran up the hill for ever. They go to Dover, and Dover is France - and France leads anywhere'.⁴⁴

In the third chapter of the third part of *Party Going* (pp.215-220), it is settled that they shall travel to France. Now that everything is settled a binary opposition opens up for Julia between the partygoers and the crowd on the concourse, an opposition that is no longer an expression of insularity, but an expression of the difference between an officer class and the ranks who are to be herded into battle:

Looking down they could see which platforms had already been opened, for at the gates a thin line of people were being extruded through in twos and threes to spread out on those emptier platforms. Separated there they became people again and were no longer menaces as they had been in one mass when singing or all of their faces turning one way to a laugh or a scream. She could even smile at them, they were so like sheep herded to be fold-driven (p.215).

⁴³ Edward Thomas, "Roads", from Marcus Clapham (ed.), *First World War Poetry*, p.121 (Wordsworth, 1995).

⁴⁴ Enid Bagnold, 1918, *A Diary Without Dates*, pp. 46-7 (Virago, 1978).

The partygoers, as representatives of an officer class, are to be taken by special route to the trains through the reception area for VIPs. Max, taking up the position of company commander, makes one final strategic decision before they embark, to invite that epitome of insularity, Embassy Richard, to accompany them as a distraction for Amabel. For Julia this symbolic entry into war is finally an act of liberation viewed in terms of childhood, the time of the First World War for Green's generation: 'So for anything in the world, it seemed to Julia, it was most like that afternoon when Miss Fellowes had said let's take the child to a matinee' (p.220). Thus Max is shown to take command of the epitomes of passivity, Julia, and insularity, Embassy Richard, in the face of approaching war, just as Green's generation would be forced to acknowledge that they would become involved in a new war.

Rod Mengham in his study of Green, *The Idiom of the Time* (1982) argues that *Party Going* makes such a deep and wide ranging use of 'the image-repertoire of the Thirties'⁴⁵ that it becomes a mirror of consciousness. Mengham argues that the mirror is held up to fundamental human consciousness through metaphoric representations of birth, sex and death. Mengham's analysis can be taken further to consider the cause of these fundamental human concerns being represented in *Party Going*: the prospect of approaching war. Green wrote in *Pack My Bag*, published a year after *Party Going*, of 'the war which seems to be coming on us now' citing this as 'a reason to put down what comes to mind before one is killed'.⁴⁶ What comes to mind in *Party Going* is a map of the route taken by Green's generation to the war crisis of 1938, and beyond this to a new war. The prospect of approaching war is a

⁴⁵ Rod Mengham, 1982, *The Idiom of the Time*, p.46 (Cambridge University Press).

⁴⁶ Green, *Pack*, p.1.

concern that Green shared with other writers of his generation. It can be read, for example, in Evelyn Waugh's *Vile Bodies* (1930), in Graham Greene's *A Gun For Sale* (1936), in Rex Warner's *The Professor* (1938) or George Orwell's *Coming Up For Air* (1939). Concern with approaching war is, itself, a fundamental literary concern of the 1930s. However, while the novels of other writers of Green's generation refer directly to approaching war Green, characteristically, is oblique. *Party Going* represents both the effect of war intruding - albeit metaphorically - into the everyday weekday world of a London railway terminus, and the fog bound railway station as a symbol of waiting for the approaching war. This latter representation encompasses the insularity of Green's generation just too young for the war and, in turn, is an evocation of the way in which they found symbolic substitutes for the war they felt they had missed in the private worlds that they created. Furthermore, in this latter form of representation, *Party Going* gathers up Green's two previous novels, *Blindness* (1926) and *Living* (1929), plotting them as points along the route to approaching war for his generation. *Party Going*, *Living* and *Blindness* are, in turn, subsumed into the story told in Green's interim autobiography *Pack My Bag* (1940).

Chapter 5: *Caught*: we were told to expect air raids

Caught (1943) starts from a point in time, and with a sense of dread that recalls the opening of *Pack My Bag* (1940). However, whereas *Pack My Bag* works back from anticipation of the outbreak of, and immediate death in, what will become the Second World War, *Caught* ranges both backwards and forwards from the outbreak of war. In so doing *Caught* tells the final part of Green's generation's journey to the Second World War from Munich to the Blitz. The narrative of *Caught* shows the prospect of immediate death at the outbreak of war, postponed by the phoney war, but eventually realized in the Blitz. As such, it could be considered the third part of a trilogy, with *Party Going* and *Pack My Bag* the first two parts, a trilogy whose subject is the journey for Green's generation from the First to the Second World War. As with Green's two preceding texts, *Caught* is dated by a postscript, here: 'London, June 1940 - Christmas 1942', that is from the fall of France, marking the end of the phoney war, through the low point of the war for England in 1941, to the end of 1942 when the prospect of Allied victory was becoming realistic. The period of writing of *Caught* coincides, for Green's generation, with real, as opposed to vicarious, experience of war.

Narrative time in *Caught* is divided into three periods, taking a representative member of Green's generation, Richard Roe, like Green a London based Auxiliary Fire Service (AFS) fireman, through the immediate pre-war - from Munich up to and including the outbreak of war - the phoney war - which from the perspective of a London based AFS fireman lasts from the outbreak of war until the beginning of the air-raids of the Blitz - and the Blitz itself. Indeed this structure of time is built into the first sentence of *Caught*: 'When war broke out in September we were told to expect

air raids'.¹ In 1943, when first published, and with its postscript telling the time of writing, *Caught* would recall the false expectation of air raids at the beginning of the war, the preparation for air-raids in the immediate pre-war which fuelled that expectation, the period of the phoney war when the air raids did not occur² and the Blitz, the consummation for Green's generation of their anticipated experience of war when air-raids eventually occurred.

These three periods of time suggest a tripartite structure, similar to the implicit tripartite structure that Green developed in his previous novel, *Party Going*. As in *Party Going*, this tripartite structure is not explicitly signified in the text but arises out of non-linear narrative movement through time. A narrative point is established just slightly in the past - the outbreak of war. From this point, the narrative constructs a deeper past, a present and a future. The deeper past extends back to the 1938 war crisis, the negotiations at Berchtesgaden, Godesberg and Munich over the future of Czechoslovakia, with flashbacks to Roe's adolescence and childhood. The present is the phoney war. The future is the Blitz. However, whereas *Party Going* constructs an allegory to tell its war related story - war at the time of writing having not been directly experienced by the majority of Green's generation - allegory is not required in *Caught* as war - that which Green's generation had been prepared for at school, been

¹ Henry Green, 1943, *Caught* p.1 (Harvill, 1991). Hereafter page references to *Caught* will be given in the text of this chapter.

² See Philip Ziegler, 1995, *London at War*, p.8 and pp.10-11 (Sinclair-Stevenson) for expectation of aerial bombardment of London at the outbreak of war (and its history) and chapter 4 "The First Alert" (pp.36-39), for false air raid alarms and growing irritability when the air raids did not occur in London.

both disappointed and relieved to miss and, as a consequence, played at through adolescence and early adulthood - has finally occurred.

The immediate pre-war, for Green's generation, cannot be understood without reference to the anticipated future – immediate death in war. This was a widespread contemporary expectation that Green's generation shared. However, immediate death, alluded to in *Party Going* and anticipated in *Pack My Bag*, does not occur. Indeed this is the typical experience of war for Green's generation, of waiting to become involved, learned at school during the First World War. The immediate pre-war past determines the narrative scheme of *Caught*, split into the past where death is anticipated, the present where death has been postponed and a new future at a point during the war where death is still anticipated, knowingly in the Blitz as the novel's post-scripted dates indicate. This narrative scheme is set up in the implicit first part of *Caught*, comprising the first seven chapters of the novel (pp.1-65).³ Here a tripartite structure of past, present and future is outlined. This occurs in parallel with a representation of the story of the past, the immediate pre-war signifying that it is that specific past that has shaped the present and future of *Caught*. The past is narrated both directly as it occurs - for example Christopher Roe's abduction from his viewpoint - and from the present - for example Christopher's abduction reconstructed by his father, Richard. There is also narration of the present - Richard Roe's trips to the country to visit his son - and two flash forwards to the future, the Blitz.

³ In the original Hogarth edition of *Caught* the chapters are un-numbered, as in the original Hogarth edition of *Party Going*. Although, unlike *Party Going*, the un-numbered chapters of *Caught* do not each start on a new page, they are clearly intended to be discrete chapters as each is separated by a gap of nine lines. This convention is preserved in the Harvill Press paperback edition of *Caught*.

The tripartite structure of the novel, and its complex representation of a structure of time comprising past, present and future, is constructed in the implicit first part of *Caught* through the setting of boundaries. These boundaries represent historical events related to the war: the Munich agreement, the anticipation of immediate death in war, the phoney war, the Blitz. The boundary between past and present is established on the first page, indeed in the first sentence of the novel. 'When war broke out in September we were told to expect air raids' (p.1). This sentence is redolent of the post-Blitz knowledge that the expected air raids would not occur until a year after the outbreak of war, a knowledge which all readers, included by the sentence's use of 'we', can reasonably be expected to have, given that the novel was published after the Blitz, in 1943.

The past is established as encompassing both the immediate pre-war period and the outbreak of war with its expectation of air raids generated in the immediate pre-war period. We are reminded that Roe was 'certain of death in the immediate raid he expected to raze London to the ground' (p.25), reflecting what Green wrote in *Pack My Bag* of the prospect of immediate death at the outbreak of the Second World War - 'it would be asking much to pretend one had a chance to live'.⁴ Present narrative time is set out in which the expectation of raids has diminished, that is the phoney war has commenced, and Roe can get sufficient leave to visit his son in the country. This allows the past to be represented as something disconnected from the present. Roe's journey is described as being 'back into his old life' (p.2). During this visit Roe's old life in the country with his son is contrasted to the present in which 'There had, as yet, been no raids on London. Because this was his first leave, Roe felt, that the moment

⁴ Henry Green, 1940, *Pack My Bag* p.1 (Hogarth, 1992).

he got back to the substation he might be in the thick of it, after the fruitless waiting' (p.3). However, this present of 'fruitless waiting' does represent a break with the immediate pre-war past and is represented in the first chapter of *Caught* when the end of Roe's leave is reported thus: 'As he drove away he felt he had lost everything, and in particular the boy' (p.7). Roe is driving away from his old life to his present life, setting up associations with past and present. The past is associated with Roe's son and the country. Indeed this recalls the first chapter of *Pack My Bag* where Green expresses nostalgia for evenings at home in the country of his childhood past before being sent away to school and vicarious experience of the First World War. In *Caught* the present is associated with London during the phoney war awaiting the Blitz – offering more vicarious experience of war - and Roe's service during this time in the AFS. Hence a physical boundary is created between country and city to signify the boundary between past and present.

The forward boundary of the past, the beginning of the narrative present of *Caught*, is established as 'After a time, when the turmoil of the first weeks of war subsided' (p.1) and 'after three months of war and no raids' (p.2), that is the beginning of the phoney war. As the *New Statesman* on 30 December 1939 opines:

Four months of the strangest war in history now lie behind us. Poland is crushed On land with uneventful monotony the youth of three nations faces each other across impregnable fortifications and the war tends to become an interminable siege ...⁵

⁵ Robert Kee, 1984, *The World We Left Behind: A Chronicle of the Year 1939*, p.344 (Weidenfeld & Nicolson).

During the phoney war the AFS firemen settled down to 'fruitless waiting' for air raids. This, then, establishes the forward boundary of the present as the delayed expectation of air raids, the Blitz.

The third and fourth chapters contain the flash forwards to the Blitz that drive the narrative on from the present of the phoney war to the known future of aerial bombardment. The Blitz will happen, and the pattern of frustrated expectation for Green's generation will be broken. The two flash-forwards pivot around the signifiers of the past - Roe's relationship with his son - and the present - his service in the AFS. In so doing, they bind together the immediate pre-war past, the phoney war present and the future Blitz into the tripartite structure of narrative time. The first flash forward occurs from the narrative present, in the country, a physical location that signifies the past, when Roe is visiting his son. The narrative jumps to the future to emphasise the memory of a specific incident during the visit: 'So the father, trying, during the Blitz, while he was being bombed on twenty-four hours' leave, to make himself believe that the war was an interlude, found his memory at fault' (p.22). The second flash forward arises from the narrative past, during a brief history of Roe's involvement in the AFS and serves to establish the Blitz as belonging to the future:

A year later, when raids began, and he faced death, he loved his son fiercely, not so much for himself as for something between the three of them which he felt made life worth living, as his son grew up, for father, the dead mother, and their living child (p.25).

Chapters five, six and seven tie together the outbreak of war with the immediate pre-war period into a past occurring before the present of the phoney war. In chapter five (pp.31-49) the time is immediately before and after the outbreak of war. The narrative moves through four sections: the pre-war, the morning war is declared, the phoney war and a flash-forward to the Blitz. Chapter six (pp.49-55) goes back in time

to concentrate on one of the characters from chapter five, the old AFS fireman Piper. The chapter follows Piper one evening before the war leaving the fire station, ignored by his colleagues and Fireman Instructors - the latter, his own age, see him as a broken old man, suggesting one of the binary oppositions - between young and old - that characterized the inter-war years for Green's generation. He meets a young female colleague, telling her that the coming war will be his fifth campaign. This broken old man is a relic of previous wars, belonging to the past; displaced by the future that now belongs to Green's generation. Indeed Piper is destined to die a cowardly death on the first night of the Blitz in contrast to Roe, the representative of Green's generation, who acquits himself well. Chapter seven (pp.55-65) comprises two sections: the first is three weeks after mobilisation, the second describes the period in the first few weeks of war when firemen were heroes, 'especially to women'. We are told that the pre-war events of chapter six took place a year ago, - 'It was on a morning twelve months later' and that the events narrated in chapter seven take place 'Just three weeks after mobilisation' (p.55). This goes back to the boundary of the pre-war, the end of September 1938, the time of the Munich crisis. On the other side the boundary of the expectation of immediate death in war is the end of September 1939, the realization, within the narrative time frame of *Caught*, of the beginning of the phoney war. Thus a chronology is set up, so that chapter eight can be read as commencing the implicit second part of *Caught* through its move into narrating the time period of the phoney war, 'this change which by then had come over people's fears, that they did not think a raid was likely' (p.66).

In the second chapter of *Caught*, (pp. 7-21), Roe is travelling on a slow train back to London. The slow train is a symbol of a change to war-time conditions in *Caught*, here used to signify a war-time boundary between the old pre-war life – which

becomes associated with the past - and the present life of the phoney war, which also becomes associated with the expected future of the Blitz. Disrupted slow running trains often appear as a typical differentiating feature of wartime Britain in novels written by members of Green's generation. Green, who spent leisure hours at Oxford dining on trains as a member of the Railway Club, writes of Roe, 'that when, at last, he got into a train, travelling seemed an unnecessary waste of leisure hours which had been dearly bought' (p.21). Stella in Elizabeth Bowen's *The Heat of the Day* (1949), is stuck in the country after her cousin Francis's funeral 'for ever severer cuts in the train service so worked out that nobody could depart, on the up or down line, for something under two hours more'.⁶ Nick Jenkins, in Anthony Powell's, *The Soldier's Art* (1966) notes as he journeys to London on leave, 'the railway carriage as usual overcrowded, while we threaded a sluggish passage through blackness towards the south; from time to time entering - pausing in - then vacating - areas where air-raid warnings prevailed'.⁷ In the second paragraph of *Caught*, still representing the days immediately after the outbreak of war, Green writes, 'The trains at once became so slow ...'.

Richard Roe, like John Hays in *Blindness* and the partygoers in *Party Going*, is another representative member of Green's generation in Green's fiction, connecting childhood and adolescence to school and war. In Roe's case joining the AFS can be traced back to the Munich crisis, the further boundary of the narrative past in *Caught*. This represents the beginning of the final journey to war for Green, as he recollected,

⁶ Elizabeth Bowen, 1948, *The Heat of the Day*, p.72 (Penguin, 1962).

⁷ Anthony Powell, 1966, *The Soldier's Art*, p.88 (Fontana, 1979).

'My London at war in 1939 begins in Eire in 1938. It was Munich, just upon us'.⁸

Roe joined the A.F.S. in October 1938 immediately after the Munich agreement of September 29 1938. We are told that

When he finished training, lost his fear of heights, and was allowed to go to fires, he never had one in all the time he waited fully dressed there, and he had gone every Tuesday for three hours until war was declared, that is for nine months (p.24).

This dates the end of Roe's training to the beginning of December 1938. Green recalled that AFS training lasted for eight weeks:

Having armed myself with the needed few bits of paper, I was enrolled and called by appointment one evening after work to get trained. With the others in the class this instruction, for not more than sixty minutes every seven days, over a period of eight weeks was meant to turn us into full Auxiliary Firemen.⁹

The eight weeks brings us back to the beginning of October 1938 and the end of the Munich crisis: 'Roe first joined the Service, when the nations were still declaring peace' (p.24). This relates Roe to Green who also joined the AFS in 1938,¹⁰ marking him out as a representative member of Green's generation.

⁸ "Before the Great Fire" published in Henry Green, 1992, *Surviving: The Uncollected Writings of Henry Green*, p.260 (Chatto and Windus).

⁹ *Ibid.*, p.269.

¹⁰ 'To join the A.F.S. in 1938 all you needed was a doctor's certificate to say you were not likely to fall down dead running upstairs' (*Ibid.*, p.268). Green also describes being 'able to call in at the office every third day off all through the war, for we worked two days on with one day off' (*Ibid.*) in the same way that Roe 'allowed one day's leave in three' is 'dropping in to the office on leave days' (*Caught*, p.5). Ziegler points out, 'In June 1938 the head of London's fire services, Aylmer Firebrace, and the Leader of the London County Council (LCC), Herbert Morrison, had jointly appealed for volunteers to join the Auxiliary Fire Service (A.F.S.). Only a handful came forward' (Ziegler, p.14).

For Green's generation, war is linked to childhood through their experience of being prepared to fight in the First World War whilst at prep school. Hence Green in later years would write of the Second World War in terms of an involuntary return to school:

The last few months of peace in Britain was to go back to be a little boy again, however old you were. It was so to speak those last few days of term, but no holidays promised, and the knowledge that having failed in everything, willy nilly next week would fix you a poorer, harsher academy in which all would indeed be different and for the worse on September first, my red telegram came, and that meant mobilisation, it was like being back at school by the pool when the instructor to your regret at last said you can go solo, and ordered you 'get wet, get in'.¹¹

Evelyn Waugh gives similar reminiscences to Guy Crouchback in *Officers and Gentlemen* (1955), as he encounters fictional representations of Henry Green:

Guns were banging away in the neighbouring parks. A stick of bombs fell thunderously somewhere in the direction of Victoria Station.

On the pavement opposite Turtle's a group of progressive novelists in firemen's uniforms were squirting a little jet of water into the morning-room.

Guy was momentarily reminded of Holy Saturday at Downside; early gusty March mornings of boyhood; the doors wide open in the unfinished butt of the Abbey; half the school coughing ...¹²

The link to school is emphasized via Roe's reasons for joining the AFS being shown to recall childhood in general - to see inside of the turreted building at the fire station - and Roe's childhood in particular - he had always been afraid of heights.

Roe's son, Christopher, specifically represents childhood in *Caught*. Roe, as a representative figure of Green's generation, is shown to strive to forge a close relationship with his son, whilst experiencing the disruption of domesticity,

¹¹ "Before the Great Fire", published in Green, *Surviving*, p.278.

¹² Evelyn Waugh, 1955, *Officers and Gentlemen*, p.9 (Penguin, 1974).

encompassing familial relationships, that had come to signify war for Green's generation. Already war is shown to have disrupted Roe's domestic arrangements as he has evacuated his son to the country to live with his sister-in-law:

He was called up three days before the outbreak and, certain of death in the immediate raid he expected to raze London to the ground, he was soon saying farewell to Christopher away out in the country whenever he was alone, losing him because he loved himself so well that he was afraid (p.25).

There are, of course, no raids, and Roe settles down into the routine of the phoney war. However, as Graham Greene observed, through Arthur Rowe's dream dialogue with his dead mother in *The Ministry of Fear*, war has changed so much that any attempt to carry on a pre-war life, with its domestic pleasures, now seems unreal:

'This isn't real life any more,' he said. 'Tea on the lawn, evensong, croquet, the old ladies calling, the gentle unmalicious gossip, the gardener trundling the wheelbarrow full of leaves and grass. People write about it as if it still went on; lady novelists describe it over and over again in books of the month, but it's not there any more'.¹³

Two flash-forwards to the Blitz link Roe's experience of war to his son. These demonstrate that while Roe can accept the disruption of domesticity as characteristic of war he cannot accept its destruction, here signified by the prospect of losing all contact with his son. Hence in the first of these two flash forwards to the Blitz Roe is deprived of an accurate recollection of the birthday present he gave his son while last on home leave. The phoney war does not threaten to destroy domesticity in the way that the real experience of war will. The second flash forward, to action during air raids, produces a sense of fierce love for his son: 'A year later, when raids began, and

¹³ Graham Greene, 1943, *The Ministry of Fear*, p.65 (Penguin, 1974).

he faced death, he loved his son fiercely' (p.25). Now that Roe is active in the war the threat to domesticity has become active so he must hang onto every detail.

The effect of war-determined disruption of domesticity on the relationship between Roe and his son is represented in Roe's second period of leave with Christopher. As he arrives Roe finds 'the shutters closed, shutting out all he had left' (p.26). The past is now symbolically closed to him as he has entered the period of waiting for the war to begin. The war is constructed in allegory as Roe builds a harbour with his son out of toy bricks, and the next day Christopher destroys the harbour by pretending to bomb it. Richard is shown, using an image of disrupted domesticity, attempting to repair the damage, 'picking up the thread where the war had unravelled it' (p.31).

The abduction of Roe's son is a key event in the first part of *Caught*. It exists in the narrative past of the immediate pre-war but resonates backwards and forwards from that point. Its forward resonance is signified by its introduction in the narrative present as a memory at a point in the narrative, which signifies a physical boundary between past and present. It is recalled by Roe on a train journey from the country, associated with the past, to London which, at this point in the novel, is associated with the present: the waiting for action that is the fate of the AFS during the phoney war. London will also be the location of the narrative future of *Caught*: the Blitz. The backward resonance produced by the abduction is signified by the earlier memories, of AFS training and the recalled adolescent episode at Tewksbury Abbey.

The abduction is linked to the AFS in both the past and the future. Recollection of the abduction immediately prompts Roe to remember his training in the AFS because

It was disastrous that the woman who took the boy away should be his Fireman Instructor's sister. Hardly less fatal that the store had been lit by stained glass windows in front of arc lamps which cast the violent colours of that glass over the goods laid out on counters (p.7).

The 'stained glass windows' prompt the recollection of an even earlier memory when as an adolescent Roe is taken by a family friend to Tewksbury Abbey to examine its stained glass windows from a ledge forty feet above the ground. Here he is said to have experienced a sense of danger and potential death linked to the images produced by the stained glass seen from

that height calling on the pulses and he did not know why to his ears,
down to dropped stone flags over which sunlight had cast the colour in
each window, the colour it seemed his blood had turned (p.8).

Roe's adolescence comprises the period immediately after the First World War, the period of after-war for Green's generation, of searching for substitutes for war. The episode in Tewkesbury Abbey is presented as a war substitute, a sense of danger with a direct reference to blood, which suggests the blood sacrifice that is one perception of the First World War. It is also linked to the abduction of Roe's son from the shop by the images produced by light shining through stained glass. In combination they produce a sense of disaster, violence and prospective death, similar to Green's generation's expectation of war. Finally this is all linked to the AFS by the narrative's structured co-incidence of Roe's son having been abducted by his Fireman Instructor's sister.

The narrative goes beyond Roe's memory to narrate the abduction from Christopher's perspective, and is presented in parentheses, to signify its difference from the father's memory. We are told 'the father imagined his son must have pointed a finger and shouted, "I want, I want"' - and then presented with the event, narrated from Christopher's perspective: '(When the lady, who sidled by, talked to Christopher, he did not answer, or try to break the spell which held his eyes. Words were no means of communication now ...)' (p.10). This occurrence of the pre-war abduction as

memory, during the present time of the phoney war, is a conflation of these two time periods into one: of the Second World War. This war is then linked to the First World War. Richard, in the country with so much time on his hands as he waits for the war to begin, remembers his own childhood and in particular his uncle killed in the First World War. The memory of his uncle triggers, in turn, the memory of his son's abduction.

Finally the abduction signifies, through being a crime against home and family, an attack on the domesticity which Green's generation linked to peace. The effect of the disruption is signified by the narrator telling us that Richard Roe's son will no longer perform a typically boyish act, playing with boats, having been bought a boat by Pye's sister. This disruption is, in turn, linked to the AFS as, Roe's sister-in-law, Dy, points out,

"Well, when this man," she meant the fireman Pye, "came back from his work, they say he said he found my true darling absolutely all right, perfectly happy really, sitting there, you see, where she left him, good as gold ... that beast is a fireman. "Richard," she had said, and this time he moaned where he lay at the recollection, "when are you going to finish with this Fire Service business?" (p.14).

Dy believes that Richard can easily 'finish with this Fire Service business' as though war was not inevitable or as though his activities were making war inevitable; the latter a widespread belief in pre-war Britain,¹⁴ a belief also given to Roe who 'had

¹⁴ For example: 'Earlier, in the summer of 1939, it was above all the British Broadcasting Corporation, it seems, which had alerted the country to the danger of war. By merely reporting the menacing turn of events on the Continent, it set the alarm bells ringing. In June, angry letters began to appear in the press accusing the BBC of being alarmist and spoiling the summer holidays; *Punch* produced a cartoon showing a well-dressed suburbanite hurling a book at his Cassandra-like radio; and there were even claims that a number of suicides had resulted from listening to the BBC news bulletins.' Raphael

never felt war was possible, although in his mind he could not see how it could be avoided' (pp.24-25). This links the AFS, the abduction and approaching war. From his memory of the abduction Roe goes back to add further detail to his pre-war map. Thus, before the abduction Roe's Fireman Instructor, Pye, says, 'I don't hold with the necessity of the AFS . . . because I don't hold with the necessity of war ...' (p.15). After the abduction Pye appears to have accepted the necessity of the AFS and, thus, the inevitability of war:

"Take a hospital," Pye might be saying, "you are called there, you arrive, and this lecture is called practical fire-fighting 'ints, but all this comes into the job just as much as putting out the fire ... You've always got to recollect you must make as little disturbance as possible, use your loaf, don't let the patients get any idea there's something up. Go about it quietly. Don't rush in a ward shouting where's the fire? there may be people in there through no fault of their own. They're to be pitied" (p.20).

On one level this is an obvious reference to Pye's sister. However, on another level it can be read as a reference to the expected effect of air raids, widespread fires and widespread casualties. Philip Ziegler outlines a history of the expectation of air raids, starting from a sub-committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence, set up under the chairmanship of Sir John Anderson, to study air raid precautions:

Samuel, "London Calling: The BBC from Savoy Hill to Shepherd's Bush" (review of Asa Briggs, *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom* in *The Times Literary Supplement*, no.4849, March 8 1996, p.14). Indeed Neville Chamberlain went out of his way to allay such fears in a BBC Broadcast of 23 January 1939, 'I want to speak to you tonight about the Government Scheme of Voluntary National Service and about the handbook which will be delivered to your homes this week.... It is a scheme to make us ready for war. That does not mean that I think war is coming. You know that I have done, and shall continue to do, all I can to preserve peace for ourselves and others too ...' (quoted in Kee, p.68).

Anderson's committee took it for granted that London would be the immediate target when war broke out: 2000 tons of bombs, they believed, would be dropped in the first twenty four hours, 150 in the second, 100 a day for the next month or so. Each ton would cause fifty casualties, a third of which would be fatal ... The bombardment of Barcelona in the Spanish Civil War provided grounds for fresh calculations. The figure of fifty casualties per ton was not amended, but the probable strength of the attack was vastly augmented. The Air Staff were now contemplating an all-out attack on London in which 3500 tons of bombs would fall in the first twenty-four hours ... Bertrand Russell sought to curdle the nation's blood when he predicted (in *Which Way to Peace?*) that London would be 'one vast raving bedlam, the hospitals will be stormed, traffic will cease, the homeless will shriek for peace, the city will be a pandemonium'.¹⁵

The present of *Caught*, the period of the phoney war, accounts for the postponement of the prospect of immediate death in war. *Caught*, like Green's previous novel *Party Going*, moves towards an expected future event. In *Party Going* it is anticipated war and the immediate aerial bombardment expected upon the outbreak of war. In *Caught* the aerial bombardment has been postponed producing the phoney war. This is characterized by stasis and expected change. The sense of stasis was expressed by Neville Chamberlain when he announced in a speech on April 4th 1940, five days before the German invasion of Norway, that 'Hitler had missed the bus'.¹⁶ The expectation of change is the postponed aerial bombardment, now known as the Blitz and expected to occur as a future event during the war, a reflection of a contemporary structure of feeling arising from the outbreak of war:

'Blitz' was named before it happened. Anticipating an attempt by Germany to bomb Britain out of the war, publicists had appropriated the word before 7 September 1940, the 'official' date for the start of the Blitz proper. It came from *Blitzkrieg*, 'lightning-war', applied by the world's press to the swift German conquest of Poland in September 1939, and then to the rapid German advance in France and the Low

¹⁵ Ziegler, p.11.

¹⁶ Angus Calder, 1969, *The People's War*, p.76 (Pimlico, 1996).

Countries from 10 May 1940. As heavy bombing of London began in the late summer, the word 'Blitz' became 'almost overnight a British colloquialism for an air raid'.¹⁷

Indeed this feeling of anticipation lasted into the Blitz. Graham Greene, in *The Ministry of Fear* (1943), represents the policeman, Prentice, telling the novel's main character, Arthur Rowe: '... In time of war, so many bodies are unidentifiable. So many bodies,' he said sleepily, 'waiting for a convenient blitz.'¹⁸ These inter-related themes of stasis and change and the tensions between them form the basis of the implicit second part of the novel (pp.65-173). Chapter eight of *Caught* (pp.65-76) is the first chapter of this implicit second part of the novel. In this chapter the two inter-related themes are introduced, represented by the party given to mark a change - the transfer of the regular fireman Wal to another station - and that the party is only made possible through a new sense of stasis in the war: 'this change which by then had come over people's fears, that they did not think a raid was likely' (p.66). The relationship between change and stasis in *Caught* reflects both a contemporary structure of feeling and Green's generation's specific relationship to war. The contemporary structure of feeling can be gauged from two reminiscences. The first is of the boredom of the phoney war:

Londoners were 'waiting, always waiting', complained the would-be actress and trainee Bohemian Theodora Fitzgibbon. 'Waiting for news, for buses, for trains . . . Waiting for bombs that never fell; gas. Waiting for casualties in dreary improvised rooms. Worst of all, waiting in queues: for foods, for forms to be filled in, for things that would never happen. The misery of doing nothing, waiting to be told what to do. Maybe. It became known as the Great Bore War.'¹⁹

¹⁷ Angus Calder, 1991, *The Myth of the Blitz*, p.2 (Pimlico, 1992).

¹⁸ Greene, *Ministry*, p.188.

¹⁹ Theodora Fitzgibbon, 1982, *With Love*, quoted in Ziegler, p.79.

