

**Spirits of Place:  
The English Picturesque in Post-Second World War  
Audiovisual Narratives**

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## **Declaration**

All of the work presented in this thesis is by Mark Edward Broughton.

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## Abstract

This thesis offers a detailed, work-by-work chronological study of the picturesque in a small number of carefully chosen country house screen narratives, from the period 1949-1982. Each chapter deals with one of these works: *Kind Hearts and Coronets* (Robert Hamer, 1949); *The Go-Between* (Joseph Losey, 1971); *The Ruling Class* (Peter Medak, 1972); *Brideshead Revisited* (Charles Sturridge and Michael Lindsay-Hogg, 1981); and *The Draughtsman's Contract* (Peter Greenaway, 1982). These screen fictions are not representative of country estate screen narratives in general, nor are they typical of their directors' oeuvres. The most significant trend is a topos; they all feature a specific type of figure set in a picturesque landscape: a male protagonist who visits a country estate and whose status as an outsider there is largely articulated through his perception of the landed family and its estate. Each figure performs in a picturesque landscape; in the process, he alters, and is altered irrevocably by, the estate. He becomes its *genius loci* (spirit of place). What was, in 1949, a somewhat unusual landscape narrative, became a small, but highly significant, groundbreaking genre between 1971 and 1982. Through this combination of case studies, I chart a history of innovation in the deployment of country estates in post-Second World War film and television. Heritage criticism tends to see landscapes in screen fictions as pauses in, or distractions from, narrative. This thesis develops an alternative approach to analysing and historicising audiovisual narratives set in picturesque landscapes. It examines the way the chosen works establish a reciprocal relationship between location and narrative. It argues that landscape history plays an integral role in such fictions and that landscape historiography is, therefore, a valuable hermeneutic tool for the analysis of these narratives, yielding new insights into a distinctly English genre.

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### A note on illustrations:

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## Introduction

He was a picturesque survival, one of those who had no use for an ordered way of life. When his type vanished, if it ever did, the world would be a safer but less-interesting place.

– Arthur C. Clarke (1954)<sup>1</sup>

The English Picturesque theory – if not its practice – has an extremely important message... The *genius loci*, if we put it in modern planning terms, is the character of the site, and the character of the site is, in a town, not only the geographical but also the historical, social, and especially the aesthetic character.

– Nikolaus Pevsner (1956)<sup>2</sup>

## The Country Estate in Film and Television Fiction

The country house and its grounds have played as important a role in British cinema and television as that of the West in US cinema and television. Notable country house films and programmes have emerged sporadically in other countries and some of those set in England were produced in Hollywood, but the country estate has become a stock screen setting mainly in British cinema and television fiction, where it has assumed a diverse range of forms.<sup>3</sup> If there is a single common tendency in most country house narratives set either in the past or the present, it is to represent the estate as a palimpsest, a site where layers of history are inscribed. Like the Western, the country house narrative is topological; through the representation and articulation of space, histories and/or myths

<sup>1</sup> Arthur C. Clarke, *Childhood's End* (London: Pan, 1956), p.32.

<sup>2</sup> Nikolaus Pevsner, *The Englishness of English Art* (London: Penguin, 1997), p.181.

<sup>3</sup> A canon of non-British European country house films would, for example, include *The Rules of the Game* [*La Règle du Jeu*] (Renoir, France, 1939), *Viridiana* (Luis Buñuel, Mexico, 1961), *Last Year in Marienbad* [*L'Année dernière à Marienbad*] (Resnais, France, 1961), *Cries and Whispers* [*Viskningar och Rop*] (Bergman, Sweden, 1972) and *The Celebration* [*Festen*] (Vinterberg, Denmark, 1998). For a list of US films featuring English country houses see William K. Everson, 'The English Home and Garden in Film', *Films in Review*, vol.37, no.1, 1 January 1986, pp.35-39.



are often embodied and explored: histories or myths, for example, of architectural aesthetics, landscape design, landed families and their contact with various outsiders, landownership, ideologies or power. However, the country estate in British film and television fiction cannot be seen as a single chronotope or a genre-specific setting. It is deployed in a diverse range of genres, such as gothic horror, the murder mystery and the comedy of manners, all of which tend to treat intersections of space and history in different ways.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, the prominence of the country estate as a setting suggests that it would be fruitful to compare films' and programmes' mobilisations of estates, as well as their generic narrative frameworks.<sup>5</sup>

Various film and television historians have sought to devise broad categories to classify films set in the countryside: since the mid-1990s, in the wake of the emergence of cultural geography, there has been a wave of attempts to define what constitutes 'landscape' in narrative cinema.<sup>6</sup> There has also been a parallel tendency, mainly in Britain, to describe, with the 'heritage' epithet, what is perceived to be the general attitude in British cinema and television to the country estate as an icon.<sup>7</sup> Both of these endeavours lean towards deductive methodologies, which seek an inclusive

<sup>4</sup> On the country house in the British horror film, see John C. Tibbetts, 'The old dark house: the architecture of ambiguity in *The Turn of the Screw* and *The Innocents*', in Steve Chibnall and Julian Petley (eds.), *British Horror Cinema* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), pp.99-116.

<sup>5</sup> As William K. Everson remarks: 'so important were homes and gardens to the British that...one can divide British movies' usage of them into any number of sub-genres.' Everson, op. cit., p.38.

<sup>6</sup> See, in particular, Gilberto Perez, 'Landscape and Fiction: Jean Renoir's Country Excursion', *The Hudson Review*, vol.42, no.2, Summer 1989, pp.237-260; P. Adams Sitney, 'Landscape in the cinema: the rhythms of the world and the camera', in Salim Kemal and Ivan Gaskell (eds.), *Landscape, natural beauty and the arts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp.103-126; Ian Christie, 'Landscape and "Location": Reading Filmic Space Historically', *Rethinking History*, vol.4, no.2, 2000, pp.165-174; Robert Shannan Peckham, 'Landscape in Film', in James S. Duncan, Nuala C. Johnson and Richard H. Schein (eds.), *A Companion to Cultural Geography* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), pp.420-429; Catherine Fowler and Gillian Helfield, 'Introduction', in Catherine Fowler and Gillian Helfield (eds.), *Representing the Rural: Space, Place, and Identity in Films about the Land* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2006), pp.1-14; Martin Lefebvre, 'Between Setting and Landscape in the Cinema', in Martin Lefebvre (ed.), *Landscape in Film* (New York and London: Routledge, 2006), pp.19-60; Alan Burton and Laraine Porter, 'Introduction', in Laraine Porter and Bryony Dixon (eds.), *Picture Perfect: Landscape, Place and Travel in British Cinema before 1930* (Exeter: The Exeter Press, 2007), pp.1-4; Steve Chibnall and Julian Petley, 'Introduction', in *Journal of British Cinema and Television*, vol.4, no.2, 2007, pp.213-218.

<sup>7</sup> For overviews of, and significant contributions to, the so-called 'heritage debate', see: Amy Sargeant, 'The Darcy Effect: regional tourism and costume drama', *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, vol.4, nos.3 & 4, Autumn 1998, pp.177-186; John Hill, *British Cinema in the 1980s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp.73-98; Sheldon Hall, 'The Wrong Sort of Cinema: Refashioning the Heritage Film Debate', in Robert Murphy (ed.), *The British Cinema Book*, Second Edition (London: BFI, 2001), pp.191-199; Claire Monk, 'The British heritage-film debate revisited', in Claire Monk and Amy Sargeant (eds.), *British Historical Cinema* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), pp.176-198; Andrew Higson, *English Heritage, English Cinema* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

nomenclature that can be applied to large groups of films, across the history of cinema.<sup>8</sup> They also share an inclination to see landscapes in fiction films – especially those shot on location – as pauses in, or distractions from, the narrative: moments where plot development is suspended and emphasis is instead placed on synchronic spatial imagery.<sup>9</sup>

This thesis contends that a different methodology is required, with a different nomenclature. It aims for a more inductive approach, through hermeneutic historicism. Rather than a telescopic, inclusive perspective on a large body of films and programmes, it offers a detailed, work-by-work chronological study of a small number of carefully chosen country house screen narratives from the period 1949-1982. Each chapter deals with one of these works: *Kind Hearts and Coronets* (Robert Hamer, 1949); *The Go-Between* (Joseph Losey, 1971); *The Ruling Class* (Peter Medak, 1972); *Brideshead Revisited* (Charles Sturridge and Michael Lindsay-Hogg, 1981); and *The Draughtsman's Contract* (Peter Greenaway, 1982). These works are not representative of country estate screen narratives in general, nor are they typical of their directors' oeuvres. The most significant trend is a topos; they all feature a specific type of figure set in a picturesque landscape: a male protagonist who visits a country estate and whose status as an outsider there is largely articulated through his perception of the landed family and its estate. Each figure performs in a picturesque landscape; in the process, he alters, and is altered irrevocably by, the estate. What was, in 1949, a somewhat unusual landscape narrative, became a small, but highly significant, groundbreaking genre between 1971 and 1982. Through this combination of case studies, I chart a micro-history of innovation in the deployment of country estates in post-Second World War film and television.

The impetus, if not the overall tone, of the thesis is polemical. Landscape gardens in fiction films and television programmes are frequently written about in passing. More detailed discussions of such films or programmes normally focus on their marketing and

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<sup>8</sup> Interestingly, Sheldon Hall's otherwise persuasive attack on the heritage critics and Andrew Higson's apologist book on the subject both present large lists of films that they argue should be thought of as a cohesive genre. See Hall, op. cit., pp.192-195 and Higson, op. cit., pp.262-267 and *passim*.

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, Lefebvre, op. cit., p.22 and Andrew Higson, 'Re-presenting the National Past: Nostalgia and Pastiche in the Heritage Film', in Lester D. Friedman, *Fires Were Started: British Cinema and Thatcherism*, Second Edition (London: Wallflower, 2006), p.93.

press reception.<sup>10</sup> The thesis offers a hermeneutic study of screen landscapes and their relationship with the film/programme as a whole. Through close analysis of the picturesque in each film or programme, every chapter focuses on the narrative role played by landscape *mise-en-scène*: in all of these texts, landscape is an integral part of the narrative space; far from marking a pause in the diachrony, it is complexly emplotted.

The term 'picturesque' is used throughout the thesis to denote a mode of informal, naturalistic landscape design theorised and widely practised from the mid-eighteenth century until about the 1830s, after which it endured on a smaller scale. The vernacular nuances, contexts and relevance of the word 'picturesque' have changed several times since it entered the English language at about the start of the eighteenth century.<sup>11</sup> However, it continues to be used by garden historians to group a range of discrete, but related historical styles and theories.<sup>12</sup> It is still also applied in other contexts with some of the same connotations it carried at the height of the picturesque cult, despite current wide usage of the word as a synonym for 'visually pleasing' or, more colloquially, 'quaint'.

The fictional estates portrayed and the locations utilised in the five texts I analyse all contain landscapes in this mode: some of the landscape locations were designed and laid out in the eighteenth century, some are later imitations of the historical picturesque, while others have grown into picturesqueness over time, after years of neglect, by design or carelessness. Indeed, none of the locations look exactly as they appeared when built; they all bear visible traces of historical design and development over time. The thesis considers how each of the texts responds to the history inscribed in the location as

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<sup>10</sup> Higson has written at length about some country house films, but his argument is largely determined by advertising campaigns and press reviews, rather than by detailed exegesis of the articulation of landscape in the films. A typical example is his chapter, 'The Heritage Film, British Cinema, and the National Past: *Comin' Thro' The Rye*', in Andrew Higson, *Waving the Flag: Constructing a National Cinema in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp.26-97.

<sup>11</sup> Malcolm Andrews, 'Introduction', in Malcolm Andrews (ed.), *The Picturesque: Literary Sources & Documents, Volume I* (Mountfield: Helm Information, 1994), p.6; John Dixon Hunt, *The Picturesque Garden in Europe* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2004), pp.13-18.

<sup>12</sup> Histories of the picturesque which trace its development as a mode of landscape design from the eighteenth century to the present include: Pevsner, op. cit., pp.173-192; John Dixon Hunt, *Gardens and the Picturesque: Studies in the History of Landscape Architecture* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: MIT Press, 1997); John Macarthur, *The Picturesque: Architecture, Disgust and Other Irregularities* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007).

*mise-en-scène*, but it is also concerned with the way they draw on the location and the history of the picturesque to structure narrative space through cinematography and *découpage*. As I focus on the representation of landscape gardens, I consult garden historiography throughout the thesis. Landscape history plays an integral role in the films and programme; landscape historiography is, therefore, a valuable hermeneutic tool for the analysis of these narratives. Apart from *The Draughtsman's Contract*, all of the texts analysed are literary adaptations: where relevant, I compare the screen landscapes with those in the source texts and refer to literary criticism.

## **Landscape, Cinematography and Narrative: A Literature Review**

The question of how a camera moves through a country estate location and charts it is rarely just a literal one. All of the texts analysed in this thesis feature shots of country estate locations. *Kind Hearts and Coronets* is fairly typical of the studio era in its limited use of exterior locations and detailed sets for interiors, but the other films and *Brideshead Revisited* all deploy locations extensively. While we need to study the elements of cinematography that, according to P. Adams Sitney, have had a strong relationship with landscape *mise-en-scène*, such as the pan, the forward track, the long shot, aerial filming and the zoom, as well as sound design and dialogue, we also need to consider the interaction between the camera and landscape architecture as a pro-filmic art form:<sup>13</sup> how do filmmakers respond to the contours, semantics and historical associations of the estate location? To what extent is the location transformed into a fictional setting? Conversely, which, if any, of its pro-filmic characteristics are harnessed and highlighted by the film?

Several writers have remarked on the ontological connection that is created on film between actual locations and the fictional places they are used to represent.<sup>14</sup> However, Gilberto Perez's argument, that 'most of the time, locations, though real, make no real

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<sup>13</sup> Sitney, op. cit., pp.105-111.

<sup>14</sup> Perez, op. cit., p.238; Christie, op. cit., p.172; Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, 'Cities: Real and Imagined', in Mark Shiel and Tony Fitzmaurice (eds.), *Cinema and the City: Film and Urban Societies* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), p.103.

difference', is representative of the consensus;<sup>15</sup> Geoffrey Nowell-Smith similarly stresses that only a 'core of films...yield[s] up a sense of place'.<sup>16</sup> Most articles and essays on the representation of space in film distinguish between incidental landscape as 'background' and the supposedly rare cases where landscape is significant and thus occupies the 'foreground'.<sup>17</sup> This hierarchy is frequently discussed in terms of a (hypothetical) dichotomy between narrative and imagery, which can be traced back at least as far as Eisenstein's contention that 'landscape is the freest element of film, the least burdened with servile, narrative tasks'.<sup>18</sup> Martin Lefebvre comments on what he sees as 'landscape's conflictual or tense relationship with narrative'.<sup>19</sup> Following Anne Cauquelin, Lefebvre discriminates between 'landscape' as an 'autonomous' icon on the one hand and 'setting', the 'space of story and event', on the other.<sup>20</sup> He allows that there 'may be cases of contamination between them', but his diction suggests that such examples are impure aberrations.<sup>21</sup> For many theorists of cinematic space, then, landscape in film matters only when it is distinct from narrative.

Historians of British cinema and television have often condemned landscape shots that they believe are, as Andrew Higson puts it, 'object[s] of beauty, rather than...narrative space[s] to be inhabited by character and spectator'.<sup>22</sup> Indicatively, however, Higson and Lefebvre both appropriate the term 'attraction' to describe shots or whole films which, they argue, present landscape as spectacle.<sup>23</sup> Country estates are written about by heritage critics solely as generic artefacts: signifiers of wealth and splendour. The specific architecture and history of the location are ignored. One of the recurrent arguments in heritage criticism is that country estates in period dramas are fetishised by

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<sup>15</sup> Perez, op. cit., p.239.

<sup>16</sup> Nowell-Smith, op. cit., p.103.

<sup>17</sup> See, for example, Perez, op.cit., p. 243; Christie, op. cit., p.166; Bernard Nietschmann, 'Authentic, State and Virtual Geography in Film', *Wide Angle*, vol.15, no.4, p.5.

<sup>18</sup> Sergei Eisenstein, *Nonindifferent Nature*, trans. Herbert Marshall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p.217.

<sup>19</sup> Martin Lefebvre, 'Introduction', in Lefebvre (ed.), *Landscape and Film*, p.xii.

<sup>20</sup> Lefebvre, 'Between Setting and Landscape in the Cinema', p.20.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p.53.

<sup>22</sup> Higson, *Waving the Flag*, p.54.

<sup>23</sup> Higson refers to Tom Gunning's phrase, 'cinema of attractions', in *English Heritage, English Cinema*, p.39; Lefebvre draws on the similar, Eisensteinian sense of the word, in 'Introduction', p.xii.

the camera.<sup>24</sup> To quote from Higson again, this fetishisation invites ‘a nostalgic gaze that resists the ironies and social critiques so often suggested narratively by these films’.<sup>25</sup> Again, the emphasis is on narrative and landscape as discrete elements of style. Significantly, the term ‘picturesque’ is frequently used by film historians, (not in its art historical sense), to denote landscape that is visually alluring, yet plays no narratorial role.<sup>26</sup>

There is, however, no reason why film studies needs to be encumbered by such rigid distinctions between narrative and landscape. Lefebvre argues that spectators switch their attention from narrative to spectacle and back, thus alternating between perception of the space as setting and enjoyment of it as landscape.<sup>27</sup> Higson similarly leans toward phenomenology when he discusses what he sees as the ‘ambivalence’ of costume drama: for him, whether the *mise-en-scène* is narratorial or pictorialist is a simply a matter of the viewer’s opinion.<sup>28</sup> Both of them thereby neglect to consider the ways in which space can be carefully managed by filmmakers to produce complex, but unambiguous signification. They also ignore the fact that shots can be – and often are – narrative spectacles. To take an example from the genre most frequently associated with spectacle, science fiction: when the Death Star explodes at the end of *Star Wars*, we can safely assume that most viewers do not stop focusing on the plot while they enjoy the spectacle; the average viewer can simultaneously be in awe of the special effect, register the fact that Skywalker’s torpedo has hit the mark and realise that he has now become a hero by saving the rebels in the nick of time. The spectacle, in this case, both marks and embodies the narrative climax, as Skywalker achieves his long-term goal to be a hero of the rebellion and his short-term goal to destroy the Death Star before it annihilates the rebels.<sup>29</sup> Similarly, when there is a sharp zoom-out in *The Go-Between* to show Leo dwarfed by the estate, the impact of the shot lies in the way it suddenly reveals Leo’s

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<sup>24</sup> See, for example, Cairns Craig, ‘Rooms Without a View’, *Sight and Sound*, June 1991, p.11; Ginette Vincendeau, ‘Introduction’, in Ginette Vincendeau (ed.), *Film/Literature/Heritage: A Sight and Sound Reader* (London: BFI, 2001), p.xviii; Hill, *British Cinema in the 1980s*, p.80.

<sup>25</sup> Higson, ‘Re-representing the National Past’, p.91.

<sup>26</sup> Brian McFarlane, *Australian Cinema 1970-1985* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1987), p.82; Sitney, op.cit., p.104; Higson, *English Heritage, English Cinema*, p.57 and *passim*.

<sup>27</sup> Lefebvre, ‘Between Setting and Landscape in the Cinema’, p.29.

<sup>28</sup> Higson, *English Heritage, English Cinema*, p.77.

<sup>29</sup> *Star Wars* (George Lucas, US, 1977).

vulnerability as a mere speck running across a powerfully spectacular landscape: the spectacle of the estate, in this case, is subversively narrativised as a threat to a child.

There are examples in both theory and historiography of alternative approaches, but most of them are to be found outside film studies. Garden historians often analyse how narratives are articulated through landscapes.<sup>30</sup> In literary criticism, a theoretical basis for comparable studies of landscapes in the novel is provided by Peter Brooks, who points to the 'semantic range' of the word 'plot': he notes that 'plot' can mean both a demarcated area of land and a narrative, and remarks that this is suggestive of the way a narrative can unfold, not only across, but also through a fictional landscape.<sup>31</sup> This is borne out by both Brooks's analysis of Arthur Conan Doyle's 'The Musgrave Ritual' and several studies of Jane Austen's novels that focus on the symbolic roles of country houses, landscapes and/or landscape theory in her plots.<sup>32</sup> Doris Y. Kadish explores landscape passages in a number of novels that '[interrupt] the main plot', but convincingly identifies the narratorial functions of such passages, in terms of how they convey characters' points of view and relate to the plot as a whole.<sup>33</sup> These authors thus helpfully direct to some of the key ways that landscape can be employed in fiction: as a metaphor, as a metonym for a character or narrator's aesthetic and moral philosophy, and as an object of interest for characters, whose different points of view of a landscape are revealing. Such studies reveal how landscape has been mobilised in certain novels to represent and deconstruct ideology.

Some engagements with 'plotted' grounds have also emerged in British film and television history. Christine Gledhill notes that gardens serve as theatrical stages in

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<sup>30</sup> Matthew Pottle and Jamie Purinton, *Landscape Narratives: Design Practices for Telling Stories* (New York: John Wiley, 1998); John Dixon Hunt, *Greater Perfections: The Practice of Garden Theory* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2000), pp.125-128.

<sup>31</sup> Peter Brooks, *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1992), pp.11-12.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.23-28. Studies of landscape in Austen include Alistair M. Duckworth, *The Improvement of the Estate: A Study of Jane Austen's Novels* (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1994); Mavis Batey, 'In Quest of Jane Austen's "Mr Repton"', *Garden History*, vol.5, no.1, Spring 1977, pp.19-20; Mavis Batey, *Jane Austen and the English Landscape* (London: Barn Elms, 1996); Barbara Britton Wenner, *Prospect and Refuge in the Landscape of Jane Austen* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006). Duckworth's approach is extended to Patricia Rozema's adaptation of *Mansfield Park* in Tim Watson, 'Improvements and Reparations at Mansfield Park', in Robert Stam and Alessandra Raengo (eds.), *Literature and Film* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), pp.53-70.

<sup>33</sup> Doris Y. Kadish, *The Literature of Images: Narrative Landscape from Julie to Jane Eyre* (New Brunswick and London: Rutgers University Press, 1987), pp.2, 4 and *passim*.

*Comin' thro' the Rye* and discusses the pastoral in other Hepworth films.<sup>34</sup> Julianne Pidduck considers how contrasts between country house interiors and exteriors structure gendered oppositions between stasis and movement in 1990s Austen adaptations.<sup>35</sup> She comments on the way the framing of a shot in Ang Lee's *Sense and Sensibility* locates Norland Park as an object of desire, while the dialogue 'poses a critique of patriarchal laws of inheritance'.<sup>36</sup> However, she is concerned more with choreography than with landscape architecture. Neither Pidduck nor Gledhill offer extended analyses of landscape gardens on film. While Pidduck briefly touches on the iconography of eighteenth century landscape painting, she neglects the location and its historical associations. In general, garden history has been ignored by film theorists and historians. The exception that proves the rule, H. Elisabeth Ellington draws on picturesque theory and garden historiography in an essay on the representation of Pemberly in adaptations of *Pride and Prejudice*, but she does so to substantiate her argument that the 1995 BBC version is a 'heritage' serial.<sup>37</sup> She implies that the programme reproduces not only the forms, but also the ideology of the eighteenth-century picturesque.<sup>38</sup> While she remarks that the programme utilises landscape to represent Elizabeth and Darcy's shared aesthetic tastes, she argues that the landscapes are arranged as objects for the viewers' scopophilia.<sup>39</sup> Like Pidduck, Ellington overlooks the significance of the location and remarks on the painterliness of certain landscape shots.<sup>40</sup>

Apart from accounts of the fetishisation of locations, then, film studies has neglected the ways directors make use of the ontological connection between films/programmes and estate locations. The inspiration for the filmmaker's representation of landscape is often attributed to painting and too rarely to garden design. Country estate screen

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<sup>34</sup> Christine Gledhill, *Reframing British Cinema 1918-1928: Between Restraint and Passion* (London: BFI, 2003), pp.21-22, 94-100; see also Christine Gledhill, 'Pastoral Transformations in Silent British Cinema', in Porter and Dixon (eds.), *Picture Perfect*, pp.37-47.

<sup>35</sup> Julianne Pidduck, 'Of Windows and Country Walks: Frames of Space and Movement in 1990s Austen adaptations', *Screen*, vol.39, no.4, Winter 1998, pp.381-400; also see Julianne Pidduck, *Contemporary Costume Drama* (London: BFI, 2004), 25-43.

<sup>36</sup> Pidduck, 'Of Windows and Country Walks', p.387-388.

<sup>37</sup> H. Elisabeth Ellington, "'A Correct Taste in Landscape": Pemberly as Fetish and Commodity', in Linda Troost and Sayre Greenfield (eds.), *Jane Austen in Hollywood* (Second edition: Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2001), pp.90-101.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p.98-99.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p.97.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p.100.



fictions often allude to paintings, but their cinematographic movement corresponds more with the mobile experience of visiting a garden. This becomes particularly evident on viewing *The Draughtsman's Contract*, which is unique in its almost totally static landscape cinematography. Despite the tendency of some critics to see gardens on screen as generic 'attractions', a great deal of research usually underpins the process by which a producer, director and/or production designer select a specific country house location. This research is often utilised in script revisions, cinematography and editing.

As Geoffrey Nowell-Smith says of location shoots:

The fact of being able to work with real materials, which retain their original quality however much they are artificially transformed, is a privilege which filmmakers neglect at their peril.<sup>41</sup>

It is this ontological connection that distinguishes location-shot country houses in screen fictions from estates in novels. Novelists often base their fictional estates on sites they have visited or read about, but this is a different process from that of the filming of a location. However, we do not necessarily need to see the shoot as a collision between the narrative and the location's 'recalcitrance', as Nowell-Smith puts it.<sup>42</sup> It is possible to discern a more dynamic interrelation in some films and programmes. This thesis is thus concerned with what Ian Christie describes as 'the idea of a specific "location" both informing and being informed by – in a reciprocal process – the dramatic narrative set within it'.<sup>43</sup> It analyses how estate locations are shot; how a narrative is woven through the landscape and architecture; how the film or programme responds to and comments on the location, its history and, more generally garden history. Christie calls for a development of the

concept of film's *visual* discourse in relation to history's predominantly verbal discourse; to create an active dialogue, which treats the representation and interpretation of the visual more adequately.<sup>44</sup>

In this spirit, the thesis considers exactly how the films and programme anticipate, reflect, diverge from and/or enter into dialogue with, the landscape historiography that emerged in the same period. This is not to say that all or any of the filmmakers necessarily read, say, John Barrell's *The Dark Side of the Landscape*, but to note that

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<sup>41</sup> Nowell-Smith, 'Cities: Real and Imagined', p.107.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p.104.

<sup>43</sup> Christie, 'Landscape and "Location": Reading Filmic Space Historically', p.168. Christie's comment refers to Bazin's analysis of *Journey to Italy* (Roberto Rossellini, Italy, 1953).

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p.165.

comparable concerns characterise these five screen narratives and some of the landscape histories that were written at about the same time. The heritage industry, school visits to country houses, amateur and professional histories of estates and their inhabitants: all of these popular phenomena provide audiences with knowledge and enthusiasm that can be brought to films and programmes set in landed estates. Spectators are not necessarily the fetishistic consumers of landscape spectacles that heritage critics often assume them to be: screen narratives can offer complex, historically-informed engagements with the specific location and the general history of landscapes and landownership, to which spectators can respond. Country house tourism equips audiences to compare the screen representation of a house with the location's layout and history, but this does not mean that the film or programme reproduces the feudal ideology of landownership or the supposed conservatism of the heritage industry. For this reason, I dispense with the term 'heritage' in my discussion of the five screen fictions.

This also applies to form and style: the films and programme depict, and engage with, locations, but their cinematography in no way resembles the tours offered at open houses. This is made apparent in *Kind Hearts and Coronets*, when Louis visits Chalfont Castle on a visitors' day and is disappointed when he cannot break away from the prescribed route to talk to his relation, the duke. Later, the film takes us to parts of the house and grounds that are cordoned off on the visitors' day. There is a similarly significant scene in *The Ruling Class*, when the camera arrives at what any country house tourist or historian of British landscape architecture would recognise as Cliveden's Long Garden: the camera enters the garden from the route followed by visitors to the garden, but does so firstly in a close-up of the exedra (often a theatrical feature in gardens) and then in a high angle crane shot, which situates the audience as if in an amphitheatre, watching a play. The implication is clear: the film is in dialogue with the experience of visiting the actual garden, but at the same time pursues a different rhetoric from the layout of the site, as it self-consciously emphasises the artificiality of the garden and the scene that takes place there.

As well as such site-specific allusions, a sense of the general history of the English landscape garden is integral to all five texts. The ways the films and programme utilise and comment on landscape design can be seen as key developments in the internal

history of the picturesque. They can also be seen as contributing to an external historiography of the picturesque, which emerged in England in the decades after the Second World War. In order to explain this, it is necessary first to provide a brief overview of this mode of landscaping and related theories. The films and programme draw on picturesque composition both to structure a plot, which unfolds through a landscape, and to engage with the way estates embody history; as I argue below, since its inception, the picturesque has been associated in various ways with both narration and the representation of the past.

### **The Picturesque: Form, Narrative and Ideology**

As Stephen Copley and Peter Garside point out, the picturesque is an important aesthetic category, but it covers a set of heterogeneous theories and practices.<sup>45</sup> In England, the word was initially used, not to classify landscape, but as an adjective to describe a set of objects or a historical/mythical scene thought to resemble painterly representation, or deemed suitable for representation in a painting.<sup>46</sup> In his detailed account of Addison and Pope's employment of the word, John Dixon Hunt indicates that it often referred to an ekphrastic description of historical action, rather than painterly composition *per se*.<sup>47</sup> While this association between the adjective 'picturesque' and dramatic content did not remain an explicit theoretical concern in the second half of the century, connections between picturesque composition and narrative were still often implicit in theory and practice. This transition from explicit to implicit narrative content echoed a gradual shift in landscape design from the emblematic garden, in which narrative was inscribed through a series of neoclassical and personal allusions, to the expressive landscape garden, where the emphasis was on affective composition, rather than on highly specific references intended for an erudite visitor.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Stephen Copley and Peter Garside, 'Introduction', in Stephen Copley and Peter Garside (eds.), *The Politics of the Picturesque: Literature, Landscape and Aesthetics Since 1770* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p.1.

<sup>46</sup> Andrews, *op. cit.*, p.6 and Hunt, 'Ut Pictura Poesis, Ut Pictura Hortus, and the Picturesque', in *Gardens and the Picturesque*, pp.106-109.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p.107.

<sup>48</sup> Hunt, 'Emblem and Expression in the Eighteenth Century Landscape Garden', in *Gardens and the Picturesque*, pp.75-102.

While a degree of continuity can be traced throughout the eighteenth century in the sustained movement away from enclosed formal gardens and towards informal landscape designs, a series of dichotomies has been identified by historians in the theories and practices prominent in the second half of the eighteenth century and the early nineteenth century. These include contrasts between the designs of Capability Brown and those preferred by his detractors, such as Uvedale Price;<sup>49</sup> between the ideology of William Gilpin's tours and that of Price and Richard Payne Knight's theories;<sup>50</sup> between the intrinsic picturesqueness described by Price and the associationist picturesque theorised by Knight;<sup>51</sup> between Price and Knight's anti-Brownian stance and Humphrey Repton's revival of elements of Brown's style;<sup>52</sup> and between William Sawrey Gilpin's picturesque and J. C. Loudon's gardenesque.<sup>53</sup> Copley and Garside argue that,

debates between the proponents of the Picturesque aesthetic in the 1790s and early 1800s are marked by sharp disagreements over what it might entail, and over its possible applications in different areas; and these disagreements are compounded by disjunctures between Picturesque theory and the practices that are justified under its name – or, in other words, by conflicts between the status of the Picturesque as a theoretical category and its manifestations as a popular fashion.<sup>54</sup>

On the other hand, there were common characteristics in most of the gardens which emerged during the eighteenth century: winding roads and streams, whether serpentine like Brown's or roughly zigzagging like Price and Knight's; novelty, in terms of either wholesale improvement or variety of form and colour across the landscape; 'natural' contours, whether smooth or rugged; partial concealments, achieved sparsely, through clumps and belts, or rigorously, through tangled boscage; and a resemblance, perceptible from various vantage points, to the paintings of Claude, Rosa, Poussin or Dughet, especially where foreground, middle ground and distances gradated

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<sup>49</sup> Stephanie Ross, 'The Picturesque: An Eighteenth Century Debate', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol.46, no.2, Winter 1987, p.273; Dabney Townsend, 'The Picturesque', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol.55, no.4, Autumn 1997, p.374.

<sup>50</sup> See Kim Ian Michasiw, 'Nine Revisionist Theses on the Picturesque', *Representations*, no.38, Spring 1992, pp.76-100.

<sup>51</sup> Mavis Batey, 'The Picturesque: An Overview', *Garden History*, vol.22, no.2, Winter 1994, p.123.

<sup>52</sup> Walter John Hipple, *The Beautiful, the Sublime, and the Picturesque in Eighteenth-Century British Aesthetic Theory* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1957), pp.238-246. 'Brownian' describes landscapes designed either by Lancelot 'Capability' Brown or in the style he made popular. See Michael Symes, *A Glossary of Garden History* (Princes Risborough: Shire, 2000), p.25.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.129-130.

<sup>54</sup> Copley and Garside, *op. cit.*, p.1.

perspective. If itemising these characteristics is to collapse the distinctions in and between picturesque theory and practice that garden historians have highlighted, it is nevertheless also to recapture the sense of the picturesque as a popular, generic mode of landscaping. It is the abstracted, generic tendencies of the picturesque that often appeared in the ‘popular fashion’ of the Gothic novel: these general characteristics also make the picturesque available as a space of movement and narrative in the films and programme I analyse. The opposition between the formal garden and a generic picturesque is often of more significance to the country house narratives discussed in this thesis, than the specific complexities of the picturesque as theorised and practised in the eighteenth century.

The partial concealments and winding paths, towards which there was a general shift in eighteenth-century landscaping, elicited a new physical response from the garden visitor, which had epistemological consequences. As Hunt argues,

the English garden asked to be explored, its surprises and unsuspected corners to be discovered on foot. It is an art about whose particular, individual ingredients we learn before we understand and see the whole in the mind’s eye.<sup>55</sup>

All gardens are places of spectatorial motion, but the picturesque landscape garden could only be perceived as an entirety through a paradoxical combination of movement and retrospection: walking forwards, while thinking back to parts of the garden encountered earlier. The historical and landscape oil paintings often associated with the picturesque frequently depicted narrative events or led the eyes over an iconographic sequence. The temporal experience of space in the picturesque garden arguably has more in common with the cognitive processes of reading a novel, watching a film or listening to music.<sup>56</sup> However, the lack of attention to movement and narrative in

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<sup>55</sup> John Dixon Hunt, *The Figure in the Landscape: Poetry, Painting, and Gardening During the Eighteenth Century* (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1989), p.143.

<sup>56</sup> Essentialist theories have emerged on the basis of this similarity: Matthew Pottage and Jamie Purinton compare the picturesque with the novel in *Landscape Narratives*, pp.136-145; Giuliana Bruno avers that ‘the picturesque can be reconsidered as a protofilimic practice,’ in *Atlas of Emotion: Journeys in Art, Architecture and Film* (New York: Verso, 2002), p.196; Rebecca Solnit also compares the experience of the picturesque garden with that of watching a film in *Wanderlust: A History of Walking* (London and New York: Verso, 2002), p.90; David B. Clarke and Marcus A. Doel partially refine Solnit’s point, by comparing the representation of space in English early modern time-based media, as well as in cinema before analytic editing, with the picturesque. See David B. Clarke and Marcus A. Doel, ‘From Flatland to Vernacular Relativity: The Genesis of Early English Screenscapes’, in Lefebvre (ed.), *Landscape and Film*, pp.213-243; Macarthur compares film form to the ‘pictoriality with movement added’ of the picturesque, in his *The Picturesque*, p.164. However, all of these critics fail to extend their theories

eighteenth-century picturesque theory has encouraged historians to see picturesque landscape design as the antithesis of the landscape of motion, as well as a non-narrative form.<sup>57</sup> John Macarthur isolates one paragraph in Price's entire oeuvre, which discusses the way eyes mimetically follow the contours of a building; the eyes are thus in 'imitation of the form of the object'.<sup>58</sup> This might be compared with the way the camera movements in, say, *Brideshead Revisited* often mimic the contours of the landscape in the *mise-en-scène* (see chapter 4). However, a more general affinity between picturesque design and narrative emerged in the landscape fiction of the late eighteenth century, which involved protagonists walking through the described space.

Consider this passage from Ann Radcliffe's 1794 novel, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*:

It was near noon, when the travellers, having arrived at a piece of steep and dangerous road, alighted to walk. The road wound up an ascent, that was clothed with wood, and, instead of following the carriage, they entered the refreshing shade... Sometimes, the thick foliage excluded all view of the country; at others, it admitted some partial catches of the distant scenery, which gave hints to the imagination to picture landscapes more interesting, more impressive, than any that had been presented to the eye. The wanderers often lingered to indulge in these reveries of fancy.<sup>59</sup>

As soon as the three characters, St Aubert, Emily and Valancourt, choose to walk through the wood, the landscape is no longer sublimely hazardous, but picturesquely varied and gradated by alternations between full and partial concealment of the view. The passage is narratorial, rather than merely descriptive, in the way that it charts the progress of the characters through a space, which unfolds picturesquely, and in its emphasis on the collective (optical and mental) point of view of the three characters. The suggestiveness of the partial concealments enables Radcliffe to make the transition from ekphrasis to an indication of the travellers' shared sensibility, evidenced in their inclination to imagine landscapes beyond the available glimpses. While the passage might encourage the reader to 'indulge in' similar 'reveries of fancy', which can be

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through the detailed analysis of landscape gardens as *mise-en-scène*. On landscape as music in cinema, see Eisenstein, *Nonindifferent Nature*, p.217 and *passim*.

<sup>57</sup> On picturesque landscape design as the antithesis of the landscape of motion, see Michel Conan, 'Introduction: Garden and Landscape Design, from Emotion to the Construction of Self', in Michel Conan (ed.), *Landscape Design and the Experience of Motion* (Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 2003), p.13. On the paucity of references to movement in picturesque theory, see Macarthur, *op. cit.*, p.233. On the picturesque as a non-narrative form, see Copley and Garside, *op. cit.*, p.6.

<sup>58</sup> Macarthur, *op. cit.*, p.237.

<sup>59</sup> Ann Radcliffe, *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (London: Penguin, 2001), pp.50-51.

triggered by the snatches of landscape detail described by Radcliffe, it serves primarily to narrate a minor episode in the journey, during which the landscape appeals to the shared taste of the characters and thus draws them closer together, before their fateful separation.

Picturesque fiction was not confined to the novel in this period; it also appeared in the form of the dialogues utilised by theorists to exemplify their interpretation of picturesqueness. For example, in his 1801 *Dialogue on the Distinct Characters of the Picturesque and the Beautiful*, Uvedale Price states that his debaters were in

a wild unfrequented part of the country, when, suddenly, they came to a ruinous hovel on the outskirts of a heathy common. In a dark corner of it, some gypsies were sitting over a half-extinguished fire, which every now and then, as one of them stooped down to blow it, feebly blazed up for an instant, and shewed their sooty faces, and black tangled locks.<sup>60</sup>

Malcolm Andrews has commented on the adjectives in this passage that typify Price's picturesque, as well as on the painterliness of Price's use of chiaroscuro.<sup>61</sup> However, the passage also deploys picturesqueness to provide a narrative structure and a sense of temporality. The suddenness with which the travellers come across the encampment is consistent with the surprises in landscape layout advocated by Price. As in the extract from Radcliffe's novel, alternations between opacity and partial visibility provide variety and tantalising glimpses, in this case of gypsies in a state of destitution and disarray. What matters for the exponent of Price's picturesque, is not the desperation of the gypsies as their source of heat dies, but that the debaters are now and again given pleasing partial views of the dishevelled gypsies. In Price's theory, the connoisseur of the picturesque ignores moral considerations and appreciates such images for their aesthetic qualities, which depend on sequentiality.

My point here is not that the picturesque is an essentially narratorial form, but that through its associations with movement and sequentiality, it has often lent itself to narration, as well as to the ekphrastic prose and pictorialism with which it is more

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<sup>60</sup> Uvedale Price, *Dialogue on the Distinct Characters of the Picturesque and the Beautiful*, quoted in Malcolm Andrews, 'Introduction', p.24.

<sup>61</sup> Andrews, op. cit., p.24.

commonly associated.<sup>62</sup> Such sequentiality is deployed by the films and programmes I analyse in the thesis.

I have discussed landscape in fiction; diachrony was also often articulated in the eighteenth-century English garden. The inscriptions and architectural allusions in many neoclassical gardens often provided a set of specific cues, which could provoke the visitor to assemble the garden's emblems retrospectively into a coherent narrative. In the later, expressive picturesque gardens, narrative tended to be less specific. As Dabney Townsend comments,

Much of the picturesque depends on a representation of temporal passage, often through the evidence of decay, but also through the fullness of development. The picturesque is never shiny and new. A formal garden could be made to keep its shape by constant care. A natural landscape depends on trees that grow, roads and houses that are used and change with time.<sup>63</sup>

The extent to which this temporality could be read as a narrative depended partly on the mental activity of the visitor. John Dixon Hunt points to the various degrees to which narrative was controlled by designers and owners of gardens: the more walking routes were co-ordinated and verbal hints supplied in inscription and guidebooks, the more specific the narrative would be.<sup>64</sup> Picturesque landscape architecture tended to consist of ruins, which lacked the learned allusiveness of the emblematic garden. As a type of narrative landscape, the picturesque depended more on provoking the visitor's 'reveries of fancy', than on the more specific cues of the emblematic garden.

A bird's-eye view of the picturesque in the nineteenth century reveals such 'reveries of fancy' supplanted by preoccupation with social conditions. Malcolm Andrews charts a shift in picturesque theory, from an emphasis on formalistic definitions of the term in the late eighteenth century, to the ethical concerns that ultimately underpinned John Ruskin's use of the term.<sup>65</sup> Ruskin remarked on what he called a 'higher picturesque', in which, for example, stoicism was discernible in dilapidation.<sup>66</sup> He identified this form

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<sup>62</sup> Studies of the picturesque in the novel tend to focus on the pictorial and painterly associations of the term, rather than on the way it can be used to structure passages in which characters move through a landscape. See, for example, Alexander M. Ross, *The Imprint of the Picturesque on Nineteenth-Century British Fiction* (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1986), p.65 and *passim*.

<sup>63</sup> Townsend, 'The Picturesque', p.367.

<sup>64</sup> Hunt, *Greater Perfections*, pp.125-128.

<sup>65</sup> Andrews, op. cit., p.4 and *passim*.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p.33.



of picturesqueness in art, which represented decay, with pathos.<sup>67</sup> The trajectory that Andrews traces here is highly significant, as it shows how the temporality of picturesque ruination became more prominent as it took on a more affective function.

Ethics and aesthetics are similarly inextricable in some uses of the term in the middle of the twentieth century. The epigraphs to this introduction are quotations from disparate texts – a science fiction novel and an art historical work adapted from radio lectures – both published in the 1950s, just a few years after the release of *Kind Hearts and Coronets*. They serve as examples of ways the term retained some of its eighteenth- and nineteenth-century connotations in diverse contexts, at about the beginning of the period covered by this thesis. In Arthur C. Clarke's *Childhood's End*, the 'picturesque survival' is a human dissident, involved in a hopeless rebellion against a utopian dictatorship by a group of benign aliens.<sup>68</sup> No landscape is mentioned, but the opposition of 'ordered existence' and 'picturesque survival' evidently derives from the common myth of a binary between formal and picturesque modes of gardening, a binary which Hunt goes to some lengths to unpack.<sup>69</sup> while 'improvement' of estates in the late eighteenth century involved the wholesale destruction of many unfashionable formal gardens, the gradual transition in garden theory from formal to picturesque layouts, which began around 1700, took at least half a century, during which neoclassical and other emblematic gardens often combined geometric and informal layouts. While Clarke's use of the term draws on its eighteenth century associations, it also relies on a conflation of the various forms of irregular Augustan gardens, Brownian parks and picturesque landscapes under the label 'picturesque', in order to achieve a diametric contrast between the formal and picturesque modes of garden design. This opposition – at once a historical reference and a mythical conflation – is visible in most of the texts discussed in the following chapters.

In Clarke's novel, though, the chronology of the opposition is reversed: order follows picturesqueness. The opposition serves as a metaphor for a political antinomy between the 'ordered existence' of a utopian earth and a minority fighting for human autonomy

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<sup>67</sup> See John Ruskin, 'On the Turnerian Picturesque', in *Selected Writings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp.82-85.

<sup>68</sup> See Clarke, *Childhood's End*.

<sup>69</sup> See Hunt, *Gardens and the Picturesque*.

and *laissez-faire*. Again, historical connotations are discernible: the picturesque theory and practice of the 1790s has often been interpreted as a *laissez-faire* discourse, with a liberalist rhetoric.<sup>70</sup> As in that decade, picturesqueness is also related in Clarke's novel to the relics of the past. However, the 'picturesque survival' in this case is recognised as 'dangerous' and runs his operation in a dystopian underground base.

Conversely, Nikolaus Pevsner, who played a key role in the development of the historiography of the picturesque in the 1940s, portrays it as a potentially utopian aesthetic, which can be deployed to improve modern town planning in Britain.<sup>71</sup> He revives the notion of the '*genius loci*' to refer to the intrinsic character of a site, to which, he argues, architects need to respond, just as Pope urged Lord Burlington to 'Consult the genius of the place in all'.<sup>72</sup> Different versions of this idea appeared throughout the eighteenth century, in, for example, Lancelot Brown's evaluation of the estate's 'capabilities' and Price's avowed belief that buildings should be designed to match their surroundings.<sup>73</sup>

Clarke and Pevsner both show an awareness of the picturesque's ideological significance, though they interpret it differently. While ideology manifested itself silently in the complex aesthetics of the eighteenth-century landscape garden, Clarke and Pevsner appropriate the term 'picturesque' self-consciously to describe different political ideas.<sup>74</sup> They both anticipate the revisionist landscape historiography that began to emerge in the 1970s, which has often examined the ideology of the picturesque in the eighteenth century. Similarly, the films and programme I discuss all thematise the ideology that underpins their landscape gardens. In some cases with comic overttness, in

<sup>70</sup> See, for example, Andrews, op. cit., p.27 and Ann Bermingham, 'System, Order, and Abstraction: The Politics of English Landscape Drawing around 1795', in W.J.T. Mitchell (ed.), *Landscape and Power*, Second Edition (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2002), pp.77-101.

<sup>71</sup> See Pevsner, *The Englishness of English Art*. Pevsner also published several influential essays on the picturesque in *Architectural Review*, including Nikolaus Pevsner, 'Price on Picturesque Planning', *Architectural Review*, vol.95, 1944, pp.47-50; Nikolaus Pevsner, 'The Genesis of the Picturesque', *Architectural Review*, vol.96, 1944, pp.136-146; Nikolaus Pevsner, 'Twentieth Century Picturesque', *Architectural Review*, vol.115, 1954, pp.227-229.

<sup>72</sup> Alexander Pope, *An Epistle to Lord Burlington*, quoted in Pevsner, op. cit., p.178.

<sup>73</sup> Batey, 'The Picturesque: An Overview', p.126.

<sup>74</sup> On aesthetic manifestations of ideology in the eighteenth-century landscape garden, see Ann Bermingham, *Landscape and Ideology* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1987), pp.57-85; Stephen Daniels, 'The Political Iconography of Woodland in Later Georgian England', in Denis Cosgrove and Stephen Daniels (eds.), *The Iconography of Landscape* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp.43-82.

others with subversive subtlety, landscape is revealed as power: a power that destroys three of the outsider protagonists and is usurped by the other two. Like Clarke's novel, all of these screen narratives reveal the danger posed by the picturesque. Landscape and the activities enacted in it lead to physical injury, death and depravity in every film and programme discussed in the following chapters.

### **The *Genius Loci* Narrative**

Pevsner's revival of '*genius loci*' is helpful, as it provides an appropriate term for the type of protagonist that appears in all five texts and, by extension, for this narrative genre. The protagonist, in his interaction with the landscape, can be described as a form of *genius loci*, or spirit of the place, in that he alters, and is altered by, the landscape: this process is analogous to the 'consultation' that Pope describes, except that the protagonist's trajectory makes available an exploration of the landscape's form and the power relations underpinning it. Pope refers to the character of the site, personified as a feminine figure. This differentiates the spirit of the landscape garden from the classical *genii loci*, the guardian spirits of place, like the one mentioned in *The Aeneid*.<sup>75</sup> Pope's muse-like *genius loci* is an approachable figure, from which the landscape designer may learn. The gradual humanising of this figure can be seen, for example, in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, in which the 'genius' in the landscape is now a male character – Valancourt – who explains the aesthetic character of landscapes to Emily.<sup>76</sup> In the films and programme with which this thesis is concerned, the *genius loci* is a different figure again: his performance not only reflects on the aesthetic character of the site and its historical associations, but also on its ideological substructure.

In each case this protagonist is attached to a particular icon or representational mode, which encapsulates how he perceives the country estate: in *Kind Hearts and Coronets*, Louis has his mother's naive painting of Chalfont; in *The Go-Between*, it gradually becomes clear that the older Leo sees events at Brandham superstitiously; in *The Ruling Class*, J.C. tries to re-enact *La Dame aux Camélias* in the grounds of the estate; in

<sup>75</sup> Virgil, *The Aeneid*, translated by David West (London: Penguin, 1991), p. 166.

<sup>76</sup> Radcliffe, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, p. 102.

*Brideshead Revisited*, Charles is sick with a nostalgic remembrance of things past; in *The Draughtsman's Contract*, Neville is obsessed with a blinkered way of looking at and representing Compton Anstey. All of the texts deploy the picturesque to ironise these mystifications of the country estates. As Doreen Massey comments, 'the very construction of films could help either to criticise or to reorder the geographical imaginations we have of the world.'<sup>77</sup> Each *genius loci* narrative deconstructs a myth of the type that has often been attached to the country estate and uncovers beneath it a *paysage immoralisé*.

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<sup>77</sup> Karen Lury and Doreen Massey, 'Making Connections', *Screen*, vol.40, no.3, Autumn 1999, p.233

## I

## Louis Mazzini's Postcard: Picturesque Determinism in *Kind Hearts and Coronets*

Landscape...doesn't merely signify or symbolize power relations; it is an instrument of cultural power, perhaps even an agent of power that is (or frequently represents itself as) independent of human intentions.

– W.J.T. Mitchell<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

*Kind Hearts and Coronets* (1949) is a comedy about an arriviste working his way up through the English class system. Concomitantly – perhaps inevitably – it is also about his journey towards ownership of a landed estate. In Roy Horniman's *Israel Rank*, the 1907 novel from which the film was adapted, the family's main estate is seen by the eponymous protagonist as an impressively large space, but the real object of his fascination when he first visits the house is a portrait of one of his male ancestors, Ethel Gascoyne.<sup>2</sup> He dwells on his resemblance to this murderous relative and, later, his thoughts return to the notion that he has inherited Ethel's homicidal tendencies. The film's director, Robert Hamer, and his co-script writer, John Dighton, displace this iconicity onto the house itself: Chalfont, portrayed by Leeds Castle. The location itself only appears in a few, albeit key, sequences. However, because Louis Mazzini's mother's painting of it appears many times, the castle as icon is frequently on screen. There is something comical, yet uncanny about this painting of child-like simplicity as it lurks insistently in the background in most of the scenes in which Louis plans his murders. The film also features numerous landscape sequences, set both in the castle's grounds and in other sites, mostly constructed from a combination of locations and studio sets. These too have their role to play in the killings. Indeed, Louis's journey towards ownership of Chalfont is charted through a series of landscapes. As the castle

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<sup>1</sup> W.J.T. Mitchell, 'Introduction', in W.J.T. Mitchell (ed.), *Landscape and Power*, Second Edition (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2002), pp.1-2.

<sup>2</sup> Roy Horniman, *Israel Rank* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1948), pp.62-68.

is the prize, its grounds appropriately form the setting of the climactic murder, the shooting of Ethelred D'Ascoyne, Duke of Chalfont.

There is a sustained relationship, then, between the film's landscapes and its plotting, which has been overlooked by the criticism published on *Kind Hearts and Coronets*.<sup>3</sup> While Louis's voice-over narration is similar in tone to Israel's prose in Horniman's novel, the film's emphasis on landscape is one of its most significant departures from *Israel Rank*. As we will see, Louis's attachment to the painting of Chalfont suggests that his criminality is the result of his education, rather than of a homicidal gene like that shared by Israel and his ancestor in the portrait. There are passages of landscape description in the novel, including a countryside murder, but Israel's schemes do not rely on the contours of any landscape: Louis, on the other hand, often carries out his schemes *through* landscape in the film. The landscapes play an integral role, not only in the film's comic dramatisation of several killings, but also in its representation of the aristocracy: the film is concerned as much with the cultural power of landscape, as with the political power of the aristocracy.

Raymond Williams argues that 'rural Britain was subsidiary, and knew that it was subsidiary, from the late nineteenth century.'<sup>4</sup> However, political power in Edwardian England still rested to a certain extent in the hands of the landed aristocracy. Whatever the impact of the agricultural depression on landowners from 1874, it was not until the 1911 Parliament Act that the power of the House of Lords was significantly reduced.<sup>5</sup> Country property had yet an ideological significance which explains its dramatic iconicity in a narrative about an arriviste in Edwardian England. In 1949, when the film was released, a second Parliament Act limited the length of time by which the House of Lords could delay the implementation of decisions made in the House of

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<sup>3</sup> A 1953 article in *Positif* points out that the poacher scene was inspired by *The Rules of the Game*, but does not mention that landscape is as central to Hamer's film as it is to Renoir's. Bernard Chardère, 'Robert Hamer's *Kind Hearts and Coronets*', in Michael Ciment and Laurence Kardish (eds.), *Positif: 50 Years*, translated by Kenneth Larose (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2002), p.24. Significant texts on the film, none of which mentions landscape, include: Charles Barr, *Ealing Studios* (London: Studio Vista, 1993); Jerry Palmer, 'Enunciation and Comedy: "Kind Hearts and Coronets"', *Screen*, vol.30, no.112. Winter/Spring 1989, pp.144-158; Michael Newton, *Kind Hearts and Coronets* (London: BFI, 2003).

<sup>4</sup> Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1973), p.248.

<sup>5</sup> On the 1870s agricultural depression, see Peter Mandler, *The Fall and Rise of the Stately Home* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997), p.118 and *passim*; on the 1911 Parliament Act, see David Cannadine, *The Decline and Fall of the Aristocracy* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990), pp.458-472.

Commons.<sup>6</sup> However, landownership was a different matter. With the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act, the position of upper class agricultural landownership was strengthened for the first time in over seventy years.<sup>7</sup> If few landowners at this time could afford to live in or maintain their estates, the country house as an ideological icon gained a new pertinence for people like Christopher Hussey and Evelyn Waugh, by virtue of its seeming ephemerality.<sup>8</sup>

The revival of interest in eighteenth-century aesthetics began in the 1920s and came to prominence in the 1940s, as part of a re-evaluation of the history of English art. The picturesque was historicised by Hussey, in 1927, and Nikolaus Pevsner, in the 1940s, who both saw it as part of a continuous tradition of English art.<sup>9</sup> According to Peter Mandler, while Hussey's aesthetic theory argued in favour of the aristocracy's continued residence in country estates, Pevsner's claim was that he 'could separate the houses from the vanished way of life they had once embodied'.<sup>10</sup> The professional historiography of the country estate, which emerged during this period, was initially characterised by these two positions: both celebrating the country estate and the English landscape garden, but from disparate political perspectives. The aesthetics of the country estate and the picturesque became a contested ideological ground, both in architectural historiography and in national politics; significantly, *Kind Hearts and Coronets* was made and released during a Labour-initiated committee of inquiry into the preservation of country houses, which also considered whether continued residence was desirable from the point of view of architectural maintenance.<sup>11</sup> Thus, despite the decline of the country estate and the powers of the aristocracy between the publication of *Israel Rank* in 1907 and the release of *Kind Hearts and Coronets* in 1949, the film's ambivalent representation of the aristocracy as, on the one hand, charmless and unjust (Ethelred) and, on the other, witty and murderous (Louis), was

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<sup>6</sup> The legal right of peers to be tried in the House of Lords was only abolished the year before: the film's trial scene is therefore topical.

<sup>7</sup> Mandler, op.cit., p.321.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p.332; Evelyn Waugh, 'Preface' to *Brideshead Revisited: The Sacred and Profane Memories of Captain Charles Ryder* (London: Penguin, 2000), p. 8.

<sup>9</sup> Christopher Hussey, *The Picturesque: Studies in a Point of View* (London: Frank Cass, 1967);

Nikolaus Pevsner, 'Price on Picturesque Planning', *Architectural Review*, vol.95, 1944, pp.47-50;

Nikolaus Pevsner, 'The Genesis of the Picturesque', *Architectural Review*, vol.96, 1944, pp.136-146

<sup>10</sup> Mandler, op. cit., p.332.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., pp.341-342.

topical as well as comical. It is apt that several of the film's acts of violence take place amidst the – then much contested – aesthetic of the picturesque.

From a broader perspective, the film's portrayal of Louis and the D'Ascoyne family can also be seen as part of a trend of suspicion and/or mockery of wealthy landowners in British films of the 1940s. For example, Cavalcanti's *Went the Day Well?* (1942) dramatises the German wartime corruption of English society with the treachery of the wealthy, educated village community leader.<sup>12</sup> Many later 1940s historical films, as Margaret Butler notes,

dealt effectively with Britain's post-war rural politics. They approached questions of universal accessibility to the land and its management...[They] raised questions about landowners' responsibilities to their tenant communities.<sup>13</sup>

*Kind Hearts and Coronets* raises similar questions, particularly with its poacher scene, in which a poacher is caught in one of Ethelred's illegal mantraps and then flogged. However, what distinguishes it from other 1940s narrative landscape films is its subversively ironic deployment of the picturesque as an aesthetic which can be utilised for a murder scheme. This chapter analyses Louis's picturesque murders and then considers these in relation to the representation of his mother's painting. It moves from close textual analysis of some key sequences to a discussion of the film's structure.

## **The Country and the City: Grounds for a Plot**

Three of Louis's four most elaborate murders are committed in picturesque landscapes: Young D'Ascoyne and his lover, tipped over the weir; Henry D'Ascoyne, blown up in the dark room at the back of his garden; Ethelred, shot in Chalfont's grounds, while pinioned in one of his own mantraps. The other lengthy murder plot, aimed at removing the Reverend Lord Henry D'Ascoyne, takes place indoors: the camera lingers in a two-shot of Louis and the rector (Fig.1.1), then gradually tracks right (Figs. 1.2-1.3) and, after a cut to a longer shot, tracks left (Figs. 1.4-1.6),

<sup>12</sup> Recent historical novels have continued this trend, locating English vulnerability in or before the Second World War in the proto-fascism of the landed classes. See, for instance, Kazuo Ishiguro's *Remains of the Day* (London: Faber and Faber, 1989) or Jonathan Coe's *What a Carve Up!* (London: Penguin, 1995).

<sup>13</sup> Margaret Butler, *Film and Community: Britain and France From La Règle du Jeu to Room at the Top* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2004), p.68. Butler refers to films such as *The Wicked Lady* (Leslie Arliss, UK, 1945) and *Jassy* (Bernard Knowles, UK, 1947).



revealing the architecture as painfully slowly as the latter talks about it. The scene engages in a pseudo-picturesque discourse of partial concealment and gradual revelation of detail. Time is taken to evoke Louis's subjection to the rector's tediousness as minutely as possible.

Above all, it is worthwhile noting that this interior, like the picturesque landscapes, is set pointedly outside London. In the country, Louis is shown more intimately and more intricately involved in his plots than in the other, more quickly executed London murders. Each of the country killings relies on the elapse of time, the unravelling of events and some degree of (fatal) serendipity. Apart from the weir murder, they all demand the effort, patience and sustained deception necessary to gain the victim's confidence. All of the victims in the countryside are humoured for some time, in spite of Louis's irritation and his own quick-thinking.



1.1 The camera set-up begins as a two-shot of Louis and the rector...



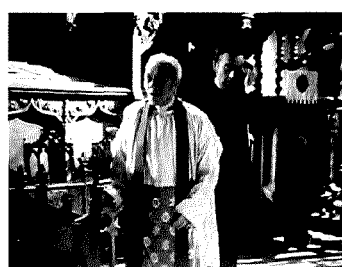
1.2...and, in a combination of a track and a pan, moves as slowly as the rector...



1.3...to partially reveal the family memorial.



1.4 A cut to a long shot is followed by another painfully slow pan and track...



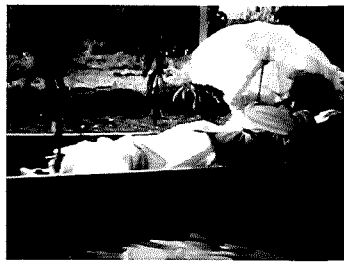
1.5...with pauses, as the rector shows Louis the architecture...



1.6...to the left of the initial set-up.

Schematic plotting is spatialised; all of the countryside murders lay heavy emphasis on the sense of distances travelled to commit the crime: the journey along the river to the weir in Maidenhead; the bicycling to and from Henry's house; Louis's disguise as a bishop from Matabeleland on a brass-rubbing vacation, ostensibly cycling from church to church across the country; Louis's guided tour by Ethelred of Chalfont's grounds.

The (literal) great lengths that Louis goes to are often humorously disproportional to the sudden death which follows them. As a result, the levity with which each death is treated is underscored. Indeed, bathos is demonstrated with diagrammatic lucidity when Young D'Ascoyne is eventually pushed over the weir. After Louis's vacillation and a correspondingly uncertain journey by boat, D'Ascoyne and his lover plunge with decisive rapidity into the depths: a suspenseful build-up is suddenly followed by the boat swiftly passing over the weir (Figs. 1.7-1.11).<sup>14</sup>



1.7 As they make love, the couple's boat starts to move...



1.8-1.9...and shot/reverse-shots of Louis watching the boat approach the weir create a suspenseful moment of expectation.



1.10 As if he is experiencing an homicidal epiphany, the shadow passes from his face...



1.11...before the boat suddenly plunges over the weir.

In the film's country murders, a connection is established between an elaborate murder plot and a measured, schematic topography. The pacing of the plot becomes literalised – or, rather, visualised: space is emplotted. In contrast, the two London killings take the form of short interludes; in these instances, like a professional assassin, Louis leaves nothing to chance. He makes a deliberate play of site-specific, comic abruptness. Lady Agatha is shot down by an arrow, mid-flight above Berkeley Square. A parody of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's 'The Arrow and the Song', Louis's epithetic couplet, 'I shot an arrow in the air/She fell to earth in Berkeley Square', conflates the time and space between the mid-flight Agatha and the crashed Agatha with the stressed end-rhyme 'air...Square'. General Lord Rufus is blown up mid-sentence in his club. In each case, the sudden death is not preceded by the kind of

<sup>14</sup> It is unobtrusively done, but the switch from actors in a real boat to a model shot arguably adds to the sense of bathos. On the model shots in the film, see Roy Armes, *A Critical History of the British Cinema* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1978), p.192.

extended, preambular plotting which characterises the murders in the countryside. In the city there is no bathetic combination of slow build-up and amusingly swift death. Both of the victims are cut short by assassination, the epigrammatic terseness of which is swift, precise and – because both of the victims enjoy making speeches – ironically apposite. Louis is not required to feign any surprise at the deaths. He remains anonymous, in both cases unknown to the victim. That these are assassinations, rather than executions, is asserted through his anonymity, as well as through his choice of weapons.

Louis apparently learns his archery skills in the country, from Edith D'Ascoyne's example. The archery scene in her garden can be seen as a nod to the archery scene in MGM's 1940 adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice*, directed by Robert Z. Leonard: one of that film's most memorable additions to Austen's plot.<sup>15</sup> In *Kind Hearts and Coronets*, therefore, archery first appears as a parodic comedy of manners set-piece: the bow and arrow are toys of the leisured classes. Their corresponding, narrative role is as props, used to dramatise a conversation piece. Any sense of the arrow's initial conception for speed and fatal elision of space is lost in this narrative role; expatiation has replaced terminal decisiveness. Louis subsequently returns the bow and arrow to their original functions as long distance weapon and ammunition. The light-hearted glissando with which the score signifies the sudden descent of Agatha's balloon and Louis's dandyish clothes may, as Michael Newton suggests, make him seem something of an Edwardian Cupid, but the briefly cruel expression on his face when he shoots the arrow makes it patent that he is, nevertheless, an assassin, and that here the bow and arrow are no longer countrified objets d'art, but a weapon and ammunition.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, the caviar has the appearance of a delicacy, but contains a lethal additive.

In the Edwardian era, a bomb exploded in England was almost exclusively an anarchist's device. Anarchists and suffragettes, like assassinations, were also more or less metropolitan phenomena. When its London murders occur, *Kind Hearts and*

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<sup>15</sup> *Pride and Prejudice* (Robert Z. Leonard, US, 1940). On the staging of the archery scene in this film, see H. Elisabeth Ellington, "'A Correct Taste in Landscape': Pemberly as Fetish and Commodity', in Linda Troost and Sayre Greenfield (eds.), *Jane Austen in Hollywood*, Second Edition (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2001), p.103.

<sup>16</sup> Michael Newton describes Louis's pose here as 'cupid-like': Newton, *Kind Hearts and Coronets*, p.7.

*Coronets* seems at pains to stress city-specific period details, differentiating death in the city from death in the country. This applies even to Louis's mother's death; she is run-over by a tram – an icon of metropolitan modernity. What is the purpose of this differentiation: to emphasise country qualities, city qualities, or both? With its anticipation of post-war dandy street fashions, *Kind Hearts and Coronets* may well be, as Michael Newton argues, 'inescapably a London film', yet the film's focus is also on the countryside and its aristocratic owners.<sup>17</sup> With an appetite as much for irony as for revenge, Louis makes a point of providing an apt death for each of his victims. The power of those victims stems from landownership. Therefore, it seems apposite that his usurpation of power should take place most extensively in the country, in landscapes, even if – as Newton argues – the gradual increase in his wealth should be demonstrated in the city.<sup>18</sup>

It is also appropriate that the index of his objective, the picture his mother paints of Chalfont, should be pre-eminent in many of the scenes set in London. Mrs. Mazzini's painting acts as a reminder that, whatever drama occupies Louis in the city, his thoughts are always partially elsewhere. While Louis satisfies his sexual desires only in the city, his opportunity as a pretender seems to lie outside London: this is the most straightforward explanation for the landscape sequences and the painting in *Kind Hearts and Coronets*.

So, there are two implications here. Firstly, the emphasis is on murders in the countryside, because that is where D'Ascoyne power lies. It is pragmatic and aptly retributive for Louis to seize it there. Secondly, things are done differently in the country, revenge and murder included. As in Leslie Arliss's *The Wicked Lady* (1945), a different type of activity obtains in the countryside from that in the city. In *The Wicked Lady*, highway(wo)men are at large in the country, whereas they are hanged in the city.<sup>19</sup> In *Kind Hearts and Coronets*, it is implied that Louis can implement an alternative form of justice most *extensively* in the country. The extensive grounds for Louis's usurpation are necessarily situated away from the intensive, bureaucratic centres of metropolitan jurisprudence. This can, retrospectively, be seen as a wish-

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<sup>17</sup> Newton, op. cit., p.52.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p.51.

<sup>19</sup> *The Wicked Lady* (Leslie Arliss, UK, 1945).

fulfilment strand in Louis's story-telling; in his version of events, landscapes offer him judicial trajectories, which act as alternatives to the unfavourable verdict of the House of Lords jury.

The countryside trajectory contrasted with the city interludes invites us to speculate on the different narratives specific to each setting. This opposition is not only jurisdictional. It is marked by a discursive split, a divide between two genres of storytelling. An alternative order or power structure in a different place allows for different events, related in a different register. The countryside involves expansive, systematically fastidious plot development, but the city murder scenes embrace plot elision. While the city narrative consists of short, decisive episodes, the countryside narrative places its emphasis on distances travelled and randomness. Louis is assisted by chance discoveries in the landscape, such as the weir or the mantrap. Evidently, there is room for serendipity in the countryside, where there is not in the city, with its tightly planned and instantaneous deaths. The very grounds of the countryside seem complicit with him. The detailed landscape arguably plays as operative a role as any character in *Kind Hearts and Coronets*. Andrew Britton argues that 'Louis's style, and that of the film, is a kind of aristocratic anarchism.'<sup>20</sup> While Britton's point might apply to the city murders, it ignores the way Louis's country murders are carefully plotted through the layout of various landscapes; whereas an anarchist might destroy the landscapes, Louis subversively appropriates the conventions of the picturesque for his murders, just as he relies on delicate use of language for his wit.

## **Murder, He Landscaped: Plotted Grounds**

In order to commit his first murder, Louis sets out from Cruikshank's Hotel by river. The allusion in the hotel's name to the nineteenth-century caricaturist, George Cruikshank, hints at the caricatural inflection of the landscape which is to follow. Louis begins the pursuit of Young D'Ascoyne and his lover, 'hoping for [he] knew not what'. This line is spoken over a picturesque image of the river, which contributes to the atmosphere of chance and open-endedness (Fig.1.12). We see Louis's canoe moving away from the camera. In the distance, we spy the serpentine course of the river, partially screened by arboreal coulisses – one large group of trees to the right of

<sup>20</sup> Andrew Britton, 'Review of *Ealing Studios* by Charles Barr', *Framework*, no.7/8, Autumn 1978, p.48.

the frame, punctuating the middle distance, and the second clump on the left, masking the background. The impression conveyed of the perspective and the trajectory it offers is one of mystery. The indistinct reflection on the water incorporates the same mood of indefinite perspective. The image is a long shot, but the focus is shallow. The shallow focus adds to the teasing picturesqueness of the semi-concealed horizon; it acts in the same way as mist or fog – the ‘nebulous refuge’, described by Jay Appleton in his discussion of prospect-refuge theory – since it partially conceals the horizon, eliciting movement towards it.<sup>21</sup>



1.12 A parodic picturesque composition: a space, not of contemplation, but of murderous intent.



1.13 The sign: the audience has just enough time to read the words in larger print: ‘Warning’ and ‘dangerous’.



1.14 The couple’s love-making, partially concealed by picturesque branches.

The shot is picturesque-by-numbers in a way that is consistent with the film’s parodic treatment of other art forms popular in the nineteenth century.<sup>22</sup> All of the components of the scene tend towards an ironic end; the atmosphere of mystery is typically picturesque, but the mystery is not philosophical, as it is in, say, Radcliffe’s novels, where picturesque landscape is a space of contemplation. Instead the mystery is murderous: will Louis succeed and, if so, how? The question is posed by the prevailing atmosphere of uncertainty, yet Louis also seems to be rowing towards the inevitable. It is as if the landscape is leading him to his killing ground. The pathetic relations between man and nature inscribed in the picturesque are ironised. Irony can be seen as a form of distance.<sup>23</sup> This shot’s perspectival distances, marked by arboreal clumps, reflect the ironic distance between the landscape’s picturesqueness and the murder that is being plotted across it.

The next two shots exaggerate the parody (Figs. 1.13-1.14). Perspective is disconcertingly abandoned in these shots. The studio set of the landscape mocks the

<sup>21</sup> Jay Appleton, *The Experience of Landscape* (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 1975), p.104.

<sup>22</sup> On parody of Victorian art in the film, see Newton, op. cit., p.39.

<sup>23</sup> John Lennard offers a usefully concise definition of irony as ‘the preservation of distance’ in his *Poetry Handbook* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p.xvii.

compartmentalisation of the picturesque. This is an ‘exterior’, but patently an enclosed space: the interior of a studio. In the first of these shots, we see Louis, his plan still undecided (Fig.1.13). He passes a river bank, observed in a brief, stationary shot. To his left, there is a sign. The audience can see that this is a ‘warning’ of something ‘dangerous’, but does not have enough time to read the smaller print to discover what the danger is. Louis’s means of murdering D’Ascoyne are prospectively gestured at, but full revelation is teasingly deferred. The next shot is a pun on the potential role of picturesque screens in censorship and titillation, with the couple’s lovemaking half-screened by overhanging branches (Fig. 1.14).

The sign is then shown in a close-up, after a shot of Louis looking left establishes that we are being shown his point of view: ‘Warning: This reach is dangerous...River users are advised to moor their craft securely.’ As Louis remarks, ‘the rest followed automatically’. It is as if the sign has offered a preferred reading/navigation of the landscape; the landscape and its sign determine the scheme to be executed. His good fortune appears even more ridiculous as he remarks that he had ‘fortunately learned to swim at the Clapham municipal baths’. Such moments of over-determined causality in Louis’s narrative make it seem all the more contrived; they parody the cause-and-effect chains on which mainstream narrative relies. As we will see, the film’s landscapes play a crucial role in this parodic causality. Louis swims to the punt, unties it and sends it over the weir. The punt is hidden from our view (Fig. 1.11). The last ironic detail is thus added: the lovers’ intercourse is censored by the weir. Young D’Ascoyne, an incongruously aristocratic, arrogant snob in a suburban world, is pleasingly concealed in the landscape.

The second landscape murder – that of Henry, the photographer – similarly involves Louis’s appropriation of picturesque concealment. The garden is discreetly screened from the village and the public house deplored by Edith. Henry’s hobby and shed, like the garden, hide things which would embarrass Edith’s priggish sensibility. The shed is screened from the garden by a wall. Louis arranges events around Henry’s alcohol; he plans to pour petrol in Henry’s paraffin lamp in advance. To do this, he absurdly hides behind some thin bushes that are rather inadequate as camouflage (Fig. 1.15) and then dashes to the shed: again, this composed, urbane protagonist suddenly becomes a man of action in a landscape (Fig. 1.16). After filling the lamp with petrol, Louis

informs us that he ‘then repaired to a meadow and took a few hours’ sleep while awaiting the hour at which [he] could reasonably arrive at the house’: another amusingly unnecessary plot detail, like his description of how he learned to swim (Fig. 1.17). The image accompanying this line points to Louis’s growing affinity with nature; as he lets his body comfortably drop against a haystack in a picturesque space, there is a dissolve to the archery scene in front of the D’Ascoynes’ house (Figs. 1.18-1.20). As the dissolve implies, his ease in the landscape will play an important role in the ensuing action. The dissolve juxtaposes the image of him at ease in a picturesque landscape with a shot of social constraint: the aristocratic ritual of archery, in a formal garden with a shaven lawn. Louis’s picturesqueness is thus contrasted with Edith’s prim formality.



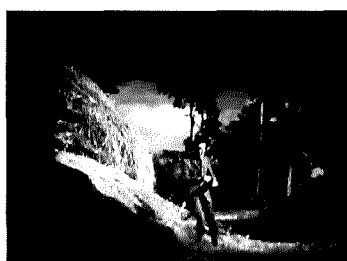
1.15 Louis’s absurdly inadequate camouflage.



1.16 Louis again becomes a man of action in the landscape...



1.17...before resting against a haystack



1.18-1.20 Significantly, a dissolve juxtaposes the image of Louis at ease in a picturesque landscape with the primness of the archery scene, which appropriately takes place in a formal garden.



1.21 The D’Ascoyne’s house (Gore Court).

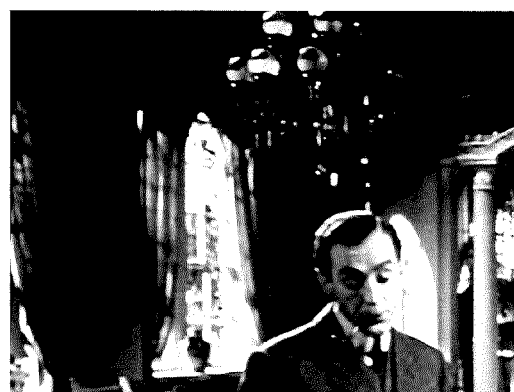


1.22 Detail from 1.21: Gore Court’s early nineteenth-century pointed windows.





1.23 The set of the house's interior.



1.24 Detail from 1.23: the pointed windows.



1.25 Through the window, between Edith's propriety and Louis's feigned delicacy, we can see apt, geometric topiary.



1.26 Detail of 1.25: the geometric topiary.



1.27 The murder scene: the topiary is again situated between Louis and Edith in an amusingly clichéd image of primness: tea in a formal garden.



1.28 Louis's performance of delicacy and composure is aptly framed by the topiary.



1.29 Louis subverts Edith's prim formality by arranging a picturesque ball of smoke behind her.



1.30 Indicatively, when the camera returns to a two-shot, the background space between them is now filled with picturesque smoke, instead of the topiary.

The symbolic contrast between aesthetic modes is enabled by the choice of location for Henry and Edith's house: Gore Court, in Otham (Fig. 1.21). The house was built in the Elizabethan era, around 1577, but its windows are Victorian: particularly obtrusive is the pair of nineteenth-century pointed windows on the right-hand side of the house's front (Fig. 1.22).<sup>24</sup> By recreating these windows in the studio set of the house's interior – at the expense of a general mismatch in architectural layout between location and set – the art director, William Kellner, retained the sense of a mixture of styles (Figs. 1.23-1.24). This architectural impurity contributes to the film's general sense of

<sup>24</sup> John Newman, *The Buildings of England: West Kent and the Weald* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969), p.431.

parodic pastiche, preparing us for the contrast in garden styles to follow in the scene in which Henry is killed. The pointed windows also ensure that the film's referencing of Victoriana is sustained.<sup>25</sup> The backdrop painting of the garden, seen through a different window in the interior set (Fig. 125-1.26) retains another of the location's distinctive features: the geometric topiary. The trimmed hedge embodies Edith's refined stringency and forms an appropriate centrepiece for the discussion between Edith and Louis, in which he mimics her delicacy of manners in order to gain an invitation to return to the house.

The topiary is again placed between Louis and Edith as they take afternoon tea in the garden, just before the shed explodes (Fig. 1.27). This master shot is framed by overhanging branches: a hint at the intrusion of picturesqueness into the formal garden that is about to follow. The editing then separates the two modes of garden design and develops a juxtaposition of formal garden and picturesqueness through intercut individual medium close-ups of Louis (Fig. 1.28) and Edith (Fig. 1.29). Louis, perfectly keeping his composure and appearance of delicacy as he hears the explosion is framed against a backdrop of topiary, which reflects his successful mimicry of Edith's refined bearing (Fig. 1.28). Conversely, behind Edith the ball of picturesque smoke rises (Fig. 1.29): to borrow Appleton's term again, rather than a 'nebulous refuge', this is a nebulous threat to her prim formality.<sup>26</sup> Louis inserts violent picturesqueness into Edith's formal garden. When the camera returns to a two-shot at the end of the sequence, it is no longer the topiary which forms the centrepiece between Louis and Edith, but the ball of smoke (Fig. 1.30): Edith's world has been dramatically 'improved' by Louis. The film deploys a dialectical landscape pastiche here: it plays off the formal garden and the picturesque 'nebulous refuge': both modes of landscape end up seeming insidious.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>25</sup> As Newman points out, Otham contains many restored houses, such as Wardes. Had it been used as the location, such a house would have provided unadulterated period architecture. The choice of Gore Court may have been dictated by availability, but Kellner clearly took pains to include the salient pointed windows in the set design and with good reason. On Otham, see *ibid.*, pp.430-431.

<sup>26</sup> Appleton. *op. cit.*, p.104.

<sup>27</sup> In its representation of history as pastiche, *Kind Hearts and Coronets* has more in common with the Gainsborough period dramas than with the others made at Ealing. However, what Sue Harper calls the 'chaotic amalgam' of *The Wicked Lady*'s production design – the mixing of props and architecture from different periods – becomes a purposeful opposition in this murder scene. Sue Harper, 'Art Direction and Production Design', in Sue Aspinall and Robert Murphy (eds.), *BFI Dossier Number 18: Gainsborough Melodrama* (London: BFI, 1983), p.42.

For his first murder, Louis participates in the landscape around the weir, but is forced to be reactive – to respond to its picturesque vagaries and the homicidal possibilities he finds unveiled. As he passes through the landscape, he discovers a propitious configuration of landscape components readily available as props: the river's trajectory, leading to the sign, the easily unmoored punt and the weir. If the landscape is picturesque-by-numbers, then Louis's participation is a matter of drawing the line of murderous intent from dot to dot, linking the available props in the landscape to form the aesthetically pleasing picture of Young D'Ascoyne's death/concealment. Louis does not plan the method of killing Young D'Ascoyne until the last moment, when he discovers the weir. By the time Louis comes to his second landscape murder, he and the audience both know what to expect, well in advance, as the murder has been prepared. Still, he responds to the specific garden he finds at the house. The second landscape murder subverts the concealment provided by the garden wall, which separates Edith from the village and the shed, the places where Henry secretly drinks. The death is signalled by a muffled bang and a gradually prominent puff of smoke. Louis creates the ball of smoke. In this way, the role of mist in the picturesque is travestied. The aesthetic utility of translucent mist in the picturesque is to disguise, but also to imply, what lies behind it. In this case, the smoke is a euphemism for Henry's death, hiding its true violence, but also signalling the explosion. The 'capability' of mist is thus recycled at an ironic level in the cloud of smoke. The foolish, weak-natured Henry is metamorphosed into an aesthetic feature. Again, a D'Ascoyne's death is arranged as a pleasing concealment in a landscape.

With his violent aesthetic alterations to the scenery, Mazzini begins to emerge as a new, homicidal, arriviste version of the *genius loci*: his murderous 'improvements' involve developing a rapport with the landscapes. Only by the third landscape does he fully take on the possibilities of the picturesque tradition, by utilising the deferral of revelation enabled by its partial concealments. His 'improvement' here therefore involves re-plotting a plot of ground. The concealment is not used to hide a death, but to plan it.



1.31 Pleasing partial concealment constitutes the aesthetic attraction of Chalfont's landscape.



1.32 From the background, Louis watches where the gamekeeper places the mantrap...



1.33...and later, in a commanding pose, guides Ethelred into it: murder by landscape.

Louis is given an extensive tour of the estate's scenery. In this case, the picturesque elements are more saturated. We see several shots of woodland, half-screened by trees and arboreal shades, offering a variety of synecdochic views of Leeds Castle (Figs. 1.31-1.33). Although the sequence parodies the clichés of upper class hunting, there is little humour until Louis frantically shouts for help, having killed the duke. Louis's engagement with the landscape is more serious here. He visits an exaggerated justice on the duke for ordering a poacher to be beaten and for refusing permission for his mother to be buried in the family vault. The explorative qualities of the first murder are combined with a private estate. Louis's movements condone and (visually) facilitate the audience to poach on areas of land it would probably not have been able to explore, even on a rare visitor's day at Leeds Castle in 1949.<sup>28</sup>

Again, serendipity leads Louis to his weapon, when the poacher is found caught in one of the duke's hidden man-traps. Taking full advantage of the picturesque concealment, which hides the duke's illegal mantraps, Louis watches where the gamekeeper places a mantrap (Fig. 1.32) and later leads the duke into it (Fig. 1.33). While the duke is caught, Louis shoots him. The murder is carried out at Louis's most calm, assured and serious. Across the three murders, Louis's character undergoes palpable changes. In the first murder, no other character can see him. In the case of the second, he has the confidence to be visible to Edith, although he assumes a façade which humours and fools her. With the third murder, dramatic irony is relinquished when he unveils his homicidal character to the duke. In addition to his verbal admissions, Louis subtly reveals the deliberateness of the mantrap's replanting by lighting a cigarette, silently reminding the duke (and the audience) of the excuse he gave to go back and reposition the man trap – that he had lost his cigarette case. He thus displays retrospectively the

<sup>28</sup> For brief details of such occasions see Alan Bignell, *Lady Bailie at Leeds Castle* (Maidstone: Leeds Castle Enterprises, 2002), pp.28, 56.

whole design of his plot. Gratification – deferred picturesquely by the teasing concealment of the mantrap – is signalled by the lit cigarette.

The irony is finally a matter of role reversal. As he guides the duke into the mantrap, he assumes an authoritative pose in the landscape (Fig. 1.33). The set-up is similar to that of the shot of the gamekeeper replanting the mantrap (Fig. 1.32), but whereas Louis skulks in the background of that shot, he now takes a proprietorial stance, standing higher, in the foreground, just to the left of the castle, while he points to the mantrap. Louis usurps the dukedom, as the duke is caught with the same trap he used to pinion the poacher. Ethelred has been hoisted by his own rural petard. Louis also becomes a poacher as he shoots some game (Ethelred), before dropping his illicit identity as poacher/arriviste to become the owner. In doing so he has mastered a (homicidal) connoisseurship of the picturesque.

## Gothicism

One possible categorisation we might offer for *Kind Hearts and Coronets*' landscape narrative is that it draws on the Gothic literary tradition. The film's designation of a landed estate as its iconic centre; the faux-medievalism of Leeds Castle/Chalfont;<sup>29</sup> the dramatic trajectories pursued through picturesque landscapes; the narration delivered from the viewpoint of an outsider visiting the estate; the film's central theme of a noble line of descent under threat; violence near a castle: all of these similarly suggest a rich Gothic vein running through the narrative.

However, if *Kind Hearts and Coronets* belongs to a Gothic revival, it is not as a prototype for the 'minor cycle of gruesome' films identified by Raymond Durnat.<sup>30</sup> Most obviously, *Kind Hearts and Coronets* lacks any comparable rhetoric of violence. Where death is concerned, the film is more about the picturesque pleasure of partial concealment than violent disclosure as jouissance. All of the outdoor countryside deaths are hidden from the viewer. In the cases of Young D'Ascoyne and Henry the

<sup>29</sup> See Plantagenet Somerset Fry, *The David & Charles Book of Castles* (Devon: David & Charles, 1980), p.252; John Newman, *The Buildings of England: West Kent and the Weald* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976), pp.370-373.

<sup>30</sup> Raymond Durnat, *A Mirror for England* (London: Faber & Faber, 1970), p.218.

photographer, it is deployment of landscape which effects this concealment. Young D'Ascoyne's death is hidden by the weir, as Henry's is screened by a brick wall and a cloud of smoke.

Nevertheless, *Kind Hearts and Coronets* indubitably recycles aspects of the incipient Gothic novel, even if it avoids the facets of the tradition which have had most currency in contemporary popular culture. *Kind Hearts and Coronets* has more in common with the eighteenth century Gothic novel than with English horror movies. The way its city/country divide determines narratorial register is comparable to how topographical variations correspond to changes in genre or tone in Radcliffe's novels.<sup>31</sup>

The film might owe as much to the mock-Gothic literary subgenre as to the early Gothic novels, though. Louis's misrepresentation of Leeds Castle ('Chalfont') as medieval nods satirically to the Gothic, just as Austen mocks Radcliffe's anachronisms in *Northanger Abbey*, when John Thorpe mistakenly dates Blaize Castle as medieval. On the other hand, Louis is shown self-consciously exploring the picturesque landscapes of Chalfont and Cruikshank's Hotel. This explorative exposition contrasts with Austen's satire.

However ironically, Louis's weir and mantrap murders nonetheless respect the narrative propensities of the picturesque espoused by Ann Radcliffe: the succession of scenes, with movement through a landscape elicited by its contours and suggestive partial concealments. In Radcliffe's novels, a picturesque scene calls for contemplation and explication. Her characters think and speak about landscape at length, just as Louis's picturesque murders involve his time and consideration. In

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<sup>31</sup> In Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, the mannered romance of Languedoc is far removed – in all senses – from the violent medievalism of Udolpho. It is telling that aesthetic anachronisms abound in the Languedoc scenes, but not in those set around Udolpho. Picturesque theory is grafted onto the Languedoc landscapes, while the Udolpho scenery is open to no such interpretation on the part of Emily St Aubert. The ghost story which has been haunting the Villeforts in Languedoc is only unveiled as a smuggling adventure when they move into the Pyrenées. The characters' change of location situates them in a different narrative, another genre. By displacing the solution of the ghost mystery away from Languedoc, Radcliffe necessarily alters its genre; each different setting in this novel demands a different type of story. In Austen's *Northanger Abbey*, a sojourn in a country house alters the behaviour of the protagonist, Catherine Morland; her judgement becomes impaired, with almost inexplicable suddenness. Anne Henry Ehrenpreis suggests that this is a flaw in the novel, in her 'Introduction', in Jane Austen, *Northanger Abbey* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), p.13. Unlike other caprices in the novel, the change is, as Ehrenpreis argues, insubstantially motivated. Such causal dislocation is only structurally sound if the reader accepts it as satirising the stringent place/genre mutuality imposed by the Gothic novel.

contrast, *Northanger Abbey* implies a triteness and redundancy in the term 'picturesque'. In *Northanger Abbey*, the picturesque becomes a short list of formalistic particulars gleaned from Tilney's expatiation on the landscape: 'He talked of foregrounds, distances, and second distances – side-screens and perspectives – lights and shades.'<sup>32</sup> An elliptical description of the picturesque is achieved by this summarisation of Tilney's speech. His points are compressed and stripped of detail. The connoisseur is censored by Austen.<sup>33</sup>

For those who took the picturesque seriously, such as Uvedale Price and Richard Payne Knight, the evaluation of landscape was imperative. Price and Knight's disagreement revolved around the latter's argument that the picturesque qualities of a landscape were not immanent, but arose from the observer: the propensity to recognise a given type of a landscape as 'picturesque' depended on the education and taste of that connoisseur.<sup>34</sup> The identification, then, could only be carried out by one who has 'correspondent ideas'.<sup>35</sup> In Marxist terms, the evaluation or utilisation of the picturesque by a connoisseur is, therefore, an ideological measure of that connoisseur.

While Christopher Hussey's *The Picturesque: Studies in a Point of View* (1927) revived the idea of the connoisseur observer, *Kind Hearts and Coronets* transforms this figure into a murderer. It is by the picturesque set-pieces that we can measure the progress of Louis. Not only are his ideas 'correspondent', but his actions too. It is his changing behaviour, characterised by an increasing confidence, which alters the way landscape is explored. By the same token, power – or the D'Ascoyne coterie wielding it – designates the shape of landscape at the two houses. Landscape is not only the locus of power, but an expression in one form or another of that power: hence Edith's prim geometric topiary and Ethelred's picturesque woods, where illegal mantraps can be hidden. There is an ideological basis to the pathetic fallacy. Plot in the country scenes has two inextricable levels, abstract and concrete: respectively, a scheme

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<sup>32</sup> Austen, *Northanger Abbey*, pp.125-126.

<sup>33</sup> Picturesque satires by other writers allow their connoisseurs to go into more detail: for example, William Combe, *The Tour of Doctor Syntax in Search of the Picturesque* (London: R. Ackermann, 1809); Thomas Love Peacock, *Headlong Hall & Nightmare Abbey* (London: Dent, 1965).

<sup>34</sup> See Christopher Hussey, *The Picturesque*, especially pp.69-77. For a more up-to-date discussion of the effect of the observer's politics on his/her evaluation of the picturesque, see Ann Bermingham, *Landscape and Ideology* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1987), pp.57-83.

<sup>35</sup> Richard Payne Knight, *An Analytical Inquiry Into The Principles of Taste* (London: Luke Hansard & Sons, 1808), p.152.

(murder) and a physical delineation of the scheme (landscape).<sup>36</sup> To seize power, Louis must involve himself in the discourse of the landed, which means plotting *through* the landscape. Thus the film is largely about a particular type of landscape and its ideological relationship with ‘plotting’.

In order to fully elucidate Louis’s character arc, it is necessary to analyse the film’s most salient structural elements. Michael Newton interprets fashion as the yardstick for Louis’s social rise: his clothes become more stylish and expensive as he gets closer to the dukedom.<sup>37</sup> However, the landscapes are equally as syntagmatic as Louis’s clothes in terms of figuring his trajectory; Louis develops from reacting quickly to the weir, to planting a bomb and a mantrap: from utilising the landscape to rearranging elements in it. The climactic murder is the most complex of all, as it involves a narrative being plotted in the grounds of Chalfont: the narrative of Ethelred’s entrapment, Louis’s confession to him and then the shooting.

On the other hand, Mrs. Mazzini’s painting, which hangs in the city, has a paradigmatic structural value. This owes something to the animated portraits which feature in some Gothic novels. The Gothic device of the magic painting can act as a useful model for analysing the narratorial functions of Louis’s mother’s painting.

### **Mazzini’s Postcard: The Magic Painting**

Film critics and historians have often noted a Wildean tone or set of themes in *Kind Hearts and Coronets*, which can, at least in part, be attributed to Horniman’s imitation of Wilde.<sup>38</sup> Of more consequence, however, is the mobilisation by Hamer, Dighton and Kellner of a Wildean device not in *Israel Rank*, namely a magic painting.

<sup>36</sup> See Peter Brooks on the ‘semantic range’ of the word ‘plot’, in *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1984), pp.11-12.

<sup>37</sup> Newton, op. cit., p.51.