The second tells of the excitement of being under bombardment during the Blitz:

The psychiatrist was the first to bring us a bomb story, so for a few days he was more important in the bar than the town-crier in a mediaeval village. For he had been in the Medical School at Millbank when it was hit. He had not been greatly disturbed by it, and in fact, as London was his first experience under fire, he was rather proud. We drank a lot that night as guns roared outside and bombs swished down somewhere, but not on our pub.²⁰

Green's generation's specific relationship with war is now the story of one dichotomy overlaid on another. The first is the original dichotomy of heroism and horror which arose from their adolescence after the First World War between initial relief that they had avoided the horrors of the war and disappointment that they had been denied involvement. The new dichotomy is based around fear - 'this change which by then had come over people's fears' - fear of immediate death in war and fear that their consummation with war, that which they had waited for and not achieved in their childhood and early adolescence during the First World War, will once again not be achieved.

The phoney war with its associated fear for Green's generation that they will again miss the vastness of experience of war for which they have been prepared, that they are repeating the pattern of their childhood and adolescence - waiting to become involved in a real war that may, in the case of the phoney war, end before it has begun, produces similar conditions to those experienced by Green's generation in their adolescence after the First World War. This is signified in part by the representations of childhood memories and comparisons between war and school in *Caught*. It is also signified by the representation of the AFS as a private sphere characterised by

²⁰ Jerome Willis, 1944, *It Stopped at London*, extract published in Norman Longmate, 1981, *The Home Front: An Anthology of Personal Experience 1938-1945*, p.72 (Chatto and Windus).

manoeuvring amongst its members and binary oppositions. This representation of the AFS as a private sphere, cut off from the public spheres of the war, is also a reflection of contemporary feeling:

When an ARP worker told a London magistrate that he had been 'called up', the magistrate rebuked him sternly, 'You were not called up. You volunteered. There are too many people in the AFS and ARP.' ... A six-year-old girl peeped through the door of a fire station in Chelsea, was invited in, and told her hosts, 'My daddy says you're a waste of public money.'²¹

When Roe's station has a call to a domestic fire, they appear to earn such approbation by going to the wrong house. The AFS in *Caught* are unfamiliar with the public sphere outside the private sphere of the sub-station. This private sphere recalls the private-spheres-as-substitutes-for-war represented in Green's first novel *Blindness*. Indeed this is emphasized by comparisons made by Richard Roe between the AFS and public school:

It's mad this public school business from the proletariat, about you've let the old man down ... We've had to turn in everything over this war, all our private hopes, all our plans. We come here ready for at least death, and then we get into trouble for not doing under our beds (pp.92-93).

The incident of going to the wrong house provides the opportunity for Pye's chief, Trant, to indulge in some manoeuvring at Pye's expense. This introduces another feature familiar to the private spheres represented in Green's fictions, binary opposition. This is initiated by what the narrative presents as a chance incident:

Up at Number Fifteen, Trant's wife, as he left his quarters, promised him pork pie for dinner. This put Trant in mind of his sub officer who had made them a laughing stock the previous day, running about like a

²¹ Ziegler, pp.65 & 67.

chicken that had its head cut off, with his Auxiliaries like a herd of sodding geeses. "I wonder," he said to himself. He rang Pye up (p.85).

The image of a headless chicken suggests the damage and panic that a bombing raid would produce, an image generated out of the private sphere of the AFS and acting as a substitute for war. Pye is not there, having been summoned to the asylum for a meeting regarding his sister - the outside world intruding into Pye's private sphere. When he returns Pye, told by Chopper, a regular fireman, about Trant, initially suspects Roe of having informed on him but then directs his suspicions at Piper.

The manoeuvring within the fire station is the context in which binary oppositions become dominant within the narrative. Pye notices that the cook Mary Howells is crying. He offers to cover for her if she wants to take a few days off, she refuses. However, Pye discovers at roll call that Mary Howells has gone 'adrift'. They are shown to misunderstand each other. The private sphere of the AFS provides the conditions under which binary oppositions will flourish, a usual practice in Green's fiction. Indeed this, as the oppositions of class, is built into the command and control hierarchy the Fire Service:

"see here, Piper," Pye said, "there's 'igh officers go floatin' around in great 'igh powered cars. They come looking for what, why for trouble. When I enter the station I don't 'ave to look, I know it's there. Smarten up. . . ." (pp.81-2)

Pye is passing on to Piper his frustration at what he tells himself is not having his orders obeyed, and the blame that he knows will be attributed to him by his senior officer, Trant, for having entered the wrong house during the bungled call to a domestic fire. There is also opposition between sections of the service. In *Caught* this rivalry is represented as being between fire service stations and regulars and

auxiliaries. This sense of rivalry is directly related to the phoney war by Hilly and Richard, discussing the rivalry in a night-club:

"... What's going to happen? The regulars will promote themselves, none of you will get a look in, a man of his [Pye's] age with his experience may end up anywhere, quite high up, honestly, if the war lasts long enough

"If there are no raids," he said, "as there have been none, they may quite likely turn away every Auxiliary who can't stand on his head on top of a ladder without having been trained how. And then Mr. Pye will revert back to what he really is, an ordinary fireman ..." (p.108).

Battle lines are drawn up within the private sphere of the AFS, involving the representative figures of Trant, Pye and Piper. The battle begins in chapter nine with a small skirmish, Trant arrives to turn Pye's sub-station out. He deliberately goes looking for disorder and is gratified to find it in the form of dirt under Roe's bed. The men feel that Roe has let Pye down and the narrative links this, through Richard, to public school:

Richard did not feel the backwash for several days. When he did he was surprised to find it came from his mates who began, as he thought in best public school tradition, to take it out of him for letting the guvnor, in other words, the housemaster, down. (p.91).

Richard expresses his frustration at the link between the phoney war and the private spheres that Green and his generation had experienced at public school, 'It's mad this public school business from the proletariat, about you've let the old man down' (p. 93). The narrative introduces that staple of public school fiction, the sneak, Piper who, in chapter ten, tells Trant the story of Pye reporting Mary Howells as sick when she was absent without leave. Piper is presented as a kind of fifth columnist, a spy in the sub-station, who is relating news to the enemy, here represented by the senior Fire Service Officers. The private battle is further developed when Piper tells Trant of Pye

chasing after Prudence and that his sister is in an asylum. Trant in turn informs on Pye to his superior officer, the Chief Superintendent, Mr. Dodge.

Mary Howells is central to the manoeuvring within the private sphere of the AFS. In relation to Pye, she incorporates all the binary oppositions in the second part of *Caught*. She is of low rank in the AFS, and belongs to the same low social rank - from the perspective of Green's class - as Piper, who has been instrumental in her recruitment. She serves in the Woman's Auxiliary Fire Service (WAFS). She successfully manoeuvres through the sphere of the wartime AFS in contrast to Pye who creates his own rules, but is destroyed as the private sphere that he has attempted to build within the AFS comes into contact with the public sphere of war. This is a pattern that Green has set out in *Pack My Bag*. There he represents his private sphere - in which he can build substitutes for war - being destroyed when it comes into contact with the public sphere of the General Strike. Howells is presented as a counterpoint to Pye. She does not attempt control, but flows. She lets her instincts and experience guide her. These prompt her to refuse Pye's offer of assistance in gaining time off to sort out the domestic problems of her daughter and son-in-law, avoiding having to become allied with Pye. The response from Pye is to post her 'adrift', ensuring that she will attend a disciplinary hearing in front of the Chief Superintendent, Dodge. However, this only serves to further isolate Pye. The oppositions of social class are brought into the narrative as Richard rushes to her defence - Pye is opposed by social classes from all sides. Indeed this is linked to war as Roe is seen to be war-like, emphasized by Blitz imagery, in his determination to right the wrong that he thinks has been done to Mary Howells: 'His eyes almost flashed, as though the lamps hanging before rows of bottles had been sent lurching, as they were to be, by a bomb' (p.128). At the hearing before Dodge, she instinctively

knows what to say to him - she recognizes that he is a man who likes gossip - and escapes without a reprimand.

The oppositions of social class are further developed in dialogue between Richard and Hilly. In a night-club, a haunt of the rich upper class, Hilly tells Richard of Pye's infatuation with Prudence and that he takes her to this club. Richard's disbelief is shown to be a matter of social class, mirrored by Hilly who points to the dichotomy in Pye, who she says enjoys it even whilst it stirs up his political views, views which she describes as 'boring'. Richard is shown to support Hilly's contribution to social class based binary opposition as he remembers Pye during fire inspection of the club, drinking three star brandy for two hours and leaving cursing the rich.

Pye is central to the development of binary oppositions in the implicit second part of *Caught*. The binary oppositions between AFS ranks, between AFS stations, between men and women, between social classes, all include him. There is a series of manoeuvres that Pye either initiates, or is involved in, whereby he becomes isolated. He coins the nickname, Savory, for Roe, intended to be derogatory. By chapter eleven (pp.112-131) the Auxiliaries that Pye commands are discussing his absences while on duty. Pye's response in chapter twelve, (pp.132-144), is to blame everything on the AFS. Thus Pye reaffirms the opposition between auxiliaries and regulars and further isolates himself as it is mostly auxiliaries that he commands. Pye steps up discipline at the substation, ensuring that he becomes hated. Pye has become the enemy of the other characters in the novel. Pye is also shown to upset the domestic routine of the sub-station kitchen, Eileen the cook gives notice as, the narrative reports, the news from Norway is worse. The news from Norway indicates that the phoney war is coming to an end, that the real war is about to begin. The expectation of real war heralds an expected increase in disruption of domesticity in the narrative of *Caught*,

associated by Green's generation with war. Hence the character of Pye, by being shown to be active in both binary oppositions and disruption of domesticity is, by association, shown to be active in heralding the end of the phoney war, the beginning of the real war.

Pye links his sister's insanity to sex in general and, more specifically, his growing suspicion that he committed incest with her in an anonymous pre-war sexual encounter. This emphasizes the disruptive effect of sex in the wartime space of *Caught* and also ties in the pre-war period - when Pye's sister would have committed her 'crime' - to the war. As John Costello states:

'War aphrodisia', as it has been called, accentuates the disruptive physical impact of war on family life. The loosening of wartime moral restraints acts as an incentive to extramarital promiscuity and the unshackling of unsatisfactory marriage bonds. Historically it was a phenomenon confined to areas adjacent to the fighting, but the mobilization of entire populations necessary to fight a 'total war' spread the hedonistic impulse throughout a society.²²

Indeed there is the often quoted extract from *Caught* on sex and war which supports Costello's analysis:

In night clubs, it has been described, or wherever the young danced, couples passed the last goodbye hours abandoned to each other and, so Richard felt, when these girls were left behind alone as train after train went out loaded with men to fight, the pretty creatures must be hunting for more farewells. As they were driven to create memories to compare, and thus to compensate for the loss each had suffered, he saw them hungrily seeking another man, oh they were sorry for men and they pitied themselves, for yet another man with whom they could spend last hours, to whom they could murmur darling, darling, darling it will be you always; the phrase till death do us part being, for them, to be left alone on a platform; the I-have-given-all-before-we-die, their dying breath (p.61).

²² John Costello, 1985, *Love, Sex and War: Changing Values 1939-1945*, p.30 (Collins).

Here 'war aphrodisia' is shown to be linked to loss, the loss of life faced by the soldier linked to the loss of a man faced by a woman. This, being presented as an overwhelming need in women, driving them to create memories, echoes the vastness of experience that Green's generation felt they had missed through not fighting the First World War, compelling them to create memories in private spheres. Hence war is presented as a driving force, disrupting domesticity by compelling men to face the heroism and horror of war and women to become, at the same time, both sexual predators and sexual victims.

There is a pattern of sexual affairs in the implicit second part of *Caught*, representing the progress of change from phoney to actual war. Ilse and Prudence form sexual liaisons with, respectively, the fireman Shiner Wright and Pye. Richard is a passive partner in these sexual liaisons, his function being that of intermediary. Richard takes Hilly to a nightclub in Soho, where she indicates her sexual availability by saying, 'Anything's possible, and all the more so now ... The war's been a tremendous release for most' (p.98), and continues, 'We haven't finished what we were on with about the war - I don't believe there is anyone who hasn't enjoyed the change' (p.100). The point is confirmed by Prudence in a nightclub with Pye, 'War, she thought, was sex' (p.119).

Sex in war is disruptive because it takes a central role, in contrast to the peacetime norm of settled domestic, and private, sex. The violence of war and promiscuous sex are linked through being conventionally perceived as both desirable and sinful. In combination, they constitute an antithesis to the innocence of peacetime domesticity. Hence the narrative of *Caught* makes an elision between immorality - the antithesis of domesticity - and sex when a Welshman, who starts an argument about the crime of a fireman's sister, asks, 'Did they account his sister's sin his own then?'. He goes on to

ask what would happen to him 'if my sister had a bastard' (p.75). Pye counters with images of peacetime domestic innocence in his social class:

"A man's sister is sacred to 'im ... who has been nursed at the same pap, and is 'is own flesh and blood ... When I was a lad, me and my sister used to go out in the kingcups and make gold chains we put about the other's neck. They were better than fine pearls fine ladies wear that they most likely got by whoring ..." (p.76).

These images of domestic innocence must, this being wartime, be shattered. They are shattered for Pye when he convinces himself that he has committed a sin far greater than that imagined by the Welshman: 'In a surge of blood, it was made clear, false, that it might have been his own sister he was with that night' (p.140). This is ambiguous - does 'false' signify false memory or the falseness of Pye's position? In the context this ambiguity does not matter. Pye's memory is yet another factor dredged up by the war as a further destruction of family and feminine domesticity. What matters is that Pye is shown to have these thoughts, and that they are generated by the war.

There is documentary evidence of increased sexual activity in wartime and attempts to limit its disruptiveness. For example, Jane Waller & Michael Vaughan-Rees in, *Women in Wartime* (1987) print extracts from women's magazines during the war advising fidelity and sexual restraint.²³ These magazines attempt to protect the sanctity of marriage - and the domesticity that marriage represents, in short a protection of domesticity from war. Similarly the Hogarth Press's solicitor's protected the readers of *Caught* from Green's original intention of an adulterous affair for Richard, insisting that the adultery be removed. The documentary evidence is

²³ Extracts are in Godfrey Smith's 1989, *How it was in the War*, pp.176-185 (Pavilion/Michael Joseph).

reflected in representations in contemporary novels where war requires that domesticity be put aside. Rex Warner puts an argument against domesticity into a speech made by his fascistic and war-like Air Vice-Marshall to new air-force recruits in *The Aerodrome* (1941):

'Some of you,' said the Air Vice-Marshall, 'are still thinking about your parents and your homes. You may be considering who or what your parents are, what are the sources of their incomes, the situations and dimensions of their houses. Please put all that out of your minds directly. For good or evil you are yourselves, poised for a brief and dazzling flash of time between two annihilations. Reflect, please, that "parenthood", "ownership", "locality" are the words of those who stick in the mud of the past to form the fresh deposit of the future. And so is "marriage". Those words are without wings. I do not care to hear an airman use them.'²⁴

The Air Vice-Marshall promotes sexual promiscuity as a means of protecting his airmen from the domestic ties that would limit their usefulness in war.

On the home front, once bombs start falling there is no protection from the physical destruction of bombed homes and death:

... things began to drop - great masses fell - great crashes sounded all round me ... The bed was covered and so was I - I could scarcely breathe - things fell all round my head ... At last there was comparative silence and with great difficulty I raised my head and shook it free of heavy, choking, dusty stuff. An arm had fallen round my neck - a warm, living arm ... when very, very cautiously I raised my hand to it, I found that it was a woman's bare arm with two rings on the third finger and it stopped short in a sticky mess. I shook myself free of it.²⁵

Here the war is shown to physically disrupt peacetime domesticity, the detail of the two rings on the third finger indicating a married woman. Again, this documentary evidence is reflected in representations in contemporary fiction. James Hanley wrote

²⁴ Rex Warner, 1941, *The Aerodrome*, p.178 (Harvill, 1996).

²⁵ From Frances Faviell, 1959, *Chelsea Concerto*, extract published in Longmate, pp.106-7.

an entire novel, *No Directions* (1943), about the disturbing effect of an air raid on the inhabitants of a block of flats during the Blitz.

In *Caught* disruption of domesticity encompasses an area of particular interest to Green's generation. War is represented as disrupting both the centre of domesticity, the family, and that which prevented the participation of Green's generation in the First World War, their being still in childhood. In the implicit first part of *Caught* this is represented by Pye's sister who abducts Richard Roe's son, Christopher, signifying the break up of the domestic family unit. However, it is revealed that this domestic family unit has already been broken by the death of Roe's wife. In the original version of *Caught*, Roe's wife was alive and Roe was committing adultery with Hilly. When the Hogarth Press's solicitor, Oswald Hickson, objected, Green's solution was to kill the wife prior to the narrative beginning of *Caught*: 'While insisting that the affair with Hilly was "inevitable & essential to the make-up of the book", he offered a solution which, he said, "suits me better"'²⁶ This suits Green better because it moves the disruption of the family unit back into the pre-war period whilst preserving the central sexual wartime affair between Richard and Hilly. The break-up of the domestic family unit of Richard Roe, and the abduction of his son, both tie the pre-war period to the war.

The child abduction - and its significance for Green's generation in its link to war - is mirrored and amplified in the implicit second part of *Caught* in the story of Mary Howells, the assistant cook recruited by Piper, and her daughter, Brid. The daughter has taken her journey into domesticity, marrying and bearing a child. However, this being the war, her relationship with her soldier husband after the birth of her child has

²⁶ Jeremy Treglown, 1991, "Introduction", *Caught*, p.xv (Harvill).

become troubled. This is introduced at the beginning of chapter nine, the second chapter of the implicit second part of *Caught*:

The door opened as Mary Howells was putting tea leaves into the warmed pot for a last cup before going to work. It was Brid. The baby was in her arms, carelessly held.

Mrs Howells said, "Oh my Gawd." The expression about her mouth, lips pursed for the rite it was when she prepared a cup of you and me, altered to horror, lips opened wider at the shock yet still pouted weak like the discharge end of a large size in spouts. The daughter came right in. She put the sleeping babe down plumb centre of one table, by its grandmother's WAFS. cap. Then, still saying nothing, she went back for her case, brought this through the door, and just stood, holding it with both hands in front of her knees.

Mrs. Howells, with shaking fingers, put down the china teapot covered with pink roses her sister, Aggie, had given as a wedding present; which had reflected Brid's conception by that liquid rose flower light of a dying coal fire twenty-one years back; which now witnessed Brid's return, deflowered, but married, and with the fruit, a child (pp.76-77).

Mrs Howells is immediately aware that something is wrong, her expression altering to horror. The war has disrupted the domesticity of her daughter's family - the point is emphasized by Brid placing the baby beside Mary Howells' WAFS cap. Finally a link is made to sex across the generations, a teapot, a wedding present that has seen both Brid's conception and her return to her mother, deflowered, her marriage disrupted. Sexual activity, given new impetus by the prospect of death in war, is presented in *Caught* as a significant disrupter of domesticity. For the moment it leaves Mary Howells unable to work,

For she mourned the fruit of her own body, what had, so to say, been grafted on her by Howells, but which, in the fullness of time, when ripe, had dropped away alive, with a live life of its own she did not comprehend, to be grafted by a stranger with this helpless bundle that in spite of the process was part of Mary's flesh and blood, this baby that bore a strange name; this it was she mourned, not for the marriage, the flowering, the development or for that its mother had borne, all these being in the course of nature, but she mourned the mother, her own daughter, that she had come back (p.80).

The same chapter containing a summons for Pye to the asylum where his sister, the abductor, is held indicates that this mirrors the abduction of Christopher Roe. The narrative mirrors Pye's visit to the asylum by representing Mary travelling north to Doncaster to confront her son-in-law, as Pye travels to the asylum where his sister is held. She melodramatically imagines her visit like Pye. Another link is made when Howells returns to find that her daughter has had a nervous breakdown having taken everything she could lay claim to and locked it in a trunk, signifying an attempt to protect the innocence of domesticity by hiding her domestic artefacts. Pye is presented as being 'a simple man ... wrought up by the outbreak of war' (p.86). Thus Pye, and the situation that he is in, has been 'wrought up', manufactured by the outbreak of war. Similarly, Mary Howells acknowledges the link between war and disruption of domesticity, bringing in the binary oppositions associated with social class. In Doncaster she tells a new acquaintance, 'This dreadful war, really. It's all on account of the rich, they started it for their own ends. Now everything's topsy turvy' (p.114) and later she says 'nowadays it's wars every generation' (p.116). Mary fabricates for Piper a story of confronting her son-in-law, Ted, and comes to feel that she has resolved the domestic crisis. However, this resolution exists only in her own private sphere because war does disrupt domesticity. Mary's sense of resolution is false, as represented by Brid's mental state disrupting a typical domestic scene, a family supper where Brid becomes convinced that her mother is poisoning her.

The two inter-related themes of the second part of *Caught*, stasis and change, are concluded in chapters thirteen (pp.144-163) and fourteen (pp.163-173), the last two chapters of the implicit second part of the novel. This conclusion signifies the end of the phoney war, that the narrative will move onto the implicit third part, the Blitz. Chapter thirteen starts with Dy and Christopher entering the private sphere of the sub-

station. Dy brings Christopher up to London for a week and at her suggestion Christopher is taken to the substation to see his father. Dy meets Pye and cannot hide her distaste for him as the brother of Christopher's abductor. Indeed the tension that this causes within the family is accentuated when Christopher calls Dy 'Mummy', suggesting the break-up of Roe's domestic family unit through Roe's son transferring parental recognition. After the visit of Christopher and Dy to the sub-station, Piper lets out the story of Christopher's abduction by Pye's sister in bits and pieces so that it 'grew in a short time, for there was not much time left' (p.151). The ambiguity of this phrase creates a sense of both Pye's impending death - building on the sense of death implied in the name of Pye's antagonist, Dy - and the impending conflagration of the Blitz. Richard becomes popular in the substation once the story of the abduction gets out, conversely Piper becomes 'even better hated' (p.154). However, we are reminded that this is a private sphere. The invasion of the Low Countries had begun, and the resulting retreat overseas, but within the AFS the consequent shock and frustration are channelled into dislike of Piper and the privileges he obtains for painting Trant's bedroom. That Pye is isolated from the public sphere of the war, within the private sphere of the AFS, is represented by him asking Richard out for a drink to discuss the abduction as France falls. Here, although Pye is aware of the military disaster, he can only refer to it in terms of his own concerns:

Look over in France. This marvellous system of ours can put a sane woman within the asylum but it can't put inside the lunatics who've landed us in the pass we've come to, because we've lost the entire British army, mark my words, there's no mistaking it. This self-same system can't get rid of the very men themselves that's at the top now, and responsible (pp.156-157).

Pye is showing signs of being insane to Richard, letting show his preoccupation with incest with his sister, repeatedly discussing first encounters with women and whether

it is possible to mistake identity in moonlight. Pye tells Richard he is considering joining the RAF as an officer air gunner - considered at the time a form of suicide, as this was the most dangerous position to take in the RAF - although years overage. To the last Pye remains in the stasis of his private sphere, isolated from the changes occurring in the public sphere of the war.

Pye, in chapter fourteen, searches for the some evidence to confirm whether he committed the act of incest that disrupts peacetime domesticity by going out into the moonlight. He meets a prostitute shining a torch upwards on her naked breast, a phenomenon of war-time blacked-out London. Meanwhile as Pye explores the nightmare of his private sphere, the Dunkirk evacuation is occurring, as the narrator notes, in the public sphere of the war. Pye finds a lost boy and takes him back to the fire station, a narrative repetition of the abduction of Roe's son. Piper sees the boy in Pye's room and tells Trant. Pye is ordered to appear before Trant, 'he was weighed down. He was in dread. Even the men noticed a greater change in him, at once' (p.173). Pye's dread, and his eventual destruction provides a necessary counterpoint in *Caught* to Roe's acceptance, on behalf of Green's generation, of participation in the war. The counterpoint is necessary to account for disillusion with the Second World War, arising from vicarious experience of the First World War. Paul Fussell points out that

Those who fought the Second World War didn't at all feel that it was good for them. For one thing, they had access to a lot of profoundly unbellicose literature not available to Brooke and his enthusiastic fellows. If the troops of the Second War had not read, they'd at least heard of the general point made by Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* and Barbusse's *Under Fire*, as well as by the sardonic memoirs of Robert Graves and Siegfried Sassoon. Many were familiar with Hemingway's understanding of military experience as vividly unfair and dishonorable in *A Farewell to Arms*, as well as with Frederic Manning's exposure of army life as not just pointlessly hazardous but

bureaucratic, boring, and chickenshitty in *Her Privates We*. The result of this awareness was, as Robert E. Sherwood said, that the Second World War was "the first war in American history [and of course even more so in British history] in which the general disillusionment preceded the firing of the first shot."²⁷

Pye, a figure wrought up by the First World War, is destroyed by his inability to reconcile his private sphere, the private sphere of the AFS and the public sphere of the war as it changes from phoney to real war. In destroying Pye, *Caught* both acknowledges the disillusionment with war that Fussell identifies and channels that disillusionment away from the representative figure of Green's generation, Richard Roe, so that Roe can become fully involved in the war. Thus, Green's generation are shown in *Caught*, through the figure of Roe, to have achieved that which they felt had been taken away from them when the First World War ended before they could become involved while acknowledging, through the figure of Pye, the disillusionment with war which they perceived the First World War to have generated.

The 'greater change' that his men notice in Pye heralds the Blitz. Thus in chapter fifteen (pp.173-198), the final chapter of *Caught*, representing the implicit third part of the novel, the narrative shifts in time: 'Some months later, after nine weeks of air raids on London, Roe was unlucky one morning. A bomb came too close. It knocked him out' (p.173). The future of *Caught*, the series of air raids known as the Blitz, anticipated in the first and second parts is finally told, in retrospect, in this third part of the novel. Richard Roe, the representative figure of Green's generation, is shown to have received what, in Green's fiction has only previously been available symbolically to such representative figures, a war wound. Indeed he is 'superficially uninjured'.

²⁷ Paul Fussell, 1989, *Wartime: Understanding and Behaviour in the Second World War*, p.130 (Oxford University Press). [Fussell quotes from *Roosevelt and Hopkins: An Intimate History* (1948), p.438.]

This is a real war injury so does not require the over compensation of the external manifestation of a wound given to John Haye in *Blindness*. The narrative has moved into the future, the Blitz, which the previous chapters of *Caught* have anticipated. Hence chapter fifteen, the last chapter of the novel, forms the implicit third part of *Caught*. It is narrated by Richard Roe to his sister-in-law, Dy, as a past event, although his descriptions are supplemented and corrected by the narrator. There is also a flash forward, told by the narrator, to a point a year in the future where the AFS firemen are in a sub-station reminiscing about the Blitz. The narrative has moved onto a future point of review, similar to the implicit narrative point of review in *Party Going*. However, this narrative viewpoint of review - which is implicit in *Party Going* in that it is implied that the novel is being narrated from some future point in the war that the novel allegorically approaches - is made explicit in *Caught* and given to Richard Roe, the representative member of Green's generation who narrates the long awaited direct experience of war, represented by the Blitz, for Green's generation.

We are told that Roe goes to Christopher and Dy in the country to recuperate, the country being associated with the past. It is this association that permits Roe to narrate his experience of the Blitz, which in the narrative time of the novel is now in the past. Hence the narrative has shifted not only in time but also in narrator, from third person narrator to Richard Roe, who tells the story of his Blitz - 'he wanted to go on talking about himself' (p.176) - in the past tense, as something that he has done, something that Green's generation have been waiting to occur from their days of war preparation at prep-school. The narrative places this event now doubly in the past for not only does Roe narrate it in the past tense, but also his narration occurs in the country, which is associated in *Caught* with the past. However, the third person

narrator is still present, filling in the parts that Roe will not, or cannot, tell. The country evokes long forgotten childhood memories told by the narrator:

Every inch of the path they followed slowly through the wild garden, which was no longer tended, would, at any time before this, have reminded him of so many small events he had forgotten out of his youth, of the wounded starling here, the nightingale there one night, the dog whining across the river one morning, while he stood, motionless behind that elm, to watch two cats from the stables. Because it was overgrown, now that the old tidiness had, so to speak, been allowed to ramble, he would once have lingered all the more with what was left him of days when these surroundings were the moist fat skin which covered the skeleton of his adolescence (p.179).

The third person narrator has to tell these memories because they are buried in a past that Roe cannot revisit:

Even when, twelve months later, he had begun to forget raids, and when, in the substation, they went over their experiences from an unconscious wish to recreate, night after night in the wet canteen, even then he found he could not go back to his old daydreams about this place. It had come to seem out of date (p.179).

As Roe narrates his story, the third person narrator corroborates what Roe says, the narrator's comments being in parentheses to indicate the primacy of Roe's narration. This technique has been used in the first part of *Caught* where the narrator corrects Roe's impressions of Christopher's experiences in the store. Indeed direct reference is made to the abduction in the store, eliding into his experience of the Blitz:

He started again. "I think I only brought it back to when the old chap was taken away because it must have been so much worse for her," meaning his wife, and forgetting she was dead at the time, "than it was for me. I don't know. But what makes me laugh," and he was not even smiling, "is to think how different the real thing is to what we thought it was going to be. And the way the people have changed, you've no idea. We're absolute heroes now to everyone. Soldiers can't look us in the face, even." (p.176)

Just as in the narration of the abduction, correction is applied to Roe's narration of the Blitz: '(It had not been like that at all ...)' (p.177 and p.181), not because Roe is

inaccurate but that the narrative needs to supplement that which the narrator labels, 'this inadequate description' (p.180). Roe needs help because, as he tells Dy, 'the point about a blitz is this, there's always something you can't describe' (p.181). Roe needs to have the blitz fully described for him to confirm that he has lived through real events in the war, that, as a representative of Green's generation, he no longer needs to live in a private sphere.

It is Roe's son, Christopher, who now lives in a private sphere, generating war substitutes, having been isolated in the country away from the public sphere of the war that his father has experienced and now narrates. Hence Christopher brings in fantasy images of the war - 'I'm a German airman, I'm bombing' (p.174) and 'I'm a German policeman, rootling them about' (p.190). It is significant that Christopher uses images of Germans - the enemy - for he is now the opposite of his father, that which his father used to be, a wartime child without experience of war. To signify that this father-son differentiation has now shifted for Green's generation, such that they now form the father part of the relationship, *Caught* is dedicated to Green's son Sebastian. Richard makes the point: '... Every child in the world is war mad now. I suppose I am. Except that I'm not keen on the war. But I seem to talk of nothing else' (p.190). The novel ends with Richard having argued with Dy about Pye so that he can position her as a civilian with no experience of war, telling his son Christopher, who now represents the pre-war Green's generation: "Get out," and he added, "Well, anyway, leave me alone till after tea, can't you?" (p.198).

Caught represents a journey into war for Green's generation. This journey is split into three parts - the pre-war, the phoney war and the Blitz. The pre-war is the false peace of the inter-war years represented in *Caught* as primarily its latter stages from Munich up to and including the outbreak of war. The phoney war is that period of

waiting for war to begin, an experience familiar to Green's generation, recalling their childhoods at prep school as they waited to be old enough to participate in the war for which they were being prepared. These two aspects of the war take up fourteen of the fifteen chapters of *Caught*. Given that these fourteen chapters refer to aspects of war represented in Green's previous writings it is not surprising that most of the features of Green's previous writings are present: the implicit tripartite structure, the private spheres where substitutes for war can be generated, the binary oppositions generated by vicarious experience of war, a sense of waiting for something to happen alternating with a sense that war has started before the Second World War begins, the dichotomy of horror and heroism being overlaid with fear of war and fear of missing war. Hence the main themes of the novel are the stasis of the phoney war, the change from peace to war and the relationships between stasis and change. The figure of Pye, a First World War combatant, and a Second World War sub-station chief promoted beyond his competence then destroyed, is used as a channel to deal with the disillusion with war arising from the vicarious experience of the First World War that Green's generation shared. However, the Blitz is the real war for those of Green's generation who were in Home Front services such as the AFS. This war is fully experienced by Richard Roe in order to achieve the consummation with war for which he, as a representative figure of Green's generation, has been prepared for at prep school but then denied by the Armistice that ended the First World War.