<sup>38</sup> The comparison between the film and Oscar Wilde’s works is the most ubiquitous exemplification of *Kind Heart and Coronets’* literariness and the most common categorisation of the film’s style. Comparisons have been made to *The Importance of Being Earnest*, to Wilde’s court appearances, and, most often, to *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. See, in particular:

Anonymous review, *Evening News*, 23 June 1949; Anonymous review, *Film Choice*, 1949 (exact date unknown: see the BFI Library’s *Kind Hearts and Coronets* microjacket); Anonymous review, *Manchester Guardian*, 25 June 1949; Barr, *Ealing Studios*, p.119; David Benedict, ‘Kind Hearts Are Cold Killers’, *Independent*, 5 February 1997, pp.4-5; John Lyttle, ‘On Cinema’, *Independent*, 30 August 1994: ‘London Supplement’, p.8; Derek Malcolm, ‘A Century of Films: Derek Malcolm’s 100 greatest





1.34 The painting's second appearance, when the lodger arrives.



1.35 Louis's room at the Hallward's home: he often walks between the painting over the fireplace and the photograph of Sibella, by the bed.



1.36 The troubled gentleman and his painting: St. James's.

The picture Louis's mother paints of Chalfont is pivotal to his murderous trajectory. It hangs on his wall, above the fireplace, wherever he lives, from the suburban home of his childhood (Fig. 1.34), to his room in the Hallward's house (Fig. 1.35), to his fashionable bachelor's apartment in St. James's (Fig. 1.36). The painting is closely connected with his problems. It not only represents what his mother has lost, but its first two appearances are, significantly, when his father dies and when the lodger arrives (Fig. 1.34): the presence of the painting in these scenes implicitly links his mother's ostracism with, respectively, his father's death and the arrival of the lodger, whose residence at the Mazzini household is later exploited by both Sibella and Lionel to taunt Louis about the comparative poverty of his youth.



1.37 After Sibella tells Louis that she will marry Lionel, Louis leans pensively against the fireplace in the schoolroom.



1.38 A cut carries us into Louis's bedroom, where he stands in front of Sibella's photograph and lights his lamp...



1.39...before walking over to the painting, which hangs over his fireplace.



1.40 The camera pans left and tracks towards the painting,...



1.41...which gradually dissolves into...



1.42...a location shot of Chalfont/Leeds Castle. Louis walks into the frame from the left; it is as if he has entered the painting.

Louis paces in front of the hearth when deep in thought: a parody of the novelistic cliché of the troubled gentleman (Fig 1.36). Indicatively, one edit carries us from Louis pensively facing the fireplace in the schoolroom, upset about losing her to Lionel (Fig. 1.37), to Louis, plotting in his bedroom, where he walks from the photograph of Sibella (Fig. 1.38) to the painting of Chalfont, which hangs above his own fireplace (Figs. 1.39-1.40), to his first decisive act towards the murder plot: his visit to Chalfont (Figs. 1.41-1.42). The schoolroom is associated with Louis and Sibella's childhood, as well as with their adult flirtation. The transition from its fireplace to a similar one in Louis's bedroom suggests that even in the schoolroom his thoughts are with his mother's painting of Chalfont: the schoolroom fireplace seems to be on the same side of the house as Louis's and it is also below a painting. Louis's voiceover forms a bridge between these similar spaces, as he states:

If there was a precise moment at which my insubstantial dreaming took on solid purpose, that was it. The D'Ascoynes had not only wronged my mother; they were the obstacle between me and all that I wanted.

A connection is established between his love for Sibella and the murder of the D'Ascoynes. In front of the fireplace, he might be a Mr. D'Arcy, perplexed by love; the scenes in which he paces in front of the hearth like a troubled lover are ironic, because he is really pacing in front of the painting and its hidden reverse, where he charts the systematic killing of every relative before him in the line of inheritance, on the relevant branches of the family tree.

Despite the fact that the family tree of death is usually turned to the wall, the painting itself is a kind of indiscretion. In a later scene in the St. James's apartment, when Sibella guesses Louis's 'guilty secret', he culpably spills his drink while standing in front of the painting (Fig. 1.43). As he bends to clear up the mess, he reveals the painting: the revelation of his guilt is thus figured visually in this shot (Fig. 1.44).



1.43 Louis spills his drink in front of the painting, When Sibella stumbles upon his secret.



1.44 He kneels to clear up the mess and thereby reveals the painting: the shot metonymically figures the disclosure of his guilt as disclosure of the painting.



1.45 There is a cut to a medium close-up of Sibella as she realises that she has stumbled on the truth.



1.46 As Louis regains his composure, he stands and his body covers the painting again.

A cut to Sibella shows her with a look of realisation on her face: she has stumbled on the truth (Fig. 1.45). Louis then stands up again, his body concealing our view of the painting as he regains his composure (Fig. 1.46).

By its insistent presence when Louis plots murder, the painting becomes a metonym for Louis's evil. It is also implicated in Louis and Sibella's adultery, by virtue of its visibility during their assignations. In this sense, it is like Dorian Gray's picture: an accomplice – or, more superstitiously, a familiar. Jerry Palmer states that Louis is 'Dorian Gray without the portrait'.<sup>39</sup> Pace Palmer, Louis is Dorian Gray *with a picture*, even if it is neither a portrait nor magic in the usual sense of the word. Its magic aura is produced by the uncanny combination of its presence in the murder-plot scenes and its child-like simplicity of style.

<sup>39</sup> See Palmer, 'Enunciation and Comedy: "Kind Hearts and Coronets"', p.155.

The history of the magic painting is inextricably tied to that of the Gothic tradition. An early example of a painting with magical qualities is to be found in Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*.<sup>40</sup> In this Gothic novel, Manfred's line of inheritance, his claim to the principedom of Otranto and his power are all threatened and ultimately taken away by forces with a supernatural bent. The painting in question is a portrait of his grandfather, Ricardo, who, it is revealed, secretly usurped the title from its rightful holder. The portrait appears early in the novel, long before that revelation or Manfred's downfall. Manfred sees Ricardo's image step down from the frame and leave the room.<sup>41</sup> The event, like many of the novel's portents, is proleptic. It prefigures the discovery of Ricardo's crime, the end of Manfred's lineage and the loss of his primacy. It enables the reader to begin to guess at these future disclosures, but the prolepsis conflates them. That is to say that, rather than being portentous at length, the event acts instead as a briefly stated, iconic figuring of later developments, which unfold in due course, gradually and in greater detail.

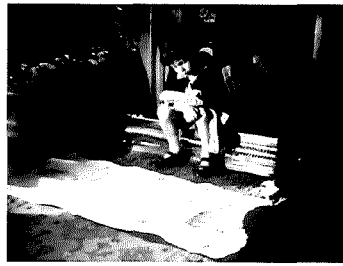
If we continue to bear them in mind, *The Castle of Otranto* and *The Picture of Dorian Gray* can act as standards with which to clarify exactly what role the painting in *Kind Hearts* plays in plot and plotting. Seen as another Gothicism, the painting's status in repetitively showing both Louis's goal and the alternative jurisdictional grounds in which he can achieve it – Chalfont – is more clearly defined.

The painting is not only an index of his objective, but also a memento of his mother. If, as Charles Barr argues, Mrs. Mazzini is as important as the mother in *Citizen Kane*, then the painting, as a constant figurative reminder of her, must be taken as seriously as Rosebud.<sup>42</sup> When she is alive, she surrounds herself with pictures of her ancestors and vignette photographs of herself and her late husband. Under her supervision, Louis grows up in a world of family icons and history (Figs. 1.47-1.49). After his mother's death, the portraits of her and Louis's father, as well as those of the D'Ascoyne ancestors, cede their paradigmatic pre-eminence to his mother's watercolour of Chalfont.

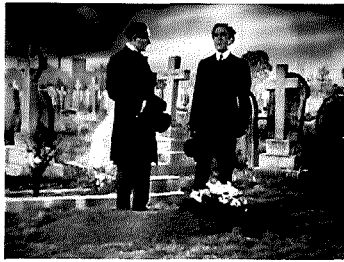
<sup>40</sup> Robert Mighall, 'Introduction', in Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (London: Penguin, 2000), p. xviii. Mighall actually gets his facts wrong: he states that the portrait in *The Castle of Otranto* is of Alphonso. It is of Ricardo.

<sup>41</sup> Horace Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto* (London: Penguin, 2001), p.24.

<sup>42</sup> Charles Barr, "'Projecting Britain and the British Character": Ealing Studios, Part II', *Screen*, vol.15, no.2, Summer 1974, p.131.



1.47-1.49 A sentimental education: the vignettes, the family tree and a portrait of an ancestor.



1.50 After burying his mother in the 'hideous suburban cemetery'...



1.51...Louis 'prunes' the family tree: he takes a cutting of the living branches...



1.52...and, symbolically, carries it over to the painting.

A shot of his mother's grave (Fig.1.50) is followed immediately by the scene in which Louis cuts off the part of the family tree featuring the living members (Fig. 1.51) and then approaches the picture of Chalfont (Fig. 1.52). In one action he has symbolised the disinheritance of all the people listed on the severed section. The voice-over delivers the formation in his mind of the murder plot:

Standing by Mama's poor little grave, in that hideous suburban cemetery, I made an oath that I would revenge the wrongs her family had done her. **[Cut from the grave to the house.]** It was no more than a piece of youthful bravado, but it was one of those acorns from which great oaks are destined to grow. Even then, I went so far as to examine the family tree, and prune it to just the living members. **[He begins to snip off the bottom of the document.]** But what could I do to hurt them? What could I take from them? Except, perhaps – their lives? I indulged for a moment in a fantasy of all twelve of them being wiped out simultaneously at a family reunion **[he starts to take the off-cut over to the picture]** – by my unseen hand, of the penniless boy from Clapham being miraculously transplanted to his birthright. I even speculated as to how I might contrive it.

While we hear this part of the voiceover from Louis's memoirs, the younger Louis shown on screen is patently rearranging the icons of his world. A new dispensation is visually implied: one cultivated from the relics of his mother's world – the family tree and the watercolour, objects upon which his maternal education was partly based. The iconographic change is indicated by the subsequent, pointed absence of the vignettes of Louis's parents from their heart-shaped frame (Figs. 1.53-1.54).



1.53 The photograph frame.



1.54 The empty photograph frame.

At the same time, the emphasis is entirely on horticultural determinism. Louis's 'youthful bravado' is 'one of those acorns from which great oaks are destined to grow'. The acorn, it seems, is planted in the soil covering his mother's coffin. Louis 'prunes' the family tree. He takes this cutting towards the landscape of Chalfont, figuring his arc: to be 'miraculously transplanted'. It is tacitly hinted thus that there will be the possibility of replanting his mother's grave in the family vault, if the 'great oak' grows. When Louis has later buried the cutting from the family tree on the hidden reverse of the painting, it is also more forcefully suggested that the replanting will first mean burying every relative before him in the line of inheritance. The sustained horticultural metaphor implies that there is, from Louis's point of view, something natural in his later crimes: his narrative extends this idea, as we are shown him being assisted by the landscapes in the murders of Young D'Ascoyne, Henry and Ethelred. This can be put another way: the horticultural metaphor anticipates his later homicidal picturesqueness.

Like the portrait of Ricardo in *The Castle of Otranto*, the 'acorn' scene and, by association, the picture of Chalfont, are proleptic. The humour in the scene flows from the compression of foretold events: Louis's absurdly swift leaps from mourning, to 'youthful bravado', to earnest homicidal scheming. He switches with equal precipitancy from one perspective to another, from his secret responsibility for the deaths ('my unseen hand') to the imagined popular account of 'the penniless boy from Clapham' rising instantaneously and innocently to fortune. The farcical concision of Louis's succession of ideas in the post-funeral scene is rendered as much visually as through the voice-over. He quickly progresses from the cemetery, to releasing the house from the state of mourning (opening a blind), to the family tree, to the

watercolour. There is motivation in the scene. That much is undeniable. However, there is also comedy in the scene's overreaching saturation of causality and the consequent insubstantiality of that causality.



1.55-1.58 A parody of the classical match-cut: a dissolve from a small death to a dying man.

This depiction of absurdly rapid causation is representative of the film's style as a whole: both its voice-over and image. For instance, a shot of Sibella being kissed by Louis dissolves to one of Lord Ascoyne D'Ascoyne, the banker, lying ill after a stroke (Figs. 1.55-1.58). The dissolve matches Sibella's posture with that of the banker. In doing so, it silently, yet with strident absurdity, suggests that Louis's lovemaking is the cause of the stroke. The joke is in the tacit unpacking of the old 'small death' metaphor. At the same time, the pun is made at the expense of classical editing. Consider also the prelude to Louis's first murder. He says,

the upshot was that I was dismissed [from the draper job] on the spot...I decided to repay him in kind by dismissing him with equal suddenness from this world.

The resolution to gain vengeance is clearly a voluntary reflex ('I decided...'), but the swiftness with which the resolve is reached also bears the mark of impulsiveness. The impulsiveness is later displaced onto Louis's homicidal reaction to the chance encounter with the weir. 'Equal suddenness' embraces this impulsiveness, as well as the comically disproportionate reciprocation; in Louis's ironic moral code, it is not the nature of the injury that Young D'Ascoyne inflicts on him which must be equalled, but the swiftness with which it has taken effect. Again, causation is revealed to be an insubstantial process, yet with decisive results.



1.59-1.61 As Louis's mother holds up a rolling pin in her right hand, a dissolve matches her posture with that of the mannequin, which has a tennis racket in its right hand.



1.62-1.64 There is then another dissolve, to the mannequin wearing a different outfit. Louis tries to put a fan in its left hand...



1.65-1.66... but fails and places the fan in its raised right hand.



1.67 Later, Sibella dances with Louis, while holding a fan – in her right hand.

Earlier in the film, the suburban draper's store forms the site of another play on the process of causation. The key scene in which Mrs. Mazzini blurts out her 'unchristian' wish, that the D'Ascoynes 'should all die tomorrow', closes with her holding up a rolling pin in her right hand (Fig. 1.59). There is a dissolve to the window of the drapery store, where Louis has taken a job (Fig. 1.60). He is in the window, dressing a mannequin in women's suburban sporting gear (Fig. 1.61). The dissolve creates a visual rhyme between his mother, holding the rolling pin, and the mannequin, holding a tennis racket in the same hand, in the same position. There follows immediately another dissolve to the mannequin in a different outfit (Fig. 1.62). Louis attempts to put a fan in the dummy's left hand (Fig. 1.63). Farcically, he cannot make the left arm stick up (Figs. 1.64-1.65), so he is forced to put the fan in the right hand (Fig. 1.66), which is raised, just as before, like his mother's right hand. The last scene in the sequence, Mrs. Mazzini's death, closes with her dropping the heart-shaped frame containing portraits of her and her husband. It falls from her right hand (Fig. 1.53). Later, at the ball, Sibella dances with Louis. She is dressed like one of Louis's suburban mannequins. In her right hand, she holds up a folded fan (Fig. 1.67).

Apart from the humour elicited by the unlikely chain of objects held in the right hands of women and female dummies, the sequence suggests two things: firstly, that Mrs. Mazzini, whatever her birthright, is trapped fatally in the suburban world of mechanical paraphernalia: it is during this sequence that we are told she has been



knocked down by a tram at Clapham Junction. Secondly, the chain of paraphernalia leads us and Louis almost directly from his mother to Sibella. She may have a 'noble' face like Edith, but Mrs. Mazzini's cultural downfall links her inextricably to Sibella's world. We can retrospectively assume that, at her death, Louis's mother encapsulates both of women he is to desire, and that she is the source of that potentially lethal double desire. On the other hand, these links are tenuous, because they depend entirely on ephemera, rather than on psychological motivation. There is, for instance, no line in Louis's voiceover to explicitly reinforce the subtle, gestural links between the women. The connections between the women are understated and distanced from the details the voiceover conveys. This is an oedipal scenario of sorts, but by playing on the flimsiness of causality, the sequence nods mockingly towards the tight causality of the oedipal.<sup>43</sup>

Mrs. Mazzini's painting itself embodies subtle determinism. The painting is hardly mentioned by Louis's voiceover. It does not move, like a magic painting, but it seems to move Louis: for example, when he becomes secretly engaged to Edith, he suddenly notices the painting, which prompts him to inform Ethelred of the engagement in order to get an invitation to Chalfont. When he plots his murders in front of the painting, it seems to be a silent accomplice and prompt. The painting in this respect has some of the agency of the generic magic painting, but lacks its animation. Nothing happens to the painting as such. Unlike Ricardo and Dorian's portraits and unlike the cliché of the picture with moving eyes, the painting does not change. However, it seems to be an 'agent of power', like the landscapes referred to by Mitchell in the epigraph to this chapter: we need to consider whether it is also 'independent of human intentions'.<sup>44</sup>

Is 'blame' attributable in a text in which motive is rendered insubstantially? If so, to what extent is Louis blameable? The first question arises because of the painting's similarity to magic paintings, whose function is to encapsulate the guilt which is displaced onto them. The second question is necessary for any consideration of affect in the film, because not all of Louis's murders can be dismissed as comedy: as audiences have pointed out, the final killing we see – that of the duke – is cold blooded

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<sup>43</sup> Barr argues that '*Kind Hearts* is an Oedipus story' in *Ealing Studios*, p.126; Newton avers that it 'portrays a cold Oedipus complex...Doing so, it plays with the surface of things, content to divorce itself from the expression of actual passion.' Newton, op. cit., p.64.

<sup>44</sup> Mitchell, 'Introduction', pp.1-2.

and, apart from Louis's cry for help, self-consciously humourless.<sup>45</sup> If the climax of the causal chain is disturbing, then its earlier links need reconsideration.

Louis's horticultural references imply a causal trunk to the homicidal tree on the obverse of the painting. In the rolling pin scene, after she expresses her near-wish that all of the relatives could die, Louis asks 'did poor Mama's silly dreaming plant in my brain some seed, which was afterwards to grow into the most sensational criminal endeavour of the century?' The pruning scene picks up this question by continuing the metaphor. The point is underlined by the continual presence of the picture and its obverse in the later shots where Louis ruminates over each murder. That Louis always sees Chalfont through his mother's eyes is made clear when we see the painting dissolve to the cinematographic image of Leeds Castle, on Louis's first visit to Chalfont (Figs 1.41-1.42). The precise match in the dissolve between painting and location encourages the audience at this point to see a similarity between his mother's idea of the estate and Louis's point of view. This is the only time the painting is animated in any way; directly after the dissolve, Louis walks into the frame from the left, as if he has entered the world of the painting – as if he has immersed himself in his mother's way of seeing. Using Bazin's terminology, the cinematographic, 'centrifugal' image in which Louis expends his energy is always already contained and determined by the 'centripetal', painted image.<sup>46</sup> His potentially centrifugal energy is concentrated by his mother's centripetal legacy: hence his double desire, his love for two different women his mother resembles. The regressive nature of his murders is emphasised by the childish scrawl with which he crosses through names on the reverse of the painting. The 'pruning' shot connects his mother's silly dreaming to her painting, which always already represents the killing ground for Louis, the site of his final cold-blooded murder: Chalfont. If Louis is blameable, then, so it seems, is his mother.

However, the notion of blameworthiness itself seems immediately redundant. The pruning scene connects insubstantiality of motivation with the displacement of the mother's culpability onto the painting. The guilty image of the mother herself is not

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<sup>45</sup> Newton, op. cit., p.66.

<sup>46</sup> André Bazin, 'Painting and Cinema', translated by Hugh Gray, in *What is Cinema? Volume I* (London: University of California Press, 1967), p.166.

portrayed in the painting, as it would be if this were in the same vein as *The Castle of Otranto*. Furthermore, unlike *The Castle of Otranto*, *Kind Hearts and Coronets* features no (centrifugal) reanimation of the ancestor's guilt. The image's framed, still, centripetal containment of guilt remains. That is, Mrs. Mazzini's possibly unwitting complicity is displaced onto an object which nevertheless cannot explicitly incriminate her and is therefore subsequently dissociated from her. Thus, by default, the complicity of the painting in the murders is more as an inanimate object, rather than as a metaphor for maternal guilt. The painting is magic, not because it can change shape and inculcate the mother, but because the displacement of guilt onto it is absolute: the painting is to blame, not the mother. In this respect, the deployment of the painting resembles the more explicit use of a similar icon in the story Hamer directed for the portmanteau Ealing film, *The Dead of Night*: the mirror, which begins to influence a man's character.<sup>47</sup> However, the more subtle magic painting in *Kind Hearts and Coronets* is also more self-conscious: the film tacitly points to the way that guilt can be displaced onto landscape in a myth (in this case, the mother's painting). The mother's role in Louis's development into a criminal is transposed onto an image of landscape: the influence the painting has on Louis appears to be independent of his mother's intentions. As Mitchell suggests in the passage quoted in my epigraph, when landscape seems to be an 'agent of cultural power', culpability is naturalised; it seems that the landscape as agent is 'independent of human intentions'. This displacement is not made explicit in the memoir because Louis – the narrator – is oblivious to it. He is just as prone to this sort of displacement of blame, with his horticultural metaphors and his absurd picturesque murders in which the contours of the landscape seem to guide him and assist in the crime.

This myth of cultural agency is apparent in the scene in which Louis glances at the painting and is inspired to use the engagement as an excuse to contact the duke. On a literal level, the picture reminds Louis of his projected destination; again, it precedes a visit to the castle, temporally and conceptually. It is as if the painting itself has spoken to Louis – not just reminded him of Chalfont, but whispered to him a suggested scheme to combine his two objectives of engagement and murder. The film uses the

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<sup>47</sup> *Dead of Night* (Alberto Cavalcanti, Charles Crichton, Basil Dearden and Robert Hamer, UK, 1945).

painting to subtly hint at the way culpability is displaced onto landscapes and thus naturalised.

At the same time, the painting and its obverse serve as a yardstick for us to measure exactly how far Louis deviates in style and morality from his beginnings. By its repetition, the motion he goes through of turning over the painting and crossing out the names becomes a ritual. If the painted side depicts his objective, thus representative of his mother's paradigmatic 'silly dreaming' about Chalfont, and the obverse gradually figures an unfolding, syntagmatic murder narrative, which aspires to the objective on the front, then together the two sides encapsulate a postcard aesthetic: icon on recto, narrative on verso. This serves as a reminder of the origin of Louis's trajectory, a reminder of something we see early in the film, when Louis relates the back-story of his mother's elopement with his father (Figs. 1.68-1.73).

### Leeds Castle as a Location

The shots of Chalfont in this early sequence are in the postcard tradition; Louis's description of the 'medieval splendours of Chalfont Castle' adds to this impression. Two shots of the castle (Figs. 1.68 and 1.73) are almost identical to some of the more prominent pictures of Leeds Castle: in the tourist guidebook (Fig. 1.74);<sup>48</sup> on the Leeds Castle Foundation website;<sup>49</sup> and even in the Foundation's more scholarly publications.<sup>50</sup> Indeed, these shots play on the popular image of Leeds Castle, which was disseminated during the early 1900s and after. Leeds Castle postcards sold well during the Edwardian era, even by the standards of the coeval postcard boom.<sup>51</sup> The commodified images of Leeds Castle were presumably saleable only because they concealed the less attractive parts of the estate; they failed to show the parts of the castle which were in fact in considerable disrepair, or the expansive grounds which had suffered severe neglect. Nevertheless, even after Mrs. Wilson Filmer (later Lady

<sup>48</sup> Fig. 1.74 is from Leeds Castle's tourist guidebook: Nick McCann, *Leeds Castle* (Derby: Heritage House Group, 2002), pp.4-5.

<sup>49</sup> <http://www.leeds-castle.com> [accessed 1 August 2005].

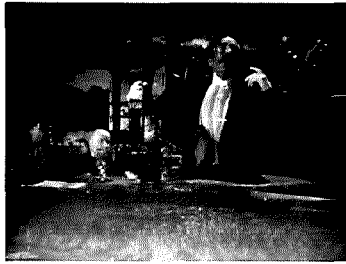
See also 'castle explorer', another site for tourists:

[http://www.castleexplorer.co.uk/england/leeds/leeds\\_links.php](http://www.castleexplorer.co.uk/england/leeds/leeds_links.php) [accessed 1 August 2005].

<sup>50</sup> These include Bignell, *Lady Bailie at Leeds Castle* and David A. H. Cleggett, *Leeds Castle Through Nine Centuries* (Maidstone: Leeds Castle Foundation, 2001).

<sup>51</sup> Bignell, *Lady Bailie at Leeds Castle*, p.6.

Bailie) had funded complete renovation in the 1920s, postcards were more or less the only means for the lower classes to glimpse Leeds Castle.



1.68 Dissolve from Mr Mazzini to a postcard image of Chalfont/Leeds Castle.



1.69 The camera pans left...



1.70 ...to a clichéd melodrama. The image of the castle is thus displaced, just as the romance will displace the castle from the future Mrs Mazzini's life.



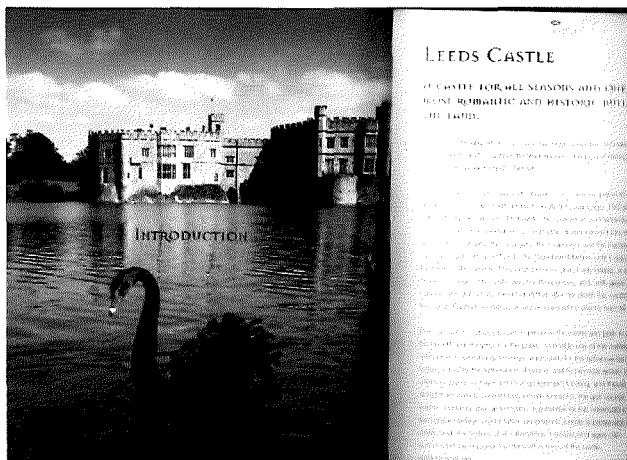
1.71 What Sibella would call an 'Italian stage lover'.



1.72 The proposal made, there is then another dissolve...



1.73...to a postcard image of the castle, now minus the lovers. Compare this to 1.74.



1.74 Photograph in the Leeds Castle tourist guidebook.

The castle opened only once or twice to visitors every year until the Second World War.<sup>52</sup> Arboreal screens concealed the castle picturesquely from the roads which skirted the estate. Most of the local builders who worked on the renovations had never seen the castle before.<sup>53</sup> Perhaps only after the house had been commandeered as a military hospital in 1940 did its visibility increase.<sup>54</sup> It is difficult to imagine it being

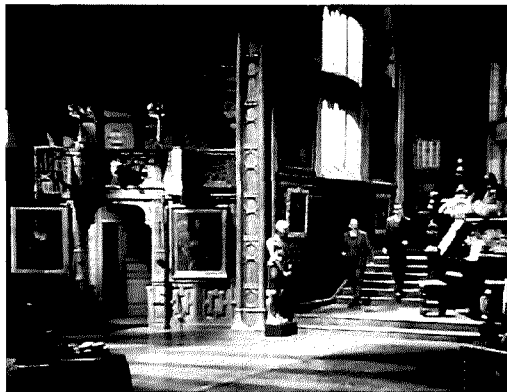
<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p.56.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p.20.

<sup>54</sup> Cleggett, op. cit., p.133.

made so readily available for filming before the war. On the other hand, Lady Bailie was a film obsessive.<sup>55</sup> Many stars were invited to her parties, although she hardly seems to have been gregarious.<sup>56</sup> She erected a permanent cinema screen in the castle.<sup>57</sup> However, there are no records of other films being shot at Leeds Castle at that time.

As was typical in the British film industry in the 1940s, *Kind Hearts and Coronets*' location filming was restricted to exteriors. The interior scenes were patently shot at Pinewood or Ealing.<sup>58</sup> William Kellner's 'baroque leanings' were not indulged with the location or the sets.<sup>59</sup> By way of comparison, the film's art direction is diametrically opposed to that of, say, Ealing's *Saraband for Dead Lovers* (1948), on which Kellner also worked.<sup>60</sup> The main interior set for Chalfont is a great hall, which bears no relation to the interiors of Leeds Castle. Instead, it parodies the great halls which became a stock feature of country house engravings at the height of the Victorian fascination with the 'Olden Time' (Figs. 1.75-1.76), with its mixture of medieval weaponry and Elizabethan architecture.<sup>61</sup>



1.75-1.76 The main set: the great hall at Chalfont. As in Joseph Nash's engravings, there is a mixture of medieval weaponry and Elizabethan architecture

<sup>55</sup> Bignell, op. cit., p.14.

<sup>56</sup> On Lady Bailie's invitations to film stars, see *ibid.*, p.36. On her lack of gregariousness, see *ibid.*, p.13.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p.14.

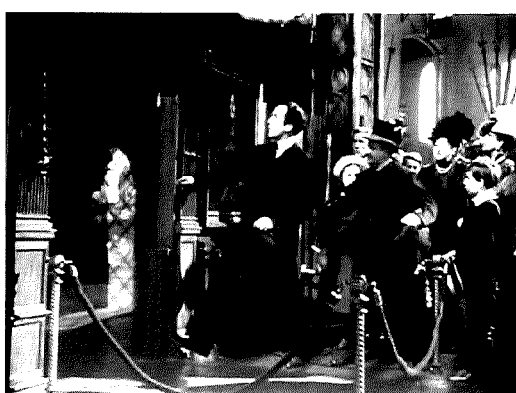
<sup>58</sup> It has been stated that the studio filming took place at Pinewood, not Ealing. Balcon denies this. Newton, op. cit., p.26.

<sup>59</sup> Sue Harper and Vincent Porter, *British Cinema of the 1950s: The Decline of Deference* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003) p.200.

<sup>60</sup> *Saraband for Dead Lovers* (Basil Dearden, UK, 1948).

<sup>61</sup> Peter Mandler discusses the prominence of the great hall in the social imaginary of Victorian England, from the 1830s to the 1860s. See Mandler, *The Fall and Rise of the Stately Home*, pp.22-69.

As for the exterior location filming, the production team chose a substantially renovated house with very little of its original shape intact.<sup>62</sup> Indeed, the film makes no effort to engage with any vestiges of the location's real medieval lineage. Nor does it offer a faithfully touristic guide to the site. It punningly emphasises the limits of a visitor's day tour when Louis is stopped from crossing a rope fence (Fig. 1.77), but the film's final murder indulges in an exploration of grounds usually denied to visitors. The film's exterior scenes thus democratise *imagery* of Leeds Castle, rather than the estate *per se*: this imagery ranges from the hackneyed postcard images at the start of the film to the bosky, picturesque grounds where Ethelred is shot.



1.77 Tourists are rarely allowed to see everything.



1.79 Pastiche: faux-medievalism, surrounded by a landscape which mimics Capability Brown's style.

The early shots of the estate focus on the faux-medieval house. What we see when the castle first appears is in Louis's imagination, not his memory, as the scene relates his parents' elopement. He is clearly as silly a dreamer as his mother. Louis says his mother left behind the 'medieval splendours' of Chalfont. Like all great postcard images, this is a manipulation of the truth: for the most part, she leaves behind the splendours of Fiennes Wykeham Martin's reconstructions;<sup>63</sup> landscape improvements by an imitator of Capability Brown;<sup>64</sup> and the refurbishments and landscaping under the direction of Owen Little, Armand-Albert Rateau and others during the late 1920's.<sup>65</sup> In Louis's mother's painting, which also resembles a postcard, these 'inauthentic' details are apparent. The faux-medieval castle is surrounded by

<sup>62</sup> When Alec Guinness arrived for location shooting, he was unsurprisingly disappointed with what he saw. Garry O'Connor, *Alec Guinness: The Unknown* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 2002), p.182.

<sup>63</sup> See Charles Wykeham Martin, *The History and Description of Leeds Castle* (Westminster: Nichols, 1869).

<sup>64</sup> David A. H. Cleggett, *The History of Leeds Castle and its Foundations* (Maidstone: Leeds Castle Foundation, 1992), p.104.

<sup>65</sup> Bignell, op. cit. pp. 18-24.

landscape elements in imitation of Brown: a lawn which reaches up to the house, clumps of trees and a serpentine approach. The painting, ostensibly a guarantee of Mrs Mazzini's genealogical pedigree, actually frames a landscape pastiche: an 'inauthentic' combination of imitative elements.

The early shots of the castle, the accompanying line about 'medieval splendours', the painting: all of these parody the popular landscape imagery of the postcard and guidebook industries. In the early Chalfont sequence, this mockery extends to hackneyed Victorian melodrama.<sup>66</sup> we see Louis's father kneeling in a crepuscular landscape shot, proposing in an absurdly mannered gesture to Louis's mother (Fig. 1.71). Louis imitates this posture three times: when he kneels at his mother's bed, when he plays what Sibella calls 'an Italian stage lover' and when he shoots the Duke in the climactic murder.<sup>67</sup> By that third point it is visible that much has changed. The landscape is now replete with the picturesque; aesthetically pleasingly views are partly concealed by trees and foliage, which thus teasingly defer full visual and/or homicidal satisfaction. As in the most saturated picturesque landscapes, these pleasing part-concealments do not look contrived. They are less Capability Brown, more Uvedale Price. The parodic melodrama of Mazzini's kneeling father is ultimately replaced by the more serious picturesque drama of the third landscape murder.

We are reminded by Louis's re-enactment of his father's kneeling posture, as he aims to shoot the duke, just how far he has come. No longer simply the silly dreamer of medieval splendours, or the Italian stage lover, he has become a subversion of the improver from the picturesque tradition. That is, both as narrator and protagonist, he is responsive to the character of the site, but instead of arranging *pleasingly* confounding concealments, he prepares a *fatally* confounding concealment. Through Louis's plotting, the landscape around Chalfont thus acquires an ironic picturesque which contrasts with the early kitsch postcard images: Louis finds an original use for the picturesqueness of Chalfont's grounds.

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<sup>66</sup> Newton, *Kind Hearts and Coronets*, p. 8.

<sup>67</sup> Charles Barr points out that both Louis and his father go down on one knee to the women they love. See Barr, *Ealing Studios*, p. 129.



## Murder in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction

The dichotomy between the unique and the popular/mass-produced commodity encapsulates the dilemma with which Louis is perpetually confronted. This is evidenced most distinctly in a scene at the end of the film. In the city, both towards the end of the memoirs and when he has been released from prison, a proliferation of competing written texts and narrative arcs threaten Louis. His life depends on Lionel's suicide note or its absence. His memoirs apparently offer the focal-point upon which to direct his thoughts while the imminence of his hanging 'concentrates his mind wonderfully' – a state of mind which appropriately finds its expression in a literary reference, to Johnson. But there is a lack of closure in the memoir's last lines:

After all, I could always decide afterwards which of these two little niggers would finally have to go...Dear Edith! Captivating Sibella! How different they were – and how well I knew each of them.

Louis's indecision is embodied in the appearance of both women outside the jail, separated as two discrete choices by two different shots. The choice between the suburban (Sibella) and the priggishness of landed nobility (Edith) is inextricably bound up with Louis's own divided character, raised in the suburbs, but with a noble birthright and a desire for landed power. It is this cultural schizophrenia which ultimately endangers his conclusiveness as a writer. Louis is finally confronted by a representative of *Tit Bits*, who wishes to publish his memoirs. This threat of publication – from one of the most iconic magazines to reach a mass readership in the late nineteenth century – leads directly to Louis's realisation that the unfinished memoirs have been left behind in his cell.<sup>68</sup> In a sense, the film's open ending reproduces the indecisive ending of Louis's memoirs. In mapping metadiegesis onto intradiegesis, it compounds the failure to choose between two women – by implication, two ways of life – with the probability of Louis's crimes being uncovered by his self-implicating text.

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<sup>68</sup> *Tit Bits*, aimed at what Gissing called 'quarter-educated' readers, is presumably not the type of publication Louis would choose for his memoirs. On *Tit Bits*, see Roger Luckhurst, *Science Fiction* (Cambridge: Polity, 2005), p.17.

The irony in the film's ending is that the publishing/unveiling threat embodied by *Tit Bits* combines the two worlds between which Louis is stuck. *Tit Bits* represents mass reproduction. In this it unites the suburban world of Sibella (who is associated with series of clone mannequins) with the sinister replications of the D'Ascoyne features, incarnated by Guinness, and the Mazzini features incarnated by Dennis Price as father and son. Louis's narrative, in contrast, embraces the picturesque, which more or less from its inception effected the concealment of the new bourgeois world of the *nouveaux riches*.<sup>69</sup> Louis uniquely deploys the variety of the picturesque to hide (dispose of) his ancestors in aesthetically pleasing configurations of landscape. His arc of killing culminates in a unique type of violent picturesqueness. However, *Tit Bits*, with its offer of circulating the memoirs in the popular press, raises the possibility that Louis will become like his ancestors: it threatens the uniqueness of his homicidal picturesqueness with mass reproduction.

Although published texts are ultimately Louis's undoing, and although they play no part in the realisation of his plans, they are instrumental in the early stages of his scheming. This is because the landed D'Ascoynes maintain their connections with the city and with public life through the popular press. Louis has to follow the progress of the D'Ascoyne lineage through the births and deaths columns of *The Times*. That Louis is shown checking these columns in the reading room of a public library stresses the wide public dissemination of D'Ascoyne news, as well as the fact that Louis can only learn about the D'Ascoynes from a distance, through reportage, just as he can only see Chalfont on 'Visitor's Day at the cost of sixpence'. The dissemination of D'Ascoyne data through the popular press is the means by which the family's genetic homogeneity is translated into the homogeneity made available and necessary in the age of mechanical reproduction.<sup>70</sup> Louis creates his own, idiosyncratic reference work on the D'Ascoynes: his scrapbook, where he sees the picture of Henry D'Ascoyne, the photographer. The scrapbook is a personal, unique rearrangement of the data published in the popular press. Its contents are 'culled from newspapers and periodicals.' This scrapbook, Louis's landscape murders and his memoirs all strive for

<sup>69</sup> See Bermingham, *Landscape and Ideology*, pp.74-75.

<sup>70</sup> A parallel for this is to be found in the film's trick shot in the scene of Henry D'Ascoyne's funeral: the mechanical tricks of the camera enable the comic representation of D'Ascoyne genetic homogeneity. For an account of how the trick shot was achieved, see the documentary, *Forever Ealing* (Andrew Snell, 2002, UK).

uniqueness. The language of his memoirs is indeed replete with an urbane wit and variety which distinguish it from the dismally unsophisticated dialogue of the D'Ascoynes played by Guinness. The distinction is repeated in the differences between the 'high' literariness of the manuscript and the 'low', mass produced body of text which represents the D'Ascoynes. There is also a distinction between Louis and Mrs. Mazzini, who is linked by a dissolve to the suburban cloning embodied by the mannequins. Against – on the other side of – her clichéd painting, Louis creates a more original 'landscape': a family tree of death, which charts the murders, including those involving his unique form of picturesque concealment.

### **Picturesque Determinism**

Unlike Dorian Gray's picture, Louis's mother's painting never changes. Hence with each appearance it increasingly emphasises Louis's picturesque divergence from its postcard simplicity. On the other hand, its obverse charts the progression of Louis as a killer. The obverse has emblematic picturesque qualities. It can, for example, be compared with the Temple of British Worthies at Stowe. Stephanie Ross inquires,

were viewers really meant to circle around behind the [Temple of British Worthies] and read the poem to Fido, or was it merely a hidden, private joke?<sup>71</sup>

Emblematic gardens contained narratives, with their trajectories dependent to some extent on chance discoveries.<sup>72</sup> Like the poem to Fido, texts, inscriptions and emblems were situated in many of the landscapes, but were not always forthcoming. The emblematic landscape trod the fine line between the intimately private and the discoverable. Moving from partial concealment of meaning to revelation was a matter of the explorer walking from one point to another, rather than, as in an allegorical formal garden, an interpretation of at once wholly visible and available symbols.

In an emblematic garden, half-concealed inscriptions with personal allusions had an oblique relationship with the plotted grounds. To a comparable extent, the obverse of

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<sup>71</sup> Stephanie Ross, *What Gardens Mean* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1998), p. 72.

<sup>72</sup> See John Dixon Hunt, *Greater Perfections: The Practice of Garden Theory* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2000), pp. 125-8.

Louis Mazzini's postcard is half-hidden. It is private joke to Louis. Sibella guesses his culpability, but never turns the painting over to discover the pruned family tree. Unlike the climax of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, in which the magic painting is seen by others, the dramatic irony of the painting in *Kind Hearts and Coronets* is retained throughout, since the obverse of the painting is known only to Louis and the audience. The turning over of the painting comes to symbolise Louis's murder plot. This turning process detracts from the pastiche image on the recto. Instead, the painting becomes a postcard, in an entirely idiosyncratic sense personal to Louis.

With its recto and verso, the painting also points to the film's discursive duality. Several critics have identified a structural dichotomy in the film's style: a split between 'narration' and 'visuals';<sup>73</sup> between 'exposition' and 'telling detail';<sup>74</sup> or between 'telling' and 'showing'.<sup>75</sup> Between what is stated and what is implied in the film lies an ironic distance. What, then, is implied? Charles Barr emphasises that desire and motivation play a significant role in the film, but as a self-conscious undercurrent. He describes the film's 'cool surface and what we are conscious of underneath, which is to say, the motivation.'<sup>76</sup> On the other hand, Jerry Palmer argues that the film is

an assessment of class without any reference to (illicit) desires to indulge in murderous ambition. Indeed, if such desires were the core of the film's pleasure, how would it be possible to laugh at the elements in it where Louis is very directly the victim[?]<sup>77</sup>

The most important point to garner from these accounts is that they both agree that the film's immediate discourse is one of surface, whether or not there is an underside to that surface. Michael Newton similarly states that 'the film plays with the surface of things...to suggest that we should never take what we hear and see straight'.<sup>78</sup> We can productively carry the idea of surface/concealed space over into the question of landscape in the film, with reference to Louis's mother's painting.

<sup>73</sup> Stanbrook, Alan. 'Kind Hearts and Coronets', *Films and Filming*, vol.10, no. 7, April 1964 p. 20.

<sup>74</sup> Barr, *Ealing Studios*, p.122.

<sup>75</sup> Amy Sargeant, *British Cinema: A Critical History* (London: BFI, 2005), p.197.

<sup>76</sup> Barr, op. cit., p.125.

<sup>77</sup> Palmer, 'Enunciation and Comedy: "Kind Hearts and Coronets"', pp.144-158.

<sup>78</sup> Newton, *Kind Hearts and Coronets*, p.41.

The ritual of turning over the painting embodies both a moral and a narratorial ambivalence in the film. A murderous trajectory, marked out as a family tree of death, lies beneath an ostensibly naive painting: in semiotic terms, the painting is a shifter, alternating with each turn between these two horticultural signifieds. However, both sides of the painting do the same thing: they naturalise crime. Mrs Mazzini's guilt is displaced onto the watercolour, while Louis represents his murders as an oak tree and he seems to be helped by the landscapes he kills in. If Louis's goal is encapsulated by the painting, then the killings seem to be motivated by a landscape. The way the film uses landscapes and a landscape painting to hint at the displacement of agency can be described as picturesque determinism: cause-and-effect chains are subtly traced through the landscape imagery. The film points to the way landscape myths are used to displace guilt. The film's mockery of causality is ultimately directed back at Louis and his absurd metaphor of an acorn for a crime.

## Conclusion

The film's subversive and humorous deployment of landscape works on several different levels, and draws on several different forms of the picturesque. The process of 'improvement' is parodied as Louis becomes a homicidal *genius loci* at Chalfont. His evolution into a murderous spirit of place is represented in his memoir as a reciprocal process: it is as if the landscape is an accomplice, an agent in the killing. The mother's guilt is similarly displaced onto the painting, which appears to have a magic agency.

Two forms of picturesqueness are contrasted. On the one hand, there is the mother's clichéd landscape pastiche, a combination of faux-medieval architecture and Brownian landscape, painted in a way which resembles a postcard image. On the other hand, against mass reproduction and stereotypes, Louis creates a uniquely homicidal picturesque, in the thicker, Uvedale Price style grounds where Ethelred hunts. However, these two forms are, it is hinted, equally pernicious. The turning over of the painting dramatically, but quietly symbolises the unveiling of a hidden underside of a seemingly harmless landscape.

Similarly, the narrative ultimately leads to the killing of the duke, in a landscape where the 'dark side' of preservation and gamekeeping (the violent punishment of a poacher) is unveiled and then reconfigured to trap the landowner. In its multiple engagements with the picturesque, *Kind Hearts and Coronets* returns us to historiographical questions; it dynamically engages with the mythopoeic ambivalence W.J.T. Mitchell identifies as a precursor to the 'dark side' of eighteenth century paintings identified by Marxist landscape historicism.<sup>79</sup> At a time when the picturesque had become a contested mode in different art historical discourses – for example, those of Hussey and Pevsner – associated with governmental debates about the preservation of the country house, the film's representation of landscape was highly subversive.

From a wider historiographical perspective, considering the three decades after *Kind Hearts and Coronets*' release, analysis of the film's landscapes can pave the way for revisionist readings of other British films and television programmes: *The Go-Between*, *The Ruling Class*, *Brideshead Revisited* and *The Draughtsman's Contract*, in all of which there are similar versions of the picturesque *genius loci*. The stylistic idiosyncrasy of *Kind Hearts and Coronets* is often stressed.<sup>80</sup> However, in terms of use of landscape, the film arguably provided a blueprint for a genre which emerged in the 1970s.

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<sup>79</sup> W.J.T. Mitchell, 'Imperial Landscape', in Mitchell (ed.), *Landscape and Power*, p.12.

<sup>80</sup> Barr discusses the difference between *Kind Hearts and Coronets* and the other Ealing films: Barr, op. cit., pp.119-130. Newton says that 'in terms of style it is unique': Newton, op. cit., p.9.

## II

## The Figure (and Disfigurement) in the Landscape: *The Go-Between*

Landscapes...are mobilised, and in that mobilisation may become productive: productive in relation to a past or to a future, but that relation is always drawn with regard to a present.