Chapter 6: *Loving*: the focus necessary for art

The narrative time of *Loving* (1945) spans May and June 1941. As in *Caught* the dates have to be worked out from clues scattered through the text. There is sustained reference to the bombing on the mainland, indicating the Blitz, lasting from September 1940 to May 1941. Captain Davenport reminds Raunce that it is close season for fishing,¹ placing narrative time between March and June 1941. Jack Tennant's leave is stated to be after the third week of May (p.21), and finalised as 'The twenty-first' (p.67). This locates *Loving* as a chronological sequel to Green's previous novel, *Caught* (1943), which ends 'after nine weeks of air raids on London',² in November 1940. The movement through time to war, told in Green's two previous novels *Caught* and *Party Going* (1939), is absent from *Loving*. Now war is acknowledged as a state of being and requires new means of representation. In *Party Going* and *Caught*, war is represented as something that Green and his class and generation will experience, it is being moved towards, and in the case of *Caught* towards and around so that war experience is eventually narrated from the other side as something in the past. As *Caught* demonstrates through its refusal to directly narrate war experience, it is not the experience of war that is important to Green's generation and class, but how this experience of war is reflected, especially in terms of the disruption that war brings. Can this still be done when Green sets out to write a

¹ Henry Green, 1945, *Loving* p.27 (Harvill, 1992). Hereafter page references to *Loving* will appear in the body of the text of this chapter.

² Henry Green, 1943, *Caught*, p.172 (Harvill, 1991).

novel whose time is the middle of the war, when war emphasises action over reflection? Elizabeth Bowen summarized the difficulty thus:

There is at present evident, in the reflective writer, not so much inhibition or dulling of his own feeling as an inability to obtain the focus necessary for art. One cannot reflect, or reflect on, what is not wholly in view.³

This difficulty informs one of her wartime short stories, 'Sunday Afternoon' (1946).

Henry Russell travels from London to a country house just outside Dublin and meets 'old friends in whose shadow he had grown up'.⁴ These old friends expect Henry to tell them of his experience of the war, of being bombed. However, Henry, like Richard Roe in *Caught*, is shown to be unable to tell

as it does not connect with the rest of life, it is difficult, you know, to know what one feels. One's feelings seem to have no language for anything so preposterous ...⁵

Loving obtains focus in a similar way to Bowen's 'Sunday Afternoon', that is through the distance of its setting, as in Bowen's story, Ireland. However, as Green was used to thinking in terms of overlapping private and public spheres, *Loving* depicts Eire as equally imbued with the disruptive effects of war. Here the Irish setting is used to position the action of war off-stage in mainland England so that the narrative can concentrate on the disruption and change that war brings as felt by the novel's characters. Thus the Irish household comes to experience war as a disruption of domesticity, a theme used in *Caught* to represent a state of anticipation of the

³ *The New Statesman*, 23rd May, 1942.

⁴ Elizabeth Bowen, 1946, "Sunday Afternoon" in *The Collected Stories of Elizabeth Bowen*, p.616 (The Ecco Press, 1989).

⁵ *Ibid.*, p.617.

experience of war, and in *Loving* fully developed to represent war being experienced through the disruption it brings.

Green's generation experienced an ambivalent response to the Second World War, inherited from their experience of the First World War. As Paul Fussell points out, it was to them, in part,

stupid and sadistic, a war, as Cyril Connolly said, "of which we are all ashamed ... a war ... which lowers the standard of thinking and feeling ... which is obsolete as drawing and quartering .."; further, a war opposed to "every reasonable conception of what life is for, every ambition of the mind or delight of the senses."⁶

Fussell also described the other contradictory response, again using the example of Connolly:

It was wartime that conferred upon him the identity he had been seeking so long. The war allowed him to blossom as an "editor" and to become one of the most popular and sought-after cultural heavyweights in England. ... several people besides Connolly were attracted by the image of themselves as cultural regulators, most notably the trio of Osbert Sitwell, Lord David Cecil, and Evelyn Waugh.⁷

The setting of *Loving* in an anachronistic country house in neutral Eire represents, for Green's generation, both a safe haven from the horror of war and cultural baggage, a reminder of their vicarious experience of the First World War whilst at school. This is reflected in the story of the novel's main character Raunce who is both of Green's generation - though not of his class – and a representative of domesticity, a domestic servant. Indeed war confers 'upon him the identity he had been seeking so long' as it

⁶ Paul Fussell, 1989, *Wartime: Understanding and Behaviour in the Second World War*, pp. 142-3 (Oxford University Press). The quotation in the passage is from "Writers and Society, 1940-1943," in Peter Quennell, ed., *Selected Essays of Cyril Connolly* (1984), 130-31.

⁷ Ibid. p.210.

provides the opportunity to be promoted to acting butler. Raunce is shown to use the opportunity represented by war whilst emphasizing its horrors to attempt to build a private domestic sphere at Kinalty. However, in the end he enters the war, like Green's generation, and persuades his fiancée to join him. As such he is both representative of the ambivalent attitude towards war characteristic of Green's generation and an agent of the disruption of domesticity in the house under his inefficient stewardship.

Because war is represented in *Loving* as a state of being, there is no need to represent the movement through time to war found in the tripartite structures of *Party Going* and *Caught*. An implicit tripartite structure is present in *Loving*, but here it tells the story of war disrupting the domesticity of an Irish Country house, of the servants' attempts to build an alternative domesticity while the owners are away in war-time England, and the realisation that this alternative domesticity is not feasible when the owners return. Hence a boundary is formed around an implicit second part of *Loving* by the departure and return of Mrs Tennant. Chapter nine (pp.71-91), the first chapter of this implicit second part begins by informing us that 'on the 18th Mrs Tennant left for England' (p.71). The further boundary is established at the beginning of chapter fifteen (pp.153-165), the last chapter of the implicit second part of *Loving*, by the telegram announcing Mrs Tennant's return. This has become the conventional structure of a Green novel - a first part that introduces the themes, a middle part that develops the themes, and a final part that concludes the narrative. *Loving* begins with eight chapters,⁸ which introduce the Irish country house, Kinalty Castle, its inhabitants, and their interrelationships. Here are introduced the main themes of the

⁸ As in *Caught* the chapters are not numbered but are each separated by a gap, here of eight lines.

novel: the threat of war, the disruption to domesticity that war entails, and the attempt by the acting butler, Raunce, and a maid, Edith, to build an alternative domesticity. In chapters nine to fifteen, the middle section of the novel, the owners, the Tennants - the name signifying a sense of the temporary - leave for England allowing the themes of the novel to be developed as the servants run Kinalty in the Tennants' absence. In chapters sixteen to twenty-one, the end section of the novel, the Tennants return to a disordered household, from their perspective. From this disordered household, Raunce and Edith - who have emerged as the central characters of the novel through their building of an alternative domesticity in which they hope to marry and continue to live at Kinalty - elope to wartime England. In *Loving*, as for Green's generation, it is not feasible to build an alternative domesticity during wartime if that domesticity depends upon insularity. Raunce realizes, and convinces Edith, that they need to become part of that which has made their love affair possible - the war.

The first eight chapters of *Loving* introduce the domestic setting of the Irish country house, against which the themes of the novel will be developed. The significance of this domestic setting is conveyed in the first two sentences of the novel:

ONCE UPON A DAY an old butler called Eldon lay dying in his room attended by the head housemaid, Miss Agatha Burch. From time to time the other servants separately or in chorus gave expression to proper sentiments and then went on with what they had been doing (p.1).

Here the fairy tale like construction of the first sentence leads to the everyday activity of the servants, represented in the second sentence. The evocation of fairy tale suggests something removed from reality. As the first sentence also represents death, fairy tale also becomes associated with death. In the fifth sentence of the novel we are

given further information; we are told that the novel's setting removes it from the reality of the dangers of war: 'For this was in Eire where there is no blackout' (p.1). The everyday life of the servants, the domestic service that they are employed to provide, by being associated with fairy tale, in Eire where there is no war caused black-out, is removed from the reality of war. Given the time of publication of *Loving*, and the time of its setting, a lack of blackout, indeed the very idea of attaining removal from the polarisation of war through neutrality, induces a sense of unreality.

In addition to the spatial distance from the war in the setting of *Loving*, there is also a suggestion of temporal distance. Kinalty Castle is run on pre-war lines with rules that would suggest anachronistic privilege in wartime England. As Angus Calder points out:

In the shocked Britain which faced defeat between 1940 and 1942 there were very obviously the seeds of a new democracy. Between them, the threat of invasion and the actuality of aerial bombardment had exaggerated a tendency already noted in the previous world war. In a conflict on such a scale, as 1914-18 had shown, the nation's rulers, whether they liked it or not, depended on the willing co-operation of the ruled, including even scorned and underprivileged sections of society, manual workers and women. This co-operation must be paid for by concessions in the direction of a higher standard of living for the poor, greater social equality and improved welfare services.⁹

The footman Charley Raunce has not been offered any concessions. Indeed Mrs Tennant, the owner of the castle, who names all her footmen Arthur has removed his Christian name from him. Braybon and Summerfield point out that domestic service, conventionally the domain of women, was the least democratized workplace during the war:

⁹ Angus Calder, 1969, *The People's War*, p.17 (Pimlico, 1996).

The least protected of any women workers were domestic servants. Edith Hall interspersed her numerous factory jobs with a spell as a 'general', that is a maid of all work, in big and small households near her home in West London ... Employers' assumptions that they owned their servants, body and soul, were increasingly resented, and occasions of particularly blatant exploitation bitterly remembered . . . Vera Brittain wrote, "There is probably no occupation in which the worker is still so emphatically regarded as having a "place", and that a very inferior one."¹⁰

The anachronism of Kinalty, with its rules presented as tradition suggests a private sphere cut off from the public sphere of wartime England. Indeed Kinalty is presented as the centre of its own sphere, the surrounding country of Eire, in a map painted over the mantelpiece in the study:

The map was peculiar. For instance Kinalty Church was represented by a miniature painting of its tower and steeple while the Castle, which was set right in the centre, was a fair sized caricature in exaggerated Gothic. There were no names against places (p.39).

The castle is a caricature, at one remove from reality and rooted in the pre-Great War past, as suggested by 'exaggerated Gothic', a characteristic Victorian architectural style. As Edward Stokes suggests,

... we are always aware of Kinalty castle. We may not attain a mental picture of this "great Gothic pile" as a whole but many sections of it become quite familiar to us ... Though there are few lengthy descriptive passages, the constant reference to this background of obsolete, functionless, prodigal splendour is of great importance in the total effect of the book.¹¹

¹⁰ Gail Braybon and Penny Summerfield, 1987, *Out of the Cage: Women's Experiences in Two World Wars* (Pandora Press), pp.142-43. The quotation is from Vera Brittain, *Women's Work in Modern England*, p.14 (Noel Douglas, 1928).

¹¹ Edward Stokes, 1959, *The Novels of Henry Green*, pp.94-5 (Hogarth).

We are always aware of Kinalty castle because the caricature anachronism of the castle is the means whereby *Loving* represents insularity as the binary opposite of the reality of the experience of war. The sense of anachronism is connected to the unreality of fairy tale through the figure of Paddy O'Connor, the Irish lampman whom the maids, Edith and Kate, go to see out of curiosity, in his lamp room within a gothic terraced stable. Here O'Connor is transformed into a fairy tale king:

Caught in the reflection of spring sunlight this cobweb looked to be made of gold as did those others which by working long minutes spiders had drawn from spar to spar of the fern bedding on which his head rested. It might have been almost that O'Connor's dreams were held by hairs of gold binding his head beneath a vaulted roof on which the floor of cobbles reflected an old king's molten treasure (p.48).

The unreality that these elements of fairy tale convey tells a story of domesticity set up to be destroyed by the war, domesticity, for Green's generation, being the antithesis of war. Nanny Swift tells a story of doves that disagree to Mrs Tennant's grandchildren. Doves are idealized, bringing their traditional symbolization of peace to Nanny Swift's story where they peacefully resolve disagreement. This is contrasted with the narrative setting of the story telling. Nanny Swift and the children are seated beside a dovecote which 'was a careful reproduction of the leaning tower of Pisa on a small scale' (p.50). The doves inhabiting the dovecote, unlike Nanny Swift's idealized doves, are fighting and killing, compelling one of the children, Evelyn, to look away from Nanny Swift to the dovecote:

What she saw was one dove driving another along a ledge backwards. Each time it reached the end the driven one took flight and fluttered then settled back on that same ledge once more only to be driven back the other way to clatter into air again. This was being repeated tirelessly when from another balcony something fell (Ibid.).

What falls is a baby dove. Here is the fairy tale told by Nanny Swift, and the anachronism signified by the status of historic monument associated with the leaning tower of Pisa, contrasted with the reality of fighting and killing. Furthermore this fighting and killing takes place amongst doves, commonly used as symbols of peace and the victim is a baby, a common wartime propaganda image used to indicate the brutality of the enemy. The children are shown to turn away from the private sphere represented by Nanny Swift's story, which has no credibility now that domesticity has been disrupted by war. Conventional domesticity during this time of war for Green's generation is obtainable only by turning away from the war to a private sphere, a sphere that is cut off from the present. In *Loving* these private spheres belong to the past, and are, thus, set up by the narrative to be destroyed by war. *Loving* becomes a story of the movement from private to public spheres - another version of the story told in Green's previous novels and interim autobiography. Indeed Evelyn Waugh considered *Loving* an improvement on *Caught* because it returned to the representation of a privacy characteristic of his earlier novels. He wrote to Green 'I am delighted to see your characters returned to privacy - fog-bound as they were in *Party Going*, a complete, beleaguered world'.¹²

The return to privacy entails the kind of oppositional conflict and manoeuvring that we have encountered in Green's previous novels. Raunce, who manoeuvres to be promoted from footman to acting butler, has, as Stokes points out, much of the comic in his representation:

¹² Letter from Evelyn Waugh to Henry Yorke, March 27th, 1945, from Jeremy Treglown, 1992, "Introduction", *Loving*, p.vi (Harvill).

over forty ... has the unhealthy pallor of one who stays indoors for months at a time; he has big protruding ears and odd eyes ...is prone to stiff necks and dyspepsia ... Raunce's moral standards are as peculiar as his appearance ...¹³

Raunce's status as comic character suggests caricature. This, in turn, associates Raunce with Kinalty and its caricature gothic. Raunce becomes a central character of the novel, using the war to get promotion to acting butler. Raunce's promotion highlights conflict between elder and younger servants in Kinalty. Raunce asserts his new position by taking the place at table of the dead butler Eldon, to the disapproval of the older servants. This is part of a wider conflict between the owners of Kinalty, the Tennants, and the servants. Rosamond Lehmann analysed this as an opposition, embedded in language, between owners and servants, an implicit reflection of a move towards classlessness during the war:

On the servants' Hall's side the class language of circumlocution, ambiguity, rhetorical flourish, of devious sly approach to the end in view; all the verbal taboos and traditional tags and saws. On the drawing-room side the habit of incoherence, tentativeness, over-emphasis, the obsessive modish portmanteau words ... *Loving* correctly shows the drawing room worn down and losing out, its command of a vocabulary disintegrating along with its mastery of the situation.¹⁴

These conflicts revolve around the disruption of domesticity. They polarise the servants and owners as Lehmann describes but they also polarise factions within the servants' hall and the drawing room and produce apparent alliances between these factions.

For most of the novel, Raunce believes that Mrs Tennant is his natural ally. This is a sentiment encouraged by Mrs Tennant when she tells Raunce,

¹³ Stokes, p.53.

¹⁴ "An Absolute Gift", *Times Literary Supplement*, 2740, August 6th 1954.

I feel we should all hang together in these detestable times ... We're really in enemy country here you know. We simply must keep things up. With my boy away at the war (p.7).

For Mrs Tennant the times are detestable, so she expects the servants to join her in maintaining pre-war standards, and reminds Raunce of the combatant status of her son to justify her stance. Mrs Tennant offers Raunce the apparent concession of being considered a part of the family by using inclusive language: the use of 'we' rather than 'you and I'. This concession is shown to be more apparent than real when Mrs Tennant says to her daughter-in-law, Mrs Jack, 'My dear what do we know about the servants? ... I don't think I care what they do so long as they stay' (p.23). Raunce uses this concession to gain his promotion to acting butler by threatening to resign. However, the promotion is predominantly in the sphere of language, having no economic effect; although the promotion appears to convince Raunce that Mrs Tennant is his natural ally in protecting a domesticity that he wishes to create with Edith as an alternative to the war, an 'alternative domesticity'. It is only the obvious distrust that Mrs Tennant displays towards Raunce when she returns from wartime England that destroys Raunce's vision of an alliance.

There is a difference in worldview between Raunce and Mrs Tennant. Raunce sees the war as an opportunity. He encourages amongst the servants the threat that war poses, as a means of promoting the insularity of Kinalty, upon which his vision of an alternative domesticity depends. He accepts the war whereas Mrs Tennant perceives the war as a threat to domesticity. This is represented in the following exchange with Raunce over the unavailability of blotting paper of the correct shade for the Gold Bedroom:

"I believe it's the war Madam."

She laughed and faced him. "Oh yes the shops will be using that as an excuse for everything soon ..." (p.16).

A play is made on the word 'service' in *Loving* and its different meanings in wartime England - the army or Civil Defence services such as the AFS - and in the private sphere of Kinalty - where it means domestic service. Miss Burch, an elder servant, realizes that wartime service is destroying the concept of domestic service, but wants to cling to the latter:

she told Edith and Kate and her were lucky to be in a place like this. She went on that there were not many girls in their position able to learn the trade as she was able to teach it, to pass on all she had acquired about the cleaning and ordering of a house, particularly when over at home they were all being sent into the army to be leapt on so she honestly believed by drunken soldiers in darkness. She said they were never to leave the Castle, that they didn't know their luck (p.25).

Miss Burch, like Mrs Tennant, sees the war as a threat that is destroying her way of life. She contrasts the dangers of war-time England with an idyllic vision of Kinalty as a safe haven which offers the trade that the maids, Edith and Kate, are learning. She is protecting both the private sphere of the castle, and the maids whom she is advising to stay within its protective privacy. This allies her with Mrs Tennant rather than Raunce, for although Raunce wishes to preserve the insularity of the castle, it is for the opportunity that such insularity during wartime will provide for him. Raunce, in contrast to Miss Burch, uses the public sphere of wartime England as a straightforward threat, without representing Kinalty as an idyll of voluntary service:

... There's the National Service Officer waiting the other side for growing lads such as you soon as you're of age ... A word to Mrs T. from me, just one little word and it's the Army for you my lad, old king and country and all the rest d'you understand. (pp.56-7).

The private sphere of Kinalty, associated with the pre-war is doomed. However, its doom is set in the future – 'this house that had yet to be burned down' (p.58) – but

also linked to the past through the suggestion of the burning of mansions during the Irish Civil War, 1919-23. Pre-war values are being kept in place in the narrative present of *Loving*. However, if Kinalty is doomed, then so is Raunce's vision of an alternative domesticity. Indeed Raunce, for all that he is shown to be given opportunity by the war, is something of a throwback to the pre-war. Green told Terry Southern,

I got the idea of *Loving* from a manservant in the Fire Service during the war. He was serving with me in the ranks, and he told me he had once asked the elderly butler who was over him what the old boy liked most in the world. The reply was "lying in bed on a summer morning, with the window open, listening to the church bells, eating buttered toast with cunty fingers. I saw the book in a flash."¹⁵

This particular incident is associated with Raunce in the novel: [Raunce] 'dipped his fingers in the rustle of potpourri . . . walking on again he sniffed once at his fingers he had dabbled in the dry bones of roses' (p.58). This suggests that Raunce can be read with the characters encountered by Richard Roe in Green's previous novel, *Caught*, that is he is a potential Home Front combatant. Raunce also embodies a dichotomy in the narrative schema of the novel. His position in the house depends upon his manipulation of its anachronistic pre-war values. This enables him to become acting butler – equivalent to a commanding officer amongst the servants. Yet Raunce, as an

¹⁵ Terry Southern, 1958, "The Art of Fiction XXII - Henry Green" *Paris Review* 5, Summer 1958 from Plimpton, George (ed.), *Writers at Work: The Paris Review Interviews Second Series*, p.105 (Secker and Warburg, 1981). Jeremy Treglown has a different provenance for this story, in a letter written by Green to his brother Gerald. Here he describes a story told by a butler he got to know in the A.F.S. 'who told me that when he was a second footman in a large place the then butler had said to him: "What I enjoy most, Favell, is to lie in bed on a Sunday morning with the windows open, listening to the church bells eating buttered toast with cunty fingers."' (Treglown "Introduction", *Loving*, p.vii).

opportunist, is a natural recruit to the other ranks of enlisted men. This type was often written out of the propaganda images of the war, as Fussell remarks:

although a whole book could be devoted to the sort of stereotyping necessary for Americans (and British) to see themselves as attractive, moral, and exemplary, some of the conventions can be noted briefly ... The advertising agents sometimes had to face facts and recognize that many of those fighting the Axis were, regrettably, quite unromantic enlisted men ... But when women enter, the male models get promoted instantly to officer rank, and their looks improve.¹⁶

However, the enlisted man does appear in wartime propaganda films such as *The Way Ahead* where the opportunist that Raunce represents eventually submerges his individuality into the collective purpose of fighting the war. Although Raunce moves to wartime England, his is not a submerging of individuality into the collective purpose of fighting and winning the war. He remains an opportunist. Once he is shown to realize that Mrs Tennant is not his ally, that the house is 'doomed to a natural death', and that there is more opportunity offered by involvement in the war – the 'lovely money going in munitions' (p.215) - he will leave Kinalty with Edith to become a part of the war in England.

The action of the war is located by the characters of the novel off-stage in England.

Raunce writes to his mother in Peterborough, a town in the middle of England:

Mother I am very worried for you with the terrible bombing. Have you got a Anderson shelter yet? I ought to be over there with you Mother not here. But perhaps he will keep to London with his bombing ...
(p.31)

Indeed, Kinalty, in this part of *Loving*, is presented as being perceived by the novel's characters, as a haven from the bombing of mainland England. Edith says of the

¹⁶ Fussell, *Wartime*, pp. 127-8.

arrival of the cook Mrs Welch's nephew from England, 'I shouldn't be surprised if she didn't have him on account of the bombing' (p.32).

However, the experience of war cannot be moved off-stage. Mrs Welch's nephew, Albert, is a disrupter of the domesticity of the household. This associates him with war, and, therefore, signifies that he has brought the war with him. He disrupts the domesticity of Kinalty both as symbol, and creator, of disruption. In the former role, both Mrs Tennant, Mrs Jack and the servants wonder whether he is really Mrs Welch's illegitimate son while the narrator hints that he is. Hence Albert disrupts conventions of family domesticity in a similar way to Mrs Jack's adultery. Mrs Welch herself records, and labels, his actions as creator of disruption:

"Children is all little 'Itlers these days," Mrs Welch answered. "D'you know what 'e done. Up and throttled one of them peacocks with 'is bare hands not 'alf an hour after he got in ..." (p.43)

This disruption is broadened to take in a wider range of war experience. Albert goes from being a Hitler figure to a starving refugee in Mrs Welch's discussion with Miss Burch:

"It's the food," Mrs Welch answered, "though I do speak as shouldn't seein' as I occupy meself with the kitchen. They're starving over there my sister says in her letter she sent . . . Albert makes a difference being a refugee like the Belgians we had in the last war," (p.45).

The title - *Loving* - suggests opposition to the war through the evocation of Auden's line from the original version of *September 1, 1939*: 'We must love one another or die'.¹⁷ The opposition of love and war, as experienced by Britons during

¹⁷ The original poem is printed in Skelton Robin. (ed.), 1977, *Poetry of the Thirties* (Penguin, 1964). In WH Auden, 1950, *Collected Shorter Poems 1930-1944* (Faber) the poem is retitled '1st September

the Second World War, is described by Paul Fussell who cites as an example a member of Green's generation:

Civilian bombing enjoined a new frankness on many Britons. "Perfect fear casteth out love" was Connolly's travesty of I John 4:18, as if thoroughly acquainted with the experience of elbowing his dearest aside at the shelter entrance.¹⁸

There are two love affairs portrayed in *Loving* - the central relationship between Raunce and Edith and the parallel adulterous relationship between Mrs Jack and Captain Davenport. These affairs are linked. It is the discovery of the adultery of Mrs Jack - in the second part of the novel - that brings Raunce and Edith together. In *Caught* one of the signifiers of domesticity disrupted is sexual promiscuity. In *Loving* this appears in the adulterous affair conducted by Mrs Tennant's daughter-in-law, Mrs Jack, and a neighbour, Captain Davenport. Mrs Jack's adultery is a reflection of Miss Burch's analysis of the effect of war in England, given the military rank of Captain Davenport. The knowledge of this adultery is revealed through the everyday talk of the servants. They talk about Captain Davenport and the archaeological excavations he is undertaking at Clancarty, and Edith remembers, 'that the last time the lady had been over to view the excavations Mrs Jack had returned without her drawers' (p.28). More play is made on this when Raunce notices that the weathervane pointer on the map above the study mantelpiece is stuck, 'with the arrow tip exactly on Clancarty, Clancarty which was indicated by two nude figures male and female recumbent in gold crowns' (pp.39-40).

1939' and the stanza containing the line 'We must love one another or die' has been dropped. The poem itself is dropped from WH Auden, 1966, *The Collected Shorter Poems 1927-1957* (Faber, 1977).

¹⁸ Fussell, *Wartime*, p. 276.

Mrs Jack catches Raunce staring at the figures and assumes that he realizes that the picture symbolizes her adultery. This symbolism is developed further. The pointer snaps in her hand as Mrs Jack attempts to move it, representing the disruption that her adultery causes. The mechanism is shown to be stuck because a mouse is caught in the gear wheels of the wind vane. Given the symbolism associated with the weather vane, the small creature caught up in a life threatening mechanism, causing the pointer to stick in a position that signifies adultery – the disruption of domesticity - can be read as a metaphor for war. At a simpler level Mrs Jack's adultery reflects contemporary wartime Britain. Braybon and Summerfield point out,

There was a four-fold increase in the number of divorce petitions filed for adultery between 1939 and 1945, and whereas before the war over half the petitions had been filed by wives, in 1945 58 per cent came from husbands.¹⁹

The love affair of Edith and Raunce signifies an attempt to build an alternative domesticity protected from the war. Raunce is not the only character in the novel who wants to construct a domesticity as an alternative to the war. Mrs Tennant wants to construct a conventional domesticity for Mrs Jack. Indeed she is shown to construct this at the slightest hint, quickly assuming in one passage that Mrs Jack is pregnant. Mrs Jack is angered by this misunderstanding. Here the meaning of that anger is ambivalent. Is she angry because she thinks Mrs Tennant suspects her to be pregnant by Captain davenport or is this an angry rejection that she may be pregnant by her husband, and, thus a rejection of the conventional domesticity of the family. Raunce's vision of domesticity is an alternative both to the war and to the pre-war domesticity

¹⁹ Braybon and Summerfield, p.214.

of Mrs Tennant and the maids. In the latter guise it depends upon the war to provide the opportunity to create a domesticity that is an alternative to pre-war domesticity.

Mrs Tennant leaves for England on the 18th May 1941 just after the end of the Blitz. The last major raid, and also the worst raid of the war, was on the evening of Saturday 10 May 1941:

... the moon was full that night and the Thames at low ebb - a combination peculiarly propitious for the Luftwaffe ... By next morning 3000 were dead or seriously injured ... Months passed before there was another raid and then it was only minor. Though nobody suspected it, dared even hope it, the blitz was over ...²⁰

Mrs Tennant's experience of the Blitz will be vicarious. It will only be possible for her to experience the Blitz through narration, the experience offered in *Caught* by Richard Roe to Dy, the experience of the First World War offered to Green by the convalescent soldiers at Forthampton Court. In *Caught* Dy is associated with the pre-war past, signified by her association with a country house. The evocation of *Caught* and Dy – through Mrs Tennant's vicarious experience of the Blitz - reminds us that Mrs Tennant too is associated with the pre-war past.

The significance of this reminder at this point in the narrative is that we can read Mrs Tennant's absence from Kinalty and the narrative as the absence of pre-war values at Kinalty. This in turn leaves the servants with their fears of war threatening on two fronts. The first comprises the servant's curiosity as to what is happening in mainland England. This serves as a reference point for the servants to the progress of the war, but also serves to externalize the war for them. The second front internalizes the war as something directly threatening the servants. This is expressed in their fear of

²⁰ Philip Ziegler, 1995, *London at War*, pp.160-1 (Sinclair-Stevenson).

Catholicism and the IRA, of being surrounded by a hostile army. Kinalty is shown to be perceived by the servants to be a foreign opposed presence in Ireland isolated both from wartime England and within neutral Eire. Kinalty becomes a private stage on which is developed the theme of the threat of war and two themes determined by the threat of war: the disruption of domesticity and the attempt to build an alternative domesticity. Indeed the latter theme is made possible by the absence of the pre-war domesticity represented by Mrs Tennant.

The first of these war-determined themes appears as soon as Mrs Tennant leaves. Her departure gives her daughter-in-law Mrs Jack the opportunity to go to bed with her lover Captain Davenport, who is discovered in Mrs Jack's bed by Edith the next morning. The discovery is shown to disrupt the morning routine of Edith waking Mrs Jack, an example of the domesticity that the servants are employed to provide. Furthermore the discovery is written so as to emphasize disruption, using imagery of death, sex and wounding, in contrast to the domesticity of 'pink bedclothes':

... there were two humps of body, turf over graves under those pink bedclothes. And it was at this moment that Mrs Jack jumped as if she had been pinched. Not properly awake she sat straight up. She was nude. Then no doubt remembering she said very quick, "Oh Edith it's you it's quite all right I'll ring." On which she must have recognized that she was naked. With a sort of cry and crossing her lovely arms over that great brilliant part of her on which, wayward, were two dark upraised dry wounds shaking on her, she also slid entirely underneath (p.72).

An association is made to war when Edith runs to her friend Kate talking of a man. Kate's immediate reaction is that this is an IRA man, the IRA being the means by which the war is internalized in the narrative for the servants in Ireland. The discovery of the adultery sends ripples of disruption throughout the household. In the short term the decision of Mrs Jack to leave early for England causes disruption to the

domestic work of Agatha Burch, Nanny Swift and Edith. In the longer term it undermines the stability of the household and can be read as contributing to Raunce's decision to leave the private sphere of Kinalty for the public sphere of wartime England.

The other war-determined theme, the building of an alternative domesticity, is brought into play by Raunce's attempt to control the incident of Mrs Jack being discovered in adultery. He warns Edith that she'll lose her place, be refused reference, if she talks: 'And there's the National bloody Service Officer waitin' for you over on the other side' (p.76), that is she will be forced to enter the public sphere of war-time England. The National Service Officer was reality in wartime England:

In the early months of 1941 at a time when Britain was suffering the Blitz and battling alone against Germany and Italy without the help of either Russia or the USA, the government came to a conclusion it never reached during the First World War: it could no longer wait for women to be employed spontaneously on the scale required ... from March 1941 all women aged 19 to 40 had to register at employment exchanges so that the Ministry of Labour had a record of what they were doing and could direct those considered suitable into 'essential work'. Recognising the reluctance of many employers to take on women, the government simultaneously issued a regulation known as the Essential Work Order (EWO) which bound them to take and keep the women workers compelled to enter war work in this way ... The EWO prevented workers from leaving work without the permission of the National Service Office (a Ministry of Labour official) but, though a constraint on a worker's freedom, the order was not loathed as much as the leaving certificates of the First World War had been, partly because the employer had to guarantee certain standards of pay and conditions and partly because National Service Officers usually let women go if they claimed they were needed at home.²¹

²¹ Braybon and Summerfield, pp. 157-58.