– Mark Dorrian and Gillian Rose<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

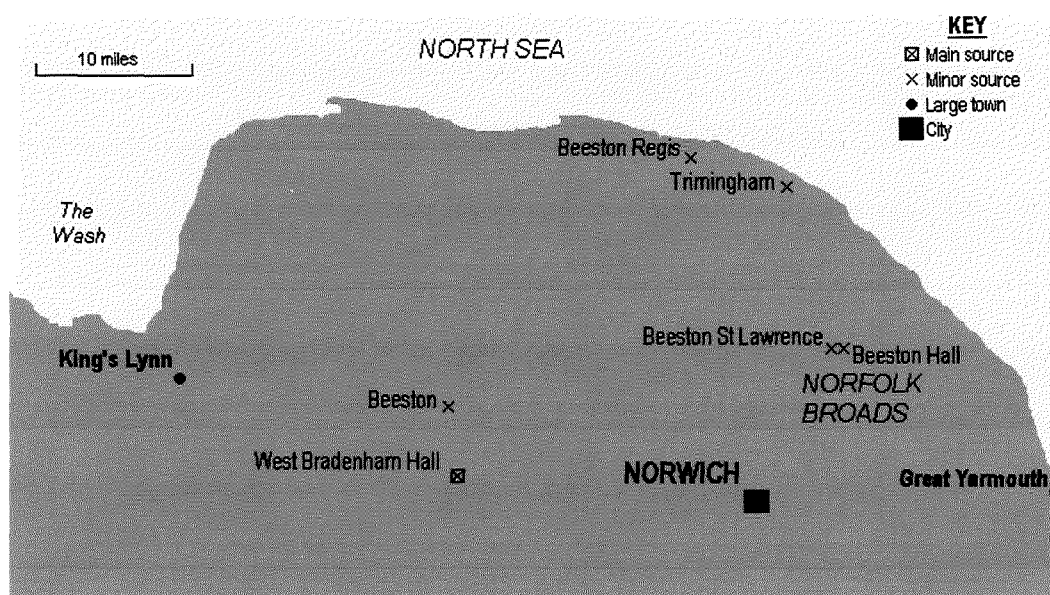
Seen as a landscape film – specifically, as a country estate narrative film – *The Go-Between* clearly represented a turning point in British cinema; at least two-thirds of the film's action take place in an unprecedented variety of landscapes: a village green; a terrace garden; picturesque landscapes designed by Capability Brown; an overgrown pre-Brownian kitchen garden; a formal flower garden; a cricket pitch; a deer park; corn fields and a farmyard. All of these were shot on location, at sites unusually near to one another (see Map 2, below), around a house which was used for nearly all of the interiors.<sup>2</sup> If the film is to be historicised, this location work has to be taken into account. Indeed, it is imperative that the film's narrative be understood in terms of its landscapes; the film's key motifs are all landscape motifs and it is through these spaces that Leo's story threads. Leo, as a figure in the landscape, moves through the estate as no other character in the film does and, indeed, as no character had walked through an estate location in any country house film prior to *The Go-Between*'s release in 1971. He walks from the country house to a farm and in between directs a curious, naïve gaze at the countryside phenomena he spies. The span of the estate, both spatial and ideological, is observed by the camera via his meandering trajectory, although his own perception of what he sees is revealed to be delusively superstitious. The film opposes Leo's mysticism with both naturalistic rural observation and historical materialist social commentary. The narrative takes place in a small geographical area, yet this geography

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<sup>1</sup> Mark Dorrian and Gillian Rose, 'Introduction', in Mark Dorrian and Gillian Rose (eds.), *Deterritorialisations...Revisioning Landscape and Politics* (London: Black Dog, 2003), p.17.

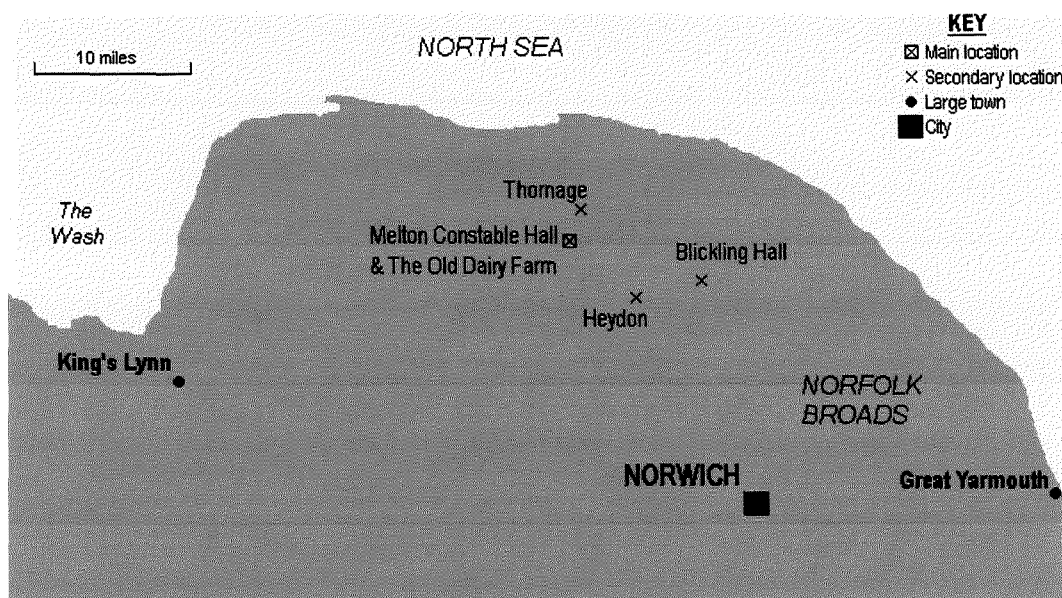
<sup>2</sup> Both maps are by the author. Franco Moretti's work provided the inspiration for these maps. See Franco Moretti, *Atlas of the European Novel 1800-1900* (London: Verso, 1999); Franco Moretti, *Graphs, Maps, Trees: Abstract Models For a Literary Theory* (London: Verso, 2005).

### MAP 1 - L.P. Hartley's Toponymical and Topographical Sources (Norfolk)



- ☒ West Bradenham Hall: the likely source for Brandham Hall - L.P. Hartley visited the house in 1909.
- × Trimmingham: the likely source for the name of the aristocratic family which owns Brandham Hall.
- × Beeston; Beeston Regis; Beeston St Lawrence & Beeston Hall: likely inspirations/locations for the fictional 'Beeston Castle' mentioned in both novel and film. A Beeston Castle exists in Cheshire, but this is too far away to fit into the novel's topographical scheme.
- When Leo is taken to Norwich, he eats at the Maid's Head in Wensum Street, sees Thomas Browne's statue in the Cathedral and walks along Tomblond. The older Colston takes rooms at the Maid's Head the night before returning to Brandham.

### MAP 2 - *The Go-Between*: Film Locations (Norfolk)



- ☒ Melton Constable Hall: location for Brandham Hall & most of the landscapes.
- ☒ Old Dairy Farm: Black Farm in the film.
- × Blickling Hall: location for the flower garden.
- × Heydon: location for Marian's dower house, as well as the village church and square.
- × Thormage: location for the cricket pitch.
- Norwich: In 1900, Leo visits the Cathedral and is seen in the city's streets; Colston boards his car outside Thorpe Station in the 1950s.



is mapped in intricate physical and social detail. More than in any country estate film before it, a congruence between fictional setting and landscape location, established through intense rural observation, is intrinsic to *The Go-Between*'s narrative discourse. This can be clarified with reference to L.P. Hartley's novel. There is a crucial difference between the novel and the film, *The Go-Between*: a difference which is indicative of the way the film diverges from the type of country estate narrative films produced before it. The disparity is evident in the different contexts in which old Leo Colston announces 'The past is a foreign country: they do things differently there', in the novel and the film.<sup>3</sup> In the novel, the sentence precedes Colston's rediscovery of his boyhood diary, in a collar-box, amidst assorted bric-a-brac. The diary and the objects which have been stored with it are relics and indices of the past he refers to. They gradually provoke a Proustian mental and literary journey to the 'foreign country', a journey which Colston undertakes by reading his diary and retelling its story in the form of a memoir, (the novel). As far as we know, he does not stir from his home until the epilogue, when he has all but finished the memoir. His home must be at some remove from Brandham Hall, the fictive Norfolk setting for his remembered tragedy, for when he finally resolves to return to the area, he staggers his journey, by sleeping at the Maid's Head Hotel, in Norwich.

In contrast, Joseph Losey's film version intercuts the older Leo's physical journey with the young Leo's visit: the events of the novel's epilogue are interspersed with those which correspond to the main body of the book, so that we discover Leo's past (1900) at the same time as we discover his present (the 1950s). The line, 'the past is a foreign country', is spoken over the first shot of the Maudsley's house in 1900, portrayed by Melton Constable Hall in the film. The 1950s voiceover – which has an aphoristic authority, despite its slight presence throughout the film – is, from the start, tied to the house in its 1900 incarnation. The film's conception of time is a complex issue, which has been dissected at length.<sup>4</sup> Suffice to say here that, while the novel depicts the unravelling of the past as action at a distance, catalysed and sustained by the diary, in

<sup>3</sup> L.P. Hartley, *The Go-Between* (London: Penguin, 1997), p.5.

<sup>4</sup> See, in particular: Edward T. Jones, 'Summer of 1900: *A la recherche* of *The Go-Between*', *Literature/Film Quarterly*, vol.1, no.2, April 1973, pp.154-160; James Palmer and Michael Riley, 'Time and the Structure of Memory in *The Go-Between*', *College Literature*, vol.5, no.3, Fall 1978, pp.219-227; James Palmer and Michael Riley, *The Films of Joseph Losey*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp.90-116; Colin Gardner, *Joseph Losey* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2004), pp.134-179.

the film Leo's past unfolds on roughly the same ground as his present: the 1900 Leo and the 1950s Leo both go to Brandham Hall's grounds, the nearby village and Norwich. While the past is literally another territory for the older Leo in the novel, in the film the past is foreign chiefly in terms of different weather conditions: hot sunshine rather than grey skies and rain. The storm at the end of the 1900 events thus marks the transition from the world of the past to that of the older Leo's present. In the film, old Colston and young Leo tread on the same earth, though the old Colston never sets foot *in* the hall; the area is recognisably the same place, whatever changes time or the pathetic fallacy have inflicted on it: there is no action at a distance and no object to catalyse his remembrance. The Leo Colston of the film is seen only in the vicinity of the country house he visits as a boy and as an old man.

Significantly, the disparity between novel and film is the same as that between the film and previous narrative sound films about country estates. Consider, for example, *The Ghost Goes West* (1935).<sup>5</sup> An American buys a Scottish castle and transports it across the Atlantic, separating the house from its grounds (the house's historical, as well as spatial, context). A connection between the house and its grounds is sustained by the presence of the ghost: literally, the spirit of the place. The Scottish grounds and their history thus become referents, symbolised by the mobile ghost, who manages to continue a line of action begun in the past, in another country(side). The house retains its history, because the ghost constitutes a portable connection between the house and its original grounds.

Similarly, in *The Man in Grey* (1943), past events, which took place in the country, are retold at a distance, in a city auction in the present.<sup>6</sup> The catalyst for the relation of the past events is a group of artefacts on sale at the auction: signifiers of the past which create a narratorial connection between present and past, between city and country. Again, action is reconstituted at a distance, by virtue of the presence of a portable signifier – in this case, a box of trinkets. It is the box's metadiegetic potential to reactivate latent narrative that is revealed to be its true value. In addition to Mazzini's mother's painting, *Kind Hearts and Coronets* features two other narratorial agents which connect London as the source of storytelling with distant country houses: Louis's

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<sup>5</sup> *The Ghost Goes West* (René Clair, UK, 1935).

<sup>6</sup> *The Man in Grey* (Leslie Arliss, UK, 1943).

scrapbook, with which Louis documents Henry D'Ascoyne's sphere of activity, and Louis's memoirs, which link his prison cell with all of the country houses and their landscapes.

All of these portable signifiers work, like Colston's diary and the other collar-box artefacts in the novel, to connect known spaces, where narration is instigated, with distant ('foreign') estates, where narratives are set. The emphasis on portability is understandable in its historical context: many country estates were sold off during the twentieth century, their assets dispersed. As Raymond Williams notes, 'the country-house, in the twentieth century, has just this quality of abstract disposability.'<sup>7</sup> Ultimately, though, in these texts the 'disposability' leads to the return of the repressed (or disposed-of) narrative in which the house features. The dynamic of the portable objects is narratorial; the distant estate and its past are brought to the viewers, as well as to the protagonists. In contrast, there is no such portable metadiegetic signifier in the film adaptation of *The Go-Between* to link one place or narrative with another; the diary appears fleetingly, but only in a 1900 scene.

The country estate films made in Britain before *The Go-Between* invariably featured studio sets. Even if the landscapes were locations, the interiors of the houses supposed to be situated in the landscapes were often sets. The portable signifier captures the spirit of this type of filmmaking: narrative action takes place in relation to a landscape, but often at a distance from it. Just as interior scenes had to be filmed away from their spatial context – the landscape – so a film would thematise 'telediegesis' in the portable object, from which narrative emerges and elides space. Conversely, *The Go-Between* was shot entirely on location.

We should be cautious about drawing too neat a parallel between the increased availability of locations and increased country house tourism, like that suggested by heritage criticism.<sup>8</sup> Melton Constable Hall has never been open to the public. The film explores landscapes which no member of the public has seen in such great detail. Location filming became easier and cheaper in the sixties, while after the Second World

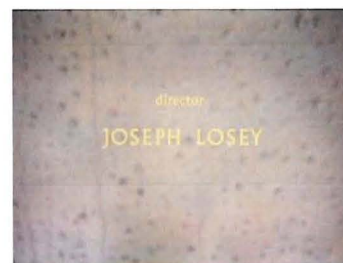
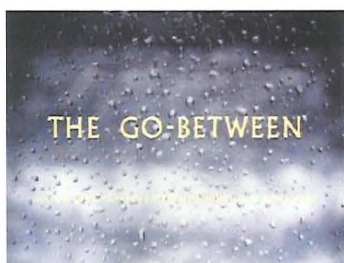
<sup>7</sup> Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1985), p.250.

<sup>8</sup> On the relationship between British period films and tourism, see Amy Sargeant, 'The Darcy Effect: regional tourism and costume drama', *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, vol.4, nos.3 & 4, Autumn 1998, pp.177-186.

War country houses became more expensive to maintain, and were therefore more accessible to filmmakers willing to pay for the opportunity to use locations. The financially strained house owners were often glad to allow film crews access to the house, especially if the crew were to partially restore the house and its grounds. Losey, for instance, was asked to pay only a nominal rent for Melton Constable Hall:<sup>9</sup> the house interior was redecorated and the garden slightly tidied by the crew.<sup>10</sup> From the filmmakers' perspective, the location shoot and redecoration of the estate could allow for a sustained dialogue between the estate's house and landscape architecture and the film's narrative. It is this dialogue which the rest of the chapter will analyse.

## Landscape and Point of View

*The Go-Between* plays on the sense of spatial immediacy created by its exclusive use of locations. The film's metadiegetic icon, which is seen in the first shot of the film, as the credits roll, is a window. We only realise that this is a car window in retrospect, since there are no establishing shots of the car and the window is stationary. The camera slowly tilts down the window, mimicking the movement of the rain which has spattered the glass. We are looking from behind the window, first at the sky (Fig. 2.1), and then, gradually, at what retrospectively appears to be a corn field (Fig. 2.2): the camera zooms into the cornfield, figuring the immersion of the spectator in the film's world (Fig. 2.3). This last cinematographic flourish indicatively appears at the same time as the director's name; Losey is about to immerse us in a fictional world. However, the rain has made the glass translucent, almost opaque. The window is evidently close to what lies beyond, but the image is partially obscured.



2.1-2.3 The opening titles: as the rain trickles down the window, the camera tilts downwards, to show what appears to be a corn field.

<sup>9</sup> Edith de Rham, *Joseph Losey* (London: André Deutsch, 1991), p.212.

<sup>10</sup> John Russell Taylor, 'The Go-Between', *Sight and Sound*, Autumn 1970, p.202.



This window, which James Palmer and Michael Riley appropriately term a ‘mindscreen’, clearly corresponds to the cinema screen.<sup>11</sup> Just as the novel uses a metadiegetic icon (the diary) which is literary, and therefore self-reflexive, so the film uses one which is cinemorphic. Palmer and Riley describe it as the screen on which the older Leo’s memories are projected. The spectators are immediately reminded by this device that they are watching a film. We are close to the landscape, but separated by a mediating lens. Likewise, the film’s other windows, through which the camera gazes at the landscape, also remind us of the cinema screen, since the window frame makes the frame of the screen more palpable, by connotation. The difference is that the film’s icon of the present is a closed, translucent car window, whereas in the 1900 sequences, there are many shots through (often open) windows with transparent glass (Figs. 2.4-2.7).



2.4-2.7 Windows looking onto the terrace garden in 1900.

While the rain on the 1950s window suggests a mediating lens of emotion, the frames of the 1900 windows are like prison bars: the physical (and ideological) structure of the

<sup>11</sup> Palmer and Riley, *Joseph Losey*, op. cit., p.267. The term was popularised in film studies by Bruce F. Kawin, *Mindscreen: Bergman, Godard and First-Person Film* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978).

house forms a rigid framework through which the young Leo sees. This dichotomy between two types of mediation and the self-reflexive emphasis of the 'mindscreen' indicate that the metaphor, 'the past is a foreign country', is just that: a metaphor, which is in the eye of the beholder. The action at a distance in the book, on the other hand, reifies, and thus panders to, the narrator's metaphor, with the past events taking place far from the older Leo's home.

In the film, then, we often see a landscape through a window frame. The frame presents one way of looking at the landscape, such as Leo's, but it is possible to achieve others. That the landscapes in the film are all self-evidently real locations, which can be seen by other means than watching the film reinforces this, as do several shots from window frames in the 1900 sections which do not correspond to the young Leo's gaze. The camera's perspective is often demonstratively separated from Leo's, such as in the first shot of the ground-floor window looking onto the terrace garden; Leo arrives at this window several shots later.

When Leo enters his bedroom after church, it is made clear that the camera's viewpoint is significantly distinct from his subjective vision. The shot begins as the door of the room opens (Fig. 2.8-2.9): Leo walks into frame a few moments later, as if the door were opened for him in advance by the camera's pan to the left (Fig. 2.10). The camera's discrete presence as voyeur is reified at this point. A similar edit later in the sequence has the same reflexive quality. On the farm, Leo looks from the horse (Fig. 2.11), across the yard (Fig. 2.12). Instead of the conventional reverse shot, showing us what he sees, the next shot shows a view of Leo, from the right side of whatever he has spotted (Fig. 2.13). As it pans left to follow Leo climbing the fence (Fig. 2.14), the camera then reveals what he was looking at: the haystack (Fig. 2.15). The cut and pan triangulate the haystack, Leo and the camera in space and demarcate the relationship between them: we can precisely locate Leo as intruder and the haystack he covets, just as we can isolate the camera's voyeurism.



2.8 The door opens, as if pushed by the camera as it pans left...



2.9...and there is a pause, which reinforces the sense that the camera has arrived first,...



2.10...before Leo walks into the shot/room.



2.11 Leo meets Smiler...



2.12...before his attention is attracted by something on the opposite side of the farmyard.



2.13 A cut repositions the frame on the far corner of the farmyard.



2.14 As Leo walks forward and climbs the fence, the camera pans left...



2.15...to reveal what attracted Leo: the haystack.

Unlike the novel, the film is not explicitly narrated by the older Leo of the 1950s; his active metadiegetic role in the film is as a commentator, delivering brief maxims over the events of 1900. We hear a couple of maxims spoken by him ('You flew too near the sun, and you were scorched'), but they do not constitute narration as such. The allusion to Icarus abstracts narrative detail into a classical myth, anticipating the downfall of the young Leo, but without giving the context. Like the window in the opening titles, this line conveys a sense of mediation through the older Leo's consciousness. His reliance on a classical myth in this line indicates a highly codified perspective on the past events. In conversation with Michael Ciment, Losey describes the film's double articulation of time as 'subliminal'.<sup>12</sup> Later in the interview, Ciment resurrects the term to characterise

<sup>12</sup> Michael Ciment, *Conversations with Losey* (London: Methuen, 1985), p.304.



some of the film's middle scenes, including the landscape scenes featuring deer.<sup>13</sup> Ciment implies that it can not only apply to the sequencing of the plot, but also to the visual imagery: the film's landscapes and its double articulation of time are thus comparable. If we unpack the expression 'subliminal', it helpfully suggests that, at a metadiegetic level, the film's imagery to some extent also reflects the older Leo's remembrance, even if he is not the storyteller in any straightforward sense.

The audiovisual narration, though, allows the possibility of other perspectives. Its physical proximity to the incidents it recounts and to the landscape in which the events occur enables this. In the novel events are filtered through Leo, who reads and rewrites the episodes recorded in his diary, the object which connects him with distant events and places. In *Kind Hearts and Coronets*, Chalfont is accessible only through Louis's narrative: we see much more of his mother's picture of the house than location shots of Leeds Castle. In the film version of *The Go-Between*, on the other hand, we are not solely reliant on the older Leo's metadiegesis, so it is easier to distinguish between his subjectivity and an objective version of events. Leo is placed at one remove from the narrating camera, yet the film is evidently coloured by his interpretation of events.

The film is structured around a constellation of landscape icons: the deadly nightshade; the haystack at Black Farm; the shade by the game larder, where the thermometer hangs; the deer park; the cricket pitch, and so on. The microcosmic design of these visual tropes renders them particularly potent. They each succinctly foreshadow a later plot development and distil a wider socioeconomic commentary into one image. Leo associates Marian with the nightshade, perhaps because of its Latin name (*Atropa Belladonna*) and its proximity to her hammock. A shot of the plant (Fig. 2.16) is followed by a shot of Leo, staring (Fig. 2.17). Then there is a reverse shot: we see that Leo has been looking at Marian, in the hammock (Fig. 2.18). The shot of Leo links those of the plant and Marian; he is the hinge in the metonym which makes their contiguity apparent and relevant. The metonym is ominous: it portends that Marian will become poisonous to Leo and that the nightshade will become a metaphor for this poisoning.

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p.311.





2.16 The deadly nightshade...



2.17...linked by a shot of Leo...



2.18...to Marian.

The haystack presages Leo's narrative arc; when he slides down it, he sustains a knee injury that prefigures his effective emasculation at the end of the film, when he is 'all dried up inside'. On the other hand, by way of social commentary, the cricket match on the village green replays the Anglo-Boer War, with the farmers (Boers) pitted against the English aristocracy.<sup>14</sup> Trimingham, who has been 'gored by the Boer' and whose fiancée is having an affair with a farmer, leads an upper class team against a team of farmers and rural labourers. Furthermore, the village green – a generic site of dispute in England between landowners and villagers since enclosure – is an appropriate setting for this codified confrontation between the classes.

The shade fulfils both of the roles respectively played by the nightshade and the cricket match on the village green: personal and social commentary. In this picturesque space, where Leo and Marian argue (Fig. 2.20), and where Leo is horrified by the thermometer readings, a large, picturesquely dilapidated tree is supported by younger, uprooted trunks (Fig. 2.19). The symbol is both local and generic. The tree is a reflection of the Maudsley family, in decline, yet propped up by the young, energetic Leo, rather like a scene at the end of the film, when Mrs Maudsley strangely drags Leo through the landscape, towards the outhouses, as if leaning on him for emotional support. At the same time, the tree is a general metaphor for the endemic corruption of the ruling class. It is apposite that the film redeploys a picturesque landscape location once owned by the aristocracy to portray this corruption.

<sup>14</sup> The novel is characteristically explicit about this, while the film leaves us to make the inference ourselves, from the suggestive confrontation between a Boer-gored Lord's team and a group of farmers. See L.P. Hartley, *The Go-Between* (London: Penguin, 1997), p.117



2.19 The shade: a dilapidated tree leaning on younger, uprooted trunks.



2.20 Marian accuses Leo of ingratitude and mercenary behaviour when he refuses to take another letter. The shade provides an apt setting for the argument, as Marian 'leans' on Leo.

The film's trenchant symbolism and the extent to which it conforms to, or diverges from, the source novel's style have often been commented on. It is imperative, though, to stress something which has been overlooked by criticism on the film, that these icons are all exterior phenomena: gardens or grounds, as well as objects found in them. The constellation of symbolic icons constitutes a landscape, through which the film is plotted. Plot finds its schematic delineation on screen in the landscape.

The film's narrative discourse is frequently seen as antithetical to its representation of landscape. For instance, a recent *Sight and Sound* article argues that

despite the picture-postcard imagery, the film-maker's real preoccupations – snobbery, sex, betrayal and violence – are always apparent.<sup>15</sup>

D.I. Grossvogel takes this caveat further, when he contends that striking shots of the estate detract from the film's discursive merits: 'the picture's visual beauty distracts still further from its sociological intent.'<sup>16</sup>

However, the film's landscape shots may well be aesthetically pleasing, but they also have a fundamental narratorial purpose. Landscapes shaped for the aesthetic pleasure of the landed gentry are politically redeployed by the film. Plot and social commentary are figured in the film's landscape: the film's discursive design is paralleled in its landscape design. Back and forth, Leo goes between the country house and Black Farm. He

<sup>15</sup> Anonymous, 'Review of *The Go-Between* video', *Sight and Sound*, vol. 10, no. 9, September 2000, p.61.

<sup>16</sup> D.I. Grossvogel, 'Losey and Hartley', *Diacritics*, vol. 4, no.3, Fall 1974, p.56.

undertakes physical and cultural journeys across a landscape, which in turn is used by the film to comment on Leo's role. The camera dwells on, studies and explores the landscape, reveals its physical contours and, in doing so, unveils the social topography in which Leo is situated. While these contours are partly symbolic, they are also literal, since *The Go-Between* was shot entirely on location, in Norfolk.<sup>17</sup> This can easily be taken for granted, but it has considerable implications. Any explication of the film's landscapes must first take this into account, as well as the fact that the landscapes in *The Go-Between* are, in more than one sense, historical landscapes.

*The Go-Between* is a film of more than two eras. The 1900 sequences are the past, the 'foreign country', but for the filmmakers and the audience, the 1950s scenes are also the past. The film makes this explicit in the shot of old Colston leaving Thorpe Station and getting into a car, surrounded by other period cars. We must also consider that landscapes contain and reveal marks and traces of other eras. In terms of picturesque landscape gardens, the general layout of the designer or improver's design, unless extensively tampered with, remained and even came to fruition over time: picturesque gardens exploited and aestheticised this, with their contrived atavism of gothic fabriques and dilapidated trees. *The Go-Between* in turn exploits this contrived atavism in its utilisation of the old tree in the shade. *The Go-Between* is in part an exploration and deconstruction of the garden's autohistoriographical markings. The film's retrospective gaze is therefore not necessarily commensurate with old Colston's, nor is it 1950s (or 1970s) nostalgia for 1900.<sup>18</sup>

L.P. Hartley's novel was partly based on his visit as a teenager to West Bradenham Hall in 1909.<sup>19</sup> The extent of the novel's autobiographical basis is debatable, but it has become evident that L.P. Hartley drew on a personal nexus of names for his novel's characters and places;<sup>20</sup> he also mobilised a wider toponymy of Norfolk (see Map 1,

<sup>17</sup> David Caute, *Joseph Losey: A Revenge on Life* (London: Faber & Faber, 1994), 255-256 and de Rham, op. cit., p.210.

<sup>18</sup> For descriptions of the film's landscapes as nostalgic, see: Araminta Wordsworth, 'The Go-Between', *Times Educational Supplement*, 1 October 1971; Richard Roud, 'Going Between', *Sight and Sound*, vol.40, no.3, Summer 1971, p.159.

<sup>19</sup> See: L.P. Hartley, 'Introduction', in *The Go-Between* (London: Heinemann, 1985), p.4; Adrian Wright, *Foreign Country: The Life of L.P. Hartley* (London: André Deutsch, 1996), pp.30-33, 169, 253-254; Douglas Brooks-Davies, 'Introduction', in L.P. Hartley, *The Go-Between* (London: Penguin, 1997), p.xiii; Taylor, op. cit., p.202.

<sup>20</sup> See Brookes Davies, op. cit., pp.xiii-xvi.

above). He took the name Trimingham from a small village near the north-east coast of East Anglia.<sup>21</sup> The fictional Beeston Castle, to which Mrs Maudsley proposes a visit on Leo's birthday, is most likely a reference to a village just north of West Bradenham Hall, though there are other Beestons in Norfolk. Hartley's nomenclature is not a rigorous topography of Norfolk, but these references nonetheless give a sense of groundedness and local spirit to the novel.

However, while the fictional name of the house in the book, 'Brandham Hall', bears a close orthographical resemblance to 'Bradenham Hall', it also has a proleptic value. 'Brandham' anticipates both the knee injury and the mental scarring Leo will suffer during the summer of 1900. As the name of the narrative's main setting, it confers an overriding metaphoric aura on the novel as a topographical whole, which contradicts, even smothers, the literalness of the topographical references. This point can be clarified: as the novel's narrator, Leo suffers from what Roman Jakobson terms a 'contiguity disorder', the obsessive attachment to metaphor to the exclusion of metonymy.<sup>22</sup> In Leo's case, however, this involves translating metonyms into metaphors. Marian is repeatedly seen as the Virgin, Virgo, more because of Leo's fixation with the Zodiac signs in his diary – his mystical association of the diary with the contiguous people and events he records in it – than because of any real observation on his part of Marian's character. For the deluded Leo, the sign initially chosen because of its contiguity seems to bear a resemblance to Marian. His contiguity disorder also applies to his perception of Brandham's landscapes: Leo has a 'fancy' that Ted is a sheaf of corn 'the reaper had forgotten and that it would come back for him.'<sup>23</sup> Ted's contiguity to the harvested corn provides a metonym, which Leo translates into a metaphor that foreshadows Ted's death. It would seem that Brandham is so called because of the older Leo's association of the hall with the emotional breakdown he is subjected to there: another metonym transformed into a metaphor.

Colston's record of events in the novel may be generally veracious, but in style he is surely one of the most unreliable narrators of all time. His retrospective foreknowledge of events pervades the book in the form of metadiegetic prolepses. His almost maniacal

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p.274n35.

<sup>22</sup> Roman Jakobson, 'The Metaphoric and Metonymic Poles', in David Lodge (ed.), *Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader* (London and New York: Longman, 1988), pp.57-61.

<sup>23</sup> Hartley, *The Go-Between* (London: Penguin, 1997), p.93.



attachment to metaphors formed from metonymy saturates the narrative with an overwrought symbolism. The symbolism is contrived: the reported events seem constrained, distorted even. Hartley's *The Go-Between* is a realist tale recounted by a pathological symbolist. The topographical authenticity of the novel is all but subsumed by Colston's style.

The film's chain of visual tropes is placed in a more pre-eminent literal context than the imagery in the novel. Edward T. Jones contends that

the viewer, like Leo, becomes enchanted by the vistaed lawns, family deer herds, and the plenitude of silver. However, the material literalness of this visualized surface curiously obliterates the novel's richer "sub-text" of Leo's grandiose symbols.<sup>24</sup>

However, it can be argued that while the 'literalness' of the film detracts from its symbolism, it does so without destroying it. Instead, the film creates a dialectics of objectivity and symbolism: 'epistemic complication', to borrow George M. Wilson's term for films' oscillation or confusion between objective and subjective registers.<sup>25</sup>

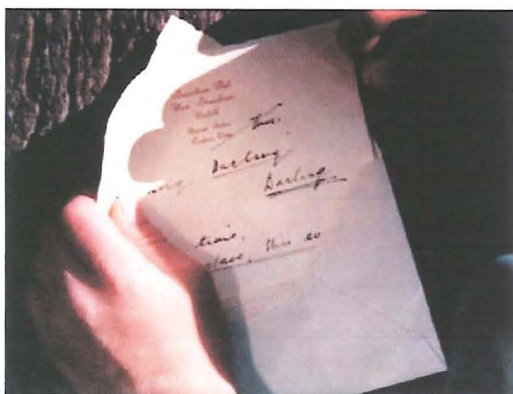
Although Pinter's script refers to the house as 'Brandham Hall', the house is not named at all in the film's dialogue.<sup>26</sup> The name only appears on two significant occasions in the film: in the letterhead above the note from Marian to Ted, which Leo reads and cries over (Figs. 2.21-2.22) and on the envelope of the letter from Leo's mother telling him that he cannot come home earlier, when he is desperate to escape the world of the house (Figs. 2.23-2.24). Marian's affair with Ted and his mother's coldness are both implicated in the 'branding' that Leo is subjected to. However, by limiting references to the house's name to these two shots, Melton Constable Hall's architecture and landscapes are left to speak for themselves. The symbolic toponymy is tightly controlled in the film. By excluding the house's name from the dialogue, there are no moments in which an image of the house is accompanied by the fictional name.

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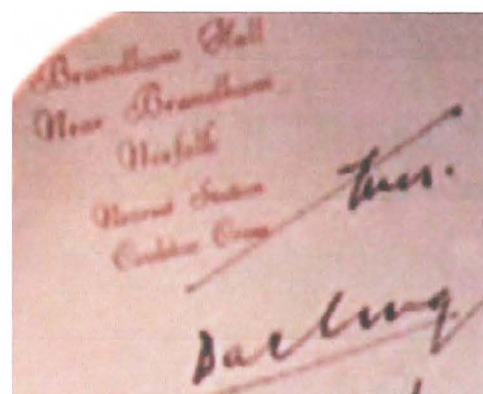
<sup>24</sup> Edward T. Jones, *L.P. Hartley* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1978), p.112.

<sup>25</sup> See George M Wilson, *Narration in Light: Studies in Cinematic Point of View* (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 1986), pp.2, 126-144.

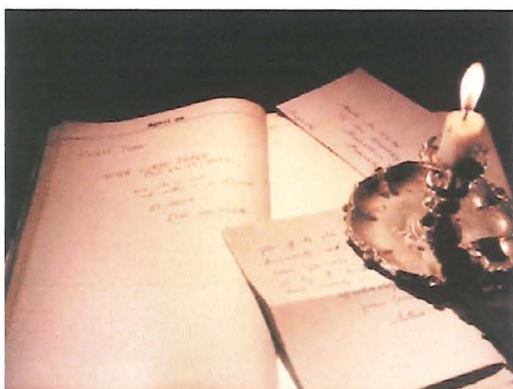
<sup>26</sup> Harold Pinter, *Collected Screenplays 2* (London: Faber & Faber, 2000), p.4.



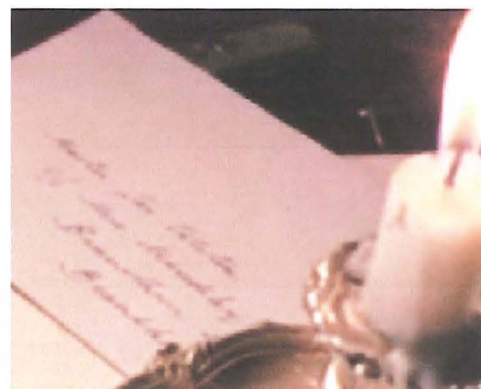
2.21 The letter from Marian to Ted, opened by Leo.



2.22 Detail from 2.21: the first time the house is named in the film.



2.23 Leo's mother's letter, telling him that 'We can't expect to be happy all the time, can we?' The positioning of the curse in the diary and the address on the envelope next to the letter, imply its culpability for the curse Leo thinks he causes and the 'branding' he suffers.



2.24 Detail from 2.23: the envelope, with the address. This is the only other time the name of the house appears.

The film thus equivocates between landscape as a trope ('Brandham') and landscape at face value (location): both forms should be seen in relation to the history the landscape embodies. A straightforward example would be the cricket pitch. The contest is between the aristocracy and village workers, on a lawn set aside for recreational games – presumably the villagers' recreation. So much of the countryside seen in the film is visibly enclosed for the exclusive pleasure of the ruling class, that the pitch, as a potentially contestable, sequestered plot of land, reminds us of the estate's landscapes before they were enclosed: when they too were the object of contestation. Given the fact that the landscapes we see were enclosed in 1290 and were therefore some of the earliest grounds in Britain to be enclosed, this becomes particularly resonant.<sup>27</sup> The match is a ritualised re-enactment of the conflict between the aristocracy and the

<sup>27</sup> The limited amount of information published on the estate means that I have had to rely on some local amateur historiography from the internet. The historical information about the enclosure of the estate is from a trespasser's description of Melton Constable: <http://www.briston.plus.com/melton/meltonpark/hall.htm> [Accessed 09/02/2006].

working classes over village commons. That Leo and Ted become the key opponents in the match is also indicative. Leo, caught between classes, is later damaged: his success in the match anticipates his fall, as he catches the ball and crashes to the ground (Fig. 2.25). On a class scale Ted and Leo are both situated somewhere between the rural poor shown watching the match and the aristocracy. As Raymond Williams notes, the rural history of the intermediate classes has been neglected, despite its significance.<sup>28</sup> *The Go-Between* partly redresses this neglect.



2.25 Leo catches the ball: a fall before pride



2.26 The shot resembling a genre painting.

However, the cricket match sequence closes with a shot that transforms the pitch from an allegorical figure into an observed, literal space (Fig. 2.26). It is dusk. The deck chairs are being carried into the pavilion. Cows have been brought onto the pitch to trim the grass. The shot, which has no provenance in the novel, is a briefly observed genre picture.

Compare this with the aforementioned landscape scene in the novel: when Ted is compared with a sheaf of corn, it is implied that his imminent reaping will make him a victim of the harvest and, by extension, a victim of the landowner. The integrity of the social criticism in this implication, though, is detracted from by the fact that the older Leo's narrative is questionable precisely because it is saturated with symbolism. In Hartley's novel, the descriptive passages set in landscapes are invariably subsumed by Leo's metaphors. Losey, on the other hand, leavens the figurative sequences of the film with brief, understated and unequivocal rural interludes.

<sup>28</sup> Williams, *The Country and the City*, pp.39-40.





2.27 A shot of the deer park...



2.28...is followed by a reverse shot of Marian and Leo at the window. Note the painting on the wall.

The film is replete with landscape phenomena, deployed at times as part of the film's symbolism, but also documented at other points in a more straightforward fashion. A herd of deer race along the house's park (Fig. 2.27). There is a cut to a reverse shot of Marian, who is gazing out of a window, with Leo at her side, watching the deer (Fig. 2.28). An exchange then follows:

Leo: Why don't you marry Ted?  
 Marian: I can't. I can't – can't you see why?  
 Leo: Why are you marrying Hugh?  
 Marian: Because I must. I must. I've got to. (*Marian weeps*)

Just before the dialogue commences, Marian is smiling as she looks at the deer. After Leo's question, her face becomes contorted. However, neither of them turns away from the window until Marian starts to cry. Marian's 'can't you see why?', which is left hanging as a rhetorical question, can be seen as a reference to the deer park they both gaze at through the window. Marian cannot marry Ted, because she would lose her privileged place in the landscape. Like the deer, whose moment of exhilaration is fleeting, their freedom illusory, Marian is enclosed, her body part of the aesthetic geography of the demesne. When she is seen outside, she is frequently motionless, supine – seemingly part of the composition of the grounds. The repetitious, rhythmical dialogue here conveys a sense of incarceration: the words, which barely progress semantically, seem ineluctable, like the landscape Leo wanders across earlier in the film. The end-rhyme, 'Hugh/got to' suggests her association between Trimingham and constraint, a constraint made more palpable by the proximity of the rhymed words. She must choose between this closed existence and one spent away from the comfortable confines of the estate, in a space she might well imagine as bearing some relation to that depicted in the painting hanging on the wall behind them, between Leo's head and her



own: a rugged, unadorned and unyielding (sublime) landscape, seen from a romantic perspective. The combination of cutting and *mise-en-scène* here positions Marian trapped between an estate and an idea of landscape.

Not all of the film's shots of the estate's game are sutured into this landscape-orientated social commentary, though their repetitiousness suggests imprisonment in a similar way to the patterned dialogue. These are apparently unmotivated, direct observations of the estate. The deer park adds a sense of longevity and continuity to the on-screen estate. The park was only the second in the country to introduce red deer.<sup>29</sup> Although it was reshaped by Capability Brown in the eighteenth century, since its enclosure in 1290 the deer park has been a constant at Melton Constable.<sup>30</sup>

When train whistles are heard over the deer park shots, they are narrativised, in that they have a purely historiographical provenance (there was no railway near Melton Constable Hall by 1971). The train sounds heard across the 1900 landscape are absent in the 1950s landscape. In 1900, we presume that Leo travels to and from the hall by train, with the horse-drawn carriage conveying him between the hall and an unseen local station. In the 1950s, Leo arrives at Thorpe Station, Norwich and gets into his hearse-like car, in which he travels to the village and tours through it. The local railway, we presume, has gone, the car a necessary replacement, since the train whistles are no longer audible: thus Losey obliquely documents local history, while sustaining the film's symbolism (Leo's black car as a metaphorical hearse, which reflects his funereal air). By contrast, in the book the car has an exclusively symbolic function: Leo describes his nervous breakdown as 'like a train going through a series of tunnels'.<sup>31</sup> In the novel, the car, 'recklessly hired', embodies the older Leo's post-breakdown mindset.<sup>32</sup> The village known as Melton Constable was built in 1880, specifically as a site for the junction station of four railway lines, which connected Norfolk to the Midlands.<sup>33</sup> The town's *raison d'être* was the railway, its main trade in the repair shops,

<sup>29</sup> *Kelly's Directory for Norfolk* (1904), pp.253-4, quoted at <http://216.109.124.98/search/cache?p=melton+constable+hall&ei=UTF-8&u=apling.freesevers.com/Villages/MeltonConstable04.htm&w=melton+> [Accessed 02/02/2006].

<sup>30</sup> On Capability Brown and the deer park at Melton Constable, see Roger Turner, *Capability Brown and the Eighteenth-Century English Landscape* (Chichester: Phillimore, 1999), p.184.

<sup>31</sup> Hartley, op. cit., p.245.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p.250.

<sup>33</sup> Out of necessity I rely on a notorious website here, but the information is, to my knowledge, accurate: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Melton\\_Constable](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Melton_Constable) [Accessed 05/02/2006].

its recreational centre the Railway Institute.<sup>34</sup> The lines were closed between 1959 and 1964; the station was demolished in 1971. The disappearance of the railway is subtly documented in the film, though this is anachronistic. In part, Losey uses the 1950s sequences to comment on the area as it was by the 1970s. The wider social commentary linked to the film's landscapes, as we will see, similarly reveals a contemporary (1970s) cultural perspective.



2.29-2.30 The road and fence around the house in the 1950s: the estate has been reduced and circumscribed.

As with the loss of the train whistles, the 1950s sequences mostly communicate change negatively; we generally spot what has been removed or altered, not things which have been added. At the very end of the film, when Leo's car drives away from the hall in the 1950s, it travels along a road which curves near the wall surrounding the house's terrace garden (Figs. 2.29-2.30). The road is not visible in the 1900 scenes. A fence separates the road from the lawn which stretches from the terrace garden to the wilderness: the road is clearly a public road. If the road demarcates the edge of the estate, then a large part of the estate's landscape has been sold off or commandeered by the local council. The loss is both plausible, given the increasing 'disposability' of the country house after the Second World War, and figural.<sup>35</sup> The grounds now look far less overbearing, now they have been diminished. Leo has, we assume, decided not to deliver the message: the car driving away from the hall, along the road, emphasises the reduction and circumscription of the estate, compounding its diminution. The earthbound shot of the estate from the car window (Fig. 2.29) contrasts diametrically with the awe-inspiring 1900 shots in which Leo, seen from above, is a mere speck on the landscape (Fig. 2.31).

<sup>34</sup> *Kelly's Directory for Norfolk* (1904), pp.253-4 [Accessed 02/02/2006].

<sup>35</sup> As Peter Mandler points out, most of those houses which were not sold off or demolished in the 1950s were maintained only by auctioning off significant parts of the estate's land and art collections. See Peter Mandler, *The Fall and Rise of the Stately Home* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997), pp.356-368.

Leo's 1950s car window now frames and contains the estate, whereas in the 1900 shot it is Leo who seems to have been diminished by the estate.



2.31 The estate in 1900: Leo is a barely visible speck.

The most indicative loss in the 1950s sequences, though, is of the unmotivated documentary interludes. The way landscape is perceived in the 1950s sequences is more concise; the camera's explorative gaze of 1900 is absent. Whereas the 1950s Leo retreads old ground, the camera's historical documentary response to the location in the 1900 sequences perhaps mirrors the young Leo's gaze, registering unfamiliar local phenomena. These shots explicitly point to the fact that this is a Norfolk film.

## Location

By 1971, when the film was released, there was nothing strictly unusual about the fact that it was shot entirely on location. Location shooting had become more popular and was often cheaper than studio-bound production. Footage of country houses' landscape gardens had been used before, but rarely in extensive combination with interiors from the same estate. Perhaps only Losey's own *The Gypsy and the Gentleman* (1958) had previously juxtaposed country house gardens with location interiors from the same site, to a considerable extent.<sup>36</sup> However, *The Gypsy and the Gentleman* also featured elaborate studio sets, which, if they did not visibly detract from the film's authenticity, at least interrupted the dialogue between the film's narrative and its locations as icons. Presumably because of lighting difficulties, *The Gypsy and the Gentleman* also included no shots which explicitly linked the interior location with the landscape. Tony Richardson's *Tom Jones* (1963) was shot entirely on location, but it is not strictly a

<sup>36</sup> Caute, op. cit, p.128; Michael Ciment, *Conversations With Losey* (London and New York: Methuen, 1985), p.154; *The Gypsy and the Gentleman* (Josephy Losey, UK, 1958).

country house film: its house plays only a minor role.<sup>37</sup> Like *The Gypsy and the Gentleman*, *Tom Jones* features no window shots to connect its interior location with the estate outside. *The Go-Between* may not have been the first country house film shot on location, but Losey's holistic approach to a location in this film was highly innovative.

*The Go-Between's* country house interiors were all shot at the film's main location, Melton Constable Hall.<sup>38</sup> Moreover, the scenes set in the countryside (that is, all the scenes apart from those in Norwich) were all shot within a nine mile radius of the house (see Map 2). There is only one scene that takes place at the fictive estate which does not correspond to any part of Melton Constable Hall: the scene in which Mrs Maudsley interrogates Leo in the flower garden. It was shot at Blickling Hall, about nine miles to the east of Melton Constable.<sup>39</sup> A different location was used because the latter's flower garden was no longer extant. The village scenes were shot at locations (Thornage and Heydon) only a few miles from Melton Constable.<sup>40</sup>

The film's concatenation of locations is both plausible and substantive. As Map 2 shows, the locations form a tight grouping: in 1971, this was unusually tight for a country house narrative film. The novel's token allusions to Norfolk topography are still credible in the film: Melton Constable Hall is much closer to Trimingham than Bradenham is, and the probable setting for Beeston Castle is now Beeston Regis. The integrity of Melton Constable Hall, both the house and its landscape garden, was more or less preserved, so that the house we see on screen approximates to the real-life hall. For Losey, who claimed his preoccupation with location filming was informed by the documentary tradition, Melton Constable Hall was almost a found object, in a found county.<sup>41</sup> 'Norfolk helped me a lot because Norfolk hasn't changed. The house was there, there was very little to adapt.'<sup>42</sup> Although Norfolk *has* changed (the film itself makes this explicit with the loss of the train whistles and other features), Losey's words

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<sup>37</sup> *Tom Jones* (Tony Richardson, UK, 1963).

<sup>38</sup> Cauter, op. cit., p.323.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p.256. See also the BFI Library Special Collection on Joseph Losey, which contains his copy of Blickling Hall's tourist guide.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p.256 and About-Norfolk's internet guide to Heydon:

<http://www.about-norfolk.com/about/towns/heydon.htm> [Accessed 02/02/2006].

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p.323.

<sup>42</sup> Ciment, op. cit., p.312.



point to the geographical discourse underpinning both the film's symbolism and its social commentary.

Losey and *The Go-Between's* art director, Carmen Dillon, scouted locations throughout Norfolk, soliciting advice from the major landowners of the county.<sup>43</sup> They visited West Bradenham Hall first, but decided against using it: in his memoir of Norfolk, Losey recalls that 'the house and gardens had obviously been redone and it was not the place my imagination searched for.'<sup>44</sup> Instead they chose Melton Constable Hall, about 17 miles north of Bradenham. In this way they did not manage to capitalise on, and develop, the novel's autobiographical bent, but the film became one of the strongest examples of a tight confluence of narrative and location.

The house needed renovation: Dillon 'reproduced the crumbling statuary in plaster' and the crew sprayed the ailing lawns with green paint.<sup>45</sup> Nonetheless, the house could be presented on screen as a found object, apart from some of the interiors which needed redecorating.<sup>46</sup> The filmmakers chose neither to alter its external architecture, nor to present its geography in a different way on screen. The only exception is a corn field which the crew planted, so that it could be filmed being harvested by a period reaper.<sup>47</sup> Apart from the fact that little needed altering to look authentic, Losey, Dillon and Gerry Fisher, the cinematographer, opted for a landscape which could be documented, rather than an illusory landscape created either in a studio, like some of the landscape shots in *Kind Hearts and Coronets*, or from shots of various locations edited together to give the impression of a whole, as in *The Ruling Class* (1972). In contrast with Bradenham, the garden at Melton Constable Hall had not been redone: its layout was largely as Capability Brown had designed and landscaped it, between 1764 and 1769, though it had been neglected since the house had become uninhabited in 1956.<sup>48</sup> This created the possibility of a dialogue between the film's narrative and the garden as a remnant of the picturesque cult, a possibility realised by the film; as we will see, *The Go-Between*

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<sup>43</sup> Cate, op. cit., p.255, 363.

<sup>44</sup> Joseph Losey, 'Memoir' (Unpublished: written 1976), quoted in Cate, op. cit., p.255.

<sup>45</sup> de Rham, *Joseph Losey*, p.266.

<sup>46</sup> Taylor, 'The Go-Between', p.202.

<sup>47</sup> *The Go-Between: Press Book* (in BFI library).

<sup>48</sup> See Dorothy Stroud, *Capability Brown* (London: Faber & Faber, 1975), p.112; Nikolaus Pevsner and Bill Wilson, *The Buildings of England, Norfolk I: Norwich and North-East* (London: Penguin, 1997), p.612.

utilises the contrast between composed or aestheticised dilapidation and real dereliction in the garden.

Melton Constable Hall as they found it was also conveniently near the Old Dairy Farm, which was suitable for Black Farm in the film, not least because it was part of the estate and part also of the aesthetic configuration of the grounds: the landscape that we see Leo wander through, from the hall to Black Farm, thus corresponds to the (picturesque) part of the estate between Melton Constable Hall and the Old Dairy Farm. Heydon, situated nearby, was also something of a found location: the village is privately owned, and has been preserved as if part of an estate. For Marian's dower house, seen in many of the 1950s sequences, as well as in the 1900 sequence during which Leo goes to church and is given his first message to carry by Trimmingham, Losey and his collaborators used the village's actual Dower House.<sup>49</sup>

The film's near-exact conflation of fictive estate with an actual location is noteworthy, not only for the precedent it set for *Brideshead Revisited* and *The Draughtsman's Contract*, but also for the integral role it plays in the film's narrative discourse. The film mobilises the authenticity of the landscape; it emphasises the physical and discursive continuity of the estate. This is evident in the scene when Leo wanders for the first time through the picturesque wilderness beyond the house's lawn, towards Black Farm. The scene, constructed as a montage, offers an elliptical report of Leo's walk through bosage (Fig. 2.32), yet when he is at some distance from Brandham Hall, the camera pans to the left, suddenly revealing the house (Figs. 2.33-2.34). We are told at once that Leo has wandered far from the house, but that the house and what it represents have a reach which extends at least this far. It is implied that the house is spying on Leo.



2.32 As Leo starts to run forwards, towards frame left...



2.33...the camera pans to follow him...



2.34...and suddenly reveals the house.

<sup>49</sup> On the village's Dower House, see Pevsner and Wilson, op. cit., p.550.

Most significantly of all, throughout the film there are shots which deliberately connect the interiors of the house with its landscape gardens. Much has been written about the ubiquitousness of windows and, to a lesser extent, doors, in *The Go-Between*.<sup>50</sup> The early sequences of the film, in which Leo, Marcus and the camera gaze at the house's landscape from various windows, have attracted particular attention. The role of the windows in the film's thematisation of subjectivity and voyeurism, as well as their metaphoric values as 'thresholds' and/or 'barriers' has been discussed in great detail.<sup>51</sup> However, a more obvious function of the windows has been overlooked: when the camera looks through a window, with the window frame still in shot, the inside of the house is directly linked to its gardens (Figs. 2.4-2.7). The unity of the location is emphasised.

### Windows, Art, Power

Like many of the window shots in one of the key 1960s British historical landscape films, *Far From the Madding Crowd* (1967), these shots use the conjunction of landscape and interior to emphasise not only that the interior is a location, but that the interior location is the same as the exterior one.<sup>52</sup> The narrative spaces of each film thus seem substantially integrated, the visual rhetoric of the indoors world in dialogue with the outdoors world, whether that dialogue is in terms of an opposition or a congruence. In *Far From the Madding Crowd* the former applies, in *The Go-Between* the latter. The windows of Bathsheba's farm house in *Far From the Madding Crowd* provide her with a view out from her female-oriented inner world to the (mainly male-staffed) farm. In this respect they also demarcate the boundary between the two worlds. When she sits with her male labourers to feast, her seat is resolutely inside the house, the table extending from the open window she sits at. Unlike Melton Constable Hall in *The Go-Between*, the house and its grounds are not works of 'art', intended for aesthetic consumption. They are chiefly functional, but interior and exterior serve different

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<sup>50</sup> For statistical information about shots of windows and doors in *The Go-Between*, see Charles Shiro Tashiro, "Reading" Design in *The Go-Between*, *Cinema Journal*, vol.33, no.1, Fall 1993, p.33.

<sup>51</sup> On the film's windows and its representation of subjectivity, see Thomas Elsaesser, 'The Go-Between', *Monogram*, no.3, 1972, p.18. On windows as 'thresholds' in the film, see Palmer and Riley, 'Time and the Structure of Memory in *The Go-Between*', pp.220-221 and Palmer and Riley, *The Films of Joseph Losey*, p.96. On the film's windows as 'barriers', see Tashiro, op. cit., p.19.

<sup>52</sup> *Far From the Madding Crowd* (Schlesinger, UK, 1967). The film also featured Alan Bates and Julie Christie.

functions: this is intrinsic to the film's narrative scheme, since the first man to properly gain entry to the house is Sergeant Troy, who contrarily treats landscape as a stage for his theatrical swordplay and wooing. In this way, he circumvents the opposition of interior and exterior.

As a country estate film, *The Go-Between* is concerned with the house and landscape gardens as art forms: art forms which can be enjoyed as aesthetic objects, by those who own them. The window shots link the iconography of the interior with that of the landscape. One shot early in the film is of Leo and Marcus at a window, through which we see figures formally arranged in a croquet game and, near the sill, a rose in a pot, placed in parallel to a column (Fig. 2.35). The camera then pans left, lingering on the formally arranged silverware (Fig. 2.36). The arrangement of the silverware reflects the composed world outside.



2.35 A composed world: the window looking onto the croquet game. The players in the game are arranged in a diagonal line. The window frame, pillar and balustrade form a set of verticals.



2.36 The camera pans left to follow the boys, revealing silverware arranged in formal patterns.

The most sustained connection between the interior and the gardens is the scene near the beginning of the film, in which Leo, having eavesdropped outside the drawing room, enters to greet the family and then escorts Mrs Maudsley to the dining room, while discussing his curses. From the drawing room to the dining room, there is a series of windows, which segment and frame the terrace garden (Figs. 2.37-2.39). Like the terrace garden, which was added around 1850, much of the paraphernalia in the two rooms is typical of mid- to late Victorian décor, including the aspidistras.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>53</sup> On the addition of the terrace garden, see Pevsner and Wilson, op. cit., p.615.





2.37-2.39 The line of windows, framing a series of views of the garden.

The synecdoches of the garden that the windows provide are also, in a sense, part of the interior iconography. Each window frames the garden aesthetically, providing painterly views. The windows are like oil paintings on the walls. The landscape, which is already owned by the Maudsleys, is thus the subject of a secondary appropriation, if we read oil painting as a form of appropriation.<sup>54</sup> In other scenes, when from a window we see figures outside on the croquet lawn or around the hammock, the figures generally add to the impression that the framed image is a painting, by standing or sitting in composed arrangements. The terrace garden completes the formal, static composition: unlike the Brownian landscapes around the terrace garden and the picturesque woods between the house and the farm, the terrace garden is typical of the mid-Victorian revival of pre-picturesque regularity and openness. Whereas the picturesque landscape characteristically elicits movement, in Melton Constable Hall's terrace garden it is possible to observe most of the space from a static perspective (Fig. 2.40).



2.40 The terrace garden. Brown's landscape, with his characteristic clumps of trees, lies beyond the terrace garden, at the top-middle of the frame.

Department for the family circle is evidently as essential in the terrace garden as it is inside the house. After Marcus and Leo fight around the Ionic columns of the terrace,

<sup>54</sup> See John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1972).

they run past Marian's hammock: the camera tracks right and pans left, following the boys (Figs. 2.41-2.45). Despite the swift, irregular movements of the boys, the camera's movement is elegant. It follows the motions of the boys, without losing its composure. Its steady movement and precise framing suggests a refusal on the part of the figures around the hammock to be moved from their deportment by the boys.



2.41-2.45 The track and pan around the hammock. The elegance of the camera movement reflects the deportment of the Marian and the two guests.

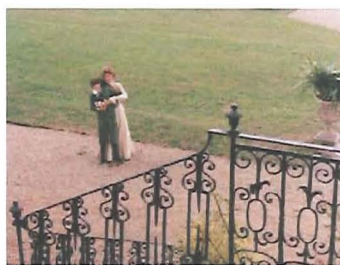
In the terrace garden, aesthetic composition is centred on the female body, rather than the boys. Near the end of the film, when Leo and Marian tussle in front of the house, the camera movements become unexpectedly unsteady and jerky (Fig. 2.46). When Marian loses her deportment, so does the camera. Suddenly their names are called out by Mrs Maudsley, just as the film cuts to her point of view – before we see her. We only know the point of view is hers because we hear her voice (Fig. 2.47). This shot marks a reversion to stasis: Leo and Marian are seen (now standing still) from the steps at the house's entrance, uneasily off-centre, but framed by the diagonals of the descending banister and the lawn edge. The shot's skewness suggests a forced, uncomfortable return to composure. After a cut to the reverse shot of Mrs Maudsley, they are upbraided by her, for their temporary neglect of deportment (Fig. 2.48). The scene – particularly with Mrs Maudsley's unexpected and unseen appearance from the house – suggests that the house's windows and the open layout of the terrace garden have been commandeered by Mrs Maudsley's surveillance, if not designed specifically for it. The window shots of the landscape thus suggest that the connection between interior and



garden is not only aesthetic or socio-economic, but also one of supervised moral etiquette.



2.46 During the tussle between Marian and Leo, the camera movements are jerky.



2.47 At the sound of Mrs Maudsley's voice, there is a cut to her point of view,...



2.48...but we only see her in the reverse shot.

Figures in the terrace garden can easily be observed from the house's many windows. Just as the landscape is scrutinised and appropriated via the windows, so are the figures in it. Through their deportment, the figures arrange themselves for visual consumption. This applies particularly to Marian, who is marriageable and therefore a marketable commodity. She is expected to marry Trimingham. The social position of the Maudsleys and Trimingham is not as clearly defined in the film as it is in the book. We do not know exactly why Hugh is the desirable match – whether for money (that is, land) or for a title.<sup>55</sup> The lack of explicitness shifts the emphasis away from the parents' motivations to the mother's coerciveness in arranging the marriage. Marian has patently accepted her role as a commodity. Even her affair with Ted seems less than passionate in her euphemism for the letter exchange: 'a business matter between Mr Burgess and myself.' Leo first sees her with Ted at a horse auction in Cathedral Square, as if the affair is a comparable transaction.

Presumably under her mother's watchful eyes, Marian dutifully arranges her body in a supine position in the landscape, as if passively awaiting appropriation by Hugh. No one else is seen using the hammock; it is as if it has been placed there to arrange her body as aesthetic property, amidst the aesthetic iconography of the terrace garden, conveniently close to the windows. In this way the film deconstructs the conception of the prospect as an aesthetic apparatus. The garden is designed for aesthetic consumption, facilitated by its openness, especially the section around the fountain, which is sunken. At the same time though, the garden, like a well-tended shop window, is the background for Marian

<sup>55</sup> At the cricket match Hugh introduces the rural workers' team, so he is perhaps the owner of the estate and the Maudsleys *nouveaux riches* tenants, as they are in the novel. However, this is never made explicit in the film.

as a marketable commodity. The prospect both aestheticises Marian and her setting, and offers a field of easy surveillance for the watchful purveyors. Moreover, the deconstruction is placed, via the location, in a specific garden history context: the terrace garden is typical of the mid-Victorian formal layout; the film's criticism of Victorian propriety is in relation to the garden as a space designed specifically for the observation and maintenance of propriety. At the same time, the house, with its many windows, comprises the means and the icon of surveillance. The house concretely evidences the consumption of land as aestheticised property and acts as a metonym for the landowners' surveillance of property.

In 'Of Windows and Country Walks: Frames of Space and Movement in 1990s Austen Adaptations', Julianne Pidduck analyses the 'gendered interior and exterior space at work in contemporary Austen adaptations.'<sup>56</sup> She isolates a recurring type of scene, in which a woman at a window glances out at the landscape. In this moment, there is a dichotomy between the woman's 'feminine stillness, constraint and longing' with a 'certain potentiality' and the male characters' ability to 'come and go, moving freely through the countryside.'<sup>57</sup> The opposition, for Pidduck, is historically accurate, since she contrasts it with the films' occasional 'retrospective yearning for the middle-class entitlements of citizenship denied Austen's female protagonists.'<sup>58</sup> In light of their significant window-onto-landscape shots, *The Go-Between* is as much an antecedent of these adaptations as the melodramas Pidduck points to.<sup>59</sup> Marian's seeming immobility contrasts with Leo's apparent freedom of movement. However, as Karen Lang points out, there is a long history, evidenced in male (patriarchal) writing associated with the emergence of the British picturesque garden, of the passive woman seen as corresponding to the landscape:

An exploration of the body in the garden implies several things. First, it signifies the human presence of makers and spectators in the garden. This body in the garden was often presumed to be male... Second, the body in the garden refers to

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<sup>56</sup> Julianne Pidduck, 'Of Windows and Country Walks in 1990s Austen Adaptations', *Screen*, vol.39, no.4, Winter 1998, p.381.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p.383.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., p.382n3.

nature itself. By the eighteenth century nature had long been gendered female. In this sense, the body in the garden is a female body.<sup>60</sup>

It is in terms of this history that *The Go-Between* depicts Marian's stillness in contradistinction to Leo's mobility. The shots of a supine Marian equate her with the grounds on which she lies. Marian's agency – or lack of it – is chiefly to be seen in the landscape shots. The view from the window is somewhat more sinister than it is in the later Austen adaptations. Either it is the means by which Marian is observed in her stillness, or, when she cries with Leo, the means by which she looks out on her imprisonment in the shape of the grounds.

### **Prosopopoeia and Surveillance**

The house comes to embody the ideology of supervised moral etiquette, which characterises its owners. Losey employs prosopopoeia; the house seems to spy on Leo and Marian. It is gradually revealed throughout the film that the house's gaze reaches much further than the walls of the terrace garden. Immediately beyond the terrace garden, the grounds are more or less as Capability Brown designed them and are typically Brownian. With clumps of trees adding variety amidst the irregular lawns, they are picturesque more in terms of a constructed naturalness, than a studied pictorialism.<sup>61</sup> Movement is invited by the partial concealments created by the clumps of trees in the landscape. However, unlike the landscapes espoused by the anti-Brownian Richard Payne Knight, the clumps are separated by large open areas. Beyond this part of the landscape, there is a lake and a wilderness which stretches almost to Black Farm. As well as the aforementioned pan to the left during Leo's first foray into the wilderness, there are other significant moments in which the house makes a sudden and unexpected appearance in the picturesque grounds. These add to the impression of observation created by the voyeuristic camera. In the picnic, the camera follows Leo's movement as he has his glass refilled by the butler, and then wanders over to Hugh and Marian, who are sitting apart from the main group. The picnickers are sitting shaded by trees, in what at first seems to be a glade in the woods. Beyond the shaded area, cows are grazing. The

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<sup>60</sup> Karen Lang, 'The body in the garden', in Jan Birksted (ed.), *Landscapes of Memory and Experience* (London: Spon Press, 2000), p.107.

<sup>61</sup> See John Dixon Hunt, *The Picturesque Garden in Europe* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2004), pp.37-40.



pan to the right reveals the lake in the far background. The scene is composed, say, like a Lambert painting, with the contrast of light and shade stressing distance in lieu of coulisses (Figs. 2.49-2.50).<sup>62</sup>



2.49-2.50 When Leo walks over to the butler, space is gradated by chiaroscuro, up to an arboreal screen. Beyond this is Brown's partially concealed lake.



2.51-2.52 As Leo approaches Marian and Hugh, there is a dramatic change to a close vista, leading back to the house, which seems to be watching the couple.

The camera moves across the scene to introduce an unexpected change in tone (Figs. 2.51-2.52). As the camera pans left, following Leo, we see Hugh and Marian, with the landscape stretching behind them in a vast perspective, bordered on both sides by coulisses and terminated by the house: what Jay Appleton terms a 'close vista'.<sup>63</sup> The shot surprises us with the sudden appearance of the vista. It suggests that the ultimate trajectory or object of Hugh and Marian's union will be the house (at a general, typological level, the house stands for landed wealth). It also implies the omnipresence of the house: these grounds, so far from the house, and so different in composition from the gardens surrounding the house, are still part of the estate. The landownership and

<sup>62</sup> See John Barrell, *The Dark Side of the Landscape: The Rural Poor in English Painting 1730-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), pp.43-45.

<sup>63</sup> Jay Appleton, *The Experience of Landscape* (London and New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1975), p.89.

moral surveillance stretches this far, from the house to the glade; the couple is being observed by the house.

Later, in the shade with the game larder and the dilapidated tree, Leo refuses to carry a letter for Marian. She accuses him of seeking payment. As he snatches the letter, upset, the camera swiftly zooms out to reveal the house, just behind a wall (Fig. 2.54-2.55). The game larder is something of a retreat, if not a refuge for Leo from the busy adult social world in which he has found himself lost and bewildered. Apart from his interest in the thermometer, which hangs there, the shade is a picturesque *hortus conclusus*. It is enclosed by trees and a wall partly covered by verdure (Fig. 2.53). It is much more like the picturesque wilderness he is attracted to between the house and the farm, than the exposed terrace garden. However, the zoom out indicates that, even here, Leo can be observed from the house and is therefore vulnerable.



2.53 The shade: Marian invades Leo's refuge.



2.54 They argue and Leo snatches the letter.



2.55 As he dashes across the garden, a sudden zoom out reveals the house.

Leo constantly seeks refuge from the openness of the terrace garden. Hugh senses this impulse when he jokingly accuses Leo of 'trying to sneak past in dead ground,' – a pun on military tactics. Leo tells Hugh he is going 'nowhere', in reply to which Hugh offers him the opportunity 'to go somewhere', that is, to take a message. This is a significant exchange, because it implies that the role of go-between is antithetical to Leo's nature. Leo prefers to wander aimlessly, in the Brownian wilderness, which is suited to this purpose. Hugh, Ted and Marian appropriate this mobility by inculcating in Leo a version of the landscape as a network of routes, across which messages are conveyed. His meandering seems doomed from the beginning, when the house appears in the pan to the left (Figs. 2.32-2.34).



Each of the shots portraying the house as a voyeur indicates that the house and what it represents are implicated in the events which occur around it. The house seems ineluctable. Marian appears to be aware of this. Apart from her tussle with Leo, near the end of the film, she only allows herself to lose her composed deportment away from the landscaped parts of the garden, in the 'old garden' near the outhouses where she has her trysts with Ted. When Leo looks for her near the game larder, which she has to pass through coming from the outhouses to the terrace garden, she is seen emerging from the bushes, tousled (Fig. 2.56). The untidiness of the overgrown old garden provides the appropriate context for her dishevelment.



2.56 Marian loses her deportment in the old garden.

Marian conceives of Leo's potential physical and social mobility in terms of her own passivity in the terrace garden. After the montage of nightshade-Leo-Marian (Figs. 2.32-2.34), in which Leo's first impression of Marian is captured, we see Marian's answering conception of Leo. Marian glances at Leo (Fig. 2.57), and then shuts her eyes (Fig. 2.58). There is a cut to the guest, who rocks the hammock as if to send Marian to sleep (Fig. 2.59). The next shot shows Leo walking up a staircase. He hears giggling, follows the noise down the steps (Fig. 2.60) and finds two servants laughing in the kitchen (Fig. 2.61), who hand him a bowl of cake mixture to eat (Fig. 2.62). The scene is like a dream; the camera follows Leo, but moves at a different rhythm and pace from him, suggesting he is being followed and spied on. Oddly, no one speaks in the kitchen. The scene is a contrived genre piece. There is an abrupt cut from Leo eating the mixture to Marian, still in the hammock (Fig. 2.63): she closes her eyes again and slowly smiles (Fig. 2.64). It is as if the kitchen scene has been dreamed by her. In retrospect, her dream appears to be the moment she realises that Leo, being from a poorer, middle class



background, can mix more easily with the working classes. Her culpability and premeditation for Leo's ultimately harmful role as a go-between is implied by the scene.



2.57 Marian glances at Leo...



2.58...and closes her eyes...



2.59...as the male guest rocks her, as if to send her to sleep.



2.60 Cut to Leo, who hears laughter and follows the sound...



2.61...down to the kitchen...



2.62...where, without speaking, the cook hands him a bowl of cake mixture.



2.63 As Leo eats...



2.64...there is a cut to Marian...



2.65...who closes her eyes again and smiles.

Her conception of Leo, visualised as a social and physical mobility (no other guest or family member is seen using the servants' staircase) which directly contrasts with her own imposed passivity and rigidity, is borne out by ensuing events. The film traces a line of continuity across the estate, which extends from the interiors of the house, through the open windows, across the terrace gardens, over the wall of the enclosed shade, towards the glade by the lake and through the wilderness which leads to Ted's farm. Leo's wandering reveals this line, but the message-carrying forces him to retread it. The extent of aristocratic landownership and its ideology is more palpable in *The Go-Between* than in any film before it. No character other than Leo moves through the extent of the demesne; only he feels able to visit Ted's farm. Significantly, Ted apparently has to come to Marian, in the outhouses. It is over and through the landscape's line of continuity that Leo moves, seemingly absorbing its characteristics

while moving. However, his own conception of this mobility is somewhat different from Marian's.

## Landscape and Epistemic Complication

This becomes evident particularly in relation to the 'subliminal' metadiegesis in one of the key landscape sequences in *The Go-Between*, one of the most significant sequences in terms of epistemic complication. It begins, indicatively, directly after Leo has taken his first message, from Hugh to Marian, about her prayer book. It ends after Leo has stumbled upon Ted's farm for the first time, when he is injured by the hidden axe. The sequence serves as a microcosm of the film's causal scheme between landscapes and figures and it maps the transformation of Leo's body. In this respect, as we will see, the sequence is ominously proleptic. In its free indirect style, the sequence equivocates between objective historical materialism and Leo's subliminated mythmaking.

### The Haystack Sequence: A Shot-by-Shot Description



2.66  
Shot



2.67



2.68

1. Leo seen from above, climbing stairs (Fig. 2.66). Camera pans right; we follow Leo and see him pause outside Marcus's quarantined room (Fig. 2.67). Camera pans left to watch Leo run across landing (Fig. 2.68). Music begins.



2.69



2.70



2.71

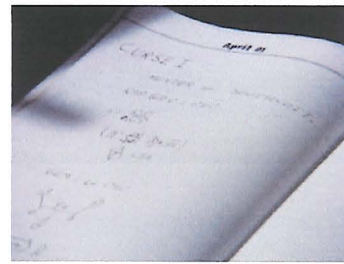
2. Camera (at eye-level of standing child) at doorway of Leo's room: it pans left as the door swings open and pauses on the bedroom (Figs. 2.8-2.9) Miniature horse ornament visible on the window sill. Moments later, Leo enters frame (Fig. 2.10). A horse can be heard neighing outside. Leo walks to window (Fig. 2.69), placing casket on chest of drawers and removing key: Marian's laughter can be heard outside. He places trunk on table and unlocks it with key. Taking out several objects (Fig. 2.70), he places necklace with an



animal bone pendant around his neck, then removes book, which he unlocks with another key from his jacket. Camera tracks forward and tilts downwards as Leo sits and opens book (Fig. 2.71).



2.72



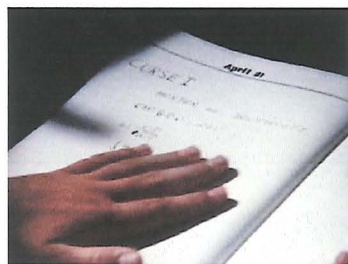
2.73

3. Point-of-view shot – extreme close-up of the frontispiece: zodiac image in the centre of the page (Fig. 2.72). Leo turns a page to reveal some diary dates and ‘Curse I Hunter and Southcott’, written above incomprehensible diagrams and equations (Fig. 2.73).

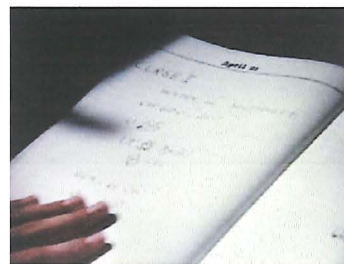


2.74

4. Reverse shot, low angle medium close-up of Leo: he rhythmically moves pendant while blowing it (Fig. 2.74).



2.75



2.76

5. Diary pages as in shot 3: he strokes them with his palms (Figs. 2.75-2.76). Music reaches pitch of intensity.



2.77

6. High angle medium close-up of Leo looking at thermometer. Only back of thermometer visible. Leo silently mouths the temperature (‘eighty-four’) with a look of severe consternation (Fig. 2.77).



2.78

7. Marian lying on wild grass with parasol (Fig. 2.78). No sense of her precise geographical position in the estate.



2.79



2.80



2.81

8. Leo on rugged grass, walking away from camera (Fig. 2.79). Fence runs diagonally across top half of screen. Camera zooms out to extreme long-shot (Figs. 2.80-2.81). Leo now miniscule and barely visible. Surrounded by clumps of trees, formal lawn in foreground, outlying informal landscape and lake in background.



2.82

9. Deer park. Deer in long shot, straight-on angle. Shot composition hinged: bottom half wild grass as dado, upper half filled with large trees (Fig. 2.82).



2.83



2.84



2.85

10. Wooded picturesque glade. Leo runs into middle of frame then nonchalantly walks to left. Pan follows him – reveals edge of glade and, behind it, the house in distance (2.83-2.85).





2.89



2.90



2.91

11. Different wooded picturesque area in sunshine, with broken branches foregrounded, Leo mid-frame and middle distance, walking to front bottom left of frame (Fig. 2.89). Small pan to left (Fig. 2.90), then he walks out of frame (Fig. 2.91). Camera pauses.



2.92

12. Leo in long-shot, framed picturesquely by farm building at left, broken gate at foreground with overhanging branches (Fig. 2.92). Sheep grazing at horizon, which is bordered by trees.



2.93



2.94



2.95



2.96

13. Same area from new angle: framed by gateway to farm at foreground (Fig. 2.93). Leo walks towards then past camera into farm (Fig. 2.94); camera pans to left and round to follow him (Fig. 2.95). Music ends. Second pan to left: Leo approaches horse, then turns to look off-frame right (Fig. 2.96).



2.97



2.98



2.99



2.100

14. Leo seen at distance in long shot (Fig. 2.97). Camera pans left to follow him run, climb gate (Fig. 2.98) and ascend ladder against haystack (Figs. 2.99-2.100) [the triangulation shot].



2.101

15. High-angle medium shot: Leo climbing ladder (Fig. 2.101).



2.102



2.103

16. Low-angle medium shot: Leo prepares himself (Fig. 2.102) and jumps (Fig. 2.103).



2.104

17. Low-angle medium close-up: Leo sliding down (Fig. 2.104).



2.105

18. Leo sliding down (Fig. 2.105).



2.106



2.107

19. Leo sliding into chopping-block and axe (Fig. 2.106). Cries out in pain (Fig. 2.107).



2.108

20. Leo close-up, half off-frame right, chopping-block centre-frame. Pan right to Leo clutching knee (Fig. 2.108).





2.109



2.110



2.111

21. Ted coming out of farm building with water pail: 'What the hell do you think you're doing? I'll give you the biggest thrashing you've ever had in your life.' Runs forward (Fig. 2.109), pan left to follow him pass through gate. Seen through gate interrogating Leo (Fig. 2.110). He picks Leo up, walks back through gate, glances circumspectly off-frame right (Fig. 2.111) and helps Leo towards farm buildings.

Shot 7 briefly relates Marian's supine body to the landscape. This may or may not be from Leo's perspective – we have no indication either way: in general the sequence plays with point of view, sometimes following Leo, sometimes anticipating him, sometimes perhaps taking his perspective. We could infer that Leo equates Marian with the landscape (making the same kind of connection between a landscape and a woman as that described by Lang) and imagines his exploration of the grounds as an exploration of her body. On the other hand, the sequence inclines towards dialectical materialism. Marian's relaxed pose suggests a confident possession of the grounds, while Leo becomes a miniscule figure when the zoom-out places him within the context of his environment; he is dwarfed by the apparatus of the outlying landscape. The process of enclosure, made more evident by the next shot of the deer park, is formally re-enacted by the zoom-out, as Leo is enclosed by the machinery of the 'improved' landscape.

These three shots, Marian-Leo-deer park - are followed by four shots (10, 11, 12 & 13) in which Leo explores picturesque areas, winding his way across partially concealed grounds and through a dilapidated gate. Leo's relaxed performance in the landscape is contrapuntal to the energetic music. The music plays at a much faster pace than he walks, as if to convey an underlying, external drive and tension in his trajectory. As Leo walks through the woods, this sense of determinism is also underwritten in his smiling gaze to the left of the frame and in the camera's responsive pan in the same direction. As in the kind of picturesque landscape favoured by Uvedale Price, the next potential scene is always already implied and invoked. However, like the music, this determinism works against – or, rather, beneath – the staccato editing of the scene.

The topography of the corresponding sequence in Hartley's novel flows uninterruptedly from a water meadow to the haystack.<sup>64</sup> There is no ellipsis. In the intervening space, each paragraph crosses a different section of landscape, which in turn leads directly to another landscape and a new paragraph. Paragraphs approximate plots of ground, while beginnings and endings of paragraphs cover linking, liminal spaces. After Leo looks at the 'darker picture of the sky' in the water, the next paragraph begins with him crossing the sluice, which leads to a path through a corn field.<sup>65</sup> By the end of the third paragraph, he spots a gate in the corner of the field, which he passes through at the opening of the fourth paragraph, onto a road. A fifth paragraph follows a surprise turning in the road, which leads to the farm. The sixth paragraph quickly moves from the farm entrance to the haystack.

However, in Losey's film, the continuity of determinism underpins the sequence rather than overlaying it. Its pattern is interrupted by the unsettling montage which disjointedly elides space between shots 9, 10, 11, and 12. Disconcertingly, there are no explicit topographical connections between the deer park (9), the glade (10), the sunny wood (11) and the broken gate (12). Likewise, the narrative drive of Leo's glances to the left of the frame is contradicted by his often nonchalant walking pace and the apparently random direction of his journey.

Losey and Ciment's term, 'subliminal', successfully evokes this dual logic of staccato surface and continuity as undercurrent. In view of its double logic, the sequence tends towards picturesque determinism instead of a more conventional, linear causality. The sequence generally eschews monolithic continuity editing and motivation, just as it avoids the clear, total exposition of Hartley's novel. Indeed, from the start, it makes causality seem uncertain. It opens with an obscure, ritualistic proliferation of signs in shots 2 to 5. We see a zodiac image, like those found in astrological almanacks. However, the book is revealed to be a standard almanack: possibly a school diary, in view of the educational publisher (Letts). Instead of recorded events, the diary pages are filled with curses. The viewer guesses these are the curses mentioned earlier in the film, with which Leo thinks he 'severely mutilated' some other schoolboys – presumably the

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<sup>64</sup> See L.P. Hartley, *The Go-Between* (London: Penguin, 1997), pp.70-71.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p.71.



Hunter and Southcott listed at the top of the page. Yet the viewer can find no reason why he incants these spells now.

The incantation process itself is odd: it is effected, not by verbal recitation, but by Leo stroking the page (shot 5). This shot, from Leo's perspective, cuts directly to Leo reading the thermometer in the landscape. The edit suggests that Leo perceives the surface of the page to be similar to the landscape, as if the page is an effigy and the curse on the page becomes what is found in the landscape. The incantation of the unreadable curse is continued by the inaudible reading of the temperature, as if the high temperature Leo mouths ('eighty-four') is the result of the curse. Both shots precede the otherwise unmotivated shot of Marian in the grounds, as if in a direct causal relationship to it: she appears to have been conjured up by the incantation.

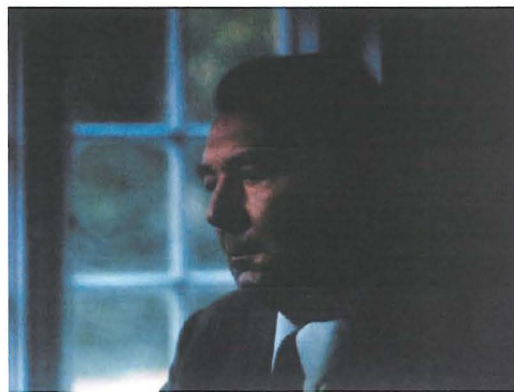
It is also implied that Leo's injury at Black Farm is predicated on the incantation process. In Leo's bedroom, we see a model horse on the window sill while the soundtrack strangely emphasises a horse neighing outside. Together, they foreshadow his discovery of Smiler, Ted's mare. It is when Leo pats Smiler that he notices the haystack (shot 13). Moreover, the causal chain of unreadable signs is picked up by the chain of picturesque determinism in the glances, pans and music, in shots 9, 10, 11, and 12, and therefore leads directly from the curse to the haystack and the axe that it hides.

A mystical relationship is implied between Leo's incantation, Marian's eroticised body, the landscape and Leo's injury. However, the relationship is ironised. The curse is self-evidently part of a child's fantasy and is therefore unlikely to have caused the injury. The landscape sequence which links the incantation with the injury also separates the two, ironically distancing them. The staccato editing and Leo's nonchalant walking pace gradate and stress this ironic distance. The sublimated implication is that Leo's spell is responsible for the injury. However, the interpolation of the landscape scenes suggests, on another level, that the landscape is in fact the precondition of Leo's injury.

The shot which depicts the relation between Marian's body and the landscape (shot 7) significantly precedes the shot in which Leo's body is effectively diminished by enclosure. The hidden axe and the haystack are the results of a cultivation which is both determined by, and maintains, that enclosure. Leo treats the farm as a *ferme ornée*, and

is consequently punished when the tools of cultivation are unveiled. An alternative causal chain therefore subtly links the sequence, from Marian as part of the landscape, to the process of enclosure, to Black Farm, to Leo's injury and finally to Ted's arrival on the scene. Ted is portrayed repeatedly throughout the film in georgic labour, as he cultivates the landscape owned by Marian's family. The cultivation perpetuates the landscape and its enclosure. At different points in the chain, Marian, Ted and Leo are all implicated in and affected by this process. The chain isolates and lays bare the power relations which underwrite the estate.

The violence of cultivation is visited on Leo as figure in the landscape. The violence paradoxically embraces both Leo's mysticism and the underlying historical materialist emphasis on power relations. The sequence and the film as a whole present Leo's misreading: that the catastrophic events can be attributed to his magic. Later in the film, when the aged Marian mentions her grandson's conviction that he is 'under some sort of spell or curse', the older Leo averts his eyes, his nod, in agreement to her 'that's just plain silly', clearly forced: the older Leo still believes in his curse and its supposed consequences. However, it is Leo's misguided linkage of his curse and his injury with the landscape that makes available a materialist representation of landscape power relations.



2.112 The older Leo's reaction to Marian's remark that her grandson believes himself cursed.

The 'dark side of the landscape' is thus made visible. The term has, as the epigraph to the previous chapter implies, become a touchstone in Marxist landscape historiography. To precisely define *The Go-Between's* dialectical materialism, it pays dividends first to return 'the dark side of landscape' to its source. John Barrell's *The Dark Side of the Landscape* takes its title

from an unsigned review of Crabbe's *The Village* in *The Gentleman's Magazine*... The reviewer remarks that Crabbe represents "only the dark side of the landscape, the poverty and misery attendant on the peasant."<sup>66</sup>

Leo is not a peasant, but his comparative poverty places him at the mercy of the Maudsleys, who ultimately make him extremely miserable. He is vulnerable because of his lack of emotional, as well as monetary, means; his father is dead, while his mother, in a line created by Pinter, is shown to be perversely fatalistic: 'We can't expect to be happy all of the time, can we?' However, it is Leo's want of money which Marian exploits in order to gain an emotional hold on him; she buys him his suit and then relies on his gratitude to render him loyally silent about the time they spent separately in Norwich. Later she turns his poverty against him, falsely accusing him of extortion in the shade: 'You want paying, I suppose.' This is a pernicious form of charity, indeed.

Leo says he has been 'scorched'; he has also been blinded to the perniciousness of Marian's charity. This becomes patent in the way the pathetic fallacy is deconstructed by the film. Light and darkness are seen to be equally harmful to Leo. The older Leo's maxim 'you flew too near the sun' bemoans what he perceives to be the Icarus-like hubris of his younger self, while the shot which follows this voice-over represents his metaphor: Marian, with her gold parasol behind her, looks like the sun which shines on them both. Another metonym (Marian/Sun) is developed by Leo into a metaphor, through his invocation of the Icarus myth. However, this metaphor and the deployment of myth are implicitly destructive. The metaphor naturalises the injury which Marian inflicts: if you fly too close to the sun, you can expect to get burnt. The myth effectively exculpates Marian at the expense of Leo's self-condemnation. The older Leo's recourse to the Icarus myth suggests his failure to achieve the kind of objectivity which would reveal Marian's culpability. Rather than enlightening Leo, the light – or sunlit – side of the landscape, facilitates a heliotropic metaphor which only extends his self-condemnation.

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<sup>66</sup> Barrell, op. cit., p.166.



2.113-2.114 The dark side of the landscape.

The literal dark side of the landscape is used symbolically, when Marian flirts with Leo on the way back from swimming (Figs. 2.113-2.114). As Leo plays with her wet hair, the couple are shrouded in ominous darkness. This scene offers a counterpoint to Leo's Icarus myth. Deeds in the dark ultimately turn out to be as harmful as those which are sunlit. Likewise, light offers the older Leo no more illumination about what happened to him than darkness does. Nonetheless, the film makes apparent the figural dark side of the landscape – the harm inflicted on Leo and Ted by a landed family. While John Barrell demonstrates how the figurative dark side of the landscape is sometimes depicted as a literal dark area on a canvas, *The Go-Between* ultimately dispenses with the symbolic dichotomy between sunlight and shade. Just as the power of the Maudsleys is shown to stretch uninterrupted across a broad, yet specific landscape, so the harmful practices of landownership and the milieu it perpetuates are seen to run through the landscape continuously, through light and shade.

At the same time, Leo emerges as the *genius loci*: he performs within the landscape, while he himself takes on elements of that landscape. That is, he is wounded in the landscape, but in the process unwittingly exposes its apparatus of cultivation. In this way, *The Go-Between* presents its historical landscape as a socio-economic construction which is ultimately instrumental in the downfall of its *genius loci*. Just as at the microcosmic level, Leo's disfigured knee is the result of the axe hidden by harvested wheat, so at a macrocosmic level, Leo is reconstituted in a disfigured form in the 1950s, as an old man Marian describes as being 'all dried up inside'. Leo's knee wound anticipates this later disfigurement.

The disfigured, older Leo is the product of the power relations that configure the landscape. At the end of the film, the young Leo is dragged by Mrs Maudsley, to witness Ted and Marian having sex in the picturesquely dilapidated outhouse. Mrs

Maudsley forces Leo to imagine himself responsible for the act that he witnesses there. She acts as if he knows where Marian is, when in fact she drags him there. Her callousness makes him confuse the real events of the outhouse with the spell he casts using the fruit from the nightshade he cuts down there. She blinds him to the truth, as is made manifest when she covers his eyes after he has seen the lovers (Fig. 2.115). Marian also shields Ted's eyes (Fig. 2.116). It seems that Marian cannot bear to let Ted see her dishevelled mother. Mrs Maudsley, despite her initial alacrity, cannot bear to let Leo witness Marian's lack of deportment *in flagrante delicto*. She prefers a flower in the well-tended formal garden as an emblem for her daughter (Fig. 2.117).



2.115 Mrs Maudsley forces Leo to look away.



2.116 Marian makes Ted avert his eyes.



2.117 Mrs Maudsley gives Leo a flower that 'reminds her of Marian'.

The outhouse is the appropriate setting for such dishevelment. It is overgrown and untidy (Fig. 2.118). It is picturesque in its dereliction, yet it contrasts starkly in terms of use with the aestheticised, composed Brownian picturesque landscape which stretches between the terrace garden and the farm. The 'old garden' self-evidently symbolises the age-old corruption of the Maudsleys as a landed family. In its real state of decay, it contrasts with the aestheticised dilapidation of the tree in the shade and parts of the wilderness, such as the gate. The garden is also a play on Melton Constable Hall's history. The space which portrays the 'old garden' is just that – a remainder of the hall's pre-Brownian formal landscape: the kitchen garden, situated behind the courtyard of the old house which was pulled down in 1664, apart from one wing which was retained for servants.<sup>67</sup>

<sup>67</sup> Norfolk Transcription Archive – a local's description of Melton Constable Hall: [http://www.genealogy.doun.org/transcriptions/documents.php?district\\_id=2&document\\_id=20320](http://www.genealogy.doun.org/transcriptions/documents.php?district_id=2&document_id=20320) [Accessed 09/09/2006]; Pevsner and Wilson, *Norfolk I*, p.611.





2.118 The outhouses.



2.119 The flower garden (shot at Blickling Hall).



2.120 Mrs Maudsley drags Leo past the doorway where the nightshade was.

Mrs Maudsley evidently prefers another type of garden altogether: the flower garden, which, in its carefully trimmed regularity, seems surreally distinct from the landscape design of the rest of the estate, the terrace garden included; in this respect, filming this scene at Blickling was providential. That the buildings at the top of the frame in the first shot of the flower garden (Fig. 2.119) do not match any seen in the rest of the film emphasises the sense that this is a different space. The flower garden is squarely under Mrs Maudsley's control: whereas gardeners are only discreetly visible in the rest of the estate, here Stanton is conveniently at hand for her intimidation of Leo. En route to the flower garden, she questions Leo about the old garden: 'do you often go to the outhouses?' The question implies guilt. It is at this point that Mrs Maudsley begins to instil in Leo the idea that he is to blame for what he sees in the outhouses.

Mrs Maudsley reclaims what she calls the 'old garden'. She reclaims it from the subversive sexual relationship that takes place there, by exposing the couple. She also reclaims it from Leo's imagination, when she pulls him past the deadly nightshade which has preoccupied his fantasies (Fig. 2.120). In the outhouse Mrs Maudsley makes him witness the truth that lies beyond his imagination, but then hides it from him. Leo is thus fatally persuaded to conflate his magical and objective interpretations of what takes place in the landscape. As a result of the reclamation, a myth is perpetuated.

Various other disfigurements become the corollaries of Leo's performance in, and the owners' reclamation of, the grounds. Ted's suicide leaves his body slumped by a gun, devoid of its once upright and powerful frame. Marian's face, like Leo's, is marked with the corruption of an old age which seems the immediate result of the events of 1900, since we are given no glimpse of the intervening years. Marian's grandson's face discloses the features of his biological grandfather, Ted, rather than features which

might support the convenient lie that his grandfather was Hugh, the gentleman Marian weds.

Hugh himself, we are told, was 'gored by the Boer'. Like Hugh's scar, all of these disfigurements can be identified as products of a landed culture and its power relations. Just as Hugh was scarred by a war which sought to bolster the British Empire, so on smaller scale the other characters are marked by a social stratification which prohibits Marian and Ted's sexual relationship. It has been argued that causality plays only a minor role in the film.<sup>68</sup> However, Leo's movements ultimately unveil the socio-economic links across the film's estate. We follow him from one part to another, and witness that action initiated in one place often has consequences elsewhere. Through Leo, its figure in the landscape, the film comments on the ideological causalities at work in a country estate in 1900. At the same time, Leo becomes a victim of this causal process. His main wound is sustained in his perception; he imagines that a mystical causality underpins the events on the estate and therefore fails to realise the full truth, until perhaps the last moment, when his car takes him away from the hall.

## Conclusion

*The Go-Between* utilises the narrative arc of a figure in a picturesque landscape to expatiate on the power relations produced by the ownership of land and their consequences. In this way, it foreshadows and complements the revisionist landscape historiography which emerged throughout the 1970s. Considered as a whole, this historiography was cross-disciplinary; its contributors were from art history, literary history and geography. The trend was largely Marxist. Indeed, it produced the first major Marxist contributions to landscape history: the television series and book *Ways of Seeing* (1972);<sup>69</sup> John Barrell's *The Idea of Landscape and the Sense of Place 1730-1840* (1972) and *The Dark Side of the Landscape: the rural poor in English painting 1730-1840* (1980); Raymond Williams' *The Country and the City* (1973). These texts

<sup>68</sup> Palmer and Riley, *The Films of Joseph Losey*, p.93.