Raunce exaggerates the power of the National Service Office, thus increasing the opposition between his vision of a safe alternative domesticity at Kinalty and the external danger of war on the mainland.

That this building of an alternative domesticity is dependent upon the insularity of Kinalty Castle is demonstrated by three related incidents juxtaposed in one chapter. Raunce, in assisting Edith in taking Mrs Jack's children out walking, takes on the domestic parental responsibility that Mrs Jack, through her adultery, has abdicated. This occurs within the private sphere of Kinalty. Mrs Jack's adultery disrupts domesticity and belongs to the public sphere of wartime London, whence she removes herself being followed by her lover the Captain. Inserted into the passage describing Edith and Raunce with Mrs Jack's children is an episode between Kate and Paddy O'Connor, the Irish lampman in which Kate flirts with Paddy. We can read this as a parallel to Edith's affair with Raunce. The narrative is ambiguous here, combining Kate's flirtation with her disgust at Paddy's dirtiness. There is a theme of an alternative domesticity internal to Kinalty which demands that relationships be pursued within the household however unlikely they may be. This is confirmed by the third incident, inserted into the passage describing Kate and Paddy and, hence, at the core of the chapter. This incident is a confrontation between the cook, Mrs Welch, and her Albert. Edith and Raunce have refused to take Mrs Welch's Albert walking with Mrs Jack's children. He is an outsider and, thus, does not fit into Raunce's vision of an alternative internal domesticity. This provokes the enmity of Mrs Welch who tells Albert that Edith is, '... a nasty little piece that considers we're not good enough for 'er, and very likely a thief into the bargain ...' (p.88). Here at the core is a binary opposition between the older and the younger servants comprising a difference in worldview. The younger servants look to the internal private sphere of Kinalty where

they construct visions of an alternative domesticity. The older servant, by allying herself with the outsider, Albert, her nephew, looks to the external public sphere of the war. Furthermore 'nephew' is a possible euphemism for illegitimate son, as other characters comment in dialogue. Hence Albert can also represent the disrupted domesticity of wartime. The hint of illegitimacy echoes the adulterous affair of Mrs Jack which has exiled her to wartime England. Finally as the narrative reverts, first to Kate and Paddy, then to Edith, Raunce and the children, Raunce becomes ill in the open air, telling Edith that he cannot take long stretches out in the open. He is, in this part of the novel, a character that belongs to the internal, private sphere of Kinalty Castle.

The servants are united in their dread and fear of the IRA. As such they share a contemporary belief about links between the IRA and the Germans.

The IRA fostered contacts with the Germans. This too came to nothing, but it was enough to upset the British and enrage the Loyalists. It was a reminder that there were still those prepared to fight for a United Ireland even if it meant attacking Britain whilst she was fully occupied in total war with Hitler's Germany.²²

There is an implication that Paddy O'Connor, the lampman, is involved with the IRA. Kinalty is perceived by the servants to be a foreign opposed presence in Ireland, already infiltrated by its enemies. This then elides into the war, making a connection between the servants' dread of the IRA and their anxiety as they feel threatened by war. Again, it is Raunce, the promoter of a vision of an insular alternative domesticity, who makes the connection in confirming the importance of not talking to the Irish: "That's right," Raunce told them. "You can't be too careful. There's a war

²² Taylor Downing (ed.), 1980, *The Troubles*, p.114 (Thames Macdonald, 1982).

on," (p.92). However, it is pointed out to Raunce that this internal world is in itself dangerous and, there follows a significant dialogue:

"Are you in a draught?" Edith asked him tenderly. "You don't want to take risks." And Kate looked as though she might start a giggle any minute.

"There is a draught," Raunce answered grave. "There's a draught in every corner of this room which is a danger to sit in."

"Move over to the other side then," Miss Burch suggested.

"Thank you," he said, "but it's the same whichever side you are ..." (Ibid.).

The 'other side' is the term that Raunce has previously used to refer to wartime England in presenting to Edith of the threat of National Service. The other side has now infiltrated the servants' quarters within the private sphere of Kinalty as the servants internalize the war.

Raunce's room is now a haven to an alternative, and insular, domesticity. This is signified by the pictures he has put up in his room, which he shows Edith, having been taken from Mr Jack's old playroom:

Making herself dainty she looked once more at the colourful lithographs of Windsor Castle, and the late King George's Coronation Coach, a plain house photograph of Etonians including Mr Jack in tails, and the polychrome print of scarlet-coated soldiers marching in bearskins (p.102).

This is the private sphere of Green's childhood in which substitutes for war were sought to evade what was happening in the public sphere. It also evokes anachronism through the images contained within it: 'colourful lithographs' and 'the polychrome print'. It is the type of private sphere that Green depicted in *Blindness* and *Pack My Bag* as unsustainable. Edith by connecting war with Mrs Jack's adultery shows that the insular domesticity offered by Raunce is not feasible:

"it's all this talk of invasion - an' the Jerries an' the Irish - then what I witnessed when I called my young lady - an' you makin' out I never

seen what I did - oh it's disgustin' that's what this old place is, it's horrible," she said (p.103).

Raunce is puzzled by Edith's reaction. He now has to perform a balancing act between promoting insularity and not frightening Edith:

"You don't want to pay no attention," he told her.
"Is that so? Then what do you need to go talkin' round it for?"
"It's you I'm concerned about," he said (p.105).

Raunce needs the threat of war to promote the insularity necessary to his vision of an alternative domesticity of which Edith is now an essential part.

Edith accepts Raunce, her acceptance being shown by her partaking in the domestic innocence of playing blindman's bluff with Mrs Jack's children and Raunce's Albert. It is Edith's headscarf that is used to signify this acceptance. The scarf displays a message conventionally associated with the heart, 'I love you I love you', wrapped around Edith's head representing acceptance of Raunce in both heart and mind. Furthermore, the scarf has been passed to Edith by Mrs Jack who, through her adultery, has removed herself from the sphere of domestic innocence.

Contrasts are set up within the insular private sphere of Kinalty Castle between the attitudes of the older and the younger servants to the threat of war. These contrasts are often highlighted by being contained within a chapter, for example in the chapter comprising pages 115-126. In the first part of the chapter Miss Burch takes the by now bed-ridden Nanny Swift through a litany of everything that she considers wrong with the private sphere of Kinalty: the death of Eldon, the drunkenness of Mrs Welch, the elevation of Raunce to acting butler, the peacock's carcass, the growing love affair of Raunce and Edith and finally the adultery of Mrs Jack. Miss Burch is summarizing the disrupters of the domesticity of the household, encountered so far in the narrative. Indeed the last disrupter, the adultery of Mrs Jack, is particularly painful to Nanny

Swift who tries to block it out with her own vision of domestic innocence - the childhood and marriage of Mrs Jack:

"She was all the time the sweetest child," the nanny said in a stronger voice. Miss Burch looked at her quickly, saw her face was smooth now, that she seemed peaceful. "Miss Violet had such lovely golden hair," Miss Swift went on, "the only child I knew to keep it always. On her wedding day it was the same ... Such a picture in white when she came up the aisle. Dear me it's a strange thing but I feel quite tired. I fancy I'll take a little nap." (p.122)

Nanny Swift has achieved the antithesis of war - a state of seeming 'peaceful' - by blocking out the disrupters of domesticity associated in the narrative with war and replacing them with her visions of domestic innocence. However, the narrative does not allow her to be successful. As Miss Burch leaves 'She cast another glance at Miss Swift who was very blue about the lips' (Ibid.). The changes wrought by the war are literally killing Nanny Swift. Earlier she has remarked to Agatha Burch:

After all there's not a woman after a life spent with her charges but doesn't get any idea for illness. It may start as no more than a snivel when you put 'em to bed and then before you've time to adjust yourself you're right in the middle of it, day and night nurses under your feet (pp.116-7)

Here her dialogue recalls those dependant servants, the pensioned nannies, in *Party Going* whose 'profession had been for forty years to ward illness off in others'.²³ The nannies in *Party Going* provide a mute chorus to the approach of war. By this association Nanny Swift cannot escape the war and the associated disruption of her life work supporting the innocent domesticity of Kinalty's children.

In the second part of the chapter Raunce and Edith are in the Red Library taking a realistic view of the opportunities offered to them by the war. Edith has found Mrs

²³ Henry Green, 1939, *Party Going* p. 61 (Harvill, 1996).

Tennant's mislaid ring. Hence Edith has come into possession of two items from the Tennants associated with domestic love: Mrs Jack's headscarf, which, we can infer, was passed onto Edith, and Mrs Tennant's ring - which Edith proposes to Raunce to use as an engagement ring - lost by Mrs Tennant but now found by Edith and, unlike the headscarf, illicitly possessed. We can further infer that it is acceptable within the private sphere of Kinalty for Edith to love Raunce but that marriage, which the ring signifies, is illicit, undermining Raunce's hopes for an alternative domesticity at Kinalty under the sway of which he and Edith could marry. Edith proposes to Raunce that the ring be sold. Raunce counters by telling Edith of the money he makes through his inheritance of Eldon's fraudulent accounting. Here the narrative takes an ambiguous moral stance, confirming the elder servants' view of the immorality of Raunce and Edith while showing Raunce to be inheritor of a system devised by Eldon, who is shown to be admired by the elder servants and praised by Mrs Tennant. This signifies a difference in worldview between the elder servants who want to preserve pre-war domesticity and Raunce who wants to use the opportunity provided by the war to build an alternative domesticity. To justify his worldview Raunce points out to Edith that he is merely the inheritor of a system devised by Eldon, and as yet does not have his predecessor's expertise. Raunce points out to Edith that he does not clear as much money as Eldon who was blackmailing the Captain over his affair with Mrs Jack. This both shocks and excites Edith:

"But I mean that's worse than takin' a ring ain't it Charley?"

"Depends on how you mean worse," he replied. "All I know is it's secure."

"D' you stand there an' tell me Mr Eldon had come upon them some time? Just as I did? That she sat up in bed with her fronts bobblin' at him like a pair of geese the way she did to me? Is that what you're sayin'?" She was so excited again that she fairly danced before him.

"Oh I don't know," he replied cautious and as if he was shy.

"There she sits up at me . . ." Edith ran on, eyes sparkling. And he had to listen to the whole thing again, and with embellishments that he had never heard, that even he must have doubted (p.126).

Edith now understands that Raunce's vision of an alternative domesticity is based upon an economic foundation that requires both the existence of the Tennants and a certain amount of falsehood on the part of her and Raunce. This is justified partly by being a tradition handed down from Eldon and partly by Edith again recounting the story of Mrs Jack, as this immorality justifies in her mind the immorality of Raunce's frauds and allows her to enter into the spirit of falsehood by embellishing the story. Edith is shown to realize that the reality of war is the disruption of conventional domesticity, an important step along the path to her elopement to wartime England with Raunce.

Innocence also has to be dispensed with if Edith is to accept Raunce's worldview. Innocence is represented by Albert, the footman. Albert is infatuated with Edith, but Edith, and Kate, are shown to be interested only in playing on this infatuation. Together on the beach Kate teases him about looking up their dresses. In response Albert sulks because he takes the romantic view, he wishes to love Edith purely and to have his love returned by her. This is linked to the war when Albert asks Edith's advice as to whether he should return to England as he feels responsible for his mother and sister. Edith's response is that of being the partner of Charley in defending the alternative domesticity of Kinalty: she tells him that he should stay put as his family has not sent for him, that he is learning a trade and if he has to go into the army he could go in as an officer's servant. Edith has to repudiate Albert's romantic, innocent view of the war; she wants the alternative domesticity that she is building with Raunce to be based upon economic reality rather than the innocence of idealism. Thus she locates Albert's innocence as the opposite of what she and Raunce are striving for:

... You talk like one of those Irishmen you're so innocent but then there's more behind what they say than they let on to. If you want to know they're an improvement. (p.134).

Albert's innocence, then, is posited by Edith as in opposition to her vision of domesticity because it is even less preferable than the internal enemy that the Irish represent.

Now convinced by Raunce's vision of an alternative domesticity Edith busies herself arranging its implementation:

she persuaded Miss Burch to put forward a claim to tea all round after dinner, a privilege not enjoyed by the others since before the war. Everyone was surprised when the cook agreed. But that was not all. Edith feared for Raunce's neck. She said those draughts in the servant's hall might harm him. Now coal was so short it was only a small peat fire she could lay each morning in the butler's room, and she insisted that the grate Raunce had was too narrow for peat. This no doubt could be her excuse to get him to take his cup along with her to one of the living rooms where huge fires were kept stoked all day to condition the old masters (p.137).

This alternative domesticity is associated with the pre-war - the privilege of tea after dinner. However, what distinguishes it from the pre-war and, therefore, makes it a war-determined alternative domesticity, is that its implementation requires the war-determined shortage of coal. It is in the setting of the alternative domesticity arranged by Edith that Raunce proposes marriage. Edith wishes to wear Mrs Tennant's lost ring momentarily as an engagement ring, signifying that their alternative domesticity relies upon the anachronistic domesticity provided by Mrs Tennant at Kinalty, and that this is illicit as the ring does not belong to Edith. This illicit domesticity is soon disrupted, first by the discovery that Mrs Tennant's ring is lost, and secondly by the arrival of the insurance company enquiry agent, Mike Matthewson who questions the servants about the lost ring. Here Raunce and Edith each strive to protect their vision of an alternative domesticity. The drawing room of Kinalty becomes a battlefield on

which Raunce fights against the incursion of the outsider. Raunce's realization that the initials of Irish Regina Assurance are IRA leads him to conclude that Matthewson is a member of the IRA, the Irish Republican Army, thus connecting the threat posed by Mike Matthewson to his vision of alternative domesticity with the threat of war which, for the servants, has been internalized as dread of the IRA. Raunce wins, escorting Matthewson from the castle but not before Raunce's Albert, the romantic innocent, in a chivalrous attempt to protect Edith, has tried to admit to having the ring. Edith, who suspects that the ring has been taken by Moira and Mrs Welch's Albert, will use Albert's brand of romantic innocence, which has previously been posited as being in opposition to her vision of an alternative domesticity, to protect that vision. She describes for Moira a false domesticity, in which she has become engaged to Raunce's Albert to encourage Moira to reveal her own vision of domesticity, marriage to Mrs Welch's Albert, which will in turn reveal that Albert has the ring. Hence Edith usurps innocence in order to fight for the realization of her and Raunce's vision. Moira's childhood innocence is shown to have been usurped by the wartime adultery of her mother. She reveals her understanding of the disrupted domesticity offered by her mother, implicitly justifying her action in the same way that Edith does, through reference to the adultery of Mrs Jack:

"I hope Mummy doesn't come."

"Hark at you," Edith said letting it go.

"I do. 'Cos that Captain Davenport will be over all the time when she does." (p.150).

Indeed, Moira builds her own alternative domesticity through her fairy tale imagined love for Mrs Welch's Albert which she believes to be paralleled by a love affair between Edith and Raunce's Albert.

The seventh chapter (pp. 153-165) of the implicit second part of *Loving* signals the end of the servants' isolation, signifying that this is the final chapter of this implicit second part of the novel. Raunce expresses his relief at Mrs Tennant's return to the other servants. His vision is still of an alternative domesticity, protected from 'this bombin' over the other side' (p.153), by Mrs Tennant's presence:

"Well we're all one family in this place, there's how I see the situation," he started. Kate began to giggle. But she got no encouragement from Edith. "We can share," he continued, still sentimental. "Now Mrs T. is comin' back she can clear this little matter up ...The IRA man," Raunce announced as though with an ultimatum (pp.153-54).

Raunce, then, promotes Mrs Tennant as an ally - 'we're all one family' - in preserving the insularity of Kinalty and, therefore, his vision of an alternative domesticity. Again he promotes unity by offering the threat of war internalized by the servants as dread of the IRA. The link to war is made again indirectly by the use of 'ultimatum', recalling the start of the Second World War and the war crises that led up to its formal declaration:

This morning the British Ambassador in Berlin handed the German Government a final Note stating that unless we heard from them by 11 o'clock that they were prepared at once to withdraw their troops from Poland a state of war would exist between us. I have to tell you now that no such undertaking has been received, and that consequently this country is at war with Germany.²⁴

Raunce is soon articulating the link to war starting with the IRA, then eliding into German invasion:

²⁴ Radio address by Neville Chamberlain, Prime Minister, September 3rd, 1939 [*British War Aims*, p.3, furnished by the British Library of Information, New York], quoted by James Watson Gantenbein, 1948, *Documentary Background of World War II, 1931 to 1941*, p.409 (Octagon Books, 1975).

An IRA man now. An inspector from the Insurance Company. Then the drains an' all on top of all this bombing not to mention the invasion with Jerry set to cross over with drawn swords ... (p.156).

However, when Raunce's Albert announces that he will cross over to the other side to fight as an air-gunner, Raunce forgets the dangers that he has stated of staying in Ireland in order to point out to Albert the dangers of the course of action that he proposes. Albert's action points to the outside public sphere of war and is thus in opposition to the insularity of Kinalty on which Raunce's vision of an alternative domesticity still depends at this point in the narrative.

The alliance between Raunce and Mrs Tennant is threatened, however, by the lost ring. The alliance being threatened means in Raunce's view that his vision of alternative domesticity is also threatened. Raunce's fear is picked up by Edith:

"Well we're not crossin' over to the other side are we?" She looked sharp at him. He seemed dreamy.

"No," he answered, "we're not. Not so long as we can find that ring," he said. "And keep the house from bein' burned down over our heads. Or Mrs Jack from running off with the Captain so Mrs Tennant goes over for good to England."

"Why Charley," she objected soft, "there's other places."

"Not without we find that ring," he said (pp.159-60).

This, then, sets the scene for the final part of *Loving*, the need to find the ring and Raunce's disappointment at Mrs Tennant's reaction when it is found which is the first step in his realization that there is no alliance²⁵ with Mrs Tennant. The narrative tells us that this alliance, based on Raunce having accepted at face value Mrs Tennant's use of the image of family, is already unobtainable, as the servants have split into warring camps. The chapter ends with Mrs Welch's Albert, the disruptive outsider who has

²⁵ Alliance means wedding ring in French.

taken and hidden the ring coming into the kitchen for his tea. Mrs Welch reveals her embattled state to Albert, based on her belief that she is surrounded by enemies:

"Because I dares'n't abandon this kitchen day or night, not till I go to me bed when day is done that is and then I double lock the door. On guard I am," she announced in a loud voice. "Because that Edith's no more'n a thief I tell you an' my girls are hand in glove with 'er, I don't need to be told." She came to a stop and although glaring at him she seemed rather at a loss.

"Yes'm," he said respectful.

"An' they're in league with the tradesmen, the IRA merchants, the whole lot are," (p.163)

In the implicit second part of *Loving* we can read the development of the interlinked themes of disruption of domesticity and the building by Raunce and Edith of an alternative domesticity. These themes are determined by the theme of the threat of war. Raunce is shown to believe that Mrs Tennant is his ally in preserving this sense of insularity. The implicit third part of *Loving* narrates Raunce's disillusion with this alliance, his realization that the alliance offered by Mrs Tennant is intended to preserve a pre-war conventional domesticity, not the war-determined alternative domesticity that he wishes to create. Hence Raunce and Edith must work out for themselves how they will establish and maintain their alternative domesticity.

The narrative now signals the centrality of Raunce by naming him as Charley, following Edith's use of his first name in front of the servants. The implicit third part of *Loving* (pp. 165-177) starts with a sense of polarity between this central character and Mrs Tennant indicating their lack of shared interests, when she returns from England to find the door barred against her:

... she reached for the latch which was a bullock's horn bound in bronze. But these great portals were barred. She gave the ordinary bell a vicious jab.

"What's this Arthur I mean Raunce?" she asked when Charley opened.

"I am very sorry I'm sure Madam. I had no idea the boat would be punctual. I was just putting on my coat to come to look out for you Madam."

"But why the locked door?" she asked as she entered.

"We had an unwelcome visitor Madam," he replied, a suitcase already in each hand. (p.165).

Mrs Tennant brings from war-time England not the sense of unity and family that Charley expects, but conflict, and a reminder of pre-war domesticity in calling Charley 'Arthur', relegating him to his pre-war position of footman, before correcting herself. In so doing Mrs Tennant disrupts rather than helps to promote Charley's alternative domesticity.

Mrs Tennant and Charley immediately discuss the lost ring, prompted by his mention of the 'unwelcome visitor', the enquiry agent, signifying Charley's belief that he was an IRA man, and his promotion of this threat as a justification for insularity. However, Mrs Tennant does not offer the alliance that Charley expects against the external threat that he describes. She concentrates on the lost ring, and Albert's confession, her belief that the servants have taken the ring being a signifier of her distrust. She interrogates Charley's Albert, setting him against the other servants:

He did not cry as he went to the servants' hall, he shook with rage. He was repeating to himself "I won't ever speak to one of 'em in this bloody 'ouse not ever again." (p.169).

This, in turn, puts increased pressure on Edith and Charley to find the ring, to promote alliance with Mrs Tennant, prompting Charley to appeal to Edith, 'I warn you it's desperate dear' (p.169).

While Edith is manoeuvring to convince Moira to return the ring, Mrs Tennant is again stirring up conflict, this time with Mrs Welch, when she unwittingly leads the cook to believe that she is accusing her Albert of stealing the ring, provoking Mrs Welch to make an angry outburst that accuses Charley and Edith:

"Criminal?" Mrs Welch replied, her voice rising. "That's just it mum. For this is what those two are, that Raunce and his Edith. I don't say nothin' about their being lain all day in each other's arms, and the best part of the night too very likely though I can't speak to the night time, I must take my rest on guard and watch as I am while it's light outside, lain right in each other's arms," she resumed, "the almighty lovers they make out they are but no more than fornicators when all's said and done if you'll excuse the expression, where was I? Yes. 'Love' this an' 'dear' that, so they go on day and night yet they're no better than a pair of thieves mum, misappropriatin' your goods behind your back." (pp.174-75).

Mrs Welch's use of 'mum' is conventional, but in the context it suggests family as well as her drunken slurring of 'madam', although the implication of drunkenness suggests an opposition to domesticity in keeping with the Cook's dialogue with Mrs Tennant. Mrs Welch, in spreading rumours of fornication, is falsely accusing Charley and Edith of doing what Mrs Tennant's daughter-in-law has been discovered doing. Fornication and adultery, in the narrative scheme of the novel, are opposed to domesticity, fornication suggesting activity outside the controlled sexuality of marriage, adultery being a direct threat to marriage. There is a further falling apart of this 'family' of madam and servants when Mrs Tennant does not accept this accusation from Mrs Welch, accusing her of being drunk, telling her that she only came to say that Mr Jack has embarkation leave, indicating where her sense of family values belongs.

Mrs Tennant leaves to be presented with her lost ring by Charley. Here the narrative shows that Edith has taken successful action to rescue the alternative domesticity that depends on the ring. Charley takes on the job of messenger, bearing the news and the ring to Mrs Tennant. However, rather than accept an alliance, Mrs Tennant introduces a new problem - 'And now perhaps you'll tell me what I'm to say to the Insurance Company?' (p.177). The problem of the ring has been resolved but still no alliance is offered by Mrs Tennant to Charley. Indeed she tells him to expect

more conflict: "Oh Raunce," she said, "I'm afraid your luncheon to-day may be burned" (p.177).

When Mrs Tennant's son Jack returns he is shown escaping into fishing - evoking Green's memory in *Pack My Bag* of pre-war holidays at home:

Tewkesbury Abbey rising clear above the town from a huge flat meadow which has always lain between, over the weir which adds to the Severn's stream, looking down right-handed between those riven oaks to what was once a ford, it is a ferry now, I could see where I was to start fishing ...²⁶

Fishing is peace, indeed pre-war peace. It is what Orwell's George Bowling, in *Coming up for Air* (1939) seeks, on the eve of war in revisiting the town in which he grew up as a child. However, just as George Bowling's peace is unobtainable given the threat of war, so Jack's peace is disturbed by the knowledge that the Captain, that disrupter of Kinalty's domesticity, is dining with them. This has been brought about by Mrs Tennant, shown as a spreader of conflict in this part of the novel, inviting the Captain to dinner as a companion for Jack. Just as Mrs Tennant restricts Jack's enjoyment of the water and fishing, so she restricts the servants access to water for domestic purposes, informing Mrs Jack that she has 'told Raunce the servants can't have any more baths ... or not more than one a week anyway' (p.178). Finally Mrs Tennant signals conflict within Kinalty by identifying the problem in the household being that of distrust. This is the first hint that Mrs Tennant knows about Mrs Jack's adultery, for although ostensibly she refers to the servants, Mrs Jack is shown to interpret it as referring to her. Here Mrs Tennant's approach is different to that of Charley. She will not use the threat of war, and that which it brings in its wake, to

²⁶ Henry Green, 1940, *Pack My Bag*, pp.45-6 (Hogarth, 1992).

protect the insularity of Kinalty but will confront it. Hence she talks of Kinalty as being her war work, indicating that there is no escape from the war in her view - neither to fishing for Jack nor, by implication, to an alternative domesticity for Charley and Edith.

The sense of distrust that Mrs Tennant brings up is represented by a passage contained within the same chapter depicting Charley and Edith. The contrast is achieved by Charley telling Edith of his books having been agreed by Mrs Tennant and the money he makes from fiddling the books. Thus the distrust that Mrs Tennant has talked of in the first narrative passage of this chapter is shown to be justified in this second narrative passage. However, this has a greater significance than justifying Mrs Tennant's view of the servants. It signifies the difference in worldview of Mrs Tennant on one side and Edith and Charley on the other side. This is what Charley and Edith need to do in order to build their alternative domesticity with economic support that does not rely solely on the wages paid by Mrs Tennant. That this is associated with the vision of alternative domesticity is signified by Charley reporting a conversation that he has had with Mrs Tennant regarding the married butler's house, which he has proposed as their married home. Charley seeks to justify his actions by raising the incident of Mrs Jack's adultery through talking about Captain Davenport dining at Kinalty. Edith is shown to feel safe within the alternative domesticity offered by Charley, telling him that Mrs Jack's adultery does not matter now and mocking the enquiry agent, Mike Matthewson, hitherto perceived as a threat, by mimicking his lisp.

This device of contrasting narrative passages is used in the next two chapters of the novel to chart the defeat of Charley's vision of an alternative domesticity and his decision to abandon Kinalty for wartime England. In the first of these chapters (pp.

188-198) the first narrative passage shows the maids Edith and Kate together, refinding old times. They talk as though the insularity of Kinalty has been protected. Indeed Kate cites the insularity as the reason for her relationship with Paddy - she is lonely and there is nobody else. It is a pre-war domesticity that is being shown re-found in the renewed intimacy of Kate and Edith and that is different to the alternative domesticity that Charley wishes to create. However, both visions are unattainable in the context of war. Hence the talk of Paddy brings with it a sense of threat. Charley has told Paddy about the peacock's carcass, Mrs Welch's Albert has told Paddy about Edith taking peacock eggs and keeping them in waterglass. Thus Mrs Welch, via Charley, and Mrs Welch's Albert have upset the 'IRA' man Paddy. The second passage shows Edith and Charley in Mrs Jack's bedroom, which last appeared in the narrative as the scene of adultery. Here Edith plays with Mrs Jack's nightdress, provoking Charley to say that she is acting like a tart. Charley asks Edith to discontinue bringing him his tea in the morning so that the rest of the household will not misconstrue their relationship. He is fighting to maintain his vision of an alternative domesticity by refusing to become involved in anything that could be construed as disruption of domesticity.

In the second of these chapters (pp. 198-210) the first narrative passage shows Mrs Tennant and Mrs Jack in the eighteenth century dairy. This use of anachronism reminds us that Mrs Tennant is the promoter of a pre-war domesticity. Here Mrs Tennant is shown contrasting the generations as the narrative hints that she knows of Mrs Jack's adultery. This is contrasted with the servants' sense of independence in their dining hall as they mimic the lisp of the enquiry agent, Mike Matthewson, as Edith did for Charley. This signifies that the threat posed by Matthewson, and promoted by Charley, has disappeared, that instead Matthewson is seen as a figure to

be mocked. Without this threat Charley cannot promote the insularity necessary to his vision of alternative domesticity. Charley is shown to instigate the mockery of Matthewson, signifying a move towards accepting that he will not now be able to construct an alternative domesticity in Ireland. Thus we are prepared for the final two chapters of the novel in which Charley will persuade Edith to elope with him to wartime England.

In the first of these final two chapters (pp. 210-219) Edith persuades Charley to go out, again mimicking the lisp of the enquiry agent: 'Come on out an feed the peacockth' (p.210). Charley now fully accepts that his vision of an alternative domesticity is unattainable; his Albert has broken out of the insularity by leaving to become an air gunner and this is shown to have revived Mrs Tennant's concerns over the ring. Charley takes the opportunity of being removed from the immediate insularity of Kinalty to tell Edith of his change of plan. He justifies the change of plan with three reasons. The first is that the air makes him feel ill. The second is that he is not valued at Kinalty, that is the alliance offered by Mrs Tennant is illusory. The third is an appeal to Edith's domestic sense of family, saying that he has received a letter from his mother accusing him of hiding away in a neutral country. All this adds up to a growing belief that he should be in the war.

The final chapter (pp. 219-225) is a continuation of the penultimate chapter. Edith is shown to be convinced, not by Charley's arguments, but by the 'romance' of elopement. Charley has switched to using the romantic viewpoint - previously equated by Edith with the internal enemy, the Irish - rather than the threat of war. As a member of Green's generation - by age, but not class or culture - he accepts that he must be involved in the war and that must happen immediately, although this will still be on his terms, to take advantage of the opportunity that war offers. Hence he gives

reasons why they must leave without giving notice. *Loving* ends with reminders of Green's earlier novel *Living* (1929) whose main character Lily Gates also undertakes a failed quest to establish a domesticity alternative to that of the paternalistic Craigan household. Badger the dog - the dog being a symbol of domesticated sexuality in *Living* - appears as Edith is surrounded by birds, like Lily Gates at the end of *Living*.

The final two paragraphs tie back to the fairy tale beginning of the novel:

"Edie" he appealed soft, probably not daring to move or speak too sharp for fear he might disturb it all. Yet he used exactly that tone Mr Eldon had employed at the last when calling his Ellen. "Edie," he moaned.

The next day Raunce and Edith left without a word of warning. Over in England they were married and lived happily ever after (p.225).

The evocation of *Living*, and Raunce as central character being a member of Green's generation only by virtue of his age, suggests a displacement of Green's generation when considered in its full definition in the context of this thesis. The war has provided the opportunity for the servants to take over the drawing room, an opportunity that, in *Loving*, can only be taken advantage of by entry into the war.

I have read into *Loving* the failed quest of Charley and Edith to create an alternative domesticity in Ireland, a domesticity that is an alternative both to conventional pre-war domesticity and the war, although the opportunity for its establishment is provided by the war. Furthermore, I have analysed this quest, its failure, and its replacement with a desire to join the war as representing the dichotomy of Green's generation's ambivalent attitude to war: both repulsed and attracted by the death and horror war offers. Given the ambiguity of representation that is characteristic of the response of Green's generation to war, other readings are possible. As Edward Stokes suggests:

all these motives - patriotism, manly pride, fear, cupidity, laziness - are present together, and they are so inextricably tangled, that no one, least of all Raunce (who, like most of Green's characters, knows very little about himself), can say which is the "real" reason. Henry Green does not tell us; he is content to present only what Raunce himself says in all its contradictions, and to permit the reader to interpret for himself.²⁷

²⁷ Stokes, p.55.

Chapter 7: *Back*: it was a time of war

Back (1946), like Green's previous three novels, *Party Going* (1939), *Caught* (1943) and *Loving* (1945), develops its themes through a tripartite structure. However, in comparison to the three previous novels, the structure of *Back* is relatively explicit. We are told in the first chapter that Charley Summers will deny Rose Grant, his dead lover, thrice. Each of these denials is noted as it occurs in the narrative. Charley sums up *Back*'s narrative action as his having been led to a future with Nance Whitmore, Rose's half sister, through three episodes. Many of the narrative events are brought into being through a three step process associated with Charley and Nance Whitmore: 'IN the next three weeks [Charley] called thrice at Miss Whitmore's ...',¹ Charley, anticipating sleeping with Nance 'tried the sofa to find if it sounded. He bounced once, then twice, yes thrice' (p.182), 'This was the third time [Nance] had said it, and it had been different each time' (p.196). The tripartite structure, as in *Party Going* and *Caught*, signifies progress to and through war by association with past, present and future. This differentiates *Back* from Green's previous novel, *Loving*. The latter represents its characters in the middle of a time of war. In *Back*, the time of war is coming to an end; a future of peace comes into view, which, as in *Party Going* and *Caught*, is represented in reference to both the present and the past. Charley's denial of Rose and his finding of Nance represent his progress from the present of war ending to a future of conventional domesticity - signified by

¹ Henry Green, 1946, *Back*, p.161 (Harvill, 1998). Hereafter page references to *Back* will appear in the body of the text of this chapter.

Nance - via a past of disrupted domesticity - signified by Rose's and Charley's adulterous affair.²

Each implicit part of *Back* is differentiated through association with a particular, time-associated theme. These three parts represent present, past and future through being associated with, respectively, the instability of the present as war is ending, the need to connect the present with the past, and achieving a future of conventional domesticity. The representation of these themes, typically in Green's fiction, is both complex and convoluted. Charley Summers provides us with an early indication of this complexity, and its relation to time, when he recalls that in the prisoner-of-war camp

The idea had been to make the clock's hands go round. And now that he'd come back, he told himself, all he was after was to turn them back, the fool, only to find roses grown between the minutes and the hours, and so entwined that the hands were stuck (pp.6-7).

Here is the narrative past of the prison camp, in which the only future imaginable is the end to being a prisoner, being recalled by Charley from the narrative present. The image of 'roses grown between the minutes and hours' represents what it is that Charley wishes to recall from the past, his dead lover Rose, the difficulty – and

² There was ample evidence of disrupted domesticity in war-time London: 'On Sunday mornings we used to go into Hyde Park, where an immense dump of old bricks, wood, and scrap iron was being made from sites cleared of bomb debris. It was a cemetery of iron bedsteads, burned-out motor-cars, lorries, baths, gas cookers, electric stoves, geysers, water tanks, and all the other things that are mute witnesses of domestic anguish after the raiders have passed', Mrs Robert Henrey, 1969, *London Under Fire 1940-45*, p.51 (Dent). *London Under Fire* comprises wartime chronicles distilled into a single volume from three books, *A Village in Piccadilly* (1942), *The Incredible City* (1944), and *The Siege of London* (1946).

foolhardiness - of the task in Charley's mind at this early point in the novel, and the difficulty of moving forward into the future: the clock's hands will move neither back nor forward. The obstructed mechanism of the clock recalls the obstructed mechanism of the weather vane in *Loving*, there used to signify Mrs Jack's adulterous affair. To restart the clock, to achieve a future, the roses must be unpicked. This is the story of *Back*.

It is Green's typical narrative style that the information that supports this reading of time in *Back* is scattered through the text and, thus, built up through accumulation. For example, on page 28 we learn, from his landlady, that Charley was taken prisoner within two weeks of landing in France, and on page 41 that Charley's present state of being is 'the flowering of four years imprisonment'. Charley Summers is reassembling himself and the fractured time that surrounds him,³ a common occurrence for a prisoner of war:

You would not believe how long one can spend as a POW preparing to do a simple thing, doing it and then talking about it afterwards. It's the way we live, and it is going to be a painful process accelerating the tempo of life again.⁴

³ Charley's feeling of being out of step with time is a reflection of Louis MacNeice's experience of returning to wartime England. MacNeice had been ill in America at the outbreak of war. He writes while ship bound from America to England in December 1940: 'I am going back to a past that is not there Leaving America, which for me is mythical future, I am going over to somewhere without tenses returning somewhere I belong but have not, as it now is, been. The world for me has become inverted', Louis MacNeice, 1965, *The Strings are False*, p.17 (Faber).

⁴ David Wild, letter to his wife dated 25th July.1943 from, 1992, *Prisoner of Hope*, pp.152-3 (Book Guild).

Now that Charley Summers is back he has to go through a similarly 'painful process' of readjustment. Hence *Back* takes him along a circuitous route through time from an unstable present to a future of conventional domesticity - associated with peace for Green's generation⁵ - via the past of the war.

The association of parts with chronologically differentiated themes places the structure of *Back* closer to Green's early war novels *Party Going* and *Caught* than his later war novel *Loving* (1945). This association, in combination with the title *Back*, suggests that this novel will be as concerned with the past of the early war and the immediate pre-war as it is of the present of war ending. However, the characters in *Back* face a different future to the characters in Green's earlier war novels. In both *Party Going* and *Caught* a definite expected apocalyptic future event - the outbreak of war - impels a revisiting of the past to explain why this future will occur. Hence a direct line can be traced in these novels - albeit via a circuitous route - from the events of the pre-war through to the expected - in *Party Going* - and actual - in *Caught* - outbreak of war. The end of the war, the future represented in *Back*, was amorphous when compared with the certainties of the outbreak of war:

Climactic action was followed by anti-climactic reaction. Arthur Koestler prophesied: 'The interregnum of the next decades will be a time of distress and of gnashing of teeth. We shall live in the hollow of the historical wave.'⁶

⁵ An inventive use of this association is made by Waugh in *Brideshead Revisited* where Charles Ryder represents his disillusion with the army through the simile of a man falling out of love with his wife, suggesting the army as substitute for conventional domesticity. See Evelyn Waugh, 1945, *Brideshead Revisited*, pp.13-14 (Eyre Methuen, 1982).

⁶ Jon Stallworthy, 1995, *Louis MacNeice*, p.334 (Faber). The quotation is from Arthur Koestler's *The Yogi and the Commissar*, 1945, p.111.

Back: it was a time of war

For Green's generation the end of the war could be perceived as being as apocalyptic as its beginning because it represented the end of that which they had been prepared for at school during the Great War. We would then expect the route to the future to be as circuitous in *Back* as it is in Green's earlier war novels.

The three parts of *Back* are not associated with orderly chronological progress. Green's characteristic ambivalence disrupts orderliness by allowing the accumulation of multiple meanings to convey the sense of a circuitous route to the future. This can be demonstrated in the different deployments of Rose in the novel. The importance of Rose is signalled within the narrative when we are told that 'her name, of all names, was Rose' (p.4). This alerts us to the importance of the name, and suggests that we read Rose as a symbol, or rather a collection of symbols. The rose is one of the emblems of England. In Christian symbolism the rose stands for purity and is applied to the Virgin Mary, one of whose titles is 'The Mystical Rose'. Rose being dead, I read into this the death of both an earlier pre-war England, and the purity associated with conventional domesticity, which, in turn, was associated by Green's generation with that earlier pre-war England. The ambivalence associated with Rose is foregrounded by the text's placing of the word 'rose' as both name and verb. A barmaid is named Rose, Charley's landlady talks of rising prices, "'Why,'" she said, "they rose, they've rose . . .'" (p.32), the name being emphasised here by the incorrect verb-tense formation. From Rose we can navigate a route that takes in the immediate pre-war, the inter-war years and the Great War. As a character, Rose is a disrupter of domesticity through her adulterous affair with Charley and, thus, a representative of the present of war. However, as the war ended for Charley with his capture, and the almost simultaneous death of Rose, she also represents the dead past of the immediate pre-war and early war, a dead past that Charley will become compelled to link to the

present. Here Rose is both a symbol of domesticity disrupted, through her adulterous affair with Charley, and an agent of disruption as the narrative suggests that Rose has kept the affair with Charley going after her marriage to James, the evidence being supplied in her letters to Charley. This is in turn linked to war through the revelation of her son's age, about six. The novel opens in June 1944, so the son was born in 1938, the year of Munich and, for Green, the start of the war. However, Rose is also associated with domesticity through evoking the domestic flower. This is a conventional symbol of domesticity with literary precedent being used, for example by Wilkie Collins in *The Moonstone* (1868) whose Sergeant Cuff wishes to retire to cultivate roses. This suggests also pre-war domesticity given that Green at Oxford, as he notes in *Pack My Bag*, was a collector of Victoriana. The plot of *The Moonstone* also suggests disrupted domesticity, through the associations of the moonstone diamond with war - stolen at the siege of Seringapatam - and the disruptive effect it has on the relationship of Rachel Verinder and Franklin Blake. This links to another resonance associated with rose. As a flower 'rose' evokes the Great War through the song, 'The Rose of No Man's Land':

There's a Rose that grows in No Man's Land,
And it's wonderful to see.
Tho' it's sprayed with tears,
It will live for years
In my garden of memory.
It's the one red rose
The soldier knows⁷

⁷ Quoted in Lyn Macdonald, 1980, *The Roses of No Man's Land*, p.285 (Michael Joseph, 1985).

Words and music published by Leo Feist, Inc. In addition to being a popular hit song of 1918, it was popular amongst convalescent troops. Green should have been aware of the song either as a popular song or through the convalescent officers at his family home.

The 'Rose' of the song is a First World War nurse, a representative figure through whom flows both domesticity - 'Rose' and 'my garden' - and its disruption through war - 'No Man's Land' and 'soldier'. The rose growing in No Man's Land is in the memory of the soldier, evoking a past domesticity. The multiple meanings provided by the combination of rose symbols are always present in *Rose in Back*, although the degree of emphasis changes. For example, 'the first reflowering of Rose' (p.35) conveys domesticity, through its suggestion of rose as a garden flower, which in turn suggest the peace of the inter-war years. Whereas Charley re-reading the letters Rose sent him conveys domesticity disrupted, as it recalls their adulterous affair. Evocation of the previous war comes into play when it is revealed that both Rose's father and husband were Great War combatants. That these different meanings come into play at different times assists in conveying the sense of a circuitous route to the future.

The circuitous route to the future is also conveyed by the deployment of other characters in the novel: Arthur Middlewitch, Dot Pitter, Mr. and Mrs. Grant. While they are not given the multiple meanings accorded to Rose these characters are important to the narrative action of *Back*. The narrative at first gives prominence to, but eventually discards characters who would block the way to the proposed future of conventional domesticity. Arthur Middlewitch and Dot Pitter, associated with the sexual promiscuity represented as characteristic of the war by Green in *Caught*, are dismissed from their jobs. Mr Grant, who exploits the instability of the time to play psychological games on Charley, dies. The characters who are capable of adaptation and change survive to enter the future even though they are also associated with the past. Mrs Grant recovers from the mental illness which has positioned her in the Great War; Charley, against the advice of Middlewitch, pitches into the past to prepare himself for the future; and Nance Whitmore, associated by Charley with the

dead past of Rose, creates for Charley a haven of conventional domesticity at the Grants' suburban home in Redham in anticipation of the end of the war.

The circuitous route that *Back* charts to the future starts, as in *Party Going* and *Caught* from a present point. Here it is June 13th 1944 a week after D-day and nine days after the British Fifth Army entered Rome. D-day signifies the beginning of the end of the war as A.J.P. Taylor notes:

D-day and its sequel brought alleviation of spirit to English people. Many had been doubtful of total victory despite their outward calm. Now unconditional surrender promised to become an early reality. . . . By July 1944 most English people decided, whether rightly or not, that the war was as good as won.⁸

In *Back* the date, and its association with perceptions of war ending, introduces into the narrative a sense of things about to change, a degree of instability. This instability is increased by the particular selection of June 13th, the date of the first V1 flying bomb attack on England,⁹ signalling that there will not be a simple straightforward route to the end of war. As in Green's previous novel, *Loving* (1945), we have to work out the date of this present point of the narrative from information scattered

⁸ A.J.P. Taylor, 1965, *English History 1914-1945*, p.707 (Pelican, 1975). This sense of war ending was evident in press and radio reporting of the time: 'Then we entered Bayeux. Men, women and children lining the streets yelled, waved, gesticulated. It was a hysterical welcome. Young and old people stood in the cobbled streets of this town from which Allied troops had just driven the Germans, some with tears streaming down their faces, all shouting 'Vive l'Angleterre! Vive l'Amérique! Vive la France!' and raising fingers in the Victory "V" sign. Over their heads the Tricolour fluttered from nearly every balcony. But no people were ever more justified in hysteria than these.' John Hetherington, Combined Press, 8th June 1944 from Desmond Hawkins, 1946, *War Report D-day to VE-day*, p.69 (Ariel Books/British Broadcasting Corporation, 1985).

⁹ Date taken from Mollie Panter-Downes, 1972, *London War Notes*, p.305 (Longman).

through the text. We are told that it is a time of war on page 3, that it is June 13th on page 6, and on page 41 that Charley has been imprisoned for four years. The most likely explanation is that Charley was captured in France sometime in late 1939 or early 1940 and repatriated in September 1943 or March 1944.¹⁰

Back begins as spring is about to turn into summer. These seasons are significant in wartime literature. In Louis MacNeice's long poem describing the period between August and December 1938, *Autumn Journal* (1939) the Munich autumn heralds the winter of war, here with an image imported from the Great War:

But after the event all we can do is argue
And count the widening ripples where they sank.
October comes with rain whipping around the ankles
In waves of white at night
And filling the raw clay trenches¹¹

If war is winter, then, peace, through association with its opposite season, is summer. In *Back* we are in late spring. It is mid June, in a few days summer will start. Indeed the text conflates present and future by stating that 'It was a summer day in England' (p.3). If peace is summer and the future, Charley through his surname, Summers, is associated with this future end of the war, a long future of many summers as signified by his surname being in the plural. The present point of *Back* represents a particular phase of the war, heralding another, and final phase of war. The action of *Back* will take us from June to Christmas 1944, from D-Day to the Ardennes offensive, the final German counter-attack of the war. Although *Back* ends in winter with the war continuing, this is the last winter of the war. The New Year will bring peace. The

¹⁰ '... the six-monthly system of repatriation of chronic sick was established in September 1943' (Wild, p.42). Charley claims, later in the novel, to have been repatriated in June.

¹¹ Louis MacNeice, 1939, *Autumn Journal*, p.37 (Faber, 1963).

point is emphasized by locating the end point of the novel at Christmas, the Christian season of peace and good will superimposed upon pagan celebration of the simultaneous death of the old and birth of the new.

The narrative style employed in these first five chapters of *Back* (pp.3-43) conveys a sense of Charley being able to temporarily postpone entry into, but not to escape the past which Rose represents. An example of this style occurs on the first page of the novel. Here life, associated with movement forward and upward, is conveyed by short sentences:

A COUNTRY bus drew up below the church and a young man got out.
This he had to do carefully because he had a peg leg.

The roadway was asphalted blue.

It was a summer day in England. Rain clouds were amassed back of a church tower which stood on rising ground. As he looked up he noted well those slits, built for defence, in the blood coloured brick. Then he ran his eye with caution over cypresses and between gravestones. He might have been watching for a trap, who had lost his leg in France for not noticing the gun beneath a rose (p.3).

Even where the short sentences appear to be giving information they are associated with movement. 'The roadway was asphalted blue', for example, by being isolated in its own paragraph encourages us to concentrate on a place where movement occurs.

The information that 'It was a summer day in England' which follows at the beginning of the next paragraph is similarly a location of movement as the rain clouds amass, and movement is attributed to a solid static object, as the church 'stood on rising ground'. This evokes also a sense of instability, as the church is not only a static object but also a symbol of stability. At the end of the passage a longer sentence appears. This begins a contrasting association of long sentences with decline and death, and signals that the movement forwards and upwards will come to an end, by being a prelude to a far longer sentence:

For, climbing around and up these trees of mourning, was rose after rose after rose, while, here and there, the spray overburdened by the mass of flower, a live wreath lay fallen on a wreath of stone, or on a box in marble colder than this day, or onto frosted paper blooms which, under glass, marked each bed of earth wherein the dear departed encouraged life above in the green grass, the cypresses and in those roses gay and bright which, as still as this dark afternoon, stared at whosoever looked, or hung their heads to droop, to grow stained, to die when their turn came (Ibid.).

This long sentence encapsulates the narrative action of the novel. In the narrative present are 'these trees of mourning' signifying both the terminus of death and a place of earthly activity, as the roses climb around the trees, linking back to the shorter sentences and the 'church tower which stood on rising ground'. However, this is not movement as in the preceding short sentences but the setting up of a contrast between forward movement and decline. These roses are linked to death and the past for it is 'the dear departed below' who encourage this life. This foreshadows the action of the novel in which Charley will turn away from the present to explore the past that determines his present, his love for Rose. The roses will decline and die, just as Charley's love for Rose will decline, paving the way for his future with Nance Whitmore.

This use of contrast associated with long and short sentences sets a pattern for the first five chapters of the novel by representing a difference between what Charley is shown to think and feel. He thinks that Rose is gone and that he is resisting the utterances of the word 'rose' that pepper the text in this part of the novel. This is true as long as Charley is involved in action, in moving forwards, when he can resist Rose. As soon as he stops acting, the sentences increase in length as Charley's feelings for his dead lover take over, preparing for the narrative stop which occurs when Charley meets Nance Whitmore and collapses in a dead faint. There are similar uses of long sentences to slow up the action on pages 34, 40 and 41. These are associated with the

arrival of Dot Pitter and the desire that commands Charley - her breasts 'nagged him' (p.40) - and pushes him into meeting Nance. Page 32 contains two longer sentences verbally associating Charley's landlady, Mrs Frazier, with Rose and war as she talks about rising prices, sentences in which Mrs Frazier saying 'rose' renders Charley inactive:

“Why,” she said, “they rose, they’ve rose . . .” and the words, because he had not paid attention, the words pierced right through. He held his breath for the pain to which he had grown accustomed, particularly in Germany, he waited for it to break over him, as he sat isolated by Mrs Frazier’s voice, he did not listen as she rasped on (p.32).

The word rose pierces Charley, like the bullet that wounded him in France, creating a further association with the pain of his wounding and consequent imprisonment in Germany.

The style of the novel in its first part conveys a sense of Charley being pulled between narrative past and future, through its accumulation of short and longer sentences and the associations built up by this accumulation. The structure of the first part of the novel works in a similar way, by accumulation and association. Typically in Green's novels information is scattered through the text to be pieced together into a coherent reading, for example, the date of the novel's opening and the length of time that Charley was incarcerated in the prisoner of war camp must be pieced together from various sources in the text. This is built into the structure of the five chapters comprising the implicit first part of *Back*. Each of these five chapters represents a different episode in Charley's route to the past, through each taking as its setting one point in the war-disrupted present that Charley Summers has been repatriated to from a prisoner of war camp. Bounded by the opening in a graveyard in chapter one with its linkage of present with past, and Charley pitching forward into 'a dead faint' on

seeing Rose in Nance Whitmore at the end of chapter five, they build a theme of the instability of the present and its relationship to past and future. These five chapters show the various points in the war-disrupted present that Charley Summers has been repatriated to from his prisoner of war camp. Each chapter introduces a new character, each associated with instability represented through disruption of domesticity. In the opening chapter Charley visits Rose's grave where he meets James, Rose's widower. The second chapter moves on to the home of Rose's parents, the Grants, in a London suburb where Mrs Grant is shown to be mentally ill. The third chapter shows Charley at work and introduces the character of Middlewitch, a counterpoint to Charley who lives firmly in the present, exploiting every opportunity presented to him. The fourth chapter shows Charley in his lodgings and introduces the character of Mrs Frazier who is linked to the past of the Grants. The fifth chapter again shows Charley at work and introduces the character of Dot Pitter who awakens his obsession with finding Rose in Nance. These are all points in his disrupted present that provide links to the narrative past and future. These links are forged into a chain that pitches Charley into his past, beginning the process that is evoked in the novel's title, that Charley is both back from the war and that he will enter into his past. However, Charley is pitched into the past so that he can find his future. Indeed the phrase used in the text at the end of chapter five is 'pitched forward' (p.43) signifying linkage between past, present and future, as Charley will be pitched from his present state into reliving his past affair with Rose - through Nance - which is a precursor to him finding a future with Nance.

An early example of how the association of past, present and future works in the narrative, occurs in the first chapter. A sense of the present violence of war is represented through 'the blood coloured brick of the church' (p.3) suggesting, in the

narrative context, brick stained by blood through a military action, building on the statement that Charley 'had lost his leg in France'. To emphasize this association we are told, 'It was a time of war' (Ibid.). Charley is in the present but he is searching for the past of the early war to which he is linked by his love for the dead Rose. We are told that 'the gun beneath a rose' wounded Charley. Charley has been wounded twice, by the German sniper and earlier by Rose when she married James but continued their relationship, which, thus, became adulterous. To emphasize this link we are told on page 7 that Rose died in the same week that Charley was wounded and taken prisoner. In the churchyard Charley, instead of finding Rose and the past, encounters James, Rose's widower. We are informed, 'fat as those geese, was James' (p.7). This reminds us how, on the first page of the novel geese flying overhead remind Charley of a wartime incident so that he feels he has been warned.¹² James is, then, linked to the present of the war and talks of that present, 'everything's initials these days' (p.9). However, he is also linked to the past not only through having been Rose's husband but in his linking of Charley's present to his own past when he tells Charley, 'I remember after the last war when I got home' (Ibid.). James is, therefore, also associated with the Great War. James becomes the conduit to the past for Charley as he shows him the location of Rose's grave. This accumulation and association of information contributes to my reading of the first five chapters - the forging of links in a chain that pitches Charley into the past.

This first chapter sets a pattern that is used in each of the five chapters that comprise the first part of *Back*. The pattern is Charley being presented in narrative

¹² This further suggests war through the evocation of the episode from Roman history when sacred geese on Capitoline Hill warned of a Gaulish attack in 390 B.C.

reaction to the other main characters in the novel, each contained within a separate chapter, each suggesting associations with narrative past, present and future. This series of patterns leads Charley up to his encounter with Nance Whitmore, which starts the second part of *Back*.

Chapter two (pp.11-19) introduces 'ROSE'S parents, Mr. and Mrs. Grant, were still at Redham, one of London's outer suburbs' (p.11). Mr Grant having invited Charley to the house, meets him in the front garden to explain that Mrs Grant is ill. The narrative suggests that Mr Grant wishes to use Charley to remind his wife of Rose, although it is ambivalent as to whether this is as cure or torment. Charley is annoyed at being so used, having risked his life fighting in the war. This emphasizes the difference between Charley and Mr Grant by evoking the perceived difference between soldier and civilian noted by Great War combatants,

a Difference which becomes evident between human beings, a Difference far deeper than that of nations and with defensive trenches more impregnable; the clean-cut and truly unpardonable division that there is in a country's inhabitants between those who gain and those who grieve, those who are required to sacrifice all, *all*, to give their numbers and strength and suffering to the last limit, those upon whom the others walk and advance, smile and succeed.¹³

This prepares for the presentation of Mrs Grant's mental illness, which causes her to believe herself to be in the time of the Great War, the time of childhood and exclusion from war for Green's generation.¹⁴ She mistakes Charley for her brother John who was killed in 1917. Mrs Grant has blotted out the memory of her daughter's death by going back in her mind to the previous war, '... complaining as she now was that it

¹³ Henri Barbusse, 1926, *Under Fire*, p.301 (Everyman, 1969).

¹⁴ For example Charles Ryder recalls 'a boyhood straitened by war and overshadowed by bereavement' (Waugh, *Brideshead*, p.54).

must be the war, that ever since the Russians gave up she had felt tired. "This terrible war," she ended' (p.14). This provides a paradigm for Charley's relationship with Rose in the novel, that he will try to bring the past into the present by searching for Rose in Nance Whitmore. The name Grant has significance. The couple grant Charley the paradigm for his behaviour - through Mrs Grant - and the means to commence this behaviour, the address of Rose's half-sister Nance Whitmore - through Mr Grant.

Chapter three (pp.20-27) shows Charley re-encountering 'Middlewitch, whom he had met, in July at the Centre where he had been to have his new leg fitted' (p.20). This encounter with a fellow amputee emphasizes Charley's present state and places him in the present. However, the past is also evoked as Middlewitch and Charley have lunch together in a bar where the barmaid is called Rose. The narrative states that Charley denies Rose a second time by boasting that he had a child by her after telling the story of Mr Grant giving him Nance's address. Middlewitch picks this up and talks of the importance of 'getting your oats ... I grant there's a lot of it around' (p.24). This play on the name of Mr Grant both associates Middlewitch with Grant - preparing the way for a more direct association in the next chapter when we are told that Middlewitch used to lodge at Charley's lodgings having been recommended by Mr Grant - and reminds us that Nance's address is a gift granted to Charley by Mr Grant. In so doing Nance is associated with the present of wartime promiscuity. Indeed Middlewitch explicitly states the association with promiscuity by criticizing Charley for not taking advantage of having Nance's address and goes on to contrast the present with the past of enforced celibacy and inactivity in the prisoner-of-war camp:

... All the hundreds of thousands of service men coming and going in a port. Well, I mean, it's war isn't it, *c'est la guerre*. Makes brutes out of

women ... When we were over in Hunland, thinking of home, didn't you and I imagine summer evenings and roses and all that guff, with a lovely little lump of mischief in the old car of course, but most of the time we were like kids dreaming for the moon, and perhaps for a little accident to happen to them with a girl (p.25).

Charley responds by saying, 'My girl died while I was out there ... I've been down to the place they buried her but everything's different.' (Ibid.). This allows Middlewitch to advise Charley to live in the present:

... I've kept in touch with some of the lads from our lot, and one or two have drawn their horns in, gone inside of themselves, if you follow me. Now that's dangerous. All you're doing is to perpetuate the conditions you've lived under, which weren't natural. Well, my advice to them and to you is, snap out of it (p.26).

Middlewitch is positioned as a counterpoint to Charley, being firmly in the present while Charley is shown brooding upon the past, a past that he has created from within himself through his obsession with Rose. Indeed Charley is on the point of delving into the past and will do so, ironically, when he takes Middlewitch's advice to visit Nance because instead of associating Nance with the present, Charley will associate her with the past by mistaking her for Rose.

Chapter four (pp.28-33) shows another point in Charley's present, his lodgings associated with another character, his landlady: 'MRS. FRAZIER sat beside Charley, in front of a roaring fire, in the bed sitting room he hired from her.' (p.28). Mrs Frazier like Middlewitch is formed by present circumstances which she exploits, telling Charley that she has given him the last of the coal 'who had a ton and a half stowed safe in the other cellar.' (p.29), at a time when coal was so critical to the war effort that conscripts intended for the armed services were instead being diverted to

the coal mines.¹⁵ Mrs Frazier's hoarding of coal links to the selfishness that Charley perceived in Mr Grant, and similarly evokes the Great War divide between soldier and civilian. A link is also made to the future. Mrs Frazier tells a story about two people who looked the same, foreshadowing Charley seeing Rose in Nance Whitmore, and the translated memoir that James sends to Charley. Significantly the story ends without Charley taking it in, just as Charley, once he meets Nance Whitmore, will not be able to take in the fact that she is not Rose. The past is shown to be unwittingly in the present, and linked to the future.

Chapter five (pp.34-43) heralds the end of Charley's sojourn in the present. Miss Dorothy Pitter arrives as Charley's assistant, the product of a prolonged correspondence. We are told that Miss Pitter has been unaware of this so that to her it seems as though the decision to move her was taken quickly. This is conveyed in a long sentence on page 34, which again serves to hold up narrative action, representing the slowness and the invisibility of the bureaucratic machine. For Charley the transfer has taken a long time because he is viewing it from his request to its implementation. Dot, unaware of the machinations, thinks that she has been pitched at short notice into a new job. This provides an association with what has been happening in the first four chapters of the novel the build up of links to the past - while Charley remains unaware

¹⁵ See, for example, Panter-Downes, p.308. Angus Calder describes the shortage of coal at this time: 'After the crisis of 1942, the public had loyally saved the situation by cutting back their use of fuel. But in the winter of 1943-44, the crisis returned. The month to month restrictions on household deliveries which had been enforced from July 1941 to August 1942 was reimposed so stringently that in the south-east, in January 1944, the householder might officially receive no more than four hundredweight for the month, and that only if he had less than one ton stock', Angus Calder, 1969, *The People's War*, p.431 (Pimlico, 1996).

of their being forged. Dorothy is introduced to Charley's system 'which had kept him sane throughout the first re-flowering of Rose' (p.35). Re-flowering suggests both a return to life for Rose and her recreation in a virginal state of being, a reversal of the adulterous affair and a preparation for the conventional domesticity that Charley is eventually to realize with Nance Whitmore. Dot becomes a part of the system that for the moment anchors Charley to the present by distracting him from Rose: 'It was a great relief to have her, it let him get back to his digs at a reasonable hour each night, and that at a time when he had got over Rose ...' (p.36). However, the system is shown to precipitate his finding a version of Rose by a series of linked events, reflecting the linked events that are represented in the first five chapters of *Back*. An error occurs, Dorothy is involved; Charley kisses her on the temple to console her. This reawakens his interest in women. After work, walking home, he finds himself within a few yards of Nance Whitmore's flat. Her name on a door card, 'Miss Nancy Whitmore, in Gothic lettering as cut on tombstones' (p.43) links back to the first chapter and his search for Rose in the graveyard. Charley thinks she must be a prostitute, evoking wartime promiscuity,

Yet he knocked.
She opened the door almost at once. He looked. He sagged. Then something went inside. It was as though the frightful starts his heart was giving had burst a vein. He pitched forward, in a dead faint, because there she stood alive, so close that he could touch, and breathing, the dead spit, the living image, herself, Rose in person.'
(Ibid.).

Charley's 'dead faint' at the end of this part of *Back* signifies the death of the present . This has been prepared for by the tombstone lettering of Nance's name on the door and the link back to the opening of the novel in the graveyard where Rose is buried. This association with Rose prepares us for the second part of the novel in which

Charley brings the past back to life by finding Rose in Nance. That Charley 'pitched forward in a dead faint' signifies that the past he is about to relive through Nance is a necessary step to his moving forward into the future, that he is a patient compelled by the external forces of war-time Britain to behave, in the second part of the novel, as though he has been pitched forward into the past.

The implicit second part of *Back* explores the need to connect the present with the past. Charley is presented awaking from his dead faint with his head in Nance's lap, believing that she is Rose, his head positioned like the body of a baby. Charley is being reborn into his past. Rod Mengham points out that Rose, from Charley's perspective, is synonymous with the immediate pre-war period,¹⁶ that is the year between the Munich crisis and the outbreak of war. However, this pre-war past is also connected in the narrative of *Back* to the present. This, like so much of my reading of the first five chapters of *Back*, is achieved by association. It is Nance Whitmore whom Charley mistakes for Rose, a mistake that persuades him it 'was as it had been six years back' (p.44). We discover that two of the characters most wedded to the present are connected to Nance Whitmore. Middlewitch lives across the landing from her and Mr Grant is her father. To further connect to the present of war, Charley breaks a teacup, a symbol of domesticity which is deployed further in this part of the novel: Charley replaces the teacup, representing his wish to repair the domesticity he has disrupted, and we are told that the breakage leaves Nance with only one usable cup, representing the narrative present of war-time austerity.