<sup>69</sup> John Berger and the series' director, Mike Dibb, deconstruct and historicise Gainsborough's *Mr and Mrs Andrews*, a painting which still crystallises the prevalent Marxist perspective of the power relation between landed figures and eighteenth century country estates. See *Ways of Seeing* (Mike Dibb, BBC, 1972); Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, pp.106-108; and Michael Rosenthal and Martin Myrone (eds.), *Gainsborough* (London: Tate Publishing, 2002), pp.62-63.

have a diverse range of subject matter, yet they all carry the same emphasis on the mystification in art of the relationship between figure and landscape. Essentially non-Marxist books also emerged from the trend, yet with similar concerns: Jay Appleton's multivalent methodology in *The Experience of Landscape* (1975) is facilitated by his varied theoretical treatments of 'those relationships which we can observe between animals and their perceived environments'.<sup>70</sup> John Dixon Hunt's *The Figure in the Landscape* (1976) focuses on 'the human consequences of the new [English landscape garden] designs – the effects upon their users and visitors, the psychological extensions of landscape space'.<sup>71</sup>

Like Appleton, the film directs to the structure of landscape experience as desire for refuge, in its depiction of Leo's meandering through picturesque grounds and his inclination to revisit the shade by the game larder. However, just as Appleton asserts that a refuge symbol in a landscape might not actually provide refuge, so the film is sceptical about the likelihood of achieving refuge in a contrived garden. Wherever Leo wanders, it seems he will always be seen without seeing, rather than 'see without being seen'.<sup>72</sup> He is observed by the house, yet does not seem aware of its gaze, when he walks through the wilderness.

The topography of the whole film is disorientating. Areas of the landscape seen frequently in the film are shot each time from a completely different and, therefore, defamiliarising angle. The environs of the hall are inhospitably amorphous. The area with the game larder and the thermometer is portrayed from a different perspective each time it appears. Thus, in spite of Leo's habitual recourse to its enclosed sanctuary, repetition never imposes on the space a certainty of dimension. Although his repeated presence there suggests it offers him refuge, it never takes on the fixity of an enclave. Likewise, when Leo visits Ted's farm after being accused by Marian of seeking remuneration, Leo even appears to follow an alternative route.

The film has most in common with the Marxist approaches in the revisionist wave of 1970s landscape historiography. In its final scene set on the road by Melton Constable

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<sup>70</sup> Appleton, op. cit., p. vii.

<sup>71</sup> John Dixon Hunt, *The Figure in the Landscape: Poetry, Painting, and Gardening During the Eighteenth Century* (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1976), p. xi.

<sup>72</sup> Appleton, op. cit., *passim*.



Hall, *The Go-Between* points to the ‘disposability’, as Williams terms it, of the country house in the middle of the twentieth century.<sup>73</sup> With its precise utilisation of location filming, *The Go-Between*’s narrative critique of the landed classes is grounded in historical materialism. Leo’s metaphor which represents Marian as the sun is ultimately undone by the film’s rural observation, which tends as much towards social realism as to symbolism. Gardeners and farmers are seen at work in light and shade. The working classes are seen and heard at the cricket match. *The Go-Between* suggests that the interaction between grounds and figure described by John Dixon Hunt in *The Figure in the Landscape* is not exclusively an aesthetic process. Marian is aestheticised in the landscape, but the Maudsleys’ landed world is supported by the work carried out by Ted, Leo and others. The work often necessitates violence – as evidenced by Ted’s blood-stained hands. Ted turns this violence against himself in order to protect the Maudsleys. Significantly, he shoots himself with the same gun he uses for gamekeeping. Leo is emotionally injured by his message-carrying. *The Go-Between*’s narrative suggests that charity given by the landed to lower classes can come with a price and may be harmful. In Leo’s case, part of the harm is an instilled mystification of events. Like Stephen Duck, who Williams reminds us ‘was writing with the worst of them’ after receiving charity, Leo is damaged by his contact with the Maudsleys.<sup>74</sup> Leo, like Ted, ultimately becomes a victim of a brutality which underpins the aesthetic sheen of the Maudsleys’ world.

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<sup>73</sup> Williams, *The Country and the City*, p.250.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, p.90.

### III

## The Romance of the Ruse: Dialectical Atavism in *The Ruling Class*

The difference between Victorian architecture and other revivals is a double one. The Victorians set about resuscitating everything at once instead of one thing at a time; and they did it, not in the sense of reverent imitation, but of open rivalry. Every aspect of the Victorian ambiance can be demonstrated succinctly at Harlaxton.

– Pamela Tudor-Craig<sup>1</sup>

The present epoch will perhaps be above all the epoch of space. We are in the epoch of simultaneity: we are in the epoch of juxtaposition.

– Michel Foucault<sup>2</sup>

### Introduction

*The Ruling Class* was first released in 1972, just one year after *The Go-Between*: with its sizeable quantity and diversity of country estate scenes shot on location, it is, like the latter, predominantly a landscape film. Most of the movie's new or extended sequences, stretching Peter Barnes's play to what many reviewers described as a film of 'inordinate length', are set in, or pertain to, landscapes.<sup>3</sup> However, whereas *The Go-Between*'s condemnation of the socioeconomic apparatus underpinning a landed estate is rendered

<sup>1</sup> Pamela Tudor-Craig, 'Foreward' to *The Harlaxton Manor Guide Book* (Harlaxton: Harlaxton College, 1984); reproduced at <http://www.ueharlax.ac.uk/harlaxton/forewardj.htm> [Accessed 25/06/2006].

<sup>2</sup> Michel Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces', translated by Jay Miskowiec, *Diacritics*, vol.16, no.1, Spring 1986, p.22.

<sup>3</sup> The phrase 'of inordinate length' was used to criticise the film in: Anonymous, 'Review of *The Ruling Class*', *The Tablet*, 27 May 1972; Anonymous, 'Review of *The Ruling Class*', *CinemaTV Today*, no.9983, p.24; Richard Combs, 'Review of *The Ruling Class*', *Monthly Film Bulletin*, vol.39, no.462, July 1972, p.145; David McGillivray, 'Review of *The Ruling Class*', *Focus on Film*, no.10, Summer 1972, p.8. Many other reviews objected to the length of the film. These include: Felix Barker, 'Grotesque, outrageous, too long, but brilliant', *The Evening News*, 25 May 1972; Fergus Cashin, 'A long laugh at the top', *The Sun*, 25 May 1972; Ian Christie, 'Review of *The Ruling Class*', *The Daily Express*, 24 May 1972; John Coleman, 'Review of *The Ruling Class*', *New Statesman*, 2 June 1972; Gary Giddens, 'Peter O'Toole in "The Ruling Class"', *The Hollywood Reporter* 14 September 1972, p.4; Douglas Goodlad, 'Fun if you don't take offence', in *The Leicester Chronicle*, 3 November 1972; Hawk, 'Review of *The Ruling Class*', *Variety*, 19 April 1972, p.18; Margaret Hinxman, 'Review of *The Ruling Class*', *The Sunday Telegraph*, 28 May 1972; G.M., 'Review of *The Ruling Class*', *Fabulous* 208, 5 August 1972; Derek Malcolm, 'Review of *The Ruling Class*', *Cosmopolitan*, July 1972; Derek Malcolm, 'Review of *The Ruling Class*', *The Guardian*, 25 May 1972; David Robinson, 'Review of *The Ruling Class*', *The Financial Times*, 26 May 1972; John Russell Taylor, 'Review of *The Ruling Class*', *The Times*, 26 May 1972; Arthur Thinkell, 'Mad as an Earl!', *The Daily Mirror*, 26 May 1972; Cecil Wilson, 'Review of the *The Ruling Class*', *The Daily Mail*, 24 May 1972.

through a discursive subtlety, *The Ruling Class*'s satire is overt to the point of reflexivity. From the beginning, the film alerts the viewer to its explicit theme: just before his accidental death the 13<sup>th</sup> Earl of Gurney announces to his butler, 'It's all based on land, Tuck. Can't have those knaves from Whitehall moving in.' A kind of protatic character, the luckless 13<sup>th</sup> Earl serves to introduce several qualities which the film as a whole directly links with landownership: power, eccentricity, sexual perversion, and concern for heredity. These qualities are explored through the narrative of the mad 14<sup>th</sup> Earl, who, as J.C., is an eccentric who believes himself to be the god of love and, after his transformation into Jack the Ripper, suffers from a form of sexual psychosis.

The film's frequent explicitness about landownership, partly expressed through the shameless candour of the Gurneys' dialogue, is evidently at one remove from *The Go-Between*, in which landscape has a tacit, though pre-eminent function. Indeed, *The Ruling Class* dispenses with the tension implicit in *The Go-Between* and *Kind Hearts and Coronets* between the discreet surface of polite society and an underlying, sublimated violence, though it is exactly this tension, embodied in the landscapes, which generates bathos in *Kind Hearts and Coronets*, pathos in *The Go-Between*. Violence and nobility are both in evidence in *The Ruling Class*: their interdependence, however, is also made obvious – through the various pursuits of the aristocracy, from the 13<sup>th</sup> Earl's masochistic fantasies of martyrdom, to Jack's predilection for blood sports. At the same time, good manners have become all but obsolete; apart from J.C.'s gentle deference, politeness is generally a self-evident sham. Sir Charles and Dinsdale's emphatic use of 'sir' in dialogue which is anything but respectful is a recurrent example. Social games are played by the Gurneys in order to wrest control of the estate from J.C. and then later by Jack to regain power, but their success is due more to the victims' readiness to be hoodwinked than to skilful execution.<sup>4</sup>

Dissemblance is transparent throughout *The Ruling Class*, yet characters exhibit an unlikely predisposition for being duped: the comedy derives less from the film's dramatic irony *per se* than from the implausibility of that dramatic irony. Although Dr.

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<sup>4</sup> Brian Woolland notes that Barnes's play is partly about 'the ways in which people at all levels of society collude in their own repression': Brian Woolland, *Dark Attractions: The Theatre of Peter Barnes* (London: Methuen, 2004), p.28.

Herder diagnoses paranoid schizophrenia, J.C.'s symptoms are the inverse of that condition. Rather than suffering a persecution complex, J.C. denies the existence of real hostility. When informed by Dinsdale and Tucker about the family's schemes, J.C. prefers to ignore the warning: "Plotting" is a word I put into my galvanized pressure cooker. Vroom! It's gone.' In the film's second half, there are several sudden, insubstantially motivated reversals. Dr. Herder reflects J.C.'s guilelessness. He guesses that Jack has murdered Claire, but, with a little encouragement by Jack, seeks refuge from this realisation in madness. Through Jack's adoption of the Ripper legend, the film directs to the concomitance of aristocratic refinement and violence, of sexual repression and psychopathy: an urbane surface with a sadistic underside. However, Jack's Victorian Gothic clothes and bric-a-brac, his confusion about dates and the references to the Jack the Ripper legend in his speech make his 'hidden' persona self-evident. Grace and Claire, the most dexterous plotters in the first half of the film, quickly become his victims, despite the fact that he is – patently enough to the viewer – still psychotic.



3.1 The first shot of the attic scene: the comically elegant mask,...



3.2...the grotesque mask and...



3.3...Jack.



3.4-3.6 Then a whip-pan and track reveals that we have been looking at a reflection of Jack in a mirror.

As with most of the film's many cultural references – including landscape – the Ripper persona is a reference to a reference; it is distanced from the viewer by a recursive iconography. Jack takes on the Ripper identity in the loft of Gurney House. This, itself, is an oblique allusion to the popular Victorian trope of the country house attic as the repository of the repressed.<sup>5</sup> The shot begins as Jack removes one comically elegant mask, with a clipped moustache made of feathers (Fig. 3.1), only to unveil another, grotesque mask underneath (Fig. 3.3). The camera then quickly whip-pans left and

<sup>5</sup> See Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar. *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven and London: Yale, 1979), *passim*.



tracks back to reveal that we have been looking at Jack's mirror image (Figs. 3.4-3.6). Soon after, a Victorian music hall ballad is heard. Rather than a complex identity, confabulated from memories of learned facts, Jack's persona is shown to have been gleaned from a comic strip version of the Ripper story in *The Illustrated Alamanack* (Fig. 3.7). The play on surfaces – illusion and allusion, mirrors and a periodical cover – deemphasises psychological motivation and character depth (Fig. 3.8).



3.7 Jack's source for his Ripper persona.



3.8 The attic: a space of illusion, allusion and performance.

The Ripper story also constitutes a more brutal version of J.C.'s preferred fable, *La Dame aux Camélias*, in which a gentleman is effectively the death of a courtesan. Just as the Jack the Ripper legend is mediated through a popular retelling, so the Ur-text of *La Dame aux Camélias* is absent throughout the film. Characters mention two well-known adaptations of the novel, Dumas *filis*'s own 1852 play version and Giuseppe Verdi's opera, *La Traviata*, but never the original novel.<sup>6</sup>

The audience is thus alienated, not only from the film's diegesis, but also from any sense of secure referential anchorage. As Bernard F. Dukemore points out, Barnes's plays' 'exploration of illusion and reality' draws on the work of Pirandello and Brecht.<sup>7</sup> The estrangement produced by references in *The Ruling Class* has a levelling effect, through which the diegesis becomes an array of surfaces. The film's explicit dissection of landownership must be seen in this context. Whereas landscape in *The Go-Between* is deployed to fathom a profound social structure of surface urbanity and underlying violence, the on-screen landscapes in *The Ruling Class* become components in a referential patchwork of surfaces.

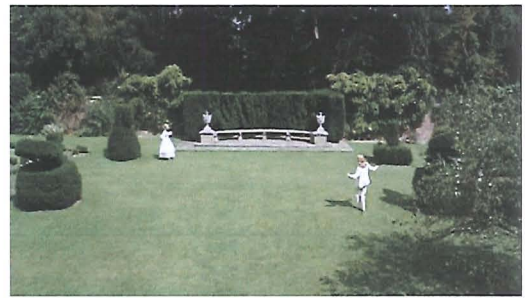
<sup>6</sup> Like Roland Barthes, Barnes is concerned with popular myth; interestingly, in his discussion of the 'central myth' of the Lady of the Camellias, Barthes also refers to the play and not to the novel. Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, translated by Annette Lavers (London: Vintage, 1993), pp.103-105.

<sup>7</sup> Bernard F. Dukemore, *Barnestorm: The Plays of Peter Barnes* (New York and London: Garland, 1995), p.ix.

The film combines two locations to form the Gurney estate: Harlaxton and Cliveden. Gurney House itself is portrayed by Harlaxton's exteriors and interiors, though most of the scenes set inside Gurney House were filmed in studio sets painstakingly reproducing rooms in Harlaxton. The gardens at Harlaxton are used for the scenes in which J.C. talks to the plants (Fig. 3.9), watches Grace/'Marguerite' with his telescope and presents a bunch of flowers to his wife, as well as some of Jack's horseback adventures. The Long Garden in Cliveden is where J.C. woos Grace (Figs. 3.10-3.11): the later picturesque scene when Jack goes hunting on foot was shot in Cliveden's Russian Valley (Fig. 3.12).



3.9 Harlaxton.



3.10 Cliveden's Long Garden: the exedra and topiary.



3.11 Cliveden's Long Garden: masquer statuary and topiary.



3.12 Cliveden's Russian Valley.

In actuality, none of these gardens was strictly 'original' when first landscaped; they are all pastiches. None of them dates from the era(s) which it references in its design. As Pamela Tudor-Craig argues (in the epigraph to this chapter), Harlaxton epitomises Victorian revivalism: both the house and its landscapes.<sup>8</sup> Harlaxton was built and landscaped from 1834-55.<sup>9</sup> Its garden style tends, like parts of the house, to the Baroque.<sup>10</sup> Cliveden's Long Garden is also a Baroque pastiche, though more broadly

<sup>8</sup> Tudor-Craig, op. cit.

<sup>9</sup> James Murden, *Harlaxton Through the Ages* (Harlaxton : James Murden, 1976).

<sup>10</sup> Nikolaus Pevsner and John Harris, *The Buildings of England: Lincolnshire* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1963), p.565.

inclusive. As the National Trust guides to Cliveden state, the garden was conceived by William Waldorf Astor after he bought Cliveden in 1893:<sup>11</sup> his

inspiration was clearly the Renaissance and seventeenth-century gardens he had known during his years as US Minister in Italy, with their statuary and formal evergreens.<sup>12</sup>

The central beds of the garden were developed in the 1920s by Norah Lindsay, who was influenced by Roman and Florentine garden styles.<sup>13</sup> The topiary; the box hedges; the masquer statuary which refers to the *Commedia dell'arte* (Fig. 3.11); the exedra (Fig. 3.10): the combination of these elements produces a wide range of allusions to garden styles, from Classical designs to both Italianate and English Restoration masques, variously theatrical and all formal. This breadth is characteristic of Cliveden as a whole; since the nineteenth century, Cliveden has had one of the most complex, varied garden designs in the whole of England. The layout of its Russian Valley (Fig. 3.12), for instance, is diametrically opposed in design style to that of the Long Garden, which was 'improved' by the Duke of Westminster and John Fleming from 1869 to 1872.<sup>14</sup> With its serpentine, irregular shape and wooded banks, the Long Garden encompasses the picturesque tradition, which had been widely popularised in the nineteenth century. This unusual variety complements the diversity of the film's non-landscape cultural references.

The proliferation of disparate references – landscape, literary or filmic – in *The Ruling Class* is, however, counterpointed by an uncomplicated plot structure. Instead of the undulating, intricately woven narrative arcs of *Kind Hearts and Coronets* and *The Go-Between*, *The Ruling Class* pursues a relatively flat line of action, with a binary formal structure, the halves of which correspond respectively to the 14<sup>th</sup> Earl's two personas: in the first half, he is J.C., the God of love, and in the second, he is Jack the Ripper. Separating the halves is the film's major turning point, Dr. Herder's experiment with McKyle. This scene includes two proleptic nods to the film's second half: firstly the ominous lightning (Fig. 3.13), which foreshadows the Gothic iconography of later scenes and, secondly, the appearance of a Hyde-like beast, dressed as a Victorian

<sup>11</sup> Jonathan Marsden and Oliver Garnett, *Cliveden Garden* (London: The National Trust, 2002), p.19.

<sup>12</sup> Antonia Boström, Jonathan Marsden and Christopher Wall, *Cliveden* (London: The National Trust, 2001), p.73.

<sup>13</sup> Marsden and Garnett, op. cit., p.19.

<sup>14</sup> See Boström *et al*, op. cit., p.76; Nikolaus Pevsner and Elizabeth Williamson, *The Buildings of England: Buckinghamshire* (London: Penguin, 1994), p.258.



gentleman, which presages Jack's adoption of the Ripper persona (Fig. 3.14). Otherwise, this scene neatly divides the film: after this, there is a general reversal of events and character attitudes. The second half of the film is thus characterised by an inverse symmetry of the first half.



3.13 The silhouette emphasises Harlaxton's Gothic outline: the lightning adds to the effect.



3.14 An absurd version of Mr Hyde attacks J.C.

This chapter will argue on the one hand that the imperatives behind the film's counterpoint of binary formal structure and diverse referentiality are grounded in Barnes's original play. On the other hand, there is a relationship in the film between narrative plotting and the representation of actual plots of ground, which is a considerable departure from the play. The chapter will contend that the essential differences between the representations of landscape in the film and the play are informed by, if not reducible to, media-specific conventions: once this is recognised, a similarity of ends, if not of means, of landscape representation in play and film is revealed.

### The Play: Minimalist Landscape

Through the first run of *The Ruling Class* at the Nottingham Playhouse in 1968, Peter Barnes became a key playwright in the revitalisation of English and international dramaturgy, as Harold Pinter, scriptwriter of *The Go-Between*, had ten years earlier.<sup>15</sup> Like Pinter, Barnes was opposed to the 'kitchen sink' style prevalent in English theatre from the popular 1956 production of John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* onwards. In contrast to Pinter, though, Barnes wrote plays which subjected the established mode to a

<sup>15</sup> Harold Hobson, 'Introduction', in Peter Barnes, *The Ruling Class: A Baroque Comedy* (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1969), p.v. Hobson recalls three breakthrough English productions which followed the performances of Irishman Samuel Beckett's French *Waiting for Godot* in English at the Arts Theatre in 1955: John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* at the Royal Court in 1956; Harold Pinter's *The Birthday Party* at the Lyric, Hammersmith in 1958; *The Ruling Class* at the Nottingham Playhouse, in 1968. On the other hand, there were many negative reviews of the play: see Woolland, op. cit., p.28.



systematic and polemical onslaught. He was a ‘sworn enemy of naturalism’;<sup>16</sup> his declared aim in his plays was to ‘strike out, to launch repeated bayonet attacks’ on it.<sup>17</sup> As we will see, Barnes’s reputation for doing just this with *The Ruling Class* effectively determined the criteria by which the film was evaluated by critics when it was first released.

The play’s anti-naturalistic style is inseparable from its politics. The play attacks many traits of the upper class: its political power, its repressive sexual mores, its jurisdictional and ecclesiastical influence, its artistic tastes and so on. This multivalence corresponds to the play’s baroque genre hybridity, which encompasses melodrama, the pastoral, popular song, farce and satire. The shift from one genre to another signals and enables the adjustment of aim from one target of ruling class life to another. In this way the play’s genre hybridity is a two-pronged offensive. It not only lampoons the upper class, but also challenges the realism prevalent in British theatre in the sixties. By switching modes, the play stridently parades its anti-naturalistic discourse. The most vaunted example of this is the characters’ propensity to burst into popular song, as if the play were suddenly a musical.<sup>18</sup> These modal shifts elicit a wide range of performances from the actors. Such performative exuberance is the antithesis of the drab, dialogue-based kitchen sink dramas. Whereas Osborne’s *The Entertainer* gloomily thematised the decline of music hall performance, Barnes reinvigorates it through a unique conflation of variety entertainment with both parodic farce and thesis play. In its diversity of reference and tone, the combination of disparate modes in Barnes’s play is arguably more radical than the use of popular song in *Oh What a Lovely War*, which Joan Littlewood staged five years earlier.<sup>19</sup>

The play’s frequent landscape scenes are also anti-naturalistic, though in a completely different sense. In diametric contrast with the drawing room scenes, there is no back-drop when characters are in the garden.<sup>20</sup> None of the conventional gestures to realism

<sup>16</sup> Michael Billington, ‘Obituary: Peter Barnes’, *The Guardian*, 5 July 2004.

<sup>17</sup> Peter Barnes, ‘Introduction’, in *Plays: 1* (London: Methuen, 1989), p.ix.

<sup>18</sup> Dukemore, *Barnestorm*, p.4.

<sup>19</sup> Roger Cornish and Violet Ketels, ‘Introduction’, in *Landmarks of Modern British Drama, Volume One: The Plays of the Sixties* (London: Methuen, 1985), p.xviii.

<sup>20</sup> As I have been unable to find a photograph or drawing of a landscape stage design used in a production of *The Ruling Class*, I rely here on Barnes’s stage directions in the play: see *ibid.*, pp.30, 48 & 82. Lynn Pecktal’s *Designing and Painting for the Theatre* reproduces a painting of the drawing room from Sandro La Ferla’s stage design for the 1972 production of *The Ruling Class* at the Goodman Theatre, Chicago.

sometimes found in landscape stage design are employed: there are no bird noises, and no coulisses or props to suggest arboreal surroundings. The physical absence of foliage is made felt by references to the garden's plants in J.C.'s lines: 'Just smell that soul-duft [sic] from the lawns.'<sup>21</sup> Grace also refers to the grass: 'Ah, there he is on the lawn.'<sup>22</sup> Particularly ironic is Jack's 'Just want to get the feel of terra firma.'<sup>23</sup> The 13<sup>th</sup> Earl's will gives the estate a specific geographical location ('Gurney House in Bedfordshire').<sup>24</sup> However, the estate's grounds are not represented. The only visible prop is a minimalist, yet obtrusive device: a metal sun is lowered from the flies and the footlights are lit. The artificiality of the metal sun is rendered more salient by the displacement of its beam onto the footlights, at the exact opposite side of the stage. The evolving mood of the play is signified by the pathetic fallacy, as the story moves from sunlight, to rain and thunder. A conventional landscape trope is thus employed, without any landscape being visible. Like the Brechtian 'harsh white lighting and frank exposure of the metal thunder sheets' in Peter Brooks's 1962 production of *King Lear*, the metal sun and footlights make transparent the fallaciousness of the pathetic fallacy.<sup>25</sup>

While this device differentiates the landscape scenes from the interiors, the landscape set's parameters are not respected throughout the play. At the end of act one, scene nine, J.C. stumbles in a fit of paranoia through the garden and onto a cross he has had installed in the drawing room of the house. In deliberate contrast with other parts of the play, in which transitions from garden to interior are signified by a scene change, this time the sun and footlights remain. It is as if the spaces suddenly merge.

Like the minimalist scenery, this spatial amorphousness suggests that landscape in the play is not subject to natural laws, but susceptible to capricious fantasy – fantasy directly derived from J.C.'s mental unbalance. This conceit is central to the play's

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The main motif in the design is juxtaposition between empty and filled frames: a door frame, picture frames, the frame of a four-poster bed and frames made by the legs of stacked tables and chairs. The emphasis is thus on a mixture of absence and presence. The non-naturalistic superimposition of the empty door frame over a filled picture frame particularly conveys a sense of the dominance of the abstract over the concrete, which is consonant with the denial of materiality in Barnes's stage directions for the landscape scenes. See Lynn Pecktal, *Designing and Painting for the Theatre* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1975), p.355.

<sup>21</sup> Peter Barnes, *The Ruling Class*, in *Plays: 1* (London: Methuen, 1989), p.30.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p.47.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p.80.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p.18.

<sup>25</sup> Cornish and Ketels, *op. cit.*, p.xxvi.

explicit representation of landscape as power. Tucker refers to landownership when he points out that 'one percent of the population owns half the property in England.'<sup>26</sup> Truscott's main concern in assessing Jack is 'property and its proper administration'.<sup>27</sup> J.C. perceptively uses an arboreal metaphor when he renounces property: 'The axe must be laid to the root. Pomp and riches, pride and property will have to be lopped off.'<sup>28</sup> The impetus of the whole play is a struggle for possession of a country estate. Idealised gardens and landscapes are recurrently alluded to: from Jack's Blakean 'England's green and pleasant' to Tucker's rendition of the song 'Come into the garden, Maud,' (another reference to an adaptation, distanced from its Ur-text, Alfred Tennyson's poem, *Maud*).<sup>29</sup> The insubstantiality of the estate's landscape as presented on stage points seditiously to the contingency and fragility of the ruling class's power through possession of land. The very materiality of the land as possession is denied by the absence of props in the garden set.

Landscape is the main setting for Jack's deranged fantasies. As J.C., he acts out his fantasies of courtly love with the 'divine figure of romance', the 'Lady of the Camellias' in the grounds. As Jack the Ripper, he pretends to be a stereotypical aristocrat, hunting in the grounds. Normative relations between landscape and owner are subverted by the play's abstract landscape, the dimensions of which are as unbalanced as Jack's mind.

The play is about land, but we never see any land represented on stage. Landscape in the play is not defined by land, but by ethereal elements: the sun and its light. Landscape seems little more than an upper class dream, a chimera. In order to define the exact manner in which this conceit is anti-naturalistic, the term naturalism must be put in historical perspective. Raymond Williams argues that 'given the complexity of [its] history, naturalism is a very much more difficult word than most of its current uses suggest.'<sup>30</sup> The term is problematic, not only because of its long history, but also because of its cross-disciplinary usage, which has meant that at any one time naturalism has had different applications and connotations in various landscape histories – histories

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<sup>26</sup> Barnes, op. cit., p.107.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p.86.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p.28.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., pp.93, 99.

<sup>30</sup> Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (London: Fontana, 1988), p.219.

of garden design, landscape painting, theatre stage design for country scenes, and landscape set designs or locations on film.<sup>31</sup> The naturalism against which Barnes's play's genre hybridity and 'metatheatricality' are mobilised is isolable as the dominant style in British theatre in the late 1950s and the 1960s, but the naturalism which the play's landscape stage design subverts is of another genus. In fact, minimalist stage design was as common in the productions of the English Stage Company as it was in the work of Littlewood and Brooks.<sup>32</sup> Invariably, if kitchen sink dramas had a set, it would be a spare domestic interior: the first production of Arnold Wesker's *The Kitchen* used no furnishings at all.<sup>33</sup> The landscape scenes of Barnes's play are thus entirely commensurate with the naturalist, as well as the anti-naturalist, *Zeitgeists* of the 1950s and 1960s in this respect.

However, the fact that these are landscapes, rather than interiors, imbues them with a different frame of theatrical reference. There have been many 'naturalisms' since the term emerged in the seventeenth century. Like realism, 'notions of [naturalism] vary across cultures [and] through time.'<sup>34</sup> We need to consider what Raymond Williams describes as the second development in the use of the term,

in relation to art and literature...[which] was the effect of the sense of natural history, in its special characteristic of close and detailed observation.<sup>35</sup>

In stage design this was manifested in a combination of two tendencies in the early nineteenth century: firstly,

a style which favoured the irregular and the picturesque and was a product of the romantic movement in which England led the way.<sup>36</sup>

The coeval popularity of Gothic narratives and picturesque landscapes can be seen as part of the 'supervening social necessity' which led to the increased use of 'wings,

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<sup>31</sup> On the long history of the term's usage, see Lilian R. Furst and Peter Skrine, *Naturalism* (London: Methuen, 1971), pp.1-5.

<sup>32</sup> Cornish and Ketels, op. cit., p.xix.

<sup>33</sup> J.A. Cuddon, *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, Fourth Edition (London: Penguin, 1999), p.444.

<sup>34</sup> David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, *Film Art: An Introduction*, Sixth Edition (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2001), p.157.

<sup>35</sup> Williams, op. cit., pp.216-217.

<sup>36</sup> Sybil Rosenfeld, *A Short History of Scene Design in Great Britain* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1973), p.xvii.

borders and shutters at Drury Lane', used to provide an impression of serpentine depth in landscape stage design.<sup>37</sup>

Secondly,

realism, which had been creeping in, particularly in landscape, during the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century... took an archaeological turn [in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century] in which Capon and J.P. Kemble are associated with attempts to reproduce [sic] historically accurate architecture.<sup>38</sup>

In this development, the design method is directly linked to the 'scientific observation' carried out by natural historians.<sup>39</sup> These two, in some respects contrary, tendencies – towards the picturesque and natural history – combined to set a trend of immaculately detailed, perspectival landscape stage design, which predominated in Britain longer than in any other country and was still in evidence, for instance, in James Bailey's backdrops in the 1950s.<sup>40</sup>

It is this tradition of naturalism – in the sense of nature observed in detail – against which the minimalist stage designs of the 1950s and 1960s were ranged. While the drab interiors of kitchen sink drama to some extent superseded natural history landscapes and other forms of naturalism, on the other hand Brechtian designers for Peter Hall and Peter Brooks produced minimal, non-perspectival landscapes.<sup>41</sup> Barnes's play represents the most radical departure from natural history designs, in that it realises an oxymoronic combination of mock-Gothic themes (the crisis of heredity; madness; the outsider in the country house; the murderous aristocrat) with an almost bare landscape. The incipient Gothic novel frequently presented history as danger in a landed estate: the return of the genealogical repressed and/or the reversion to medieval brutality. Barnes's play undermines this, by relating a Gothic tale in an estate that has no concreteness: a landscape that contains no marks of history. As I remark elsewhere in the thesis, all

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<sup>37</sup> The term 'supervening social necessity' is Brian Winston's: see Brian Winston, *Media, Technology and Society, A History: From the Telegraph to the Internet* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), pp.5-7 and *passim*; Paul Ranger, 'Terror and Pity Reign in Every Beast': *Gothic Drama in the London Patent Theatres, 1750-1820* (London: The Society for Theatre Research, 1991), p.25.

<sup>38</sup> Rosenfeld, *op. cit.*, p.xvii.

<sup>39</sup> Christopher Innes, 'Introduction', in Christopher Innes (ed.), *A Sourcebook on Naturalist Theatre* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), p.4.

<sup>40</sup> René Hainaux, *Stage Design Throughout the World Since 1935* (London: Harrap, 1956), p.169.

<sup>41</sup> See, for example, John Bury's garden design for Peter Hall's 1963 production of *Wars of the Roses*: a photograph can be found in René Hainaux, *Stage Design Throughout the World Since 1960* (London: Harrap, 1972), p.35.

landscape gardens, but especially picturesque ones, become vessels of history, with the remnants of past designs still inscribed in their contours.<sup>42</sup> Landscape in this sense always bears the marks of its past ownership. Barnes's landscape denies this history, and thus denies hereditary landownership. To the detriment of aristocratic lineage, Barnes describes a neutral landscape which can only exist in the present.

*The Ruling Class* is conspicuous for its contemporariness. It is one of the few landscape garden narratives set in the present (the play: 1968/the film: 1972). *The Ruling Class* foregrounds its topicality through its protagonist, Jack Gurney, who as a long-haired 'god of love', J.C., espouses hippy ethics in the first half of the plot. The play/film's second half, in which J.C. becomes Jack the Ripper, is no less topical, for all of its emphasis on Victoriana in Jack's clothing and furniture. The members of the hunt, for instance, call for the reintroduction of capital punishment, which had only been effectively abolished with the Murder (Abolition of Death Penalty) Act in 1965.<sup>43</sup>

Post-Second World War country house tales set in the present – whether theatrical or cinematic – tend to draw heavily on one of two popular genres (either the country house farce or the country house murder mystery) or at least tend to be centred on character, such as Hugh and Margaret Williams' *The Grass is Greener*, a light comic reiteration of the Jamesian theme of a declining European aristocracy confronted by a self-made, wealthy American.<sup>44</sup> In all of these cases, the house and its grounds rarely constitute anything more than a convenient backdrop. Few of these tales provide a politicised deconstruction of the estate itself; it is usually historical narratives – especially on film – in which this is effected (such as *Kind Hearts and Coronets*, *The Go-Between*, *Gosford Park*).<sup>45</sup>

Towards its end, *The Ruling Class* transforms into a parody of the country house detective story made popular by Agatha Christie, as the butler, Tucker, is wrongly

<sup>42</sup> See also Dabney Townsend, 'The Picturesque', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol.55, no.4, Autumn 1997, p.367.

<sup>43</sup> As Woolland notes, the 1965 Act suspended the death penalty: it was only on 16 December 1969 (after the first production of the play) that the House of Commons 'reaffirmed its decision that capital punishment for murder should be permanently abolished'. Woolland, *Dark Attractions*, p.266n5.

<sup>44</sup> See Hugh Williams and Margaret Williams, *The Grass is Greener* (London: Samuel French, 1959) and the film adaptation of the play, *The Grass is Greener* (Stanley Donen, US, 1960).

<sup>45</sup> See *Gosford Park* (Robert Altman, US, 2002).



arrested for murder by a pair of incompetent detectives, who foolishly place their faith in the idea of *noblesse oblige*. In this respect, the parodic, if not the reflexive, emphasis is much the same as in Tom Stoppard's *The Real Inspector Hound*, which was first performed in 1965. However, this is but a minor aspect of a multi-faceted or, to use Barnes's own term, 'baroque' comedy.<sup>46</sup> The play apes those country house genres which have modern day settings, yet it also emphasises, by way of contrast, its own, politicised contemporariness.<sup>47</sup> Raymond Williams maintains that

the true fate of the country-house novel was its evolution into the middle-class detective story. It was in its very quality of abstraction, and yet of superficially impressive survival, that the country house could be made the place of isolated assembly of a group of people whose immediate and transient relations were decipherable by an abstract mode of detection rather than by the full and connected analysis of any more general understanding.<sup>48</sup>

Though the play mocks this genre and the form of sociological analysis to which it subscribes, its landscape set heightens the note of abstraction. The set's minimalism pointedly contrasts with the extravagance of the play as a whole. Devoid of historical detail, the landscape negates the ruling class's claim to legitimacy through tradition; the space constitutes a *tabula rasa*, on which J.C. projects his fantasy of an anthropomorphic ecosystem and Jack his hunting scenario. The great chain of being and the countryside as a metaphor for the great chain of being become self-evident illusions. Landownership can bring power, but the play denies the myth that naturalises that power: landscape as a 'natural' aesthetic index of the order and tradition which stem from the ruling class. The play's landscape setting is a paradigmatic void. It symbolises the gap between the idea of landscape in aesthetic cultural discourses and the actual history of the countryside. Through its recurrence, the set becomes a constant against which the extravagant fantasies, schemes, power and aspirations of the aristocracy are measured and thus invalidated throughout the play; the goal-orientated narratives of the ruling class are negated by the landscape's void.

Conversely, the play's iconography and formal structure register plot development. The play is neatly divided into two acts of equal length, which correspond exactly to its

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<sup>46</sup> The play was initially subtitled 'A Baroque Comedy'. Later editions omit this subtitle. See the first edition of the play: Peter Barnes, *The Ruling Class: A Baroque Comedy* (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1969).

<sup>47</sup> See Ian Christie, 'The Ruling Class', essay in *The Ruling Class* DVD (Criterion, 2001).

<sup>48</sup> Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1973), p.249; see also Peter Mandler, *The Fall and Rise of the Stately Home* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997).

bipartite narrative; the formal and informal structures of the play are homologous, since in the first act Jack is J.C. and in the second he is Jack the Ripper. Play and film both signify Jack's metamorphosis, through the *mise-en-scène* in the second half of the plot, before he appears. The drawing room, the main setting in each, is no longer furnished with a cross. Instead, the room is decorated with Victorian furniture and bric-a-brac, which Dinsdale later directs the audience's attention to, in play ('There's all this Victorian bric-a-brac stuff he's got everywhere,') and in the film ('Well what about all this Victorian bric-a-brac he's got all over the place?').<sup>49</sup> In the play, though, the minimalist design for the garden setting does not change for the second act. As before J.C.'s transformation, a metal sun is lowered, illuminated by a spot, and the footlights are lit. While the play's landscape scenes constitute key moments in the narrative, none of the plot developments which occur therein are mirrored, elaborated or otherwise signified in the *mise-en-scène*; despite the heat implied by the metal sun and the intensified lighting, the informational value in the play's landscape design is palpably – and purposefully – cool.

### **Adaptation Through Landscape: Topography in the Film**

Both *The Go-Between* and *The Ruling Class* were chosen to represent Britain in the Cannes Festival competition, in 1971 and 1972 respectively, which suggests that on release they were perceived – at least, in one official quarter – to be similarly representative of British filmmaking at this point.<sup>50</sup> Circumstantial evidence also suggests that the agenda of *The Ruling Class*'s director, Peter Medak, was similar to Joseph Losey's for *The Go-Between*. After Medak and O'Toole left the *Figures in a Landscape* project, Losey took over as director.<sup>51</sup> It is clear from accounts of the film's production that Losey quickly became as disillusioned with the film as Medak had been, feeling impeded by the producer, John Kohn.<sup>52</sup> As Losey then went on to make an

<sup>49</sup> Barnes, *Plays 1*, p. 80.

<sup>50</sup> Myro, 'Cannes Festival: *The Go-Between*', *Variety*, 2 June 1971, pp.15-16; Victor Davis, 'Britain shows its class at Cannes!', *The Daily Express*, 8 May 1972.

<sup>51</sup> Medak asserts that after O'Toole left the production, he followed suit: see Medak's contributions to the commentary on Criterion's DVD release of *The Ruling Class* (2001). David Caute states (without naming Medak) that he was fired by Kohn. David Caute, *Joseph Losey: A Revenge on Life* (London: Faber & Faber, 1994), p.233; *Figures in a Landscape* (Joseph Losey, UK, 1970).

<sup>52</sup> The descriptions of the problems encountered by the production and distribution of *Figures in a Landscape* vary. The most substantial accounts are in: Caute, op. cit., pp.233-236; Edith de Rham, *Joseph Losey* (London: André Deutsch, 1991), pp.203-206; Michael Ciment, *Conversations With Losey* (London and New York: Methuen, 1985), pp.296-303.

aesthetically more satisfying figure-in-landscape narrative film with *The Go-Between*, so Medak (with O'Toole's backing) came to direct *The Ruling Class*. Both *The Go-Between* and *The Ruling Class* also refine *Figures in a Landscape*'s theme of a power struggle between individuals and a dominant ideology: a struggle significantly enacted through, and articulated in, a landscape. Like *The Go-Between*, *The Ruling Class* situates the confrontation in a more concrete generic setting: the English country house.

Thus the minimalist landscape of the play is replaced with the various gardens of Cliveden and Harlaxton in the film. Indeed, the film features a great deal of landscape, shot on location. In particular, those scenes concerning Dr. Herder's lunatic asylum were added to the first half of the film, making it substantially longer than the second half. The representation of the asylum as a converted country house points to the fate of many estates in twentieth-century Britain, turned into public and private institutions (Fig. 3.15).<sup>53</sup> In doing so, it makes the threat posed to the Gurney's land more tangible. At the same time, the implication is that the lunatic asylum as country house precisely mirrors the Gurney estate as it already is, an analogy to which Tucker adds weight: 'Be best all round if the bloody lot of you were put away.' Elvetham Hall was well chosen as the location for the asylum; like Harlaxton, Elvetham is a Victorian mansion with mixed architecture and, as Nikolaus Pevsner and David Lloyd point out, 'not [a house] anyone would praise for beauty'.<sup>54</sup> The house's formal garden also resembles that of Gurney House/Harlaxton: there is a visible resemblance between the film's lunatic asylum and Gurney House.



3.15 The country house converted into a lunatic asylum (location: Elvetham Hall), which resembles a public school.

While the first half of the film features several new landscape scenes, including those at Herder's asylum, the second act contains a short new hunt scene, set in a picturesque

<sup>53</sup> See Williams, op. cit., p.250.

<sup>54</sup> Nikolaus Pevsner and David Lloyd, *The Buildings of England: Hampshire and the Isle of Wight* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967), pp.210-211.

landscape. These additions notwithstanding, the film largely adheres to the play's duplex plot structure; during the original exhibition of the film in the UK, the intermission was placed at the same point as in the play: directly after J.C.'s confrontation with McKyle, the electric messiah, and before his re-emergence as Jack the Ripper.<sup>55</sup> The narrative structure of the film, however, is registered as much in the landscapes as it is in the other aspects of *mise-en-scène*, as the various formal gardens seen in the first half of the film (including those at Herder's asylum) are followed by a range of picturesque landscapes in the second half. The way in which this general, typological grouping of landscapes serves as an index of plot structure, as well as the typology's historiographical basis, will be discussed in the next section of the chapter. Here, it is imperative to note the way in which landscape characterises and enables *The Ruling Class*'s transition from stage to screen; the unchanging minimalist landscapes in the play represent a constant, against which plot developments are measured. In contrast, the shift in landscape styles in the film registers the progression of the plot and in this way contributes to the narrative dynamic of the image.

The landscape's role in plotting is based on general typology, yet, on the other hand, the locations were also chosen with meticulous regard to specific associations. The sense of age-old aristocratic lineage is bolstered by the use of Cliveden, as the original estate was built by George Villiers, The Duke of Buckingham, from whom James Villiers (Dinsdale) was directly descended.<sup>56</sup> At the same time, Cliveden contributes to the film's aura of topicality: as Ian Christie notes, 'both play and film appeared [soon after] the great Profumo-Keeler society scandal of 1963, which rocked the British government.'<sup>57</sup> John Profumo's brief liaison with Christine Keeler in 1961 began in the grounds of Cliveden, not far from the Long Garden, where Medak later shot the scene in which J.C. agrees to Grace's request for a white wedding (Figs. 3.10-3.11).<sup>58</sup> Although the scene's dialogue is lifted verbatim from the play, its themes of seduction, duplicity

<sup>55</sup> Peter Medak, in the commentary on the Criterion DVD release of *The Ruling Class* (2001).

<sup>56</sup> Norman Rose, *The Cliveden Set: Portrait of an Exclusive Fraternity* (London: Pimlico, 2001), p.9; Anonymous, 'James Villiers: Biography', in *Press Book for The Ruling Class* [in the BFI Library]; Anonymous, 'Obituary: James Villiers', *The Daily Telegraph*, 27 January 1998, p.29; Dermot Hill, Untitled, *T.V. Times* 14 October 1977.

Hugh Montgomery-Massingberd, 'The Perfect Gentleman', *The Daily Telegraph*, 16 January 1991, p.17; Tom Vallance, 'James Villiers', *The Independent* 21 January 1998.

<sup>57</sup> Christie, 'The Ruling Class', Criterion essay.

<sup>58</sup> See James Crathorne, *Cliveden: The Place and The People* (London: Collins & Brown, 1995), pp.184-190.

and unwitting self-destruction become all the more politically resonant when placed in the context of Cliveden. Like Keeler, Grace is an objectified woman: a lower class parvenu, who has been permitted access to the country estate mainly for her sexual charms. Just as Keeler's sexual conquests included important figures from both sides of the Cold War, so Grace is at one point both Charles's mistress and J.C.'s 'Marguerite'; J.C.'s earlier mention of Kremlin plots retrospectively acquires a broader significance when we see the Cliveden scene.

Serendipitously or intentionally, the choice of Harlaxton directs to several parallels between the film's storyline and the history of the house's inhabitants. Jack's initial fixation with a shot-gun and his recollection that 'it's a sign of normalcy in our circle to slaughter anything that moves' echo the character of Harlaxton's owner at the start of the twentieth century, Thomas Pearson Gregory, 'one of the best shots in England'.<sup>59</sup> Gregory was popularly known as 'the man with the gun', because he was always seen carrying one.<sup>60</sup> Perhaps accidentally, Jack shoots a poacher, who is then hounded from the estate by Charles and some gamekeepers; as a magistrate, Gregory was famous for being 'especially stern with poachers'.<sup>61</sup> The scene, as with the denouement in the House of Lords, also recalls *Kind Hearts and Coronets*.

The eagerness with which Jack and others clamour for the reintroduction of the death penalty contrasts ironically with the reputation of Violet Van der Elst, who bought, and moved into, Harlaxton in 1937, two years after Gregory's death.<sup>62</sup> She single-handedly waged one of the most committed, high profile campaigns against capital punishment: like J.C., Van der Elst was a benevolent eccentric, who was often seen riding a tricycle.<sup>63</sup> In temperament, J.C. also uncannily resembles the Jesuits, who succeeded Van der Elst in ownership. As if in anticipation of J.C.'s cross, The Society of Jesus

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<sup>59</sup> Graddon Rowlands, 'Harlaxton's Varied Inhabitants', in *The Harlaxton Manor Guide Book* (Harlaxton College, 1984); reproduced at <http://www.ueharlax.ac.uk/harlaxton/inhabitantsj.htm> [Accessed 25/06/2006].

<sup>60</sup> Charles Neilson Gattey, *The Incredible Mrs. Van der Elst* (London: Leslie Frewin, 1972), p.162.

<sup>61</sup> Murden, *Harlaxton Through the Ages*, p.15.

<sup>62</sup> Douglas Goodlad's review of the film remarks on the irony of the 13<sup>th</sup> Earl's hanging misadventure being placed in the context of Van der Elst's old home. See Douglas Goodland, 'Fun If You Don't Take Offence', *The Leicester Chronicle*, 3 November 1972.

<sup>63</sup> Gattey, op. cit., pp.42, 167. See also Rowlands, op. cit. In *Let Him Have It* (Peter Medak, UK, 1991), Medak documents the most famous case of miscarried justice used by campaigners against capital punishment as evidence of the penal system's immorality. James Villiers appears in this film, again playing an unsympathetic upper class character.



installed an altar in Harlaxton's Great Hall.<sup>64</sup> It is indicative that J.C.'s affinity is with the nouveau riche or communal occupants of the house, while Jack – the Ripper – resembles one of the house's legitimate heirs.