Why does Charley need to convince himself that Rose is alive? Why does he mistake Nance Whitmore for Rose when others - Rose's widower, Rose's mother -

¹⁶ See Rod Mengham, 1982, *The Idiom of the Time*, p.159 (Cambridge University Press).

cannot see a resemblance? The answer has been prepared for in the first part of *Back* when we are told that Charley's present state of being is 'the flowering of four years imprisonment' (p.41). Charley is another representative figure of Green's generation in Green's fiction, a character who has been prepared for war only to have the opportunity to participate taken from him, here by being taken prisoner sometime in 1940, either at, or towards, the end of the phoney war period. David Wild, who was taken prisoner in 1940 during the fall of France, described, upon his return to England in 1945, the effect of having been out of the war:

. . . . for company I found a pleasant assortment of strangers. They were the Third Officer of one of the Queens, a New Zealand subaltern and a black Jamaican RAF Flight Lieutenant. All three had abundant recent experience of active service, and when I let on that I had just emerged from five years of useless incarceration, my disclosure was clearly a conversation-stopper. This was a reaction to be experienced many times in the coming months by me, and I suspect by many others. It was like letting on in public that one was suffering from an unmentionable terminal illness. Most people were quite sympathetic, but did not really want to know how we had filled up five years of enforced inactivity.¹⁷

To emphasize his enforced inactivity, and to link it to the formative experience of the Great War for Green's generation, Charley has been told by Rose's husband and Rose's father of their Great War experience in the first part of *Back*. Charley, like Green's first published fictional representative of his generation, John Haye in *Blindness*, needs a substitute for war to compensate for losing the opportunity to achieve active war service. For John Haye it is achieved by a substitute wound, his blindness, and his struggle to exist in this new state of being. Charley finds it in his adulterous affair with Rose, a disrupter of domesticity signifying war. The need,

¹⁷ Wild, p.271.

associated with Rose, is indicated by the text: 'he found of an evening ... that he barely existed, lived in a daze now that Rose was over' (p.41). Charley, in the first part of *Back*, is shown struggling to ignore Rose. In the second part of *Back* he is shown struggling to exist. Therefore he has to find a substitute for Rose to be his substitute for war. This double substitute for war is Nance Whitmore.

As far as Charley is concerned Rose is now alive: 'HE loved Rose desperately and despairingly now'. This is connected to war by allusion to Cyril Connolly's *The Unquiet Grave* (1944) when we are told that Charley's bed 'had been an unquiet grave all night' (p.52). Writing in 1950 Connolly echoes Charley's struggle:

The Unquiet Grave is inevitably a war-book. Although the author tried to extricate himself from the war and to escape from his time and place into the right empyrean of European thought, he could not long remain above the clouds.¹⁸

Descending into his past with Rose, Charley is reconnected with the war through the dialogue of others: 'A woman behind said, "They're like flies those bloody `uns, and

¹⁸ Cyril Connolly, 1944, "Introduction", *The Unquiet Grave*, p.xi (Persea, 1988). Indeed the parallel between *Back* and *The Unquiet Grave* can be extended. The ghost of Rose must be appeased, just as the ghost of Palinurus must be appeased in *The Unquiet Grave*, as Connolly explained, 'The plot of the book is contained in the title. *The Unquiet Grave* first suggests the tomb of Palinurus, pilot of Æneas; it is the cenotaph from which he haunts us. 'The ghost of Palinurus must be appeased'. He is the core of melancholy and guilt that works destruction on us from within. But the title is also that of an old border ballad in which a lover haunts the grave of his mistress and troubles her sleep: 'The wind doth blow tonight, my love,/ And a few small drops of rain,/I never had but one true love,/In cold grave she was lain'. He remains by her grave for a year and a day ... until she dismisses him: 'The stalk is withered dry my love,/So will our hearts decay,/So make yourself content my love,/Till God calls you away' (Ibid., pp. xiii-xiv). Similarly Charley will depart from the past of Rose to look for a future with Nance Whitmore.

my goodness are they being flitted" ... "Lost 'is leg in the war I'll bet," another voice came ...' (p.53). This is again connected, by association, to the past of the Great War. Charley, deciding that Mrs Frazier is in league with Mr. Grant to deny that Rose is alive, takes a taxi to his lodgings, and is directed to the fruiterers, Blundens. This evokes the writer Edmund Blunden and his memoir of the Great War, *Undertones of War* (1928), suggesting that Charley is experiencing his own undertones of war. Mrs Frazier again evokes the exploitative civilian envisaged by Great War combatants as she wants to use Charley to get to the head of the queue, and she tells Charley, and us, that she is contented with this state of affairs when she says, '... Mr Blunden is always good to me' (p.56).

Connecting the present with the past provides a substitute experience for what has been lost. This is not, as in *Blindness*, an ongoing state. It is a means of catching up with the present and preparing for the future as war is ending. The infatuation with Rose is a temporary substitute for war, to be replaced by love for Nance who represents the domestic future of peace. This is prepared for in the 'translation' that James sends to Charley. Translation suggests that we can use the story to translate Charley's experience. To assist us in this reading the translation is linked to Rose when we are told that it comes from a literary review Rose had liked. Indeed 'review' further suggests that we can translate the content as a reviewing of Charley's past relationship with Rose. James writes on the cover, 'Read, mark, learn and inwardly digest' (p.87). The narrator tells us that Charley will not see this, suggesting that it can be read as an instruction to the reader. James also marks the translation with a cross. Charley recognizes the review and, providing another link to Rose, we are told that he thinks for a moment that the cross must be an old kiss from Rose. We could also read it as a cross marking a grave, reminding us that Rose is dead. We are invited

to read a parallel to Charley's first encounter with Nance when we are told that he had not intended to read the review until 'his eye caught a bit about a girl fainting' (Ibid.). Our eyes are caught too, we are prepared by the narrative to read the translation as a parallel to Charley's experience in which the girl 'Sophie Septimanie de Richelieu' represents Charley. The translation tells the story of Septimanie's transfer of love from her dead lover, the Count de Gisors, to his living half brother, Severin de Guys.¹⁹ If we read the story as a parallel, we then anticipate that Charley will transfer his love from his dead lover Rose to her living half sister Nance. We would also anticipate a tragic end to this relationship, as in the translation. This creates an ambivalent ending to the novel. On the last page of *Back* we are told that, like Charley and Edith in *Loving*, Charley and Nance will live happily together as Charley weeps on Nance's body. This ambivalence – happy marriage or tragedy - suggests the dichotomy of the ideal of heroism and the reality of horror that had been Green's generation's perception of war since the end of the First World War. In *Back*, it evokes the uncertainty that the end of the Second World War meant for Green's generation. However, reading this translation of his own present, past and future has a beneficial effect upon Charley, he has his first good night's rest for weeks, signifying that he is now settled on the path he will take through the narrative.

There is a pivotal point in this part of the novel representing Charley transferring his love from Rose to Nance. This occurs in the chapter which narrates the visit of Charley and Dot to James over the August holiday weekend. We are prepared for this

¹⁹ Indeed we could go further and read the Vidame de Poitiers gift of bearer bonds to de Guys as equivalent to Nance arranging that Charley receives clothes coupons from the Grants.

pivotal chapter, when, at the end of the preceding chapter, Charley cuts up the letters he had kept from Rose:

he realized he had destroyed, cut into ribbons, every letter he had ever had from Rose. Then he despaired, blaming himself. But he could think of no other way to get an expert opinion. And he knew Nance was really Rose. And, after all, that had killed her letters.

So, for the evening, he mourned the fact that Rose's treachery had destroyed the last there was left to him, the letters which, for all the months and years in Germany, had been what he was most afraid to find mislaid, or lost, when he got back (p.118).

This is the end of his infatuation with Rose and is represented by Charley sleeping that night 'very well for once' (Ibid.). This provides a link to the next chapter where Charley again 'slept well for once' (p.135) after discovering that Dot Pitter is sleeping with James, preparing him for his relationship with Nance by removing the prospect of a romantic entanglement with Dot. We also possess the knowledge that James provides resolution, as represented by his providing the translation from the review that reflects Charley's relationship with Rose and Nance. Here the further resolution is provided by James removing the possibility of Charley establishing a relationship with Dot, thus impelling him towards Nance.

The visit takes place in the month in which the end of the war could be imagined.

As Mrs Robert Henrey pointed out:

AUGUST, so packed with exciting news from France where two major fronts had by now developed, also brought the first real sunshine of the summer ... here and there, almost for the first time since the war began, you could see a dash of bright paint in the street where somebody was able to liven up a door or façade. People considered that the war was virtually finished and, though apprehensive of some new and more horrible secret weapon that might supersede the flying bomb, they looked enquiringly into the future, wondering what peace in Europe would bring.²⁰

²⁰ Henrey, pp.214-215.

War and the Writing of Henry Green

The Allied armies were advancing through France and 'On 24 August Paris fell to the Americans and French.'²¹ The liberation of Paris was an important psychological milestone to the end of war and was marked by a victory peal rang by the bells of Westminster Abbey.²² The convoys of American soldiers thundering past James' house represent the perception that the American army was making progress in France.

However, liberation and the prospect of the end of war brought new worries, contributing to the sense of instability in the present. As Angus Calder points out:

people were gloomier, rather than brighter, as the military position improved. While fears of mass unemployment after the war were receding, as people grew used to new security at work, it seemed clear to many that the future would be little better than the past . . . war strain clearly played its part . . .²³

Calder identifies a link between what has been endured in the past and perceptions of the future. Concern about the present represented in *Back* should also be factored in: the cost, in terms of destruction, of liberating Europe. This concern was represented in Erik Linklater's *Private Angelo* (1946), in a number of dialogues initiated by Private Angelo on the liberation of Italy, of which the following is an example:

'Would you say that this village has been liberated?' asked Angelo.
'Oh, properly liberated,' said the soldier. 'There isn't a roof left in it.'

²⁴

²¹ Thompson, Julian, 1994, *The Imperial War Museum Book of Victory in Europe*, p.141 (Sidgwick & Jackson).

²² See Henrey, p.217, for a report of this event. So important was this psychological milestone that the bells were rung on 23rd August even though Paris was not completely liberated until the 24th.

²³ Calder, *People's War*, p.525.

²⁴ Erik Linklater, 1946, *Private Angelo*, p.87 (Jonathan Cape, 1973).

Back: it was a time of war

The destructiveness of liberation enters *Back* as the convoys of American trucks shake the house all day, Dot has to yell to make herself heard, and it is difficult to get over to the pub where the darts are shaken off the dartboard. This link to the destructiveness of war emphasizes the present, a present in which the future end of war is in sight, such that a view can be taken of how the destructiveness of war looks from the perspective of peace.

At this point in the novel past, present and future are all in view. Time is represented as veering between past, present and future in contrast to the chronological narrative progress deployed in the rest of the novel. The point around which time revolves is James' final provision of resolution, his sleeping with Dot. At first the narrative progresses chronologically. The first night is narrated from Dot's point of view. The next day, and the second evening when James sleeps with Dot, follow. However, the narrative now reverts to first night downstairs and is told from the men's point of view. Charley and James are talking, discussing Rose, and Charley's imprisonment. Just as the narrative has moved into the past so have James and Charley in dialogue. They move on to talk about Charley taking James to visit Nance. Here the narrative has Charley discarding Rose. He is 'now ashamed of what he had felt for Rose' (p.123) and two pages later he knew: 'Rose was gone and he'd got rid of her' (p.125). Finally Charley in bed 'had a short spell of Rose before he began to feel he was in Germany again' (p.128). The past, represented by Rose, that Charley adopted upon his return from Germany is now discarded. Hence Charley feels he is in Germany again, ready to start anew, freeing the narrative to move to the future. It moves on, in one paragraph, to the next day, the first morning of Dot's visit, then the following morning when Charley brings her a cup of tea after James has slept with her.

Having disrupted chronological progress, the narrative re-links past, present and future. The next paragraph reverts to the first morning when Charley encounters 'Rose's precious Mrs Gubbins', a link with his past and Rose. To emphasize the links from present to past and future James sleeping with Dot is referred to as 'what was to happen had not occurred yet' (p.129), although we have already been told in narrative what does happen. James tells Dot of the pergola he plans to build in the back garden with 'roses trained up for old time's sake' (p.130). This is a link to both the past represented by Rose and a link to the future when Charley will kiss Nance in the rose garden of a bombed house. We are reminded that we are still in the present of war when five buzz bombs come over on the first morning and this is repeated on the second morning. This is referred to in narrative time as 'bed plus one day', indicating that time has begun anew, that once James has slept with Dot time is re-ordered so that the future can come into view. Charley meets Middlewitch who attempts to position Charley in the present with him: 'It's not for the likes of you and me to set up a little home' (p.133). We know by now that Middlewitch is an unreliable character and steeped in the present. As Charley is now being directed by the narrative towards the future, Middlewitch's statement becomes ironic comment. Charley will set up 'a little home' with Nance Whitmore - or rather Nance will set up a little home for him.

The story told in this chapter, once the twists and knots of time have been unravelled, is of Charley's final journey into the past and the beginning of a new journey into the future. Charley brings Dot from the city to James in the country. In *Caught* the city represents the present of war, the country represents the past of the pre-war. We are reminded of this when the narrative reverts to the first morning where they had an egg each for breakfast. This contributes to a reading of the country as being associated with the pre-war, for as Angus Calder points out, 'The distribution

of eggs in shell was controlled so that most people might expect no more than thirty per year'.²⁵ The suggestion of pre-war is also triggered by the visit temporal place at the end of August. This serves a dual function evoking both the end of war as the Allied armies advance in France and the past of the pre-war, the time of year of the Munich crisis in 1938 which, for Green, marked the beginning of the war. The pre-war in *Back* is the time of the triangular relationship between Charley, Rose and James, with Rose pregnant and leading both men to believe that they are the father of her child. The suggestion of pre-war allows the narrative to present us with a replaying of this triangular relationship. Dot is put in Rose's old room, the sexual significance emphasized by the narrative: 'She looked brazenly at where she was to sleep. Because, she felt, she knew what she was there for. It was a double bed all right' (p.119). She talks of making this room her own by carving her name on the window. She expects that Charley will sleep with her. On the second night James sleeps with her 'though everything had been so dark she hadn't known till after' (p.121). This represents the climax of Charley's obsession with Rose, which leaves him unable to take advantage of the sexual opportunity that Dot presents, but is the cause of his being pushed onto Nance. Charley is now being driven by the narrative towards the future; hence he does not seek to form a second triangular relationship with Dot and James. He considers that Dot has betrayed him; he, inadvertently, has her removed from her job. She is finally linked to Rose for, as she leaves the office for the last time, Charley denies Rose for the third and final time. The final obstacle to his relationship with Nance is removed when, in the chapter following the visit to Essex, the handwriting expert confirms there is no resemblance between Rose's and

²⁵ Calder, *People's War*, p.381.

Nance's writing. However, given everything that has happened in Essex, 'this did not seem important now' (p.136). Charley visits Nance again where, as the narrative indicates, he considers a relationship with her, rather than with Rose, this being brought about by his failure with Dot.

He was allowing himself a long examination of her appearance, as he has never dared to when they met previously. She was very well aware of this. But what she could not know was that it was directly due to Dot. This girl's treachery with Phillips had awakened him to possibilities, and now his eyes guardedly took her in while, at the same time, as never before, he got no impression of his Rose. He was comparing Nance with Miss Pitter. So that he ignored the girl he had loved, who was gone (p.140).

Once the pivotal point has been passed the narrative discards characters who are associated with the present. James, having performed his role as provider of resolution, is no longer required. We are told that Mr Grant is ill while Mrs Grant has recovered from the mental illness that immersed her in the past and now has control over her husband and, consequently, control over the present. As Nance points out, 'conditions are properly topsy turvy with them at the moment' (p.149). This recalls the reversal of dominance between husband and wife represented by the Duprets in *Living* and suggests that Mr Grant, like Mr Dupret, will die allowing his son, here represented by Charley, to realize his inheritance, the granted gift of Nance. Nance is invited to Redham by Mrs Grant, contributing further evidence to my reading. The illness of Mr Grant allows Nance Whitmore to take up residence in Redham, which apparently unaffected by the war has 'a splendid train service still' (p.164). She prepares the house, unaffected by the disruption of domesticity signified by war, to be the domestic future for Charley. Nance 'appeared to take everything about this house in her stride, and, at the same time, to pump life into it' (p.171). Redham, now brought to life by Nance, becomes the central location of the novel. Middlewitch

travels to Redham to ask for help having lost his job. Mrs Frazier, who has been represented as a cynically exploitative wartime civilian, attempts to visit but is repulsed. These characters have no place in the future represented by a Redham pumped full of life by Nance. It is Mrs Grant's behaviour, her recovery, now that Mr Grant is dying, from the mental illness in which she positioned herself in the past of the Great War, which continues to be a paradigm for Charley as he emerges from the past represented by his obsession with Rose.

Charley's reawakened obsession with Rose in this part of the novel has been brought into being by Nance appearing to Charley to be the embodiment of Rose. As this part of *Back* moves towards its close, appearances, and the memories they evoke, are resolved in the new relationship between Charley and Nance. Mrs Grant reminds Charley of his mother; Charley reminds Nance of her husband. Mrs Grant tells Charley that it is as if Rose has come back but denies a resemblance to Rose in Nance; that would be to look to the past rather than the future. This culminates in the penultimate chapter of this implicit second part of *Back* when Nance compares her relationship with Phil to Charley's with Rose:

“Well, what did your Rose mean to you?” she began, rather wild.
“Was she a part of you? Did you wake with her in the morning? Did you know what was in her mind when she was a thousand miles overseas. Oh Phil,” she said, and could not go on. (pp.171-2).

Nance has been shown as a nurturer, pumping life into the house at Redham. Here she is seeking to mend both broken relationships - hers with her dead husband, Charley's with Rose - by forming a new relationship with Charley. To do this she seeks to replace Rose for Charley. She asks Charley to take her where he used to take Rose. This has a sexual connotation, which the narrative emphasizes, demonstrating that Nance is taking the initiative by urging Charley to take the part of a lover:

“I don’t know this part,” she pointed out. “Lord, aren’t there any Lovers’ Lanes round here or anything?”

He laughed. “I wouldn’t know.” he said.

“Oh yes you would, dear. Take me where you used to take her, then.”
(p.172)

Now we are presented with the connection of past, present and future being associated with the developing relationship between Nance and Charley. The present and the past come into view, 'Autumn was the season, most roses were dead summer now gone'. Summer is now in the past. Autumn is the present, but autumn also evokes the pre-war through Louis MacNeice's *Autumn Journal* and the time of Charley's triangular relationship with Rose. This echo of the immediate pre-war is replaced by the present of the war as 'the syrens set up a broken wailing' (p.173) and Charley and Nance enter the rose garden of a bombed house. As they enter the rose garden the narrative deploys long sentences. This recalls the long sentences in the first chapter of the novel, representing a difference between what Charley thinks and feels, and used there to undermine Charley's denial of Rose and suggest that he will become obsessed with her. Here the long sentence is again used to hold up narrative action and signal a change in Charley's relationship with a woman, now the replacement of Rose by Nance.

But when they got round the red garage, which was intact, and a privet hedge, which in this red light, and because it was shaded, burned a dark glowing violet, they found what had been the rose garden, enclosed with a low brick wall, and then they had before them, the outlines edged in red, stunted, seemingly withered, rose trees which had survived the blast as though it had never happened, and, for a screen, at the back, a single line of dwarf cypresses, five feet high with brown trailing leafless briars looped from one to the other, from one black green foliage to its twin as green and black, briars that had borne gay rose, after rose, after wild rose, to sway under summer rain, to spatter the held drops, to touch a forehead, perhaps to wet the brown eyes of someone idly searching these cypresses for an abandoned nest whence fledglings, for they go before the coming of a rose, had long been gone, long ago now had flown (p.174).

The roses are 'seemingly withered' rather than dead beyond doubt. However, as the sentence moves on it becomes clear that the roses that once gave pleasure are now in the past. This past pleasure is linked to loss of innocence, the fledglings 'go before the coming of the rose', although this also implies, by association, that fledglings will come again, this time for Charley and Nance. Hence, in the rose garden, past, present and future come together as Nance kisses Charley, the kiss being a weapon that Nance deploys to cleave Rose from Charley.

"Was it like that?" she asked, as though nothing had happened.
He made to grab her up to him once more. But she twisted away.
"Was it?" she repeated. He did not realize that she was aiming at Rose
(p.175).

We discover in the final chapter of this implicit second part that, while Nance and Charley have been establishing their relationship in the rose garden of the blitzed house, Mr Grant, a representative of the present has had 'another bad turn' and is now dying. As the doctor arrives, Charley sums up the story of the novel, and in so doing articulates the tripartite structure of the novel:

That time, in the office, when he put his face against hers because she was crying, had led to his call on Nance, which had caused him to take Dot down to Jim Phillips, which, in its turn, had pushed him on here to Nance (p.177).

Charley also relates his future to Grant's death:

'Wasn't it just like his luck the old man should have another bad turn, exactly when his own affairs promised better? Then, with surprising intuition, he supposed that one crisis in this life inevitably brings on another . . .' (p.179).

This is then elevated to a religious experience: 'After his war experiences he had a sort of holy regard for death in bed, whereas dying out of doors meant damn all to him.' (Ibid.). Mr Grant's death represents the final death of the old order, the present and

the past. Hence it is announced, as if it were the death of a monarch, by shouts, running feet, slamming doors, yelling and sobbing 'the culmination of which was to remind Summers of something in France' (p.183). The old order is linked to war; its death represents the end of the war, the beginning of the future of peace: the king is dead, long live the king. Finally Nance arrives to confirm Mr Grant's death. 'She stood proud, grave, and lovely It was when he saw her as she was looking at that moment, when, finally, she brought him peace, that he knew he really loved her' (p.184). This is the end of the implicit second part of *Back*, the past and present die as Charley is shown to realize that he loves Nance.

The counterpart to the instability of war is a search for stability. In *Back* this stability is the conventional domesticity of settling down to marriage and children associated by Green's generation with peace and, in this context, evoking the future, the end of the war. Peace, for Green's generation, was also linked with the feminine. For example Green, in *Pack My Bag*, represents the 'feminine' interests of boys at public school after the Great War. Thus the main female character in *Back*, Nance Whitmore, is represented as a pioneer, within the context of the novel, in the sphere of conventional domesticity. Nance prepares a domestic haven at the Grant's house in Redham and then leads Charley to it. The middle part of *Back* has brought us to the point where Charley realizes that he loves Nance. That is, he is on the point of realizing his future, a future of peace, of conventional domesticity, of marriage and children with Nance. The final part of *Back* concerns itself with bringing this future stability into being. Here Charley is a patient. Just as his adulterous affair is shown to have been brought into being by the agency of Rose, by her marriage to James, so Nance brings about conventional domesticity for Charley, in an unconventional manner, suiting her status as pioneer, by proposing to him, and taking him on a trial

trip, 'for the first time in what was to be a happy married life' (p.207). However, war does not cleanly end. Charley's boss advises him to marry and settle down but then argues with his wife on the 'phone. The ambivalence remains at the end of the novel in Charley's acceptance of the conventional domesticity that Nance offers him on their 'trial trip' as he calls out, 'Rose'.

The concluding part of *Back* represents the future belonging to the conventional domesticity being created at Redham by Nance. Redham is central to the conclusion of *Back*. Indeed it is literally central being sandwiched between two episodes: Charley being lectured by his boss on the desirability of marriage, and Charley and Nance at Ernie Mandrew's. At Redham Charley finds domestic peace:

"I'm O.K." he assured her. He found, as he had done recently, that he was quietened by having her there, and then the kittens were domestic, like having your slippers off to a fire (p.190).

At Redham the characters use names associated with conventional family domesticity. Mrs Grant is 'mother', the dead Mr Grant is 'father', and Mrs Grant tells Charley that Nance 'was no more to me than my own daughter could have been' (p.191).

Mrs Grant, now the matriarch of Redham, encourages marriage. She offers the model of her own marriage with Mr Grant, now that he is safely dead. Mr Grant represents the death of the present; hence this encouragement of marriage is presented as the one point upon which Nance and Mrs Grant disagree. To ensure that the present, represented by Mr Grant, is properly disposed of before the future can begin, a physical relationship between Nance and Charley must be postponed until after the funeral.

Greatly daring he turned to her, and made as if to put an arm around her waist.

"Steady," she warned him. "We shan't want much of that, shall we, or not until after the funeral, at all events?" (p.194).

The last elements of the present and the past will be disposed of by Nance. She invites Charley to Ernie Mandrew's. The narrative recalls the earlier pivotal episode at James' cottage during the August holiday, telling us that Nance used 'almost exactly the same words he had used to Dot Pitter, on a previous occasion' (pp.199-200). This also allows Nance to dispose of the present associated with Middlewitch. When Charley worries that Middlewitch will be at Ernie Mandrew's as he was during the August holiday, Nance replies that he is out of favour. Nance asks Charley to think of the future: "'Would you ever want to have children?'" she asked' (p.201). This turns Charley's thoughts to the past and the possibility that he fathered Rose's child, allowing Nance to dismiss Rose: "'Oh, I believe it was only your old Rose," she brought out at last, very much relieved' (p.202).

Nance takes the initiative by proposing to Charley. Stipulating only that they should have a 'trial trip' before the marriage. Although this is a sexual relationship outside marriage it is not promiscuous, it is presented as a preparation for the conventional domesticity of marriage. On this trial trip Charley

burst into tears again, he buried his face in her side just below the ribs, and bawled like a child. "Rose," he called out, not knowing he did so, "Rose."

"There," Nancy said, "there," pressed his head with her hands. His tears wetted her. The salt water ran down between her legs. And she knew what she had taken on. It was no more or less, really, than she had expected (p.207).

Here the articulation of Rose is ambivalent. It could be read as Rose remaining alive in Charley's memory. It could also be read as an involuntary expression of grief immediately prior to the consummation of the sexual relationship between Charley and Nance which will mark the final death of Rose for Charley. The phrase, 'salt water ran down between her legs', has connotations with both sexual intercourse and

birth. It signifies both the present of 'the trial trip' and the future of Charley's and Nance's conventional domestic marriage and the attainment of the future of peace.

I read *Back* as telling the story of the circuitous route given to the novel's protagonist, Charley Summers who has to explore his past before he can realize his future. Time is linked to phases of the war. The present is war coming to an end, the future is peace, the past is the immediate pre-war and early stages of the war comprising the phoney war and the fall of France. These phases, as in my reading of Green's previous war novels, I link to the disruption of domesticity with the addition that the attainment of peace is linked to the reinstatement of domesticity, in particular the building of a home suitable for a soldier returning from the war, which in turn depends upon the removal of those characters, like Mr Grant and Middlewitch, who would disrupt domesticity. This theme links *Back* to novels, published during the last years of the war, that took disruption of domesticity in various forms as a theme, for example, Nigel Balchin's *The Small Back Room* (1943), L.P. Hartley's *The Shrimp and the Anemone* (1944), Rosamond Lehmann's *The Ballad and the Source* (1944), Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited* (1945). The effect of my reading of *Back* is to convey the Second World War as a supreme experience for Green's generation, a reluctance to let this experience go, such that Charley is not only back from the war, but is also back in the war and this will always be so. Hence his utterance of 'Rose' at the end of the novel is finally both grieving for the end of the war experience that Rose represents and an attempt to hold onto that war experience.

Chapter 8: *Concluding*: frozen in the high summer of the State

Concluding (1948) is set in a state-dominated future at a former Great House in the English countryside converted to a boarding school for ‘embryo State Servants’.¹ Its narrative action is bounded by Rock, a retired scientist, awakening ‘with a groan’ to his falling asleep ‘well satisfied with his day’, a day that has been split into three parts. The novel’s structure, typical of Green’s novels since *Living*, comprises unnumbered chapters marked by short gaps. However, in *Concluding*, unlike his previous novels where tripartite structure is to a large degree implicit, created by narrative action, two larger gaps explicitly mark the three parts. The tripartite structure narrates a day set in a shabby state-controlled future extrapolated from contemporary British post-war conditions experienced by Green’s generation. As such it is similar to Orwell’s dystopian post-war novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949). However, unlike *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, *Concluding* explicitly uses the public school system as the basis of its representation of a totalitarian state, recalling similar sentiments expressing the similarity of public schools to totalitarian states from Green’s interim autobiography, *Pack My Bag* (1940). Furthermore, whereas *Nineteen Eighty-Four* warns that a war fought to transform society could be hijacked by a virulent totalitarianism, *Concluding* depicts, from a position of nostalgic regret, a society in which an old order has died but a new order does not have the strength to

¹ *Concluding*, 1948, p.25 (Harvill, 1997). Hereafter page references to *Concluding* will appear in the body of the text.

survive. Indeed “Dying” was the title that Green put on the novel’s final draft ² before settling for the characteristically ambiguous *Concluding* with its double meaning of ‘ending’ and ‘drawing inferences’ as Green pointed out in a letter to Jean MacGibbon.³ We have to draw inferences from the text of *Concluding* as with all Green’s writing. The inferences here are drawn by comparing and contrasting *Concluding* with contemporary post-war socio-economic conditions in Britain and the socio-historical observations of Green’s generation. This reveals two histories represented in *Concluding*: one is of the perception, particularly amongst Green’s generation, of a general post-war decline, the other is a personal history of preparation for, and participation in, war and a subsequent sense of emptiness once that war has been experienced.

Philip Ziegler summarizes wartime attacks on London and their impact:

London had endured 101 daylight and 253 night attacks Forty-one percent of the flying bomb attacks were on London, 40 percent of the rockets. . . . Thirty per cent of the City had been virtually destroyed, 20 per cent of Stepney and Southwark; 80,000 buildings had been wrecked beyond repair, another 700,000 had suffered more than minor damage.⁴

In *Concluding* lack of adequate housing plays a part. For example, Adams tells Rock, ‘Houses are that short there's no-one safe’ (p.8), a statement linking housing shortage and insecurity. Indeed this ‘insecurity’ is shown to spread as Rock passes his worries regarding the insecurity of tenure of his cottage onto Adams such that Adams, later in the narrative, accuses Rock of conspiring with Edge and Baker, principals of the

² Jeremy Treglown, 1997, “Introduction”, *Concluding*, p.v (Harvill).

³ Quoted Ibid., p.vi.

⁴ Philip Ziegler, 1995, *London At War*, p.337 (Sinclair-Stevenson).

boarding school, to remove him from his home. We can read this housing shortage and consequent insecurity as mirroring the condition of London immediately after the Second World War.

There are also parallels with the socio-historical perceptions of Green's contemporaries. John Lehmann, for example, describes a sense of exhaustion and depletion after six years of war when 'a ruined Europe lay at our feet. The cost had been enormous, in lives, wealth, effort. . . .' ⁵ The sense of national depletion and exhaustion identified by Lehmann has been converted into the personal in *Concluding*. Liz, following her breakdown at work, is too tired to look after herself and must rely on her grandfather. A temporary 'truce' between Edge and Rock, ends in this exchange:

"I am *tired*. I should go home," he said.
"In that case, goodnight," Edge answered from her deep chair, more of an enemy than ever. She had finally decided there would be *nothing*.
"Look after yourself," she added with *tired* venom, while he *dragged* his body out ... (p.204, my italics).

The use of 'truce' and 'enemy' evokes war. However, the exchange between Edge and Rock shows the truce to have been motivated by tiredness. This links exhaustion - 'dragged' - and depletion - 'nothing' - to war's ending, even if it is a temporary ending in the narrative of *Concluding*.

Anthony Powell picturesquely summarizes this sense of having been battered into exhaustion by the war in a passage from his novel, *Books Do Furnish a Room* (1971), set in post-war Britain:

The war had washed ashore all sorts of wrack of sea, on all sorts of coasts. In due course, as the waves receded, much of the flotsam was

⁵ John Lehmann, 1966, *The Ample Proposition*, p.13 (Eyre & Spottiswode).

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to be refloated, a process to continue for several years, while the winds abated. Among the many individual bodies sprawled at intervals on the shingle, quite a lot resisted the receding tide. Some just carried on life where they were on the shore; others - the more determined - crawled inland.⁶

Here war is represented as a watershed for a new form of society suggesting, through the image of new beings crawling inland, both an accelerated evolution and a primeval state of being. In *Concluding* the only determination to get away is shown by Mary and Merode who escape from the school. However, Merode is soon found and Mary, in a reversal of the image used by Powell of evolution from water to land, is presumed drowned at the bottom of the lake. Even physical passion, productive of new life, is depicted as stuck in a dying undersea world when Liz

turned with a smile which was for him alone to let him take her, and helped his heart find hers by fastening her mouth on his as though she were an octopus that had lost its arms to the propellers of a tug, and had only its mouth now with which, in a world of the hunted, to hang onto wrecked spars (p.46).

An octopus without arms will not be able to sustain life. This metaphor used to describe Liz – who, as the narrator tells us, has worked for the state in the position for which the girls at the boarding school are being prepared - suggests a fate these girls are likely to experience, conveying the sense of a society in terminal decline.

This sense of exhaustion was also evident in the economic sphere. A vision of a new post-war prosperity for all had grown during the war nurtured by publications such as the Beveridge Report, taken up not only by the left side of the political spectrum. For example, Douglas Reed, one of the 'right-wing intellectuals of the

⁶ Anthony Powell, 1971, *Books Do Furnish a Room*, p.140 (Fontana, 1978).

G.M. Young-A.P. Herbert type'⁷ could envisage in 1942 a post-war Britain of vigilant citizens keeping

record of all pledges made by Governments and Ministers, for instance, in respect of such matters as the re-employment of men returning after the war, of assistance in the rebuilding of ruined businesses⁸

Optimism flourished towards the end of the war despite the economic pessimism of the Treasury, a pessimism that Correlli Barnett in *The Audit of War* (1986) argues was well founded:

the most chilling wartime predictions of post-war penury and danger of economic collapse were to come true between 1945 and 1950, from the 'economic Dunkirk' (in Keynes's phrase) in late 1945 after the abrupt American ending of Lend-Lease, on through the first perilous post-war balance of payments crisis of 1947 to the great emergency of summer 1949 when actual national bankruptcy seemed all too possible.⁹

Britain did not have the economic strength to bring to life a new post-war way of life.

This state of being produced a post-war society unable at times to provide basic amenities. Hence Powell in his representation of post-war London has

the water main (located next door in a house bombed out and long deserted) passed beyond insulation or control. The public supply of electricity broke down. Baths became a fabled luxury of the past.¹⁰

Lehmann states the sense of economic disillusion when he wrote of the war that 'the full effects of that spending were still to a large extent concealed from us.'¹¹ Hence in

⁷ George Orwell, "As I Please", *Tribune*, 16th June 1944, from Orwell, 1968, *The Collected Essays Journalism and Letters of George Orwell: Volume 3 As I Please*, p.202 (Penguin, 1970).

⁸ Douglas Reed, 1942, *All Our Tomorrows*, p.282 (Jonathan Cape, 1943).

⁹ Correlli Barnett, 1986, *The Audit of War*, p.241 (Macmillan).

¹⁰ Powell, *Books*, p.151.

¹¹ Lehmann *Ample Proposition*, p.13.

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Concluding the future society is represented as having reached an enfeebled state where material wealth, represented by gold and silver, can only be hinted at in the ephemeral weavings of the spiders:

A world through which the young man and his girl had been meandering, in dreaming shade through which sticks of sunlight slanted to spill upon the ground, had been at this point struck to a blaze, and where their way had been dim, on a sea bed past grave trunks, was now this dying, brilliant mass which lay exposed, a hidden world of spiders working on its gold, the webs these made a field of wheels and spokes of wet silver (p.46).

As in *Back* the long sentence is used to hold up narrative action. In *Back* the long sentence provides contrast between vitality and death and decline. Taken out of context we appear to have a similar contrast in *Concluding*, vitality is represented by 'the young man and his girl', death and decline by the phrase 'slanted to spill upon the ground'. However, Green's distinctive ambiguity marks the contrast as more apparent than real for 'his girl' is the debilitated Liz made sick by overwork in state service. This ambiguity suggests decline overcoming vitality. Liz and Sebastian are about to stumble across one of the escapees, Merode. Merode is weakened and has to be assisted back to the school, a symbol of decline entering the school. Indeed decline will again enter the school, as would have been evident to contemporary readers in the representation of the decoration of the school hall with azalea and rhododendron:

In comparatively recent years, a new disease has attacked rhododendrons in this country. It is called "bud blast", and it causes the buds to turn brown and rot¹²

¹² Ibid., p.193. Quoted from *New Soundings I*, a radio feature broadcast on the Third Programme, January 1952.

The narrative action of *Concluding* builds upon this sense of decay when Edge 'looked more closely at the azalea and rhododendron. With a great rush of horror, she realised the whole pile of blooms was alive with bluebottles' (p.105), as though they had been attracted by, and were now feeding off, the decay brought into the school by the rhododendrons. This is, in turn, linked to death as Edge imagines the bluebottles to be attracted by a body concealed beneath the pile of blooms.

The sense of death and decline is also conveyed by the narrative action and the structure of *Concluding*. This narrative action is contained within an explicit tripartite structure comprising unnumbered chapters marked by short gaps, two larger gaps explicitly marking the three parts. Part one, pp.3-90, starts with Rock awakening, and ends with luncheon in the school; part two, pp.91-149, starts with tea, and ends with Rock and Liz on their way to the House for the dance, a yearly ritual marking Founder's Day; part three, pp.150-213, starts with the girls waiting to go to the dance, and ends with Rock going to bed at the end of the day. Rod Mengham observes that '*Concluding* appears as the *summa* of all [Green's] triadic combinations . . . the text is even divided into three parts.'¹³ I consider this as much a change of approach as a *summa*. Triadic combinations in Green's previous novels *Party Going*, *Caught*, *Loving* and *Back* have complemented a tripartite structure which traces paths from the past to or through a present point of war and on to the future. In *Party Going*, which uses compression of narrative action similar to *Concluding*, the future is represented as the coming war. In *Caught* the ending takes the novel back into the war. Although there is little movement in the body of the narrative of *Loving*, like *Back* it presents us with an ending that evokes a future married state. With *Concluding* the significance of

¹³ Rod Mengham, 1982, *The Idiom of the Time*, p.205 (Cambridge University Press).

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the tripartite structure changes to represent the compression of action into a single closed day which contains no sense of a future, and although there is the tracing of a path from past to present this is neither linked to the tripartite structure, nor offers any hint of a future. *Concluding* is closest to *Party Going* in its compression of narrative action. However, whereas *Party Going* anticipates an apocalyptic end in war, *Concluding* mirrors a perception of the terminal decline of post-Second World War Britain. This places Green's writing within a historical cycle as identified by Paul Addison:

Irrational fears are a recurrent element in politics and one we often pass over in retrospect. In the mid-1930s, for example, there was a genuine fear on the Left that the National government intended to introduce fascism in Britain. Similarly, there were people who feared after 1945 that the trend of events was towards a permanent socialist dictatorship with rationing and other controls maintained, not for any pragmatic purpose, but for the sake of levelling and liquidating the middle classes.¹⁴

In *Concluding* the final paragraph says of Rock: 'On the whole he was well satisfied with his day. He fell asleep almost at once in the yellow woollen nightshirt' (p.213). This conveys a sense of not only ending, of Rock having had his day, but also that his life is now compressed into a single day. His falling asleep can be interpreted as a representation of death. This in turns evokes a sense of the ephemeral in keeping with the post-war tiredness and disillusion of Green and his generation, the sense of having been, in Powell's phrase, 'washed ashore'. Even if we read this final paragraph literally, that is that Rock has merely fallen asleep, we can only infer from the evidence of the text that he will awake to another day very similar to the day represented in the narrative. Here in this stasis, history is represented as ending, an

¹⁴ Paul Addison, 1985, *Now the War is Over*, p.43 (Pimlico, 1995).

ending determined for Green's generation by the uncertainty as to the future now that war, the event for which they had been prepared at school, has become a past experience. The only future is a non-future, a decline into nothingness.

In *Concluding* we are shown that an old order has died but that a new order is declining into nothingness, captured in the phrase, 'Everyone was frozen in the high summer of the State' (p.64). This represents, through the inner contradiction of the cold of 'frozen' and the heat of 'high summer', an unsustainable state, bound to dissolve into a watery end, playing on the allusions to drowning in the narrative. Indeed we see the State dissolving. We are shown the inefficiencies of authority represented in the novel, for example Edge's and Baker's indecisiveness in responding to the escape of Merode and Mary, the latter presumed drowned, and Edge's and Baker's committees being cancelled without forewarning, causing their wasted journeys to London. Furthermore State officials, represented by the tutors and Principals of the school find ways to subvert the control of the State without replacing it with anything of substance. For example Birt, Liz's lover and a tutor at the school, circumvents his lack of freedom to express his true thoughts by communicating most of the time by mimicry, as though he realizes that he is not allowed to express his true self. The Principals of the school manoeuvre around state control:

"The way to handle all matters of this sort is to act in the name of the State at once, then congratulate the State on what has been done afterwards," Edge propounded, with a sudden dryness (p.185).

Concluding uses the public school system to represent a future totalitarian state built from contemporary post-war Britain. John Reed in *Old School Ties* observes:

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in *Concluding*, the welfare state has not only adopted the techniques and attitudes of the private educational system, it is transformed, through the symbol of the Institute, into an institution.¹⁵

The school in *Concluding* is linked to decline by being presented as a former Great House in the English countryside converted to a boarding school for 'embryo State Servants' (p.25). It occupies the same territory as Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited* (1945), where the Great House occupied and vandalised by the army, represents the decline of the old order. *Brideshead Revisited* links decline to the war, *Concluding* to school.

Green's representation of school as symbol of death and decline suggests that the war has killed off a form of society in which he felt comfortable. As Reed observes, Green transfers the public school system to the fledgling post-war Welfare State by using the school as a symbol of that state. Given the specific examples in *Concluding* of death and decline linked to school, we can infer that *Concluding* represents the Welfare State as an ineffective substitute for a pre-war state of being. It is natural that the rhododendrons, representing decay, are brought into the school for the school itself is a symbol of post-war decline. Green's views, as represented in *Concluding*, on the effect of the Second World War are similar to those expressed by Nigel Nicolson in writing of his parents Harold Nicolson and Vita Sackville-West:

they both believed that the world which they knew and loved would be irreparably broken by the war. They saw in it the end of *les douceurs de la vie*, represented by [their houses] Sissinghurst and King's Bench Walk. They thought that their past life of literature, Bloomsbury, 'the purchase of books and pictures and the unthinkable enjoyment of food

¹⁵ John R. Reed, 1964, *Old School Ties*, p.246 ((Syracuse University Press).

and wine', a large garden and sufficient servants, was now 'an obsolete tradition'.¹⁶

Green's perception of the historical process that led to this state of post-Second World War decline can be read in *Concluding*. As in *Party Going*, *Caught and Back*, we can trace a path in *Concluding* a path from the past to the present point of the narrative. This path is traced through the meanings attached to the girl's boarding school. These meanings are created by the various time periods evoked by the school: of the contemporary present of the writing and first publication of *Concluding*, of the Second World War, of the inter-war-years public school, of the First World War and its immediate aftermath, of Green's early childhood, of the Victorian public school. Jeremy Treglown reads a connection to Victorian schooling which he finds distracting:

while *Concluding* belongs to both the present and the future, it isn't a fully worked-out allegory, and many details root it in the past - particularly those comic creations, Miss Edge and Miss Baker, variations on the famous Victorian pair of headmistresses, Miss Buss and Miss Beale.¹⁷

I read this as an essential component of the allegory. To complete its allegory *Concluding* traces back a route through the past connected to the present point of the narrative. The meanings that this traced path creates coalesce into two overlapping structures of feeling for Green's generation: that public school is an agent of decline and that school is inextricably linked to war.

¹⁶ Harold Nicolson, *Diaries and Letters, 1939-1945*, ed. Nigel Nicolson (Collins, 1967), quoted in Alan Sinfield, 1989, *Literature, Politics and Culture in Postwar Britain*, p.45 (Blackwell).

¹⁷ Treglown, "Introduction", *Concluding*, p.vii.

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School and war were linked for Green's generation. For example, Orwell reflected after the war upon his experience at private school in 'Such, Such Were the Joys'.

Nostalgia and contempt are both present, although Orwell tends to divide these between his two schools, contrasting his public school, 'Eton, where I was relatively happy' with his preparatory school:

As for St Crypian's, for years I loathed its very name so deeply that I could not view it with enough detachment to see the significance of things that happened to me there. In a way it is only within the last decade that I have really thought over my schooldays, vividly though their memory has always haunted me.¹⁸

It is 'within the last decade', the decade that includes the Second World War, that Orwell thinks over his schooldays, as though it were war and its aftermath that compels this analysis of the past. Orwell wrote 'Such, Such Were the Joys' in 1947,¹⁹ contemporary with Green's writing of *Concluding*. There are connections between the narrative content of the two texts. For example, in *Concluding* the girls at the boarding school are given orderly duties as a reward, an experience that Orwell recalled from his private school where 'The high-water mark of good favour was to be invited to serve at table on Sunday nights'.²⁰ Orwell links the writing of "Such, Such Were the Joys" to the war.

We can infer similar links between war and Green's use of school in *Concluding*. Hence there is in *Concluding* both nostalgia, implicitly, for what has been lost and contempt for what the public school has become, a production line manufacturing

¹⁸ George Orwell, 1947, "Such, Such Were the Joys", from, Orwell, 1968, *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell: Volume 4 In Front of Your Nose*, p.422 (Penguin, 1978).

¹⁹ "Written by May 1947; *Partisan Review*, September-October 1952", Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid., p.401.

state servants. It is the character Rock who is used to both convey loss and voice contempt. Rock can be read as a representative of Green's generation, his great discovery, upon which his reputation rests, having been made at the age of twenty-one, Green's age when he published his first novel, *Blindness* in 1926. Rock directly evokes loss as no-one is now able to remember what this great discovery was. Furthermore he has given up all intellectual effort: his books lie unread, his letters unanswered.²¹ Contempt also becomes centred upon Rock, as it is he who articulates it. He talks of the girls overtaxing themselves (p.5), describes the school as an 'Institute to train State Servants' (p.7), refers to Founders Day as 'the Anniversary of theirs' (p.62), and labels the two Principals of the school 'cruel weasels' (p.145).

As a boarding school for elder girls, the school in *Concluding* evokes the public school system. However, this is not a public school in what had become the traditional sense of the term, a producer of gentlemen,²² by the time Green's generation attended public school in the 1920s. For example, Dr Cyril Norwood, headmaster of Harrow, wrote in 1929:

what has happened in the course of the last hundred years is that the old ideals have been recaptured. The ideal of chivalry which inspired the knighthood of medieval days, the ideal of service to the community which inspired the greatest of the men who founded schools for their

²¹ The model for Rock could have been M.R. James who Green reports, 'had such a contempt for day-to-day affairs that he tossed all incoming mail unopened into a large trunk', Henry Green, "Edward Garnett", *New Statesman*, 30 December 1950, published in, 1992, *Surviving: The Uncollected Writings of Henry Green*, p.133 (Chatto and Windus).

²² See Barnett, p.214 for Cardinal Newman's mid-nineteenth century musings on the role of school and university in producing gentlemen.

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day and for posterity, have been combined in the tradition of English education which holds the field today.²³

The boarding school in *Concluding* is a parody of the public schools attended by Green's generation, for example in its attempt to grow an almost instant tradition around Founder's Day, although the institution is only ten years old. Here school has been transformed from a producer of gentlemen to a state institution to train girls who will go into state service.

The girls attending the boarding school in *Concluding* are learning a vocation just as people were trained for armed service during the war using the public school process. Indeed, during the war the army came to be perceived as an extension of preparatory and public school:

"I walked through the gates alone," says Rupert Croft-Cooke of his arrival at his first training camp in 1940, "feeling some of the shyness of a new boy entering a school, half expecting to be asked by one of the old hands in khaki what my father did for a living." A continuation of boarding school by other means - the army could seem that, especially in Britain. Croft-Cooke continues: "Life ... became a sort of parody of life in a preparatory school, with new boys arriving 'frightful rows' going on, football matches against rival establishments, favoritism, whispered confidences, and if not tuck-boxes at least pocket-money to spend in the canteen." Everyone noticed how closely military instructors and superiors resembled the eccentric schoolmasters of one's boyhood.²⁴

Green's generation had already experienced this in reverse when during the Great War their preparatory schools became extensions of the army as they were drilled and given rifle practice to prepare them for participation in the war. This then became the

²³ Dr Cyril Norwood, *The English Tradition in Education* (John Murray, 1929), p.19, quoted in Ibid. p.218.

²⁴ Paul Fussell, 1989, *Wartime: Understanding and Behaviour in the Second World War*, p.55 (Oxford University Press).

basis for their construction of private spheres - the public sphere of war entering the school to be filtered and transformed into substitutes for war. During the Second World War there is a perception of school entering into the public world of war. The school in *Concluding*, having become vocational, reflects this perception.

A return to school in Green's fiction and its linkage to decline in the years immediately following the Second World War could be read as a repetition of the disillusion experienced after the First World War. This would represent a return to a pattern of experience that Green and his generation knew, the territory represented in Green's first novel, *Blindness* (1926). However, school in *Blindness* is the moulder and sustainer of a private sphere of action that provides a substitute for war experience, a sphere that endures after John Haye has left his school. In *Concluding* the school can sustain nothing. Liz who has had a nervous breakdown and can no longer work epitomizes its final product, the female state servant. The girls' attempt to build their own private sphere comprises listening to music in a cellar on a radio that, like Liz, ceases to function.

The disillusion experienced by Green's generation after the Second World War is different to the disillusion they experienced after the First World War. The latter is determined by the shame of not having fought, where the use of the girl's school in *Concluding*, suggests a doubling of shame as described by Elizabeth Bowen in her memoir of her school published in the Graham Greene edited *The Old School* (1934):

I cannot imagine a girl's school without a war. The moral stress was appalling. We grew up under the intolerable obligation of being fought for, and could not fall short in character without recollecting that men were dying for us.²⁵

²⁵ Elizabeth Bowen in Graham Greene (ed.), 1934, *The Old School*, p.42 (Oxford University Press).

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This sense of shame caused Green's generation to liken their schools to totalitarian states. Indeed Green in *Pack My Bag* compared physical education at school as the 'useless torture one is put through in fascist states'.²⁶ This provided the substitute for war, something that, if not tangible was at least understandable, something that Green's generation could fight against. In *Concluding* this evocation provides the representation of a step along the path to the Second World War.

The effect of the Second World War was to remove totalitarianism from the private sphere of school into the public sphere of world war, in the minds of Green and his contemporaries, as Green's generation had participated in the public fight against totalitarianism as represented by the Axis powers. From the representation of totalitarianism in *Concluding* we can infer that Green's generation perceived totalitarianism as remaining in the public sphere after the war. Hence, totalitarianism for Green's generation has been removed from the private sphere of school into public spheres of politics, world affairs, society. This removal of the enemy from school also removed a sense of vitality. Robert Hewison sums up this feeling for Green's generation of public school educated writers

the war that followed on the failures and disappointments at the end of the decade drove them back on their social origins. The public school was an institution for which they felt both nostalgia and contempt - blaming it for their own inadequacies and the general debility of English life.²⁷

The peace of the inter-war years, associated with domesticity and femininity by Green's generation, is now unattainable. The girls in *Concluding* are being trained for state rather than domestic service. Indeed, in a reversal of Green's representation in

²⁶ Henry Green, 1940, *Pack My Bag*, p.26 (Hogarth, 1992).

²⁷ Robert Hewison, 1981, *In Anger: Culture in the Cold War 1945-60*, p.2 (Wiedenfeld and Nicholson).

Blindness (1926) of the daughter looking after a sick father, in *Concluding* the grandfather, Rock, now takes on domestic duties to look after his sick granddaughter whose training and work as a servant of the state have left her incapable of looking after herself. However, even Rock, the domestic provider, is shown to be reduced to hoping to be offered his breakfast in the school's kitchen. This represents a movement of women in the fiction of Green, and his generation, from the domestic sphere. This is the reverse of what happens in *Blindness* where John Haye, through the agency of his wounding, is removed from the male public school into the feminine domestic sphere of home, that feminine mystery for schoolboys of Green's generation, which Green described in *Pack My Bag* as 'a far country unvisited with all its mystery of latitude and space'.²⁸

With the enemy of totalitarianism removed from the post-Second World War school, other debilitating factors come to the forefront. A means of representing the shame that Green's generation felt during the inter-war years was to represent their schools as prisons, thus removing from themselves the status of agents while at the same time providing a means to represent shame. This is retained in *Concluding* to assist the depiction of a future controlled by the State. Indeed the use of the girl's school evokes the following dialogue from Graham Greene's *It's a Battlefield* (1934): 'Is that the prison?' 'A school for girls'.²⁹ In *Concluding* imprisonment is suggested by the need to escape, represented by Mary and Merode. The repeated hints that Mary may be drowned in the lake indicate that escape is impossible.

²⁸ Green, *Pack*, p.112.

²⁹ Graham Greene, 1934, *It's a Battlefield*, p.17 (Penguin, 1977).

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The other debilitating factor that comes to the forefront in *Concluding* is the anti-science ethos of the public school. This is conveyed in Bowen's reminiscences of her schooldays at Down House, previously the home of Charles Darwin for the last forty years of his life and reverting to a memorial to him after the school departed:

I have never liked scientific people very much, and it mortifies me to think of them trampling reverently around there on visiting days, thinking of Charles Darwin and ignorant of my own youth.³⁰

This could be Edge voicing her disapproval of the State's decision to start pig farms at the school. This, in turn, provides the motive for Edge's dislike of Rock and her desire to remove him from his cottage in the school. Rock, the famous scientist, represents the incursion of science into the school. Hence Rock is shown to anticipate the State's decision on pig farms by offering to give lectures to the girls on keeping pigs.

Correlli Barnett in *The Audit of War* blames Britain's economic weakness after the Second World War on the anti-science ethos of the public school. In his view this left Britain's governing class before, during and after the war with little appreciation of the scientific knowledge and expertise required by modern industry. John Reed in *Old School Ties* traces the development of the anti-science public school ethos to the nineteenth century school reforms pioneered by Thomas Arnold at Rugby. These reforms created public schools concerned with creating Christian gentlemen, and latterly administrators of Empire. The school in *Concluding* evokes the nineteenth century via a piece of Green's family history associated with Forthampton Cottage, Green's birthplace. *The Victoria History of the County of Gloucester* has an entry for,

³⁰ Bowen in Greene (ed.), *Old School*, pp. 50-1.

'Forthampton Cottage, an 18th-century brick building enlarged in the 19th century, where there was a girl's boarding school in 1856'.³¹ The date, 1856, evokes the publication of Thomas Hughes's *Tom Brown's Schooldays* (1857), which publicised and popularised Thomas Arnold's public school reforms. Hence we are brought to what, in Barnett's view, is the root cause of decline in post-Second World War Britain.

The evocation of Forthampton Cottage in turn evokes Green's pre-Great War, pre-school childhood. It was his home until the age of seven, that is up until 1912, and is fondly recalled in *Pack My Bag*:

The house was called Forthampton Cottage and like so many names of country houses it is misleading. Here was no cottage and round and about was the English garden, flower beds surrounding a number of small lawns. The house, washed over in pink, was built raised up above these lawns on a low embankment We lived here in the early years, in soft lands and climate influenced by the Severn³²

Beyond this point lies preparatory school, inextricably linked to war, and public school, inextricably linked to decline. This is Green's personal history. Forthampton Cottage represents a golden age of innocence, before being plunged into preparatory school which, coinciding with the Great War, mentally prepared him for war and living through its associated dichotomy, for Green's generation, of heroism and horror. This vision of war remained in the minds of Green's generation until its

³¹ *The Victoria History of the County of Gloucester Vol. VIII*, p.197 (Oxford University Press). The Victoria History also states that Forthampton Cottage was bought by James Yorke in 1791, hence the Yorkes must have had some responsibility for the girls' school.

³² Green, *Pack*, pp.2-3.

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catharsis in the Second World War, and the vision of decline that replaced their vision of war in post-war Britain.

Concluding uses the setting of its dystopian future to tell an allegory of post-war Britain for Green's generation. In so doing, it represents two histories. One is of a general post-war social decline, as perceived by Green's generation, and implicitly blamed, in *Concluding*, on the inappropriate education offered to the country's governing class by public school. The other is a personal history of preparation for, and participation in war, and a subsequent sense of emptiness. Both histories are linked, and bounded by war, a determining influence on Green's generation. As Orwell observed: 'the successive wars, like ranges of hills rear their bulk between ourselves and the past . . . ' ³³ Writing five months after the end of the Second World War, Orwell outlined a historical process tending 'towards the reimposition of slavery. We may be heading not for general breakdown but for an epoch as horribly stable as the slave empires of antiquity.'³⁴ Elements of this general decline into slavery can be read in *Concluding*. The school setting has been taken from the 'private owner of this estate from which the State had lifted everything' (p.13). The state is in control, represented in *Concluding* by the principles of the school, Edge and Baker, who describe the school as 'our house'. Edge and Baker are managers in Orwell's reading of the term taken from James Burnham's *The Managerial Revolution* (1940):

Burnham has probably been more right than wrong about the present and the immediate past. For quite fifty years past the general drift has almost certainly been towards oligarchy. The ever-increasing

³³ Review of *Great Morning* by Osbert Sitwell, *Adelphi*, July-September 1948, from Orwell, *Collected Volume 4*, p.501.

³⁴ "You and the Atom Bomb", *Tribune*, 19 October 1945, from *Ibid.*, p.26.

concentration of industrial and financial power; the diminishing importance of the individual capitalist or shareholder, and the growth of the new 'managerial' class of scientists, technicians and bureaucrats
...³⁵

This, with Rock's contempt for the school, suggests that *Concluding* is a dystopian view of the future, a future that would be brought into being by the contingencies forced upon Britain by war. As Samuel Hynes points out:

It is the nature of war to diminish every value except war itself and the values war requires: patriotism, discipline, obedience, endurance. Other values, which in time of peace would be thought civilized - freedom of thought, tolerance, a broad and generous receptiveness to culture - these will be devalued.³⁶

Britain in decline is shown in *Concluding* to be unable to revalue freedom of thought, tolerance, a broad and generous receptiveness to culture. The other history is Green's generation's personal history. This is reflected in the novel's representation of a state in terminal decline, symbolised by a school that can sustain nothing, mirroring a sense of personal emptiness now that the war prepared for at school during Green's childhood has been experienced well into adulthood. It is not surprising that his next, and penultimate, novel is entitled *Nothing*.

³⁵ "James Burnham and the Managerial Revolution" from *Ibid.*, p.209.

³⁶ Samuel Hynes, 1990, *A War Imagined* p.57 (Pimlico, 1992).

Chapter 9: *Nothing* and *Doting*: their time is practically over

Similar times and places are set out in similar fashion at the start of *Nothing* (1950) and *Doting* (1952). The characters in both novels, a not-quite-so-moneyed class in post-war London, are introduced at their leisure:

ON A SUNDAY AFTERNOON in nineteen forty eight John Pomfret, a widower of forty five, sat over lunch with Miss Liz Jennings at one of the round tables set by a great window that opened on the Park, a view which had made this hotel loved by the favoured of Europe when they visited London (*Nothing*, p.1).

‘Pretty squalid play all round, I thought!’
His son only grunted back at him, face vacant, mouth half open in London, in 1949 (*Doting*, p.3).

Hence we return after, *Concluding* (1948), to characters immediately identifiable as belonging to Green’s generation in post-war London settings – expensive restaurants, nightclubs, theatres - that we would expect them to inhabit. However, the time and place are still those represented allegorically in *Concluding*. This is unusual in Green’s novels prior to *Concluding* where there is clear chronological movement, novel by novel, towards and through the war. In this aspect Green’s last three novels convey a sense of stasis. However, *Nothing* and *Doting* also represent movement into the peace of the post-war through their setting at a time when Green’s contemporaries were setting their novels in the war and the pre-war. Green also developed a theory of the novel of dialogue which he newly applied to *Nothing* and *Doting*. This differentiated his style from that of his contemporaries, who were mostly content to persevere with styles of writing developed before the war. It also helps to convey a sense of movement. It is this dichotomy of movement and stasis that informs Green’s

last two novels, a new dichotomy for the post-war period replacing previous dichotomies of heroism versus horror, and fear of involvement versus fear of missing involvement.

Green's generation, as represented in *Nothing* and *Doting*, live amongst luxurious surroundings - an opulent and exclusive restaurant in *Nothing*, clubs and restaurants in *Doting* - despite their claims to post-war poverty. The opulent surroundings, and the promiscuity represented amongst the relatively wealthy, recall Green's pre-war novel *Party Going* (1939). Indeed the ages of the characters belonging to the elder generation - here Green's generation - in *Nothing* and *Doting* suggest that they are pre-war partygoers carrying on much as they did before the war. This differentiates Green's generation from the young generation represented in *Nothing* and *Doting* who accept the changed conditions of the post-war world. Furthermore, it suggests that for Green's generation the post-war movement to peace that they desire is backwards to the life they knew before the war, to reclaim the drawing room from the servants, a movement that is hampered by post-war conditions. V.S. Pritchett writing of the post-war period, states, 'we went back to our old privacy . . . I am not sure that to be so drowned in the mass was good for the art of writing'.¹

There are differences between Green's last two novels. The most important of these concerns the domesticity of marriage. In *Nothing* we see the domesticity of the proposed marriage of Philip Weatherby and Mary Pomfret, representing the younger generation, disrupted by the machinations of the older generation, Green's generation, represented by John Pomfret and Jane Weatherby. In *Doting* the domesticity of the older generation is disrupted by their own machinations and they are joined by the

¹ V.S.Pritchett, 1971, *Midnight Oil*, p.228 (Chatto and Windus).

younger generation who accept that they have nothing to look forward to. The differences between *Nothing* and *Doting* are not important enough to distract from their common representation of two central, and opposed, themes: a world which is moving into post-war peace and a sense of stasis, of not moving any further. Hence, I propose to analyse these two novels together in one chapter.