The film's painstaking reproduction of Harlaxton Manor's architecture reinforces these associations. Following the example set by *The Go-Between's* innovative meditation on Melton Constable Hall, Medak's focus is partly local. However, *The Ruling Class* was not shot entirely on location. Its successes as spectacle are attributable as much to a virtuosic reanimation of old techniques as to experimentation with location shooting. Some of the interior scenes, notably those on the baroque staircase, were shot on location at Harlaxton (Fig. 3.16). However, the majority were filmed at Twickenham Studios, where the production designer, Peter Murton built breathtaking sets. With the same technical precision he applied to his House of Lords set, Murton recreated rooms from Harlaxton in intricate detail, with paintings on loan from the house added to the *mise-en-scène* (Figs. 3.17-3.18).<sup>65</sup> In some respects, the general approach could be said to have revived the studio artistry of 1940s and early 1950s English films.<sup>66</sup> More specifically, however, the detailed, total recreation of an actual country house interior was anything but traditional.<sup>67</sup>



3.16 Location interior: the baroque staircase at Harlaxton.



3.17 Studio re-creation of Harlaxton's hall.



3.18 Studio re-creation of bedroom at Harlaxton.

Compare *The Ruling Class* with *The Grass is Greener*, another country house film adapted from a play with a modern day setting.<sup>68</sup> Donen's film begins with a montage of snapshots of country houses, accompanied by Noël Coward's song, 'The Stately Homes of England'.<sup>69</sup> This inclusive, generalised perspective of country estates

<sup>64</sup> Rowlands, op. cit.

<sup>65</sup> See *The Ruling Class: Press Book* [in the BFI Library].

<sup>66</sup> Christie, 'The Ruling Class', Criterion essay.

<sup>67</sup> Even the set for Henry and Edith D'Ascoyne's house only references Gore Court's facade: it is not a precise reproduction of the location's interior.

<sup>68</sup> *The Grass is Greener* (Stanley Donen, US, 1960).

<sup>69</sup> The use of this song is indicative: Donen's film's tone has much in common with that of Coward's lyrics.



exemplifies the *The Grass is Greener*'s detached, apolitical approach as a whole. Despite some location shooting, it features many interior sets, not based on any real country house's interior architecture. The film does not deconstruct any specific, localised estate, but uses the general concept of the stately home as a backdrop for what is essentially nothing more than a comedy of manners. Conversely, Medak and crew match Losey's pioneering invocation of local history in a country estate film, though their technique is different from his, as is the final result; a fictional whole is constructed from a patchwork of substantive landscapes from the two locations.

So, did the use in *The Ruling Class* of substantive, material landscapes develop, or diverge from, the play's depiction of landscape? Reviews of the adaptation anticipated heritage criticism, arguing that the film's landscape locations introduce an incongruous 'naturalism' to the discourse, which detracts from the play's narrative. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the strongest articulation of this complaint came from a regional reviewer, based near enough to Harlaxton Manor to be more sensitive to its screen presence. Douglas Goodlad asserts that

Use of this Lincolnshire setting...quenches much of Barnes's satire. Oak panelling and well-drilled flower beds, grass and trees and lolloping hounds add up to a realism which conflicts seriously with the work of a witty playwright whose declared intention was to cock a snook at naturalism.<sup>70</sup>

Other reviewers, such as Gordon Cow made more or less the same point, without the same emphasis on local detail:

Under the direction of Peter Medak, naturalism is positively rampant. We see the exterior and grounds of a real stately home, and we are confronted by interior sets that look real as well.<sup>71</sup>

In some cases it was argued that such a non-naturalistic play could not be satisfactorily adapted as a film, because of film's ostensible qualities as a specifically mimetic medium: Derek Malcolm argues 'what was first and foremost a theatrical experience hardly translates into a properly cinematic one.'<sup>72</sup>

Goodlad and Cow's use of the term 'naturalism' is problematical: the cause is an endemic confusion in criticism of at least two irreconcilable notions of 'naturalism'. In

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<sup>70</sup> Goodlad, op. cit.

<sup>71</sup> Gordon Cow, 'Review of *The Ruling Class*', *Films and Filming* vol.18, no.10, July 1972, p.50. See also George Melly, 'Review of *The Ruling Class*', *The Observer*, 28 May 1972.

<sup>72</sup> Malcolm, 'Review of *The Ruling Class*', *The Guardian*, 25 May 1972.

film production, ‘naturalistic landscape’ has frequently been used to mean landscape shot on location.<sup>73</sup> Though this usage implies a more ‘realistic’ representation of landscape, (that is, compared with studio sets or painted backdrops) it excludes any observation about specific technical, dramatic or aesthetic contexts. It could, for instance be applied to landscape footage shot on location and combined via back-projection with studio sets, which would effectively – if not obtrusively – put the observed landscape at one remove.<sup>74</sup>

The action taking place in the landscape could be entirely fantastical. The landscape itself might be a geometric garden or a representation of a mythical scene. In film criticism this usage is, as in the case of Goodlad and Cow’s reviews, almost always confused with ‘naturalism’ in the broad literary sense of dramatic realism. This conflation is erroneously to presume that a camera cannot portray an actual landscape in a fanciful manner. There are, in any case, other examples of films with links to the theatrical anti-naturalism of the 1950s and 1960s which used substantial location shooting. Peter Brook, a figurehead in Brechtian theatre in the UK, shot *Lord of the Flies* entirely on location.<sup>75</sup> The antithesis posited by the aforementioned critics between anti-naturalistic plays and location films is a fallacy, as is the assumption that landscape gardens themselves are necessarily naturalistic – that they always mimetically represent ‘nature’.

A landscape garden is, after all, not just raw material placed in front of the camera, but, considered either *in situ* or as represented in the filmic text, an artwork itself – whether representational or abstract. In fact, English formal gardens were and are predisposed to abstract geometric design or symbolism, and rarely to mimetic representation, or themes of nature. The picturesque garden, which succeeded, but never entirely replaced, the formal garden, tends towards a naturalistic arrangement, with artifice all but concealed in the composition. It always already represents ‘nature’, or, rather, how eighteenth century theorists believed nature should look when drawn: as Walter John Hipple argues, at the height of the term’s popularity in landscape theory,

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<sup>73</sup> Michael Powell, for example, uses the term several times in this way in the first part of his autobiography: Michael Powell, *A Life In Movies: An Autobiography* (London: Faber & Faber, 2000), pp. 166, 323.

<sup>74</sup> Powell uses the term in this connection: *ibid.*, p. 166

<sup>75</sup> *Lord of the Flies* (Peter Brook, US, 1963).

when applied to scenes in nature, and *sometimes when applied to imitations of these on canvas or in words*, [“picturesque”] meant “eminently suitable for pictorial representation,” as affording a well-composed picture, with suitably varied and harmonized form, colors, and lights.<sup>76</sup> (My italics)

This implies that pictorial or verbal representation of picturesque scenes can produce *mise-en-abyme*; since the picturesque landscape is always already predisposed to artistic composition, it also implies it. To spot the ideal representation of nature in a landscape garden is to acknowledge the *a priori* human intervention in the landscape. However well artifice is buried in the picturesque garden, it always rises back to the surface through the spectator’s appreciation of its merits. Besides, whatever their role in the popularisation of theatrical naturalism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, picturesque landscapes often contain(ed) mock Gothic elements such as dilapidated ornamental buildings, which tipped the composition towards myth and fantasy.<sup>77</sup>

As location filming became cheaper and more practical through the 1960s, it became more common for films to be made on location in landscape gardens. Far from necessarily imposing any mode of dramatic realism, this tendency made it equally likely for there to be a dialogue between the film’s narrative and the character of the site, be that character naturalistic, in any sense, or entirely fantastical, or something of a mixture of the two. *The Go-Between* encompasses both modes, as its representation of the estate is always poised between the older Leo’s metadiegetic superstition and the younger Leo’s phenomenological exploration of the grounds.

The landscape architecture at Harlaxton and Cliveden which appears in the film version of *The Ruling Class* features nothing as pointedly artificial as the play’s metal sun, but it is hardly naturalistic, especially as represented on screen. Cliveden’s Long Garden, with its statuary from the *Commedia dell’arte*, is a self-conscious treatment of love as performance (Figs. 3.10-3.11): as we will see, the film exploits and plays up the garden’s theatricality. The Russian Valley is picturesque, but its wooded coulisses are separated by a patently man-made, curved lawn, which detracts from the ‘natural’ look of the overall garden (Fig. 3.12). The scene which takes place here is imbued with a

<sup>76</sup> Walter John Hipple, Jr., *The Beautiful, The Sublime & The Picturesque In Eighteenth-Century British Aesthetic Theory* (Carbondale: The Southern Illinois University Press, 1957), p.186.

<sup>77</sup> William Kent, an early picturesque landscape gardener, was also a stage designer. See John Dixon Hunt, *The Picturesque Garden in Europe* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2003), p.26.

Gothic iconography which further distances the setting from any appearance of naturalism. The play attacks the aesthetic delusions of the ruling class, by negating the materiality of landscape. The film uses the exact opposite means, to make the same political point. It extrapolates the abstract aesthetic world of the landed estate, exaggerating its fantasticality. It does this on two levels: that of general topography and that of specific aesthetic and historical character. The latter level incorporates historiography: I deal with it in the next section. The former level relates particularly to the adaptation process, the plot's transference from a theatrical stage to a filmic world.

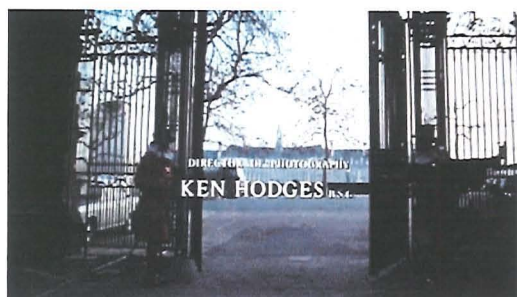
In terms of this wider topography *The Ruling Class* does not follow *The Go-Between's* lead. While *The Go-Between* broke new technical ground in order to achieve a more holistic depiction of an actual, single country estate and its environs, *The Ruling Class's* ostensibly seamless fictional world sutures together landscapes 90 miles apart, in Harlaxton and Cliveden. For all of the film's success in synthesising disparate landscapes and studio sets into an organic whole, the aesthetic emphasis of *The Ruling Class* remains one of atomism; the individual contribution of each section of the chosen gardens is of more consequence to the film's discourse than the character of any single estate. Sections of Cliveden's and Harlaxton's estates are taken out of context and interpolated into a bipartite plot structure of formal gardens followed by picturesque landscapes. It is precisely this use of atomism to construct a general typology which defines the film's original approach to landscape in narration.

The various landscapes that appear in the film are woven into a power structure, which the film maps from its opening. As the credits roll, after the 13<sup>th</sup> Earl has addressed the Society of St George in London, a montage shows us his car's point of view as he is driven through the city, in a deliriously nonsensical trajectory: from Banqueting Hall (Fig. 3.19) to Chicheley Street behind County Hall (Fig. 3.20); back over the Thames to Trafalgar Square (Fig. 3.21); then, in the country, through Shere, a Surrey village (Fig. 3.23);<sup>78</sup> finally arriving at 'Gurney House in Bedfordshire' (Harlaxton Manor, in Lincolnshire; Fig. 3.24). The sense of geographical absurdity is heightened by the ludicrousness of the salutes to the earl in several shots (Figs. 3.20, 3.22, 3.23), yet the tone of the sequence, as of the whole film, is ambivalent. While its specific geography is

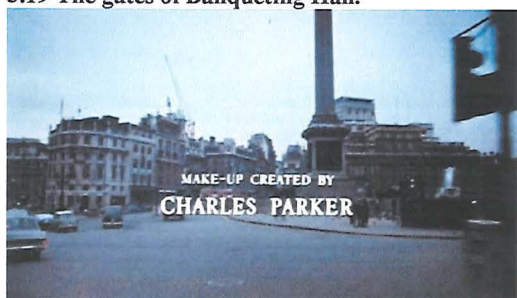
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<sup>78</sup> See the *The Ruling Class: Press Book* [in the BFI Library].

self-evidently incredible, the general intention of the sequence – from city to country – makes a serious political observation. The city is depicted as the ostensible locus of power: all of the buildings shown are associated with government; Trafalgar Square commemorates English military superiority; all the saluting figures in the city wear uniforms. The earl's importance in this power structure is signalled by the salutes. His power, though, is traced back to the country, to his seat.



3.19 The gates of Banqueting Hall.



3.21 Trafalgar Square.



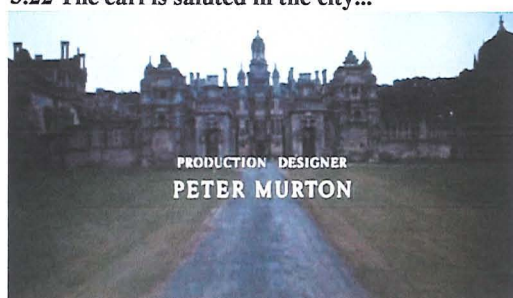
3.23...and in the country: Shere, in Surrey.



3.20 Chicheley Street.



3.22 The earl is saluted in the city...



3.24 Gurney House, in Bedfordshire (Harlaxton Manor, in Lincolnshire).

As in Medak's film adaptation of Peter Nichols's *A Day in the Death of Joe Egg*, car journeys play an integral role in the transposition of a stage-bound theatrical plot into a dynamic filmic plot.<sup>79</sup> There is a series of car arrivals at Gurney House: those of the 13<sup>th</sup> Earl, Dr. Herder, Truscott and Brockett – a judge, a psychiatrist, the master of the court of protection and a policeman. On his first visit to the estate, Dr. Herder is collected from the railway station by Claire and driven back to the estate in her limousine. The

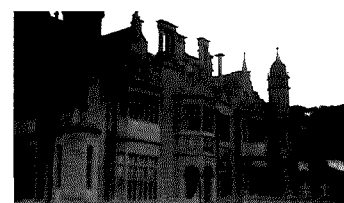
<sup>79</sup> *A Day in the Death of Joe Egg* (Peter Medak, UK, 1972).

audience is reminded of the wider national context of the story by a map of England outside the station (Fig. 3.25). This scene, as with the other arrivals, suggests an English network of power: each of the newcomers is a representative of a nationally important institution. The hub of this network is Gurney House.



3.25 One of several arrivals, placed in a national context by the railway station and its map.

Like *The Go-Between*, *The Ruling Class* reflects Marxist landscape historiography in its deconstruction of a landed estate: just as *The Go-Between* maps the power extending locally from a central country house across a radial landscape, *The Ruling Class* charts on a national level a power structure based on landownership. This difference in perspective – national rather than local – corresponds to the difference in tone between the two films. The Maudsleys' estate may in one respect be a synecdoche for the landed class's property in its entirety. More emphatically, though, *The Go-Between* asserts that the true degree of harm caused by the socio-economic apparatus of landownership can only be measured in terms of unique, localised, inextricably personal tragedies. *The Ruling Class* charts the insidiousness of the same – albeit now debilitated – system on a national, as well as a local scale. The film's larger purview is both convincing and absurd; the general implication that power still largely lies with the landed gentry is credible, but the specific localisation – Gurney House as the centre of power – absurdly literalises the point. Though it sincerely stresses that the landed class is still the ruling class, the film simultaneously burlesques the tendency in fiction to use a single estate as a synecdoche for landed power.



3.26-3.28 The camera traces Gurney House/Harlaxton Manor's picturesque skyline, appropriately accompanied by the discordant music at the wedding reception.



The representation of landscape architecture plays a key role in the film's burlesque treatment of the landed estate as power. The grotesquerie and grandiloquence of Harlaxton's 'picturesque skyline and varied modelling' is traced by the camera after the wedding scene, as if to complement the string quartet's discordant music which is heard at the same time (Figs. 3.26-3.28).<sup>80</sup> This is the first hint that events are to take a turn for the worse; in the second, Gothic half of the film, the house's façade appears more frequently. Harlaxton's façade is almost always shadowed:<sup>81</sup> as Pevsner and Harris argue, 'In terms of silhouette, Harlaxton exploits the potentialities of the site to the full'.<sup>82</sup> John Piper's painting of Harlaxton from the same year as *The Ruling Class*'s release uses abstract colour contrast to emphasise the façade's gloom and hence the picturesque skyline of the house.<sup>83</sup> Exemplifying the continued dialogue between English fantasy cinema and neo-romanticism, *The Ruling Class* similarly stresses this skyline.<sup>84</sup> As the literalised embodiment of landed power, Harlaxton's extravagance encapsulates the film's deliberately overstated power relations. The film also responds to Soane's call for picturesque architecture to be 'a portrait of the character of their inhabitants'.<sup>85</sup> As the film's *genius loci*, the 14<sup>th</sup> Earl becomes more like the Gothic character of the house as the narrative progresses. Likewise, he becomes more like the film's other Gothic nineteenth century façade – that of the Houses of Parliament.

Having fully metamorphosed into Jack the Ripper, he screams and stretches his arms to the edge of the frame. The camera then tilts to a higher angle (Fig. 3.29), before a cut to a high angle shot of the Houses of Parliament (Fig. 3.30). The screaming bridges the cut, stressing the parallel created between the image of the demented earl and the façade. There is a graphic match between Jack's posture and the shape of the building: his hands resemble the two towers, the Clock Tower and Victoria Tower. The cut is

<sup>80</sup> Mark Girouard, *The Victorian Country House* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1979), p.93.

<sup>81</sup> Tudor-Craig, 'Foreward' to *The Harlaxton Manor Guide Book*.

<sup>82</sup> Nikolaus Pevsner and John Harris, *The Buildings of England: Lincolnshire* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1964), pp.561-562.

<sup>83</sup> The painting is reproduced in several books, including: Anthony West, *John Piper* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1979), p.192.

<sup>84</sup> See David Mellor (ed.), *A Paradise Lost: The Neo-Romantic Imagination in Britain 1935-55* (London: Lund Humphries, 1987), especially Nannette Aldred's essay, 'A Canterbury Tale: Powell and Pressburger's Film Fantasies of Britain', pp.117-124.

<sup>85</sup> Caroline van Eck, "'The splendid effects of architecture, and its power to affect the mind": the workings of Picturesque association', in Jan Birksted (ed.), *Landscapes of Memory and Experience* (London: Spon Press, 2000), p.251.

another example of the film's absurdly sudden leaps from the local to the national, from the private to the public.



3.29 An indicative cut links the 14<sup>th</sup> Earl screaming dementedly, with outstretched arms...



3.30...with the Houses of Parliament. There is a graphic match between Jack's posture and the architecture; his hands are raised like the two flanking towers, the Clock Tower and Victoria Tower.

## Landscape as History in the Film

As a 'personal fantasy', Harlaxton Manor is an appropriate location for the 14<sup>th</sup> Earl's series of fantasies.<sup>86</sup> All of the film's landscape architecture is fitted into a schema, which mirrors plot and character. Historical landscapes overtly reflect and embellish narrative structure. They play a uniquely defined, pointed structural role. The first half of the film is predicated on formal landscapes, the second on picturesqueness. The dichotomy of landscape styles exactly matches the film's bi-partite narrative. The fundamental transition from the regularity of the formal gardens to the variety, surprise and concealment of the picturesque landscapes occurs with decisive instantaneity when the 14<sup>th</sup> Earl metamorphoses from J.C., the god of love, to Jack the Ripper. The shift in landscape modes thus marks the film's narrative twist. Moreover, each mode of landscape corresponds to one of Jack's personas; each half of *The Ruling Class* is characterised by a landscape design style which is imbued with a precise psychological bearing. The film's contrasting landscape modes are both motivated by the protagonist's activities and fantasies. As Dr. Herder remarks, 'His idea of the world we live in is determined solely by his feelings. What he feels is, is.' When, as J.C., he pursues an exuberant courtship and marriage with Grace Shelley, an apposite context is provided by a series of formal landscapes mixing allegorical, theatrical and emblematic elements.

<sup>86</sup> Girouard, op. cit., p.93.

Conversely, his hunting exploits as Jack the Ripper are plotted through several expansive picturesque landscapes.

The film mobilises certain generalised historical associations pertinent to each landscape mode. Thus, after J.C. declares that a 'love isn't just for one season', a ritual of courtly love – or an ironic imitation of it – is depicted next to yew topiaries resembling birds: emblems of mating (Fig. 3.34). Allegorical gardens of love, ubiquitous in the Renaissance, often personified flowers and animals;<sup>87</sup> in an earlier scene, J.C. takes this prosopopoeia literally, when he talks to the flowers ('No water in days? Sorry!'). Later he presents flowers to Grace Shelley, reassuring her: 'It's all right. They agreed to be cut.' In the topiary scene, this anthropomorphism is inverted as J.C. and Grace (dressed as Dumas *fils*'s Marguerite Gautier) court each other, behaving as if they were birds (Figs. 3.35-3.36).

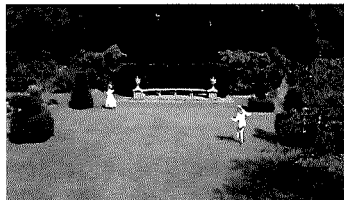
### The Topiary Scene (Filmed in Cliveden's Long Garden):



3.31-3.32 The camera tracks towards Grace (posing as Marguerite), who is at the exedra, as J.C. enters the frame.



3.33 J.C. takes flight like a bird. As he chases Grace out of the frame...



3.34...there is a cut to a high-angle extreme long shot, which positions the viewers as if they were sitting in the gods in a theatre. Note the bird topiary.



3.35 J.C. woos Grace by imitating the bird topiary.



3.36 She responds.



3.37 Cut back to the high-angle shot.



3.38 As they walk off left...



3.39...there is a 90° edit to face them. Note the masquer statuary.

<sup>87</sup> Christopher Hussey, *The Picturesque: Studies in a Point of View* (London: Frank Cass & Co, 1967), p.22.



3.40 The symmetrical hedge. A biblical garden: Gethsemane or Eden?



3.41 Now J.C. has fallen into the trap, by agreeing to marry Grace...



3.42...the camera rises in a crane shot, emphasising the sense of entrapment, as J.C. is surrounded by the hedges.

The allegorical tendency of the scene is coupled with elements from other types of formal gardens, the products of other *Zeitgeists*. Topiary was at its most prominent in English gardening during the seventeenth century, the era in which garden theatres became popular with the construction of London's pleasure gardens at Ranelagh and Vauxhall.<sup>88</sup> The scene opens with J.C. finding 'Marguerite' on an exedra, or conversation seat (Figs. 3.31-3.32). Exedras were a recurrent feature of garden theatres. As John Dixon Hunt points out, in their basic form they

were both vantage points whence to watch other events and stages where visitors themselves were made to feel they constituted the garden dramas.<sup>89</sup>

This reflexivity, in which garden encounters are narrativised and players in garden scenes become self-aware, inflects J.C.'s and Grace's meeting. They are both playing roles, J.C. as the god of love, Grace as Marguerite Gautier, even though J.C. has confused his role with his real identity. They pursue each other as birds in a static high-angle crane shot, the set-up of which is repeated after two intervening close-ups. In these high-angle shots, the camera's vantage point is raised as if seated in the gods in a theatre (Fig. 3.34), while the *mise-en-scène* is entirely theatrical; a symmetrical garden is presented, with an arboreal backdrop, a hedge dado, and discrete coulisses in the form of topiary, which indicate the sides of the 'stage'. The general impression is of a proscenium arch theatre with tiered seating, while the central, self-consciously theatrical prop on stage is the exedra.

The exedra neatly conflates the two *milieux* of *La Dame aux Camélias*: in Dumas fils's novel and play, Marguerite frequents the theatres of Paris, where she is seen holding a

<sup>88</sup> Michael Symes, *A Glossary of Garden History* (Princes Risborough, Buckinghamshire: Shire Publications, 2000), pp.121-122; John Dixon Hunt, *Gardens and the Picturesque: Studies in the History of Landscape Architecture* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: MIT Press, 1994), pp.49-73.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, p.54.



bunch of camellias. With Armand she escapes the excesses of the city, to find a short-lived happiness in the country, at Bougival. There, Armand and Marguerite visit an *auberge*, the Point du Jour, 'hôtel de semaine, guinguette le dimanche', (hotel in the week, pleasure garden on Sundays).<sup>90</sup> The house which they rent there is also memorable for its garden:

devant la maison, une pelouse verte, unie comme du velours, et derrière le bâtiment un petit bois de plein mystérieuses retraites.<sup>91</sup>

(in front of the house, a green lawn, smooth like velvet, and, behind the building, a small wood full of mysterious retreats.)

The iconographies of Marguerite's two worlds are unified in the theatrical garden device of the exedra. As with the rest of the garden, the comedy derives from the quietly iconoclastic conflation of two disparate elements. The tragedy of Marguerite's inexorable return from the restorative gardens of Bougival to the theatrical dissipation of Paris is succinctly and disrespectfully undone as the two distinct spheres of activity are artfully conflated in *The Ruling Class's* exedra.

For all of its popular currency as a melodrama, Dumas *fil's* original novel has been seen as symptomatic of a trend of literary realism in the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>92</sup> *The Ruling Class's* subversion of *La Dame aux Camélias* is, by extension, also a subversion of a particular mode of popular realism. The reflexive emphasis on theatricality and performance in the scene undermines its own credibility. The scene typifies affect in this film as a whole. Maynard Mack argues that

the comic artist subordinates the presentation of life as experience, where the relationship between ourselves and the characters experiencing it is a primary one, to the presentation of life as a spectacle, where the primary relation is between himself and us as onlookers.<sup>93</sup>

The scene, with all its theatrical references, both employs and underscores exactly this distance between comic spectacle and audience. Although *The Ruling Class* frequently

<sup>90</sup> Alexandre Dumas *fil's*, *La Dame aux Camélias* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1963), p.153.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, p.155.

<sup>92</sup> See David Coward, 'Introduction', in Alexandre Dumas *fil's*, *La Dame aux Camélias*, translated by David Coward (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp.xvi.

<sup>93</sup> Quoted in Ian Watt, 'The first paragraph of *The Ambassadors*', in David Lodge (ed.), *20<sup>th</sup> Century Literary Criticism: A Reader* (London: Longman, 1972), p.537.

presents characters' subjective points of view, the comic thrust of the film inhibits identification with any character. The audience is emotionally distanced from the spectacle performed in the Long Garden. Far removed from Dumas's tragic tone, this is, as J.C. puts it, a self-conscious 'love scene'. When J.C. announces this and begins to act as a bird, a masque is implied, to which Grace quickly adapts, as she begins to imitate the bird topiary (Fig. 3.34).<sup>94</sup> That this is self-conscious mimicry is indicated by the two close-ups respectively depicting J.C. and Grace posing as birds and whistling, next to topiary (Fig. 3.35-3.36). However, since we see J.C.'s bird impression before we are shown the topiary (Fig. 3.33), and likewise hear his bird tweets before the soundtrack introduces real bird noises, it would be more precise to say that the diegetic garden responds to the stimulus of J.C.'s performance; editing is carefully used to structure the shots of the location. Later in the sequence, after the cut to the symmetrical hedge pattern, masquer statues are visible in the background (Fig. 3.39), as if in response to the masque which J.C. and Grace have enacted.

It is at this point, however, that the dialogue invests the sequence with a biblical frame of reference (Fig. 3.40):

Grace: You deserve a big kiss.

J.C.: Not here in the garden. Last time I was kissed in a garden, it turned out rather awkward.

Grace: Oh, but Judas was a man.

J.C.: Yes, strange business. [Pause] Who are you?

Grace: A woman

J.C.: Descended from Eve?

On one the hand, this exchange indicates an allegory in the landscape, (con)fusing two biblical spaces: the garden is Eden/Gethsemane and J.C. (God) is about to be betrayed by Grace (Eve/Judas). The formal garden often acquired a biblical symbolic value in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, 'pitted by analogy with Eden, a nature made meaningful by pattern and design,' though it is unlikely that Eden was ever confused with Gethsemane in this manner.<sup>95</sup> On the other hand, the dialogue can be taken literally – from J.C.'s point of view, since he believes himself to be God. From his perspective,

<sup>94</sup> See Hussey, op. cit., p.22: the Renaissance tendency for personification in scenery 'is carried to its extreme in the Court masques for which Inigo Jones designed the costumes and scenery.'

<sup>95</sup> Simon Watney, 'Gardens of Speculation: Landscape in *The Draughtsman's Contract*', *Undercut*, no.7/8, Spring 1983, p.7.



the references are part of what he believes to be his personal history; the garden is not allegorical, but directly associative.

The formal gardens in the first half of the film thus negotiate a wide range of various generalised characteristics of garden styles spanning the Middle Ages to the Restoration and the emblematic mode of gardening, as well as incorporating Dumas *fils*'s gardens. This catholicity is partly facilitated (and compounded) by the film's production methodology; landscapes from two disparate locations, Harlaxton Manor and Cliveden, which are 90 miles apart, are sutured together, to form the grounds of the entirely fictional Gurney House in Bedfordshire; Harlaxton is in Lincolnshire, Cliveden in Buckinghamshire.

*The Ruling Class* presents an ostensibly seamless combination of the various gardens at Harlaxton and Cliveden, but in doing so makes a virtue of catholicity and pastiche. Compare this with *The Go-Between*'s Melton Constable Hall, which is all but unadulterated on screen (the Blickling flower garden is the only exception), acquires intradiegetic authenticity by virtue of its situation in Norfolk, as well as authenticity *hors texte* by its proximity to West Bradenham Hall, and contains several landscapes, for example its Capability Brown deer park, which had groundbreaking designs when constructed.

By contrast, *The Ruling Class*'s systematic adulteration of its locations' grounds exaggerates their various pastiches. Furthermore, as the film's plot embellishes the pro-filmic landscapes, so their archetypal features are accentuated. In the Long Garden, this is achieved by the emphasis on incongruity. J.C.'s dialogue gives rise to Christian associations, with his allusions to Eden and Gethsemane. The predominant facets of the Long Garden on screen, though, are reminiscent of Restoration theatre gardens: topiary was popular in gardens of this era, but was usually excluded from representations of Eden, as it was seen as a sign of fallen man's ingenuity rather than characteristic of God's gardening.<sup>96</sup> From a historiographical perspective, J.C.'s religious references seem out place in a garden with topiary. However, the film exploits this contradiction; the conspicuous conceit of the garden represents the threat his family's scheme poses to

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<sup>96</sup> Symes, *op. cit.*, p.121; Hunt, *op. cit.*, p.77.

him. J.C. alludes to Judas in the middle of a symmetrical hedge pattern: the scene is driven by dramatic irony, as J.C. is apparently unaware of the aptness of his reference. The shot suggests that J.C. is subjugated to the designs of the aristocracy with the same stringency as the formal garden, with its ornate hedges, is cultivated. The crane movement up to a high angle emphasises J.C.'s entrapment (Figs. 3.41-3.42). The film's association between formal gardens and imprisonment is reinforced by its scenes set in Dr. Herder's lunatic asylum, where inmates stroll through the formal grounds in which they have been incarcerated, uncannily resembling children in a public school (Fig. 3.15): a resemblance highlighted by Herder's references to public school in conversation with Charles. Just as he mentions school as a likely cause for J.C.'s schizophrenia, the inmates are revealed by the camera.

The extravagant range of styles in the film's formal gardens is entirely consistent with J.C.'s demented flow of cultural references, from St. Francis to W.C. Fields – a flow in which 'diversity, distinction and variety [are] all clearly rolled up into the unity of universal love.' It has another purpose, though: the gardens lose historical and geographical specificity, as various types of regularity are conflated – or 'rolled up' – into a generalised, archetypal formal landscape. 'Diversity, distinction and variety' are, conversely, the most commonly listed traits of an archetypal picturesque. It is against this picturesque archetype that the 'rolled up' formal garden archetype is apposed by the film.

Cliveden's Long Garden forms the key space in a network of diegetic landscapes in the first half of the film: the most significant location in the second half is the same estate's Russian Valley. This appears in the scene in which Jack goes hunting on foot and shoots the poacher. In consonance with the archetypal picturesque structure of partial concealment and measured revelation, the shape of the landscape is gradually unveiled through the course of the scene. Comparison with the garden style of the film's first half is elicited by the fact that the compositional sequence is similar to that of the Long Garden sequence; as in the Long Garden, a tableau (Fig. 3.45) is succeeded by a vista (Fig. 3.47), though this scene returns to an asymmetrical tableau (Fig. 3.48). In contrast with the Long Garden, the layout of the plants is entirely irregular. The symmetrical tableau, formed by the family, Tucker, Dr. Herder and two anonymous gamekeepers, is offset by an informal backdrop of evergreens, an uneven carpet of wild foliage on

uncultivated soil and a picturesque prop in the form of a piece of tree trunk, on which Jack sits. The vista, much longer than that of the Long Garden, is composed as an undulating perspective across a forest lawn, with arboreal screens demarcating the sides (Fig. 3.47). The vista is terminated by a small incline, which thus partially conceals the horizon and the expanse of the valley. Both of these compositions achieve the picturesque balance between the look of naturalness ('untouched' nature) and painterliness:<sup>97</sup> in terms of contours, the vista is not dissimilar to Thomas Girtin's *The Sandy Lane*, which Hussey uses to exemplify picturesque composition (Fig. 3.55).<sup>98</sup>

### The Hunting Scene (Filmed in Cliveden's Russian Valley):



3.43 A picturesque space: note the stairs at the top right of the frame.



3.44 Dinsdale, caught in the brambles.



3.45 The symmetrical tableau.



3.46 After being shot by Jack, a poacher comes out of his hiding place...



3.47...and is chased along the vista.



3.48 The asymmetrical tableau.



3.49 Jack's Victorian clothes: now he is in black, while Grace is still in white.



3.50 The full revelation of Jack's psychosis is marked...



3.51...with a breach of the 180° rule.



3.52 As the camera zooms out, Jack is equated with...



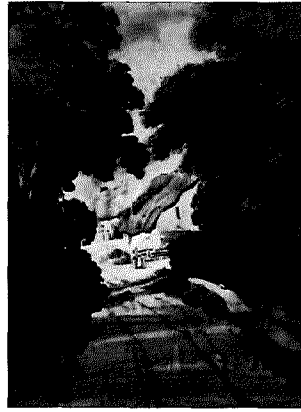
3.53...the hollow tree. He begins to flap his arms like a bird, just before...



3.54...a cut to a clichéd Gothic image of birds suddenly flying from a tree.

<sup>97</sup> See Hunt, *The Picturesque Garden in Europe*, (London: Thames & Hudson, 2003), p.6.

<sup>98</sup> Hussey, *The Picturesque*, op. cit, plate X and p.272.



3.55 Thomas Girtin, *The Sandy Lane*.  
Compare with 3.47.

Except for the theatrical tableau which the group forms around Jack, the blocking accentuates the picturesqueness of the scene: the entrance of Grace, followed by the rest of the family, is made via steps leading from a half secreted serpentine path behind Jack, at the top left of the frame (the steps can be seen in Fig. 3.43); Dinsdale is comically entwined in the brambles and concealed (Fig. 3.44); a poacher is suddenly revealed when he is hit by a bullet from Jack's rifle (Fig. 3.46). Indeed, it is Jack's bullet which breaks up the symmetry of the tableau, as Charles, Tucker and the gamekeepers give chase to the poacher he has (unwittingly?) uncovered (Fig. 3.47-3.48). Throughout the whole film, the same leitmotif recurs: the family poses in a formal arrangement, which is then disrupted by J.C./Jack. Whether as J.C. or Jack the Ripper, the 14<sup>th</sup> Earl constitutes a threat to the order of the Gurney household.

Whereas in the first half of the film the threat is posed by and articulated in a wide range of cultural references and dramatic performances, in the second half of the film it is largely constituted by a farcical combination of picturesque and Gothic clichés. Jack is Jack the Ripper and he appears in the Russian Valley, as in other scenes, in black Victorian robes, suit and top hat (Fig. 3.49). His face has become paler. His metamorphosis is figured in the drawing room by the picturesque layout he has introduced (Fig. 3.56): a forest of plants with furniture and bric-a-brac, partially concealing parts of the room. In its saturation, if not in its motifs, it is reminiscent of John Soane's house.<sup>99</sup>

<sup>99</sup> Pevsner argues that Soanes's house evidences an application of picturesque principles to interior design. See Nikolaus Pevsner, *The Englishness of English Art* (London: Penguin, 1997), pp.175-176.



3.56 Jack's Victorian décor, in a picturesque layout.

His language in the Russian Valley scene is – clearly enough to the audience – the effusion of a sexual psychopath: the return of repressed preoccupations with gore, filth and sexual intercourse. The dramatic irony has been reversed. The family members are no longer all aware of Jack's insanity, fooled as they gradually are by his performance as a stereotypical aristocrat, who likes blood sports. Jack's use of stereotypical activity in landscape to conceal his madness is echoed in the various concealments enacted through the scene. After the family have left, the camera dramatises the revelation of his madness. There is a sudden cut which disconcertingly breaks the 180° rule of cinematography, to an unexpectedly vertiginous high-angle shot (Figs. 3.50-3.51). As Jack's first soliloquy is related, the camera zooms out (Figs. 3.52-3.53), equating his maniacal monologue with the surrounding picturesque space. His body twists and lurches, his posture paralleled and framed by the tree revealed on his left. This shadowy, hollow, tilted, somewhat dilapidated tree reflects the decline of Jack into the Gothic, like the dead autumnal leaves falling to the ground around him. The Long Garden scene takes place in sunshine; whatever J.C. means by 'love isn't just for one season', the season is patently spring or summer. In the Russian Valley, the pathetic fallacy is again deployed to comic effect, an autumnal gloom emphasising Jack's moral decline to the point of hyperbole. Any lingering sense of picturesque naturalism is completely undone at this point.

The scene precedes the full disclosure of his identity as Jack the Ripper, but his Gothic tendencies are foreshadowed here. While J.C.'s bird impression in the Long Garden mimics the topiary, here his bird-like flapping (Fig. 3.53) is in proleptic anticipation of the following shot. We see a hackneyed shot of birds in a Gothic silhouette (Fig. 3.54), inexplicably abandoning a bare deciduous tree. The cut from a tree with falling leaves to a bare tree seems to accelerate autumn unnaturally. The emphasis on dilapidated trees is also decidedly Gothic; the process of 'improving' a landscape to become picturesque

often required the deliberate neglect of dead trees and ruins to add an air of Gothic decay. Again, a comparison between this scene and the Long Garden scene is provoked – the birds' role, appearing as if in response to Jack's mimicry, evokes the topiary in the earlier garden.

While these scenes differ minimally from the play in terms of plot and dialogue, their associative range is extended. The play's sense of fantasy is retained in the film, but inscribed more substantially, in an earthbound dialogue between narrative and locations. The film does not document the landscapes. Rather it expounds fancifully on the eccentricities of the ruling class which Barnes equates with lunacy. These eccentricities are, as the film suggests, to be witnessed as much in garden design as in anything else. The film places the landed class's madness and immoral schemes in the context of its power; country estate landscapes, whether formal or picturesque, ultimately stand for and constitute that power. The fanciful subversiveness of the play's minimalist landscape is thus elaborated; its critique of landed power is substantiated in the film through the adaptation of landscapes.

However, both types of landscape are historical. For this reason they are conspicuous in a film which is set in the present and deals with issues which were still topical when it was first released in 1972. The gardens in *The Ruling Class* are entirely archaic, markedly separate from the present: the general point is that the enclosed fantasies of the aristocracy are still in the past, yet there is a more complex implication, too. The pointed atavism of the landscapes is inseparable from the film's diametric opposition of formal and picturesque landscapes, by which the two landscape styles are refined into archetypes.

The sequence in which the landscape modes are placed in *The Ruling Class* is arguably diachronic, as historical sequentiality is respected to the extent that the formal mode is succeeded by the picturesque. However, historical detail has been abandoned for the sake of this modal opposition; there is no liminal stage. Even the basic account of the English picturesque acknowledges that



the story of the invention of what is known as the landscape garden can only be told in ways as serpentine as Hogarth's line of beauty. The path twists and doubles back on its tracks.<sup>100</sup>

Yet perhaps the fullest realisation of this 'serpentine' historiography can be found in John Dixon Hunt's *Gardens and the Picturesque: Studies in the History of Landscape*, where Hunt unpacks the complex transition from emblematic to expressive gardening as a gradual shift in paradigms.<sup>101</sup> Hunt later summarises it:

The shift relates to a change from a landscape where the premium is upon precise encoding of ideas, stories, themes to one where the visitor's decoding is privileged, even if this in its turn accentuates more personal, solipsist and (what Whately's called) "transitory" ideas.<sup>102</sup>

This description helps us to clarify the transformation which takes place in *The Ruling Class* in the relationship between figure and landscape. The film utilises the same historical paradigm shift which Hunt relates. Design in the formal garden ultimately reflects the ruthless circumscription of J.C.'s fantasies of courtly love, but later the picturesque's concealments pose a threat to Jack's relatives. Jack uses the stereotypical role of the aristocrat poaching in a picturesque space to conceal his madness from the others. While the formal garden contains and explicitly frames J.C.'s madness, cultivating his fantasies for his family's exploitation, here Jack's madness is secreted, its revelation surreptitious; the picturesque landscape only frames his insanity when he is alone. The film thus ironises both the holistic, open layout of symbols in the formal garden and the introversion of picturesque associationism. These scenes establish a correspondence between garden design and the 14<sup>th</sup> Earl's madness. This is the film's romance of the ruse: his arc, from being the victim of a plot to a plotter, from being the deceived to the deceiver, comically and perversely straddles the divide between the courtly allegories of the formal garden and the pleasing concealments of the picturesque.

The film effectively summarises the history of the landscape garden as a myth of perpetual moral decline, from superficial courtliness to individualistic plotting. The shift from formal to picturesque archetypes emphasises the 14<sup>th</sup> Earl's arc, above all. As the film progresses, it becomes clear that the synchronic opposition (in the Lévi-Strass

<sup>100</sup> H.F. Clark, *The English Landscape Garden* (Gloucester: Alan Sutton, 1980), p. 18.

<sup>101</sup> Hunt, *Gardens and the Picturesque*, pp. 75-102.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 182.

sense) between the young earl and the family is subsidiary to the diachronic opposition between J.C. and Jack. The dialectical atavism of the film's landscapes reveals a moral: as Jack becomes the *genius loci* of the estate, so he loses his compassion and subscribes to the same ruthless individualism which drives the rest of the film's characters.

## Conclusion

The boldness with which the film presents its landscape spectacles in a binary narratorial structure starkly differentiates it from previous narrative landscape films. *Kind Hearts and Coronets*, for instance, displays Louis's character developments subtly, through a succession of picturesque landscapes. Each syntagmatic landscape is different from the last, but with a delicate complexity which mirrors Louis's understated verbal wit. *The Go-Between* covers a range of landscape styles, from a Victorian terrace garden, to a picturesque wilderness, from a Brownian series of clumped trees to a formal flower garden. Though polar opposites might be implied, such as between the terrace garden where Marian is on display in her hammock, compared with the outhouse where Marian secretly has sex, the visual and narratorial experience of landscape conveyed by the film is predominantly one of subtle continuity and fluent graduation. With the exception of the flower garden, each different area of the grounds is shown be linked in a physical and ideological chain which constitutes the Maudsley's estate as a (visible) whole.

In contradistinction with *The Go-Between*, *The Ruling Class* asserts, though with large measures of irony, that different ideological modes can preponderate in different conditions in an English country house: courtly and free love juxtaposed with Gothic murderousness. These modes produce, and are reflected in, contrasting landscape modes. *The Ruling Class*'s frank structural approach to landscape distinguishes it as a turning point in narrative landscape cinema: a turning point coeval with, and comparable to, that represented by *The Go-Between*, yet markedly distinct from it.

In *Kind Hearts and Coronets* and *The Go-Between* affective stylistics are inextricably linked to represented landscapes, since those landscapes constitute figures of narrative design, or plotted grounds; plot, which structures affect, is concretised in the on-screen

landscape. This textual fabric, which encompasses landscape, plot and affect, draws on and reformulates eighteenth-century conceptions of the picturesque. In most of its manifestations, the picturesque has been a narratorial form, containing and invoking gradual narrative development. As Caroline van Eck points out in her essay about picturesque association, John Soane called for buildings to be designed as ‘architectural dramas’.<sup>103</sup> Soane, who was inspired by picturesque theory, constructed and furnished the interior of his home in the picturesque idiom.<sup>104</sup> With his call for ‘architectural dramas, he thus suggests that there is a formal equivalence between drama and picturesque composition. However, on the evidence of Soane’s house, with its careful, but complex concatenation of mirrors, diverse ornaments, furniture, doorways and walls, we can assume that he has a particular kind of drama in mind, one which involves a broad range of references structured by a convoluted plot.

In *Kind Hearts and Coronets* and *The Go-Between*, picturesque landscapes constitute microcosms of the films’ complex narratives. The landscape scenes are proleptic or sum up plot developments. In this way individual landscape scenes encapsulate the larger narratives of the films. For example, when Leo runs through the landscape, the house appears intermittently, as if spying on him; the scene summarises the power relation between Leo and the Maudsleys and symbolises Mrs Maudsley’s increasing surveillance of Marian and Leo. Narrative plot is larger than on-screen landscape, since the landscapes are incorporated as scenes in the entire corpus of the film’s diegesis. *Kind Hearts and Coronets* and *The Go-Between* have convoluted narratives, through which the main character – the *genius loci* – moves. The larger narrative of the films seems to take its shape from or resemble the picturesque landscapes, which feature in certain scenes. The protagonist moves through the landscapes, in a serpentine trajectory similar to his narrative arc, but on a smaller scale. Thus, the films’ plots can be seen as picturesque macrocosms: plot development reflects the serpentine composition of picturesque landscapes.

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<sup>103</sup> Caroline van Eck, “‘The splendid effects of architecture, and its power to affect the mind’: the workings of Picturesque association”, in Jan Birksted (ed.), *Landscapes of Memory and Experience* (London: Spon Press, 2000), p.251.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.; see also Nikolaus Pevsner, *The Englishness of English Art* (London: Penguin, 1997), pp.175-176.

On the other hand, *The Ruling Class*'s bipartite, inversely symmetrical narrative is the antithesis of serpentine development. The model of picturesque determinism cannot be applied to its plot. Is there a confluence then between narrative and landscape in the film?

The difference between Losey's and Medak's films can be clarified in Marxist terms: in *The Go-Between* landscape patently plays an integral role in Leo's interaction with the owners; this, then, is its use value. The film's demystification of this use value makes the underlying exchange value transparent: the landscape's exchange value as aesthetic and economic capital is never mentioned in the film's dialogue. The marriage market is explicitly at stake in *The Go-Between*, to which landscape is an undeclared, yet clearly fundamental adjunct.