Geoffrey Faber in "The Critical Moment", an article published in the *Spectator* in November 1948, described the difficulties of adjusting to post-war Britain:

Signs of exhaustion are only to be expected. As a nation, or an island group of nations, we have suddenly exchanged riches for poverty, and power for insecurity. This change in our status and prospects has come as a reward for our 'finest hour' . . . The process of adjustment is going to be slow and painful.²

The difficulties of adjusting to post-war Britain for Green's generation can be surmised from the predominately backwards looking literary output of Green's contemporaries. Anthony Powell wrote of inter-wars Eton and Oxford in *A Question of Upbringing* (1951) and inter-wars London society in *A Buyer's Market* (1952); Evelyn Waugh wrote of the war in *Men at Arms* (1952); William Cooper (born 1910) wrote of young adults in provincial England in 1939 in *Scenes from Provincial Life* (1950); Jocelyn Brooke in his autobiographical novels *The Military Orchid* (1948), *A Mine of Serpents* (1949) and *The Goose Cathedral* (1950) wrote of the First and Second World Wars and the inter-war years with brief forays into the post-war present in *A Mine of Serpents* and *The Goose Cathedral*. Similarly Graham Greene sets *The End of the Affair* (1951) in London immediately after the war although its first person narrator spends much of the novel recalling the wartime affair whose ending gives the

² Quoted in Robert Hewison, 1981, *In Anger: Culture in the Cold War 1945-60*, p.31 (Wiedenfeld and Nicholson).

novel its title. Robert Hewison uses the emphasis given by publishers after the war to reprinting classic texts as an example of post-war retrospection.³ Alan Pryce-Jones claims that in the post-war period 'Imaginative literature was either at a standstill or cast in the mould of the Thirties' and quotes *Horizon* from 1947:

It is disheartening to think that twenty years ago saw the first novels of Hemingway, Faulkner, Elizabeth Bowen, Rosamund Lehmann, Evelyn Waugh, Henry Green, Graham Greene, to name but a few, for no new crop of novelists has arisen commensurate with them. Viewing the scene in 1947, moreover, one is conscious of the predominance of a certain set of names, the literary 'Best People', who somewhat resemble a galaxy of impotent prima donnas⁴

Green can be differentiated from these literary 'Best People' because he depicts post-war Britain in *Nothing* and *Doting*, thus turning away from the preoccupation with war that marked the adolescence and early adulthood of his generation, and still formed the basis of their literary output. Indeed he criticised

. . . . the old trick by which the novelist, to be dramatic, casts his reader, or rather drags his reader back into that imaginary golden sunny adolescence spiked with simple fears.⁵

This can be read as implied criticism of Anthony Powell's *A Question of Upbringing* which represents the adolescence of Green's generation, and, by extension, the backward looking emphasis of his contemporaries.

To break out of what Pryce-Jones describes as 'the mould of the Thirties' Green developed his theory of the novel of dialogue and put it into practice in *Nothing* and

³ See Hewison, *Anger*, p.10.

⁴ Alan Pryce-Jones, "Towards the Cocktail Party", from Michael Sissons and Philip French (eds.), 1963, *Age of Austerity*, p.219 and p.212 (Hodder and Stoughton).

⁵ "An Unfinished Novel", published in *The London Magazine*, 1960, reprinted in Henry Green, 1992, *Surviving: The Uncollected Writings of Henry Green*, pp.255-6 (Chatto and Windus).

Doting. Green considered dialogue a more appropriate form for the post-war world and argued his case in a radio broadcast in 1950:

... if [the novel] exists to create life, of a kind, in the reader - as far as words are concerned, what is the best way in which this can be done? Of course, by dialogue. And why? Because we do not write letters any more, we ring up on the telephone instead. The communication between human beings has now come to be almost entirely conducted by conversation.⁶

By 1952 Green was arguing, 'The conventional approach by a novelist in which he presumes to know all about his characters, what they are feeling and thinking at any moment, seems to me as dead as the Dodo'.⁷ Angus Wilson uses the same metaphor to suggest post-war change in *Such Darling Dodos* (1950) where the darling dodos are Priscilla and Roger, 30s leftists, now being supplanted by a new generation, represented by Harriet and Tony, in the post-war who look upon them with pity at the story's end, and conclude, 'I suppose it's always the same when people live in the past'. Indeed a progression can be traced in the structure of *Nothing and Doting* away from the structure favoured by Green in his pre-war and war novels. In *Nothing* there is an explicit tripartite structure. As Jeremy Treglown notes, Green made an explicit instruction to the publisher, missed by his typist, to separate the parts of the novel.⁸ In *Doting* the tripartite structure disappears to be replaced by movement through a number of short episodes ending in a statement that the novel's characters will do the same again tomorrow. Furthermore, the telephone is an important means of

⁶ "A Novelist to his Readers: I", broadcast by the BBC, published in *The Listener*, November 1950, from Green, *Surviving*, p137.

⁷ John Lehmann's Programme, broadcast by the BBC, 1952, from *Ibid.*, p.164.

⁸ Jeremy Treglown. 1992, "Introduction", *Nothing*, p.xi ((Harvill)).

communication in *Doting*, as one would expect given Green's theory of the telephone increasing the importance of dialogue. Hence in structure *Nothing* still looks back to the tripartite structures Green used in his war and pre-war novels, whereas *Doting* severs this final link, becoming in relation to Green's other writings, a distinctively post-war work.

However, this movement in structure is not supported by content. In *Doting* domesticity is achieved: the proposed marriage of John Pomfret and Jane Weatherby signifies an attempt to resolve the disrupted domesticity caused by their past affair and thus an attempt to achieve domesticity which in Green's writing tends to signify peace. However, the narrative raises a question as to the success of this domestic venture given that it is based on avoidance of truth. It also disrupts the proposed marriage of their children, Mary and Philip. In *Doting* the characters play at domesticity disrupted: the Middletons both play with adultery - Arthur with Annabel, Diana with Charles - but fail to achieve it. Does this signify that domesticity has been permanently disrupted by the war? The answer would appear to be yes, given that the characters are represented longing for domesticity, most notably Charles, drunk at the end of the novel, dancing with Claire and talking of domesticity. We might expect resolution through achievement of conventional domesticity in *Doting*, if *Doting* is taken to represent movement towards post-war rapprochement. However, this is what appears to happen in *Nothing*, although the narrative raises doubts as to how successful a resolution it will be.

These two central and opposed themes, present in both *Nothing* and *Doting*, are intertwined with representations of different generations. This ultimately becomes an opposition between young and old. However, it is different to the relatively simple binary opposition between young and old as represented in many novels published

after the First World War, including Green's first two novels: *Blindness* (1926) and *Living* (1929). In *Nothing and Doting* Green represents three generations. There are representatives of his generation: John Pomfret – aged 45 in 1948 - Jane Weatherby and Dick Abbot in *Nothing*; Charles Addinsell, Arthur – rising 45 in 1949 - and Diana Middleton in *Doting*. There are representatives of a young generation: Mary Pomfret and Philip Weatherby in *Nothing*; Peter Middleton in *Doting*. There is also an in-between generation represented by Liz Jennings in *Nothing*; by Annabel Paynton and Claire Bellaine in *Doting*. Liz Jennings's status is established in the first chapter of *Nothing* when John Pomfret tells her she is young while she states that she is old. Later she is told by Jane Weatherby, 'you are in-between generations you fortunate angel' (*Nothing*, p.78).

The in-between generation act as commentators on narrative action and provides a conduit between the younger and older generations. This function is made necessary by Green's use of the novel of dialogue:

Until *Nothing* and *Doting* I tried to establish the mood of any scene by a few but highly pointed descriptions. Since then I've tried to keep everything down to bare dialogue and found it very difficult.⁹

The difficulty is caused by the relative absence of a narrator's voice to comment upon the action. In a radio programme, broadcast by the BBC in 1952, Green talks of the importance of descriptive passages to link dialogue. The example he gives is the long sentences used to describe the nightclub performers at the beginning of *Doting*. These are relatively passive descriptions of the appearance of the performers and what they

⁹ Terry Southern, 1958, "The Art of Fiction XXII - Henry Green" *Paris Review* 5, Summer 1958 from Plimpton, George (ed.), *Writers at Work: The Paris Review Interviews Second Series*, p.208 (Secker and Warburg, 1981).

are doing and Green comments, 'it is almost the only bit of description in the whole book.'¹⁰ Green overcomes this absence of narrator's comments by deploying the in-between generation to comment upon the action as a kind of chorus. In *Nothing* Liz's dialogues with Dick Abbott are in part comments upon the narrative action of the novel. For example, she tells Dick Abbot, 'it's bad for John all this rehashing of what's dead and gone' (*Nothing*, p.85) and that she has 'to lug poor John back to the present' (*Ibid.*, p.86). This both represents the stasis that John Pomfret, as a representative member of Green's generation, has entered after the war and suggests that John will eventually marry Jane Weatherby, effectively reliving and resolving their past pre-war affair. In *Doting* the in-between generation is given a more obvious and formal status as chorus as Annabel Paynton and Claire Bellaine are given six meetings in a pub to comment upon the action of the novel.

The meetings between Annabel Paynton and Claire Bellaine chart the relatively minimal action of *Doting*. At the first meeting Annabel reveals that she is having a relationship with a middle aged married man called Arthur and compares the young generation, made up of Terence Shones and Campbell Anthonys, unfavourably with Green's generation. However, she tells Claire, 'all this I've been telling you will probably come to nothing, of course' (*Doting*, p.58), linking the narrative action of *Doting* with *Nothing*. At the second meeting Ann gives her version of events when she was discovered by Diana with Arthur at their flat and claims it was innocent, although Claire tells her she is being promiscuous. At the third meeting Ann tells Claire about her new relationship with Charles and how 'he compares everything with

¹⁰ John Lehmann's radio programme, broadcast by the BBC, 1952, reprinted in Green, *Surviving*, pp.164-5.

about twenty years ago' (*Doting*, p.118). At the fourth meeting Annabel gives more detail about her relationship with Charles, while Claire argues that it makes no difference if girls go to bed with men, provided that precautions are taken. At the fifth meeting Ann says she is getting nowhere, that Arthur loves her but she does not love him and that Charles is too neurotic to love. At the final meeting Claire tells Ann (but not in words) that she has slept with Charles. Here we have *Doting* continuing to represent the same kind of inconsequential relationships found in *Nothing*. Indeed next to nothing occurs in *Doting* producing a stasis of frustrated desires which is increased by the novel's final sentence: 'The next day they all went on very much the same' (*Doting*, p.226).

Like Liz in *Nothing* the chorus in *Doting* has also to take part in the narrative action of the novel. However, in *Doting*, as part of the action, Annabel and Claire become associated with the younger generation. Indeed this is shown early in *Doting* when Arthur Middleton tells Annabel and his son Peter, 'Strange how much nearer in age you two are, both of you, than to Diana or me' (*Doting*, p.6). Annabel and, by association, her friend Claire come to represent both the in-between generation and the young generation as Peter Middleton fades out of the narrative to go salmon fishing in Scotland. Peter's place in *Doting* is taken by Ann who takes on the status of the young generation when she tells Arthur, 'I find your generation so sad; no, not sad, that's not the right word. What I mean is, you seem melancholy, all of you' (*Doting*, p.152), thus becoming part of the polarity of young and old in the novel.

The in-between generation in *Doting* becomes part of the young generation and a simpler opposition between generations appears to be created. In *Nothing*, Liz Jennings remains part of the in-between generation moving from John Pomfret to Dick Abbott as a younger woman – Dick tells her that he likes younger women - while

being consulted as an older woman by Philip Weatherby for advice on his engagement to Mary Pomfret. The respect of the younger for the in-between generation is absent from *Doting*, where Peter Middleton tells his parents that he dislikes Annabel Paynton. In the earlier part of the novel Peter serves to emphasize the polarity between old and young as his parents have little idea of what interests or pleases him and he tells Annabel, 'I don't discuss anything with my parents' (*Doting*, p.32). Annabel eventually takes on this polarity when she tells Claire that she does not love Arthur and that Charles is too neurotic to love. In *Nothing* there is polarity between Philip Weatherby and his parents' generation and this is linked, in the dialogue of the younger generation, to the wars experienced by Green's generation. Philip criticises his parents' generation: 'They've had two frightful wars they've done nothing about except fight in' (*Nothing*, p.56). Similarly, in *Doting* Ann, taking on the role of the young generation, tells Charles, 'with two world wars and everything in between, your generation's taken quite a pasting' (*Doting*, p.114).

Each of the two opposed generations in *Nothing* and *Doting* represents one of the two themes: movement into the post-war world and stasis. The young generation accepts and tries to make sense of the post-war world. By contrast the representatives of Green's generation find the post-war world distasteful. They are in stasis, unable to accept the present, unable to recreate the past to their own satisfaction. In both *Nothing* and *Doting* the young generation differentiates itself from the old. This suggests that the young generation will accept and make the most of the post-war world whereas the old generation through having its world view formed by 'two world wars and everything in between' remain in the past. Indeed Green articulated this sense of opposition between post-war generations:

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We, that is the thin blooded, who have been in two wars, have not much left. We had starvation in the first and bombardment in the second. My generation regards with contempt what one can only describe as the social double meanings of Amis et al.¹¹

The young generation in *Nothing* accept the post-war world as better than the war or pre-war, 'You wouldn't want to go back to the bad old times' Philip tells Mary (*Nothing*, p.43). Meanwhile their parents pity them for not having the opportunities that they enjoyed at their children's' ages. In *Doting* the mood becomes darker as the young generation lose hope. Ann says to Claire, 'have we nothing to look forward to . . . Just treachery I suppose' (*Doting*, p.197).

Nothing and *Doting* both tend toward the viewpoint of Green's generation. Hence although the younger generation in both novels are represented as accepting the peace of the post-war world they are shown to have difficulty making progress forward in this world on their own terms. For example Peter Middleton in *Doting* is removed from the narrative and remains off-stage for the rest of the novel, his exploits reported by his parents. He has escaped from London - which, in *Caught* (1943), Green associates with the war - to Scotland to fish. His parents are shown remarking that he is very successful at fishing. Green in *Pack My Bag* (1939) describes fishing as high pastoral, a kind of peace. Hence the young generation in *Doting*, through Peter, are shown to be embracing a pre-war version of peace. Peter has to move away from his parents, who represent Green's generation, and out of the narrative to find peace. Yet paradoxically the peace he finds is his parents' generation's version of pre-war peace in the post-war. To emphasize this paradox, Peter suffers a symbolic wounding in the form of a taxi crash on the way to the station – that is before he gets to Scotland -

¹¹ "Unlovely", published in *The Times*, 1961, from Green, *Surviving* p. 282.

requiring hospitalisation and the postponement of his trip. This is an oblique reference to Green's generation's – Peter's parents' generation's - vicarious experience of war after the First World War, a replay of *Blindness*.

The apparent unity of the younger generation in both novels is shown to be fragmented. In *Doting* this occurs when Claire sleeps with Charles creating opposition between herself and Ann. Hence there is movement toward a greater polarity in *Doting* as the in-between generation becomes split between young and old, Claire becoming associated with the older generation through sleeping with Charles, Annabel being associated with the younger generation through refusing to sleep with Charles and Arthur. In *Nothing*, as in *Doting*, the unity of the younger generation is fragmented. Mary defends her parents' generation while Philip links war to disrupted domesticity when he says to Mary of his mother '... she practically broke up your mother's home'. Mary takes on the domestic role often assigned to women in Green's fiction to make peace: 'Mummy's dead, we'll never know the truth and it's you who're raking a whole lot up You must be discreet you really must' (*Nothing*, p.57).

There is ambiguity in the setting and content selected by Green for *Nothing* and *Doting*. Although both novels are explicitly set in the post-war, location and content are similar to those of the pre-war *Party Going* (1939). Where the content does become characteristic of the post-war period it is to complain of its constraints. This allies Green to the conservatism in post-war literature that Pryce-Jones identifies at 'the most blatant, or perhaps the most honest'¹² in the post-war novels of the popular novelist, Angela Thirkell. These, Pryce-Jones argues,

¹² Alan Pryce-Jones, "Towards the Cocktail Party", from *Sissons and French*, p.218.

seem to unite every emotive response to the post-war years from the class most directly forced to retrench. Angela Thirkell was speaking for all those who felt that the new equality and socialism were a discrimination against themselves. The hazards of the future were weighed and found wanting against the comforts of the past¹³

Hence in form and setting, *Nothing* and *Doting* are of the post-war but the content of both novels represents the difficulty for Green's generation in coming to terms with the post-war world.

Waugh wrote in *Men at Arms* of the war as a time when, 'splendidly, everything had become clear. The enemy at last was plain in view, huge and hateful, all disguise cast off'.¹⁴ In the post-war world the new enemy, for Green's generation, becomes higher taxation.¹⁵ For example, tax in Graham Green's *The Third Man* (1950) is represented as an enemy for Harry Lime as he tries to tempt Rollo Martins with an illegal tax-free income. Higher taxation had both economic and social determinants. Jeremy Treglown notes,

As the once-rich characters in *Nothing* find, times were hard in a Britain that was trying not only to recover from a costly war, but to carry out a peaceful socialist revolution.¹⁶

The narrative time of *Nothing* and *Doting*, 1948 and 1949 respectively, coincides with the start of the new world of the Welfare State. As Angus Calder points out, 'The welfare state, which would have its symbolic birthday on July 5th, 1948, when the new National Insurance Scheme and National Health Service would come into

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Evelyn Waugh, 1952, *Men at Arms*, p.12 (Penguin, 1980).

¹⁵ Green turned down an offer from Penguin to publish *Loving* in paperback because the taxes would not make it worthwhile, Treglown "Introduction" *Nothing*, p.v.

¹⁶ Ibid., p.vii.

operation simultaneously'.¹⁷ The time of the birth of the age of the Welfare State also coincided with a sense of ending for Green's generation: *Horizon* and *Penguin New Writing* both fold in 1950.¹⁸ These literary journals were started during the war - although *Penguin New Writing* arose from the pre-war magazine *New Writing* - but could not survive in the post-war world. Both published Green during the war: "A Rescue" in *Penguin New Writing*, Vol.4, and March 1941; "The Waters of Nanterre" in *Horizon* No.60 1944. Green's contemporaries, respectively John Lehmann (born 1907) and Cyril Connolly (born 1903), edited these publications. There is a sense of the world of art and literature enjoyed by Green's generation being deposed by the age of the Common Man, signified by the Welfare State. Green's generation felt if not the enmity at least the indifference of the Government. Emanuel Shinwell, Minister of Fuel and Power said, 'We know that the organised workers of the country are our friends. As for the rest, they don't matter a tinker's cuss.'¹⁹ At this time Angus Wilson was publishing stories of middle class poverty in collections such as *The Wrong Set* (1949) and *Such Darling Dodos* (1950). In one of these stories he gives the following dialogue to 22-year-old Hamish:

"Well we've reached the final point of fantasy. Vitiate the minds of what pass for the minds of the people with education, teach them to read and write, feed their imaginations with sexual and criminal

¹⁷ Angus Calder, 1969, *The People's War*, p.584 (Pimlico, 1996).

¹⁸ Robert Hewison, 1977, *Under Siege: Literary Life in London 1939-45*, p.185 (Readers Union Book Club, 1978), see also Bernard Bergonzi, 1993, *Wartime and aftermath: English Literature and its Background, 1939-60*, p.23 (Oxford University Press).

¹⁹ Quoted in Paul Addison, 1985, *Now the War is Over*, p.29 (Pimlico, 1995).

fantasies known as films, and starve them in order to pay for these delightful erotic celluloids. Circenses without panem it seems”.²⁰

Green, with his newfound theory of the novel of dialogue as applied to *Nothing* and *Doting* intended ‘to create a life which is not’.²¹ The phrase can be interpreted to mean that Green’s deployment of his new theory of novel writing allows him to represent the feeling of his generation that the years after the war represented a non-life in that they felt power and influence had been taken away from them and their way of life was being destroyed. This suggestion is fortified by the novel title, *Nothing*. As there is a non-life for Green’s generation in the post-war years the domesticity that Green associates with peace cannot be attained. This is signified in *Doting* by the disappearance of the possibility of love, which is replaced by doting, and as Arthur Middleton points out on two occasions in the novel, doting is not loving (*Doting* p.43, and p.143). This implies that loving is now impossible in the non-life of the post-war world, and differentiates *Doting* from Green’s war novel *Loving*.

The non-life of the post-war world is shown to be a limbo where although war is no longer being fought it has not ended. This was a British phenomenon as Paul Addison argues

In Germany and Japan, the values and institutions embodied in the war effort lay buried in the rubble of catastrophe. There was no alternative but to start afresh. In Britain, however, victory had ratified the spirit as well as the machinery of the war effort. Vera Lynn, Tommy Handley, J.B. Priestley, the Ministry of Food with its tips on how to make an omelette, the Ministry of Works with its monopoly of bricks and mortar, were all carried over in triumph from the war to the peace. Sometimes names were changed as when the BBC Forces Network became the Light Programme, or the Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts was reborn as the Arts Council. But continuities

²⁰ Angus Wilson, 1949, “Crazy Crowd”, *The Wrong Set*, p.124 (Secker & Warburg, 1969).

²¹ “A Novelist to his Readers: I”, from Green, *Surviving* p.136.

abounded. The Labour government itself rested on foundations constructed during the war by Labour ministers in the Churchill coalition. For a few critical years after 1945, the home front ran on without a war to sustain it, and Britain was reconstructed in the image of the war effort.²²

There was a willingness of publishers to publish, and readers to read, novels about the war in the years immediately following the war. Hence post-Second World War fiction immediately represented the war as experienced by combatants - Eric Linklater's *Private Angelo* (1946) - and on the home front - Patrick Hamilton's *Slaves of Solitude* (1947) and Elizabeth Bowen's *The Heat of the Day* (1948). This provides a contrast to the years immediately after the First World War where the desire to create a new future was reflected in the relative lack of war novels and memoirs before 1926. Patrick Hamilton's description of the deprivations caused by war would ring true to contemporary readers in the age of austerity:

TO the endless snubbing and nagging of war, its lecturing and admonitions, Miss Roach was subjected from the moment she left the Rosamund Tea Rooms in the morning to the moment she returned at night, and these things were at last telling upon her nerves and general attitude.

Immediately she stepped forth into Thames Lockdon (which itself was not being permitted to be Thames Lockdon, all mention of the town having been blacked out from shop-fronts and elsewhere for reasons of security) the snubbing began with:

NO CIGARETTES.

SORRY

in the window of the tobacconist opposite.

And such was Miss Roach's mood nowadays that she regarded this less as a sorrowful admission than as a sly piece of spite. The "sorry", she felt certain, had not been thrown in for the sake of politeness or pity. It was a sarcastic, nasty, rude "sorry". It sneered, as a common woman might, as if to say "Sorry, I'm sure", or "Sorry, but there you are", or "Sorry, but what do you expect nowadays?"²³

²² Addison, p.2.

²³ Patrick Hamilton, 1947, *Slaves of Solitude*, p.100 (Constable, 1972).

Green's generation as represented in *Nothing* and *Doting* is shown either recreating or embodying the past, both of the war and the immediate pre-war, particularly in their relationships with each other. In *Nothing* Jane Weatherby battles to wrest John Pomfret from Liz Jennings and to prevent her son marrying John's daughter. To do so she bends the truth, anticipating the Ministry of Propaganda - an explicit continuation of the war into the post-war - in *Doting*, for whom the poet Campbell Anthony works. In *Doting* the elder generation also bend the truth as they battle with and betray each other, and create their own perception of the post-war world. Hence Arthur and Charles agree that the immorality of young women is caused by high taxation. Female promiscuity and its related disruption of domesticity suggests the war for Green's generation. This suggests in turn that Arthur and Charles, as representatives of Green's generation are shown to perceive that post-war high taxation has caused stasis as it prevents progress away from war-time conditions.

The elder generation in *Nothing* and *Doting*, the representatives of Green's generation, are able to afford to live in luxurious surroundings despite their complaints about not being well off. This was a real complaint if viewed in relative terms. As Paul Addison notes,

The sense of post-war deprivation was sharpest amongst the middle classes. The figure for salaries, professional earnings and the profits of the self-employed show that all were several percentage points down in 1949 by comparison with 1938. The Atlee governments maintained the higher levels of income and surtax introduced during the war and perpetuated controls over profits and rents.²⁴

However, there is a sense in both *Nothing* and *Doting* that despite their relatively reduced circumstances, the elder generation is attempting to push the clock back past

²⁴ Addison, pp.28-9.

the war and re-live their pre-war lives. Indeed the luxurious surroundings that these characters are shown to inhabit evokes a *Party Going* of slightly reduced circumstances. In *Nothing* the name of John Pomfret's dead wife, Julia, recalls the character from *Party Going* who vies with Amabel for Max's attention. This is emphasized by the recollection of the past adulterous affair between John Pomfret and Jane Weatherby. Characters refer to the past pre-war affair of John Pomfret and Jane Weatherby and it is their selfishness and machinations that eventually destroy the proposed marriage between their children, Mary and Philip. In *Doting* the middle aged Arthur Middleton attempts to sleep with the much younger Annabel Paynton – whose forename recalls Amabel from *Party Going*. Meanwhile his wife, Diana, conducts a relationship with his friend Charles Addinsell who, in turn, sleeps with Annabel's friend Claire Belaine, much to the annoyance of both Diana and Annabel. These promiscuous relationships, portrayed like military manoeuvres – for example, Diana talks of 'reprisals' - suggest that these post-war characters are carrying on much as their pre-war counterparts did in *Party Going*.

There is another symmetry between the post-war and the past suggested by setting. *Doting* and *Pack My Bag* share nightclub settings, and these, via *Pack My Bag*, are linked to the war:

Since interest in what goes on about us has been sharpened by the fear of death and we have been left less sure than ever of anything except the extraordinary behaviour of acquaintances and friends, discussing these is the exchange we can have in the kind of forcing house a night club will always be, and the indiscretions, the lies which give the underlying truth away, all this so far as I can tell is what goes to make up the bargain basement of the store our lives now are, in the receiver's hands.²⁵

²⁵ Henry Green, 1940, *Pack My Bag*, pp.181-2 (Hogarth, 1992).

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The character Arthur Middleton in *Doting* suggests the similarly named Arthur Middlewitch from *Back*, a character who lives in the present of the war. This symmetry again suggests no forward movement in the post-war world for Green's generation.

In *Nothing* Jane's two children, Philip and Penelope, recall significant events from Green's past. The novel is set in Spring 1948. Philip who is 21 would have been conceived in 1926, the year of publication of Green's first novel. This also links *Nothing* to *Concluding* where the famous scientist Rock was 21 when he made his great discovery. Penelope, aged 6, would have been conceived in 1941, at the end of the Blitz, recalling the end of Green's wartime novel *Caught* (1943) and the peak of Green's war-time experience in the AFS. In *Doting* the characters play at adultery but never actually succeed. This suggests disruption of domesticity, which Green in *Caught* has associated with the war. As the disruption is unsuccessful, it also suggests an unsuccessful attempt to recapture the war. Indeed there is a suggestion of irony attached to domesticity in Charles' drunken remark to Claire while they are dancing at the end of *Doting*: 'There's something in this whole evening you know. Domesticity, what?' (*Doting*, p.225). In *Nothing* domesticity is mocked in the mock marriage that John undertakes with Jane's six-year-old daughter, Penelope, a mockery that is supported by Jane.

The past continues to have an influence, albeit a negative influence, upon the present. This is most evident in *Nothing* where the question is raised – and never resolved – as to whether John Pomfret, as a result of his affair with Jane Weatherby, is Philip's biological father. This would make Mary Pomfret his half-sister and invalidate their proposed marriage. Indeed the marriage is abandoned, adding to the list of things that do not work in both novels, for example the difficulty of getting

served in restaurants, the scissors in Mary Pomfret's office which she has to replace with her own scissors, the wrestlers in the night club at the end of *Doting* who do not appear. There is a sense of not getting anywhere and of there being no way out of this stasis. In *Nothing* Philip and Mary are, to their parents, corrupted by the post-war age of the common man: Philip is too polite to women, Mary is a bluestocking. The narrator shares this view, using the word respectable to describe the pub where Mary and Philip meet, respectability being a state that the common man, in his middle-class incarnation, is conventionally understood to strive for. This is contrasted with the restaurant, 'loved by the favoured of Europe', where their parents meet. Indeed when Philip and Mary attempt to eat in the restaurant they are about to be turned away until Mary's father intervenes. When Mary and Philip leave the restaurant we are told that 'they probably appear bright and efficient to their elders, quite a mirror to youth and the age they lived in' (*Nothing*, p.45).

V.S. Pritchett remarked of the Second World War, 'for years the experience exhausted us mentally and physically. And then there is nothing as dead as a dead war'.²⁶ *Nothing* and *Doting*, like *Concluding* before them, represent the tentacles of this dead war reaching out to stifle the post-war peace. The movement represented in the novels is into a dead zone, a stasis, a nothingness where it has become so difficult to adjust to the post-war world that doting, not loving, is the only possible human activity, an activity that characters return to daily as represented in the last sentence of *Doting*. Where characters try to make a new post-war life - Mary and Philip in *Nothing* - their efforts are frustrated by the past - the suspicion that Mary's father may also be Philip's father and the machinations of their parents. In *Doting* the young

²⁶ Pritchett, p.227.

generation have given up either accepting alliance with the older generation - Claire sleeping with Charles - or in the case of Annabel a fatalistic acceptance of treachery and betrayal. Jeremy Treglown points out, in his introduction to the Penguin edition of *Nothing - Doting - Blindness*, doting has two meanings²⁷. In addition to its more widely understood meaning of being foolishly in love it also has a Middle English meaning of decaying like a tree again suggesting the allegory of post-war Britain in decline for Green's generation. It also, of course, means being in one's dotage and there is an implication that this will be the fate of the representatives of Green's generation who long to be back in their pre-war world. However, to treat *Nothing* and *Doting* as simple allegories would be to discount the ambiguities and complexities characteristic of Green, and present in these novels, despite - even due to - Green's intention to create novels of dialogue. The meanings that the ambiguities and complexities of *Nothing* and *Doting* create need to be accounted for. In his last two novels complexity and ambiguity appear to rise up and overwhelm the novels, just as the post-war world was overwhelming Green's generation.

Why did Green not write another novel after *Doting*? Green in an accompanying letter to his review of Virginia Woolf's *A Writer's Diary* published in *The London Magazine*, 1954, wrote:

Quite frankly, the book is almost impossible. It is one long agonised cry from someone who was breaking herself with overwork and it should, as she meant it to be, be the basis on which a memoir was written on her.²⁸

²⁷ Jeremy Treglown, 1993, "Introduction", *Nothing, Doting, Blindness*, p.xi (Penguin).

²⁸ "A Writer's Diary", from Green, *Surviving*, p.179.

Was this also Green's view of himself? We have the evidence of Sebastian Yorke's memories of his father's difficulties at work in the early 1950s and his observation that 'as things started to go wrong, it was to prove a drain on his energies for writing'.²⁹ In an interview with Terry Southern in 1958 Green said, in response to a question on impact of film and television on the novel, 'It might be better to ask if novels will continue to be written.'³⁰

Such an answer would fit the underlying argument I have put forward in this thesis, that war was a determining influence upon Green's writing. In my interpretation, that determining influence simply disappeared after Green had experienced war and digested that experience. Green was to return to the war after *Doting*, attempting to write, for publication an autobiography of his time in the AFS during the Blitz. He mentions this work to Southern in the interview in 1958, giving it a title: *London and Fire, 1940*.³¹ Only the first section of the book - intended to be between 65 and 75000 words³² - was completed and was published in *The London Magazine*, Volume 7, 1960 and *The Texas Quarterly*, 1960, as "Firefighting". However, without any further evidence, or biographical details any answer, as Rod Mengham states in *The Idiom of the Time*, is speculative. As with any reading of Green's writing, the answer to both why Green wrote and why he stopped writing is a matter of interpretation, of how the reader reads the available texts. This, quite simply, is all I have attempted to do in this thesis.

²⁹ "A Memoir by Sebastian Yorke", from *Ibid.*, p.299.

³⁰ Southern, p.213.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p.214.

³² See Green, *Surviving*, p.260. The whole piece is reprinted in *Surviving*, pp. 260-79.

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