In contrast, *The Ruling Class*'s aristocratic family is characteristically tactless, but frank about landownership. It is not the 14<sup>th</sup> Earl's title which is subject to dispute, but his possession/control of Gurney House, portrayed by Harlaxton Manor in the film. As Charles explains to Dinsdale, 'Blast you! There's land at stake here, Gurney land.' The exchange value of the grounds is all that bothers Charles, though he is less concerned with individual ownership within the family than with the management of family land: 'You mean Jack's free to run the estate and everything?' Such brazenness is integral to the film's satire, which reveals the ruling class as boorish and entirely without discretion. *The Ruling Class*'s explicit, self-referential preoccupation with landownership and estate management has a visual and structural counterpart, of equal boldness, in the way the film's landscapes constitute appositional archetypes. It is through this binary juxtaposition that *The Ruling Class* deconstructs the grounds' use value: the aesthetic characters of plots of ground are used by the family and later by Jack to 'conceal' their plots to gain control of the estate. However, this 'concealment' is, in fact, entirely obvious.

It is precisely through the picturesque that the liminal space between concealment and revelation of a scheme (or plot) is negotiated in *Kind Hearts and Coronets* and *The Go-Between*. Thus, it is perhaps inevitable that the picturesque plays a distinctly different role in *The Ruling Class*, in terms of both structure and irony. The picturesque only appears in the second part of the film. The dramatic reversal, by which the deceived

(J.C.) becomes the deceiver (Jack), is registered by a shift in landscape paradigms from the formal to the picturesque. The picturesque in *The Ruling Class* becomes only one half of a binary structure of landscape as aesthetic surfaces. There is no real concealment in any of the gardens. None of the landscapes is of any real 'depth', either in terms of narrative complexity or historical authenticity. Instead, the fictional world of landscape constructed by the mixture of Cliveden and Harlaxton's gardens acts as a 'heterotopia of deviation'. Foucault's term 'heterotopia' describes

real places – places that do exist... which are something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested and inverted... The heterotopia is capable of juxtaposing in a single real space several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible.<sup>105</sup>

Indicatively, two of Foucault's examples of heterotopias are the cinema and the garden. So, even at a pro-filmic stage, Harlaxton and Cliveden are heterotopias. The sub-category, 'heterotopia of deviation', is where

individuals whose behaviour is deviant in relation to the required norm are placed. Cases of this are rest homes and psychiatric hospitals.<sup>106</sup>

Many of the country houses which were sold by their aristocratic owners in the twentieth century became such heterotopias of deviation. With its parallel between a lunatic asylum and a country house, *The Ruling Class* implies that the country house garden itself is a heterotopia of deviation, where aristocratic eccentrics play out their fantasies; like the landscapes in Russell's *Women in Love* (1969), *The Ruling Class*'s landscapes are spaces of performance, of the gestural and the fantastical.<sup>107</sup> As a heterotopia of deviation the fictive estate featured in *The Ruling Class* juxtaposes 'several sites' by linking gardens at Cliveden and Harlaxton in one narrative sequence. To stretch Foucault's argument slightly, the film as a whole text is a meta-heterotopia in that it juxtaposes two historical archetypes of garden heterotopia in a structural relation. Foucault links the heterotopia with structuralism.<sup>108</sup> The film's dialectical atavism differentiates it from all previous country house films, by introducing a structuralist

<sup>105</sup> Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces', pp.24-25.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., p.25.

<sup>107</sup> *Women in Love* (Ken Russell, UK, 1969); Richard Combs compares the 'fantasy... at the level of literal masquerade' of *The Ruling Class* with the work of Ken Russell. Richard Combs, 'Review of *The Ruling Class*', *Monthly Film Bulletin*, vol.39, no. 462, July 1972, p.145.

<sup>108</sup> Foucault, op. cit., p.22.

diagnosis of the estate. *The Ruling Class* resembled in this respect the British structural avant-garde landscape films which appeared in the same decade.

If we exclude those movies which belonged to the horror, murder and spy thriller genres, then the majority of films before 1972 which featured landed estates were historical narratives. This was not necessarily the result of a predilection for nostalgia. Indeed, one of the prevalent modes in the decades following the Second World War was a kind of inverted pastoral or counter-pastoral, in which the landed estate in the past is characterised by criminality or a miscarriage of justice. The nature of the crime might make it comparable to the sensationalist felonies typical of country house detective novels or films: Louis's murders or the violent crimes in *The Man in Grey*.<sup>109</sup> Conversely, the crime might be a more subtle and, therefore, more convincing example of endemic sin in the upper classes of the past, as with Marian's exploitation of Leo in *The Go-Between*. The distinction between the relative tranquillity of a narrative's present and the crisis of the past was frequently embodied and demarcated by a metadiegetic icon, such as Louis's memoirs or the car window/mind screen in *The Go-Between*. In *The Go-Between*, a complex relationship is created between the landscapes' various pasts, Leo's past (1900), his present (the 1950s) and the era of the film's production (1970s), the last tacitly operative, for instance, in the anachronistic absence of train whistles.

Unlike *The Go-Between* or, say, *The Ghost Goes West*, which is set in the era of its own production, *The Ruling Class* features no metadiegetic icon to connect the audience with its characters' or its landscapes' pasts.<sup>110</sup> By the same token, the film's own mediation of the present is not symbolised by any storytelling icon. Just as there are no magic devices which carry the narrative from a present to a past, so no character is designated as a storyteller via an icon, such as Louis with his memoirs in *Kind Hearts and Coronets*. Instead, landscape as history is abstracted into structural components, or myths, linked to the narrative of the *genius loci* (J.C./Jack), but only to his adventures in the present. The film makes no connection between the landscapes and any character's back story. The gardens, like the film's other cultural references, are surfaces, pastiches

<sup>109</sup> *The Man in Grey* (Leslie Arliss, UK, 1943).

<sup>110</sup> *The Ghost Goes West* (René Clair, UK, 1935).



detached from their provenance. It is apt that a film which attacks the aristocracy denies even the aesthetic pedigree of the ruling class's landscapes.

## IV

## Deconstructing Charles: Threads, Twitches and Landscape in *Brideshead Revisited*

Garden perspectives may be metaphysical as well as physical. Artists often invite us to view sites as sacred, magical or in some way special.

– John Dixon Hunt<sup>1</sup>

How one bids accidents to occur, how much chance remains when it is arranged by art are the questions that the Picturesque works with... Whether artifice is a positive component in the Picturesque or a serious defect seems to depend on whether the presence of concealment, deception, and manipulation are considered benign or threatening.

– Sidney K. Robinson<sup>2</sup>

### Introduction

*Brideshead Revisited* is an intensive, sustained depiction of a country estate and its effects on an outsider. Broadcast in 1981, it represented a new hybrid country house narrative: a television serial with extensive filming at an estate location. With the exception of the conservatory and Charles and Sebastian's adjoining bedrooms, Brideshead Castle's interiors and landscapes are those of Castle Howard.<sup>3</sup> In *Barry Lyndon* (1975), Kubrick uses parts of Castle Howard, but demonstratively sutures them into a narrative landscape that also comprises Stourhead.<sup>4</sup> Kubrick deconstructs the way fictional estates are often a *bricolage* of locations. In contrast to Kubrick's atomism, *Brideshead Revisited* matches a complex, distended narrative with the topographical

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<sup>1</sup> John Dixon Hunt, *Greater Perfections: The Practice of Garden Theory* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2000), p.167.

<sup>2</sup> Sidney K. Robinson, *Inquiry into the Picturesque* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1991), p.115.

<sup>3</sup> The Paxton Conservatory at Tatton Park was used for Brideshead's conservatory. See Fred Inglis, 'Brideshead Revisited Revisited: Waugh to the Knife', in Robert Giddings and Erica Sheen (eds.), *The Classic Novel From Stage to Screen* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2000), p.189. See also Jeremy Irons's remarks in the commentary to '1. Et in Arcadia Ego', on the *Brideshead Revisited* DVD (Granada Ventures, 2005), disc one. Charles and Sebastian's adjoining bedrooms were also filmed at Tatton Park. See the 'Revisiting Brideshead' exhibition at Castle Howard, designed and produced by IDEAS [Visited April 2003].

<sup>4</sup> *Barry Lyndon* (Stanley Kubrick, UK, 1975).

span of a single estate: its roads; its various woods and gardens; its ornamental buildings and fountain; the house and its interiors. Over the course of the serial, we witness the gradual metamorphosis of both Brideshead Castle and the character of the protagonist/narrator, Charles Ryder. It would arguably be impossible to achieve this in the running time of a feature film; *Kind Hearts and Coronets*, *The Go-Between* and *The Ruling Class* are all concerned with the encounter between an outsider and the layers of history embedded in gardens, but not with a visitor's sustained observation of, and involvement in, the landscape's continuous development over a long period of time. It is *Brideshead Revisited*'s serial form that facilitates such a plot.<sup>5</sup>

The story spans two decades, from 1923 to 1944, during which several different regimes predominate at Brideshead, including Sebastian and Charles's Bacchic revelry, Lady Marchmain's Catholic propriety and the Army's mixture of discipline and vandalism. However, unlike *The Ruling Class*, *Brideshead Revisited* is not preoccupied with estate management *per se*. The programme's emphasis is more on the different experiences of the estate that are made possible by each regime. While *The Go-Between* can be compared to the Marxist landscape historiography of the 1970s, *Brideshead Revisited* has more in common with the type of garden history pioneered by Christopher Hussey, H.F. Clark and John Dixon Hunt: the aesthetic analysis of a landscape as an organic artwork. Castle Howard played a key role as a case study in the emergence of this approach and features in the work of all the above historians.<sup>6</sup> Its early 1700s landscape design, poised between emblem and expression, is in many respects an early example of the picturesque composition that flourished in the latter half of the century.<sup>7</sup> Much of this landscape remains intact, yet *Brideshead Revisited* utilises it to expound, not on the persistence of a garden's meaning over the centuries, but on the evolution of an estate, perceived by an outsider – Charles Ryder – as both a physical entity and a symbolic system.

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<sup>5</sup> Kristin Thompson convincingly argues that 'in the latter half of the twentieth century, it seems safe to say that TV was far and away the art form of seriality.' See Kristin Thompson, *Storytelling in Film and Television* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 2003), p.104 and *passim*.

<sup>6</sup> H.F. Clark, *The English Landscape Garden*, Second Edition (Gloucester: Alan Sutton, 1980), pp.51-52; Christopher Hussey, *English Gardens and Landscapes 1700-1750* (London: Country Life, 1967), pp.114-131; John Dixon Hunt, 'Castle Howard Revisited', in *Gardens and the Picturesque: Studies in the History of Landscape Architecture* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: MIT Press, 1997), pp.19-46.

<sup>7</sup> See, for instance, Hussey, *op. cit.*, p.121.

More specifically, *Brideshead Revisited* is concerned with an outsider figure that has been integral to the history of the English country house: the artist commissioned to paint the estate. There are traces of this figure in Louis Mazzini, Leo Colston and J.C./Jack, all of whom perform in some manner in the landscape. However, their performance is physical; they are more like modern incarnations of the garden hermit. *Brideshead Revisited*, on the other hand, is about an architectural painter's relationship with a country estate; Ryder learns his craft painting murals of the estate's ornamental buildings and his first professional commission is to paint the family's London home, Marchmain House. The extent to which Evelyn Waugh's novel is a *Künstlerroman* is contested.<sup>8</sup> It certainly does not contain much ekphrasis where Ryder's paintings are concerned; only his first pieces at Brideshead – a drawing of the fountain and a mural – are described in any detail. His inspiration, or lack of it, becomes more important than his technique. Conversely, the televisual *Brideshead Revisited* could be seen as a *Künstlersendung* [artist programme], since it shows many of Ryder's finished works on screen. This is particularly significant to the programme's representation of landscape, since his response to the landscape gardens is articulated in another form of landscape art. The paintings constitute distinct planes of imagery, ontologically distinct from, yet tangential to, the gardens: stilled, synchronic moments from Ryder's lengthy diachronic relationship with the estate.

Charles's murals of the estate's ornamental buildings are integral to *Brideshead Revisited*'s theme of an evolving twenty-year relationship between an outsider and a country house, not least because they encapsulate and preserve his response to the estate at single points in this relationship, while their context and subject, the estate, visibly alters. What Robert Murray Davis says of Ryder in the novel holds true for Ryder in the serial: 'his art helps him to fix in paint a world that has no future in a carefully circumscribed and manageable space.'<sup>9</sup> Charles makes his name painting a house which is about to be demolished. His attempt through his art to frame spaces and halt the inexorable flow of time is a major theme in novel and programme alike. However, in the programme the murals themselves ironically become the yardsticks of change.

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<sup>8</sup> See Jeffrey Heath, *The Picturesque Prison: Evelyn Waugh and his Writing* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1982), p.162 and Robert Murray Davis, *Brideshead Revisited: The Past Redeemed*, (Boston: Twayne, 1990) p.37.

<sup>9</sup> Robert Murray Davis, 'Imagined Space in *Brideshead Revisited*', in Alain Blayac (ed.), *Evelyn Waugh: New Directions* (Houndsmill and London: Macmillan, 1992), p.28.

The first mural painted by Ryder depicts Sebastian standing in front of Brideshead's temple (portrayed by Castle Howard's Temple of the Four Winds), in the boys' Arcadian summer of 1923. Ryder's Neo-romantic vision characteristically exaggerates the scene, with Sebastian placed at the end of a rainbow, as if he is a pot of gold. When Rex's milieu of 'politics and money' has invaded Brideshead Castle in 1936, two of Rex's friends parody Sebastian's posture in the mural, their left hands on their hips (Fig. 4.1). This is a more subtle, but no less sacrilegious act of iconoclasm than the naked women chalked and pasted over the same mural by soldiers in 1944 (Fig. 4.2). Charles's aestheticisation of Sebastian and the landscape is violated in both cases; his attempt to preserve an instant ironically provides the means for change to register itself, while he is punished for his hubristic effort at imposing his fantasy on the Flytes' landscape.



4.1 Rex's friends parody Sebastian's posture in the mural (episode nine).



4.2 The temple mural, violated by the Army (episode eleven).

The re-appearance of this mural in episode nine also serves to remind the audience of the shots of the temple that figure prominently in episode two, so that, when the temple is seen again in episode ten, the disparity between it in the sunshine of 1923 (Fig. 4.3) and its weather-beaten condition in an autumnal 1938 (Fig. 4.4), is all the more apparent. Pace Cairns Craig, any sense of 'permanence of the architecture, landscape and possessions that fill the screen' has utterly vanished by this point in the programme.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Cairns Craig, 'Rooms without a View', *Sight and Sound*, vol.1, no.2, June 1991, p.11.





4.3 Summer 1923 (episode two).



4.4 Autumn 1938 (episode ten).

In his groundbreaking reception study of gardens, John Dixon Hunt emphasises the fact that gardens are often experienced ‘through a *longue durée* of existence, change and reformulation.’<sup>11</sup> It is with this mode of phenomenological reception that *Brideshead Revisited* engages, through Ryder’s memory as a narrator and his art and actions as a protagonist. The estate is explored in detail across the serial’s eleven episodes: elements are foregrounded, abandoned and returned to several times. Through this system, it is not only transitions that are marked, but also the cyclical nature of the plot. Landscape is deployed as a mnemonic system, which not only concretises the protagonist/narrator’s exploration of the past, but also, through its topographical rhythms, manipulates the audience’s responses to the narrative.

It has been argued that we watch television (and *Brideshead Revisited* in particular) without investing a great deal of concentration. Of *Brideshead Revisited* and *The Jewel in the Crown*, Charlotte Brunsdon contends that the ‘only specifically televisual demand is that the viewer switch on at the right time and watch.’<sup>12</sup> Similarly, Sarah Cardwell asserts that

Our distracted engagement with television could be considered to accentuate the detached nature of our gaze upon the landscapes, buildings and interiors of classic-novel adaptations like *Brideshead*.<sup>13</sup>

On the contrary, *Brideshead Revisited*’s repetitions and motifs elicit a more attentive, assiduous spectatorship than this. The long-term demands that *Brideshead Revisited* makes on its viewers’ memories are arguably typical of much serialised television drama. As Kristin Thompson argues, ‘television is structured in ways that become

<sup>11</sup> John Dixon Hunt, *The Afterlife of Gardens* (London: Reaktion Books, 2004), p.7.

<sup>12</sup> Charlotte Brunsdon, ‘Problems with Quality’, *Screen*, vol.31, no.1, Spring 1990, p.86.

<sup>13</sup> Sarah Cardwell, *Adaptation Revisited* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), p.121.



apparent only if we take the long view.’<sup>14</sup> *Brideshead Revisited*’s uniqueness lies in the way its long (temporal) structure is correlated with the expansive (spatial) structure of a country estate. Television’s specificity is often defined in terms of intimacy, maintained, for example, through liveness, frequent close-ups and the familiarity the audience gains with the characters, plot strands and settings during long-running series.<sup>15</sup> *Brideshead Revisited* was filmed (on 16mm), with a relatively large number of medium and long shots, but its emphasis on an individual’s attachment to a single place for twenty-one years creates a singularly intimate bond between the faithful viewer and the narrative space over the course of the transmission period.<sup>16</sup> However, the audience’s investment in the programme’s iconography and plot is not, as the heritage critics would have it, reducible to Charles’s fetishisation of Brideshead and/or the Flyte family.<sup>17</sup> The programme’s tale of nostos and recollection appropriately exercises the audience’s memory, but in doing so equips the viewer to put to test both the accuracy of Charles’s recollections as narrator and the morality of his actions as a protagonist: these two qualities are linked, for the programme gradually reveals Charles’s unpleasant neuroses as he develops from painter into narrator.

The serial’s complex negotiation of pathos and irony needs to be understood in relation to the way that it represents landscape and painting. Central to its thematisation of painting is the fact that Charles Ryder is conversant with art history; his response to the estate’s architecture and landscape is often articulated in art historical terms. Charles emphasises the estate’s formative role in his erudition: ‘It was an aesthetic education to live within those walls... This was my conversion to the Baroque.’ He says this as we see the young Charles walk from the South Parterre into the Great Hall, where he gazes upwards (Fig 4.5). The next shot is of the dome (Fig. 4.6), at the centre of which is *The Fall of Phaeton*, Scott Medd’s recreation of the painting that the Venetian Baroque artist, Giovanni Pellegrini, executed for the Howards between 1709 and 1712.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Thompson, op. cit., p.x.

<sup>15</sup> See, for example, John Ellis, *Visible Fictions: Cinema, Television, Video*, Revised Edition (London: Routledge, 1989), p.132.

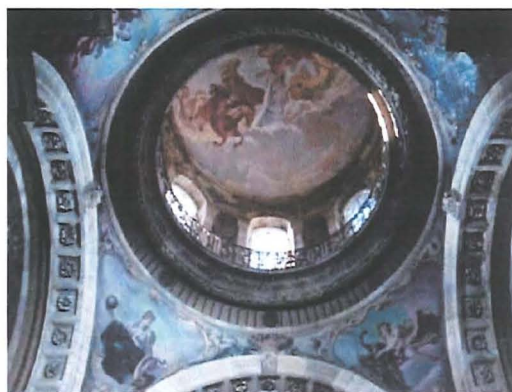
<sup>16</sup> Nick Roddick hailed the programme as the ‘return of the *plan américain*’ in his review, ‘Brideshead Revisited’, *Sight and Sound*, vol.51, no.1, Winter 1981/82, p.59.

<sup>17</sup> Critics who classify *Brideshead Revisited* to a greater or lesser extent as a heritage programme include Craig, op.cit.; Kate Beetham, *Us and Them: Brideshead Revisited, National Identity and the English Past* (unpublished MA Dissertation, 1993: held in the BFI Library); Cardwell, op.cit.

<sup>18</sup> A fire in 1940 destroyed the original. Christopher Ridgway and Nicholas Howard, *Castle Howard*, Second Edition (Castle Howard: Castle Howard Estate, 2002), pp.32-33.



4.5 The young Charles gazes upwards...



4.6 ...at the dome and *The Fall of Phaeton* (summer 1923: episode two).

As Erwin Panofsky points out, the Italian Baroque involved reconciliation between factors that had been in conflict previously: exterior and interior, ‘neopagan humanism’ and ascetic ‘Christian spiritualism’, ‘ideal beauty and reality’.<sup>19</sup> Charles reproduces these characteristics in ersatz form. His murals depict the estate’s ornamental buildings on the interior walls of the Garden Room (Castle Howard’s Garden Hall), introducing pagan Neo-romanticism to a Catholic house. His painting of the temple is at once realistic and fantastical, with Sebastian as ideal beauty: the proverbial pot of gold. The Baroque is intrinsic to the programme’s articulation of his friendship with Sebastian. Later, in episode two, they look down from the Baroque dome at Bridey and the agricultural fair judges, below (Figs. 4.7-4.8).

This kind of vertical opposition occurs again in episode three, when they look down from the dome in Marchmain House (Tatton Park) at Julia (Fig. 4.9-4.10). As Bacchants, Sebastian and Charles are placed literally and metaphorically above aristocratic mundanity. When Charles lets Sebastian down by spending time with Lady Marchmain, he forfeits this elevated position and never regains it. In episode ten, a complex crane shot moves downwards towards Charles, as if to emphasise the fact that he is now earthbound. The Phaeton painting on the dome anticipates Charles’s hubris and fall.

<sup>19</sup> Erwin Panofsky, ‘What is Baroque?’, in *Three Essays on Style* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: MIT Press, 1997), p.38 and *passim*.



4.7 The boys look down from the dome...



4.8...at Bridey and the judges (episode two).



4.9 The boys look down in Marchmain House...



4.10 ....at Julia as she arrives (episode three).

In Waugh's novel (at least, from the fourth UK edition onwards), Brideshead's dome is described as 'false'. In all editions, Nanny's room is inside the dome: there is no Baroque painting. Jeffrey Heath avers that the novel's theme is the 'operation of divine grace' through such 'inauthentic' architectural features.<sup>20</sup> For Heath, Waugh's picturesque, narrowly defined as decaying country piles, represents a 'false refuge,' which in *Brideshead Revisited* becomes the means through which Charles is eventually brought to Catholicism.<sup>21</sup> In contrast, the programme's dome is authentic; elevation seems to have nothing to do with Catholicism. The programme thematises Catholicism, but raises Bacchic paganism above all. When Charles and Sebastian look down from it, they have achieved a pagan form of apotheosis. This verticality complements a horizontal Baroque axis, along which interior is linked to exterior. When they meet at Brideshead at the end of episode one, Sebastian sits in his wheelchair, Castle Howard's Atlas Fountain visible behind him (Fig. 4.11).<sup>22</sup> The fountain, with its globe held aloft by Atlas, represents pagan endurance. The shot suggests that Sebastian carries the

<sup>20</sup> Heath, *The Picturesque Prison*, p.168.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p.1.

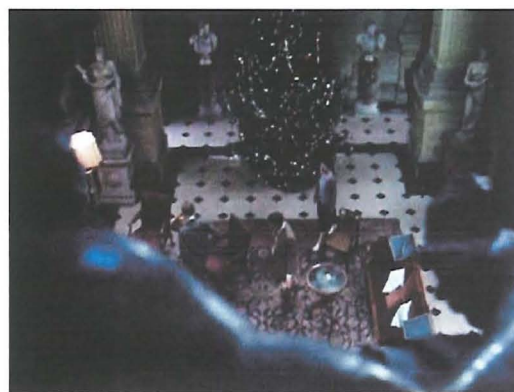
<sup>22</sup> This connection between interior and garden was only made possible by restoration work. A fire had destroyed Castle Howard's Garden Hall in 1940: the passage it allowed between the interior and the South Parterre was felt to be important enough for Granada to pay for the restoration. Life imitates art.



fountain's mythic associations into the house. The open doors also confer a sense of aeration on the scene, which is lost when the house enters cooler seasons, as the doors are shut and Charles's relationship with Sebastian deteriorates amidst the suffocating presence of Lady Marchmain (Fig. 4.12).



**4.11** The Atlas fountain can be seen over Sebastian's left shoulder (episode one).



**4.12** Christmas 1924: The space of the hall is now occluded. Note the Christmas tree blocking off the door that leads through to the Garden Room. (episode five).

The Baroque fluency between exterior and interior that enables the serial to celebrate the boys' paganism was made possible by developments in television drama's representation of landscape that occurred during the 1960s and 1970s. In order to understand *Brideshead Revisited* as a country house television narrative, it is important first to trace some of these developments, for they were crucial to the programme-makers' response to the religious and pastoral themes in Waugh's novel.

## Landscape on Television

The programme's mobilisation of a single location for Brideshead Castle's exteriors and interiors was more cinemorphic than televisual in 1981. The typical approach in television was that visible in, say, *A Portrait of a Lady* (1968) or *War and Peace* (1972): exteriors were shot on location, interiors in studio.<sup>23</sup> Interior scenes were recorded on video using an as-live process. Garden scenes were often shot on location, but generally using film cameras: these filmed scenes were then inserted into the serial. There were stylistic, as well as optical, differences between the exterior and interior scenes, which could be accounted for by the fact that the cinematographer and editor of

<sup>23</sup> *A Portrait of a Lady* (James Cellan Jones, BBC, 1968); *War and Peace* (John Davies, BBC, 1972).

the filmed inserts would not work on the electronic recording of the interior scenes. This was not necessarily to the detriment of any programme. *A Portrait of a Lady*, for instance, makes a virtue of it, by accentuating the difference in shooting style between studio/video and location/film to emphasise the fact that different forms of social discourse obtain in different parts of a country estate.

During the 1970s there were concerted attempts to avoid this binary system. Both *Love for Lydia* (1977) and *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1978) were shot solely on video, utilising a mixture of studio and locations, including landscapes.<sup>24</sup> The major trend, however, was the increased use of 16mm on location for exteriors *and* interiors, of which more below. Before *Brideshead Revisited*, though, no British country house programme was shot entirely on location: this aspect of its production had its roots in the film industry.

*Brideshead Revisited*'s broad coverage of a landscape location can be seen as a development of the approach to shooting which defined *The Go-Between*'s aesthetics. Just as L.P. Hartley's tale of a naïve visitor damaged by his experiences at a country house reworked the basic myth in Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited*, so the television adaptation of *Brideshead Revisited* drew on the techniques Losey applied to *The Go-Between*: to explore a country estate location in intricate detail, from its interiors to the edges of the gardens. However, in *The Go-Between*, Leo Colston makes only two visits to Brandham Hall. Apart from the historical associations evident in the landscape and architecture, the estate's evolution is indicated through the integrated apposition of the two visits Leo makes over a fifty-year period. The film juxtaposes the weather and landscapes of two separate moments in order to convey a sense of diachrony. As a result, *The Go-Between*'s phenomenology of an estate's development over time is necessarily, though suitably, elliptical. In contrast, over Charles Ryder's eight visits to Brideshead Castle, *Brideshead Revisited* presents a more expansively diachronic study.<sup>25</sup> Screen-time, plot-time and geographical expanse are correlated. There is a total of about five hours of scenes shot in and around Castle Howard: far more footage of a country house location than any other previous programme or film

<sup>24</sup> *Love for Lydia* (Various, LWT, 1977); *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (David Giles, BBC, 1978).

<sup>25</sup> In this respect, the television serial can also be contrasted with the highly elliptical play based on Waugh's novel, which presents the plot as an oneiric flow of remembered events. See Roger Parsley, *Brideshead Revisited* (London: Samuel French, 1994).

had featured. *Brideshead Revisited* establishes a congruence between the topographical span of Castle Howard, Charles Ryder's twenty-year relationship with Brideshead Castle and the spectator's protracted experience of viewing eleven episodes. This intensifies the spectator's cognitive and affective relation to the on-screen house and landscape, while allowing him/her to perceive detrimental changes in the estate caused, in part, by Charles.

*Brideshead Revisited* became the first British television programme to explore a country estate in such detail, with fluid transitions from landscapes to interiors. In this respect, it represented a turning point in television drama, much as *The Go-Between* had in narrative film. However, *Brideshead Revisited* followed a period in which rural fiction and 16mm location films were increasingly made for television, often in tandem. The impetus to make landscape television narratives had increased markedly since the end of the 1960s. The shift to colour broadcasting in the UK was a major catalyst for this. However, there was also a range of wider cultural determinants. For example, folk pop helped to broaden interest in rural themes during the 1960s. Environmental concerns also led to discourses promoting self-sufficiency and organic farming.<sup>26</sup>

In terms of film gauge, the use of 16mm was more instrumental in television production than that of 35mm. The ATV subsidiary ITC, for instance, made all-35mm action adventure series from 1955, but following the example of US companies, used a mixture of location and studio footage.<sup>27</sup> The otherwise widespread adoption of 16mm in the 1960s as an alternative to 35mm – firstly for television documentary, then for docudrama, and finally for filmed inserts in drama – lowered the cost of location filming, so that it could be used more frequently and in greater quantity. After Ken Russell's groundbreaking *Diary of a Nobody* (1964), more and more BBC television plays began to be shot entirely using 16mm on location.<sup>28</sup> The independent broadcasters were slightly slower than the BBC to adopt 16mm for production of plays, but Thames

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<sup>26</sup> This movement was thematised in, for example, the SF dystopian series *Survivor* (BBC, 1975-1977) and the sitcom *The Good Life*. For a detailed account of the *Zeitgeist* and its impact on television, see Andy Sawyer, 'Everyday life in the post-catastrophic future: Terry Nation's *Survivors*', in John R. Cook and Peter Wright (eds.), *British Science Fiction Television: A Hitchhiker's Guide* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006), pp.131-153.

<sup>27</sup> Jonathan Bignell has charted ITC's use of studios and locations and its relationship with the film industry in an as yet unpublished research paper presented at the University of Reading, on 9 May, 2007.

<sup>28</sup> *Diary of a Nobody* (Ken Russell, BBC, 1964).



Television eventually led the way when it set up its subsidiary, Euston Films, in 1971 to make series, one-off dramas and, eventually, serials on 16mm. Other such subsidiaries were subsequently formed by ATV and Southern Television.<sup>29</sup>

16mm film was used for a large number of television plays with contemporary urban themes.<sup>30</sup> However, it also provided the means to make plays with rural settings entirely on location. During the early 1970s, 16mm was employed to film a variety of landscape television, including Granada's series of plays based on works by H. E. Bates, *Country Matters*, on which Derek Granger worked before he came to produce *Brideshead Revisited*.<sup>31</sup> While the one-off rural film drama flourished, the old approach of combining video and film persisted in landscape serials into the 1980s, with the occasional exception, such as *Love for Lydia*, *Mayor of Casterbridge* and *Brideshead Revisited*. The 16mm filmed serials of the 1970s were all contemporary crime dramas such as *Gangsters*, *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* and Euston Films' *Out*.<sup>32</sup> *Brideshead Revisited* is by contrast a period piece, but in Britain in 1981, a mainstream period drama would only be filmed on 16mm if it were made for television; filmmakers like Chris Welsby were using 16mm for experimental landscape films and Peter Greenaway shot *The Draughtsman's Contract* on Super 16mm.

The graininess of 16mm added an apposite appearance of grittiness to social realist television plays and series. It is apt in an entirely different sense in *Brideshead Revisited*. It adds a texture like that of a Monet painting to the programme, appropriate to the theme of a painter attempting to catch and preserve fleeting moments. The production method for *Brideshead Revisited* would arguably have been impossible, though, if it were not for the precedent set by Euston Films with its urban drama series. Euston Films was set up by Thames Television in 1971 to make series, one-off dramas and, eventually, serials on 16mm. Crucially, Euston's offices were not in the same building as Thames Television's London studios; it remained institutionally tied to

<sup>29</sup> Ian Christie, 'A Beginner's Guide to the Telefilm Jungle', in Jayne Pilling and Kingsley Canham (eds.), *The Screen on the Tube: Filmed TV Drama* (Norwich: Cinema City, 1983), p.10.

<sup>30</sup> Jamie Sexton gives a detailed history of this aspect of 16mm's impact on television drama in "'Televerite' hits Britain: documentary, drama and the growth of 16mm filmmaking in British television', *Screen*, vol. 44, no.4, Winter 2003, pp.429-44.

<sup>31</sup> *Country Matters* (Various, Granada, 1972). Video was, however, used for some of this series' interiors.

<sup>32</sup> *Gangsters* (Various, BBC, 1976-1978); *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy* (John Irvin, BBC, 1979); *Out* (Jim Goddard, Thames, 1978).

Thames, but possessed physical autonomy.<sup>33</sup> For each programme it made, Euston also set up a temporary production base and editing suite in rented premises near the key location.<sup>34</sup> Thus, the location effectively became the axis of all stages in the production process. Euston privileged the location in a way that no television or film company had done before.

With this in mind, the permission granted to producer Derek Granger by Granada's managing director, David Plowright, to shoot *Brideshead Revisited* entirely on location seems less idiosyncratic. However, the finished programme was also the result of some unexpected and unique circumstances. *Brideshead Revisited* was originally planned to be a five-part serial.<sup>35</sup> The initial director, Michael Lindsay-Hogg had shot several scenes, including a summer montage of Sebastian and Charles at Castle Howard, when a technician's strike brought the production to a halt.<sup>36</sup> Owing to contractual obligations elsewhere, Lindsay-Hogg had to depart and Charles Sturridge was brought in to replace him.<sup>37</sup> He worked with Derek Granger on John Mortimer's script during the strike, refining and expanding it.<sup>38</sup> After the strike had finished, Jeremy Irons was contracted to act in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. While he was away, there was more time available to work on shots not involving him. The production took two years and the length of the serial stretched to eleven hours.<sup>39</sup> This distended length was matched by no less than three visits made to Castle Howard for location filming.<sup>40</sup> Usually a film crew

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<sup>33</sup> Manuel Alvarado and John Stewart, *Made for Television: Euston Films Limited* (London: BFI, 1985), p.33.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p.45.

<sup>35</sup> Subsequent accounts by members of the cast and crew differ on the original planned length and number of episodes, but when production on the programme started, it was publicised as a five-part serial in Anonymous, 'Brideshead Blockbuster', *TV Times Magazine*, vol.94., no.9, 24 Feb 1979, p.31 and Anonymous, 'Olivier for Brideshead', *Television Today*, 1 November 1979, p.19.

<sup>36</sup> Email interview by the author with Charles Sturridge, 11/05/07. See also Derek Granger's DVD commentary on '1. Et in Arcadia Ego', disc one and Michael Lindsay-Hogg's general commentary on disc three, *Brideshead Revisited* DVD (Granada Ventures, 2005).

<sup>37</sup> See Sue Summers, 'The 28-year-old who won TV's £3 million brief', newspaper and date illegible (from the BFI *Brideshead Revisited* microjacket). Granger was given permission by Granada to continue with the project. It seems that it was Granada that was responsible for the extra budget, not the programme's initial co-financiers, Exxon, WNET and NDR.

<sup>38</sup> Email interview by the author with Charles Sturridge, 11/05/07.

<sup>39</sup> This was evidently a gradual process. When Sturridge was interviewed shortly after being given the job, he described the planned length as 'something like eight hours', so the length had probably swollen between the start of production and the strike. See Summers, *op. cit.*

<sup>40</sup> According to Sturridge, this was partly due to the protracted shoot. Email interview by the author with Charles Sturridge, 11/05/07.

visits a location only once. The *Brideshead Revisited* crew set up a production base there, after the Euston model, with the editor on site to work on dailies.<sup>41</sup>

It is this production system which enabled the crew to develop a complex response to the estate, with subtle motifs worked systematically across the full length of the programme. Lindsay-Hogg asserts that the plan from the beginning was to film a country house location in all four seasons, yet the result is even more complex.<sup>42</sup> There is a general, pathetically fallacious arc from summer to harsher seasons, which reflects Charles's decline. The decline consists of cycles: after the summer of 1923, Charles experiences the estate in several autumns, winters and early springs. The range of seasons, weather and times of day in which Castle Howard is depicted confers an aura of ephemerality on the estate and Charles's relationship with it. When sunshine returns to the estate in episode ten, it is the light of an evening at the end of summer: darkness and autumn are approaching fast, as is the end of Charles and Julia's life together (Fig. 4.14).

Derek Granger (who was involved in many of the creative decisions) and Charles Sturridge were evidently concerned that the audience would not be able to digest the parallels constructed across the serial's thirteen-hour duration.<sup>43</sup> They tried in vain to persuade Granada to schedule the programme as seven two-hour episodes, but finally reached a compromise: the first and last episodes were to be broadcast in two-hour slots and the middle nine episodes in one-hour slots.<sup>44</sup> The re-editing process that ensued to mould the programme to this schedule was, according to Sturridge, 'very complicated'.<sup>45</sup> The intricately planned seven-part formal structure was considerably altered. It is perhaps due to the precedent set by *Love for Lydia*, a relatively short novel adapted as a thirteen 50-minute part serial, that *Brideshead Revisited*'s eleven episode serialisation was accepted by Granger and Sturridge as a compromise. When it was originally broadcast, *Brideshead Revisited* was both the longest British drama serial (as opposed to series) to have been shot solely on film and the longest to have been made entirely on location. At the time, these details were emphasised in the press and used to

<sup>41</sup> Mark Titmus, 'Editing the Galaxy...and a fine cut', *Broadcast*, 24 May 1982, p.15.

<sup>42</sup> Lindsay-Hogg, DVD commentary.

<sup>43</sup> This figure includes advertisement breaks. Excluding these, the serial lasts eleven hours.

<sup>44</sup> Charles Sturridge, email interview with the author, 11/05/07.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

publicise the serial in *TV Times*.<sup>46</sup> From a historiographical perspective, they are crucial; the serial's protracted length and the fact that it consists exclusively of 16mm location footage distinguish its shape as a country estate screen narrative, for it is with these means that *Brideshead Revisited* depicts an outsider's experience, not only of an expansive estate, but also of the metamorphosis the house and grounds undergo over twenty years.

### Deconstructing Charles: Picturesque Irony

The arcs in the serial are delineated through the systematic deployment of landscape motifs. *Brideshead Revisited*'s schematic composition demands close attention and sharp recall, if we are to spot, for instance, the similar framing of shots from the second and tenth episodes, in which Charles is shown painting at the fountain, respectively with Sebastian (Fig. 4.13) and Julia (Fig. 4.14).



4.13 Sebastian and Charles, midsummer 1923 (episode two).



4.14 Julia and Charles, end of summer 1938 (episode ten).

In these analogous shots, the curtain of water is flattened like a screen over Sebastian and Julia by the telephoto lens; it suggests that they are both mediated through Ryder's art as painter. Julia is revealed as a replacement for Sebastian. Later in episode ten,

<sup>46</sup> *The Prisoner*, longer by 200 minutes, was filmed entirely on 35mm, but as it is a hybrid series with only some serial elements, it can be discounted. It was also largely shot in studio.

On *Brideshead Revisited* as the longest British serial made on film, see:

Anonymous, *Screen International*, 17 March 1979, p.18; Anonymous, 'Olivier for Brideshead', *Television Today*, 1 November 1979, p.19; Anonymous, 'Making Ready for Waugh', *TV Times Magazine* vol.102, no.6, 31 January 1981, p.19; Anonymous, 'Brideshead Blockbuster', *TV Times Magazine*, vol. 94., no.9, 24 February 1979, p. 31; Joe Steeples, 'The Borgias versus Brideshead', *The Daily Mail*, 30 July 1981; Brian Appleyard, 'Hopes for "Brideshead" as high as the price', *The Times*, 23 September 1981.

The following articles celebrated the fact that *Brideshead Revisited* was shot entirely on location:

Anonymous, 'Thames Television listings', *TV Times Magazine*, 10-16 October 1981, p.51; John Morris, 'Inside Television', *TV Times Magazine*, 28 November – 4 December 1981, p.28; Anonymous, 'Wonderful Brideshead now on tape release, but only in some shops', *Video Viewer*, August 1982, p.52.

Charles wonders whether he saw Julia in Sebastian or sees Sebastian in Julia now. This shot certainly suggests the latter. Whereas in 1923, Sebastian and Charles gaze outwards, beyond the edges of the frame, in 1938 the characters face one another. The relaxed, open arrangement in the earlier shot is replaced by the centripetal tension of a closed shot; Charles has arranged Julia as his subject to fill the position once occupied by Sebastian.

The motivation for his attempts to position Julia as an *objet d'art* or replacement for Sebastian appears to be desperation in the face of inevitable separation. The summery haze of 1923 has become the fading crepuscular glow of 1938. The latter shot thus harks back to the past, but is also ominously proleptic. Certainly, as we will see, Charles develops into more of a conscious contriver of events in the latter half of the serial, as his desperation increases. The 1938 fountain shot exemplifies the programme's complex treatment of narration. The screen of water not only suggests that the Charles of 1938 is arranging and re-mediating of events, but also points to the fact that Charles the narrator is doing this.

The narrator's unreliability is particularly evident at such moments when past and future are both invoked, that is, when the larger design of plot is made apparent in a single moment. Ryder looks back over twenty years. This period is first generally a time of comedy and happiness, then generally an era fraught with misery and a sense of loss. Sarah Cardwell argues that 'nostalgia is internal to the text...: we are "nostalgic" for the first section of the serial when we watch the second section.'<sup>47</sup> This may be true, but narrative desire is also represented throughout the serial by two forms of prospection, which elicit a more analytical response from the audience. Firstly, the metaphors and similes that Charles the narrator uses to describe events at certain points in his life are often coloured by events which occur later. He employs thalassic metaphors which look forward to his fateful meeting with Julia onboard a ship on the Atlantic. He describes Sebastian in episode two as 'like a friend met on board ship on the high seas'. In his terms, Brideshead symbolises the 'home port'. Later, when Sebastian is descending into alcoholism, he says 'the subject was everywhere in the house, like a fire deep in the hold of a ship'. Later on, after the Atlantic scenes, the metaphor becomes retrospective.

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<sup>47</sup> Cardwell, *Adaptation Revisited*, p.128.

In episode ten, after Julia's outburst, she surprises Charles by her ability to suppress her emotions when she returns to talk calmly to Bridey. Charles the narrator remarks, 'I was all at sea.'

A pseudo-Bergsonian, Charles can often only describe one event in terms of another. If Bergson criticises the conception of time in terms of space, the idea that moments of time can be separated into discrete units as if they are spatial areas, then from Charles's perspective, spaces are as inextricable as moments of time: space is remembered as *durée*, or, in Dixon Hunt's terms, the '*longue durée* of existence, change and reformulation.' This constant displacement is the sign of a narrator whose analytic capacity has failed him.

Most critics agree that the Ryder of the novel is, one way or another, reprehensible. Whether or not the novel is condemned on this basis depends on the amount of irony through which Waugh is perceived to have presented his protagonist, or, as Robert Murray Davis puts it,

the degree of distance – intellectual, moral, social; and...religious – not only between the novelist and his creation but also between the "I" as narrator and the "T" as actor.<sup>48</sup>

William J. Cook isolates three Ryders in the novel: the narrator, the soldier protagonist of 1942-1943 (1944 in the programme) and the younger, civilian protagonist of 1923-1939.<sup>49</sup> Ryder's act of recollection as a soldier at Brideshead informs the narration. This is made clearer in the programme, in which a dissolve from Ryder-soldier's face to Oxford 1923 suggests that the intradiegesis is his recollection (Figs. 4.15-4.16), and that the Arnoldesque dreaming spires we see are inflected by his memory.

<sup>48</sup> Davis, *Brideshead Revisited: The Past Redeemed*, p.18.

<sup>49</sup> William J. Cook, *Masks, Modes, and Morals: The Art of Evelyn Waugh* (Rutherford, Madison and Teaneck: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1971), p.198.





4.15 As the narrator recalls his first visit to Brideshead in 1923, a dissolve merges a close-up of the Ryder-soldier of 1944...



4.16...with an Arnoldesque Oxford of 1923 (episode one).

Both novel and programme are about a memory of a recollective act: the narrator remembers his recollections as a soldier. To complicate this recursive framework further, the younger, intradiegetic Charles of 1923-1939 also looks back on the past. The novel's three Ryders are, as Cook points out, distinct. The narrator comments on his actions as a younger man, censuring, for instance, his misunderstanding of Sebastian's need to be a Samaritan to Kurt. However, the three Ryders are also linked. *Brideshead Revisited* is a *Bildungsroman*. It traces the formative experiences which shape Ryder's narrative voice. Jeffrey Heath argues that Ryder's act of narration is an important part of his progress, as he finally manages to create 'a non-derivative work': the story he tells. Heath defends the novel because of the disparity he sees between the narrator and the civilian protagonist.<sup>50</sup> In the programme, the connection between Ryder narrator and Charles the civilian is more firmly substantiated through Ryder's paintings: his earlier attempts at weaving Brideshead Castle into a narrative. The serial does not encourage us to see the narrator as a reformed version of the protagonist, nor the narration as more authentic than the paintings.

Distance between author and narrator in a novel is usually a matter of tone. The narrator's voice needs to strike a self-evidently false note. Critics disagree over Waugh's success in distancing himself from Ryder. James Carens argues that the use of a narrator 'nearly banished from the novel the objective, ironical satirical detachment which had hitherto distinguished Waugh's art.'<sup>51</sup> In his preface to the 1960 revised version of the novel, Waugh admitted that he now found the book's 'gluttony...for

<sup>50</sup> See Heath, *The Picturesque Prison*, p.174.

<sup>51</sup> James F. Carens, *The Satiric Art of Evelyn Waugh* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1966), p.106.

‘rhetorical and ornamental language...distasteful,’ and as a result had ‘modified the grosser passages’.<sup>52</sup> A critic’s judgement of the novel has often depended on whether he/she perceives the ‘gluttony’ as Ryder’s or Waugh’s. Having praised Waugh’s early novels for their ‘extensive use of metonymic and synecdochic detail,’ David Lodge concludes that, with *Brideshead Revisited*, Waugh’s style unfortunately ‘became heavily metaphorical, given to long, elaborate analogies’, part of a ‘phoney revival of modernism.’<sup>53</sup> For Lodge, the revisions in the 1960 novel were not entirely successful.

At times modifying ‘the grosser passages’ further still, at times dispensing with Waugh entirely, Mortimer, Granger and Sturridge drew on *both* the 1945 and the 1960 versions of the novel. The programme’s key difference from the novel, though, is the picturesque irony with which it treats Ryder and his propensity for elaborate metaphors: it manages to distance its discourse from the phoniness of its narrator. In film and television it is perhaps easier to represent a narrator ironically: discrepancy between the accounts offered by voiceover and image is the most common device. In the television version of *Brideshead Revisited*, Ryder’s paintings constitute another layer in this ironic fabric; there are discrepancies between his fantastical paintings and the actual landscapes. However, Ryder’s florid style as an artist reaches its nadir in his voiceover.

Ryder is held at a distance from the viewer from the very beginning of the programme. The novel begins with Ryder recalling a moment where he achieves a vantage point, a moment of emerging cognisance:

When I reached C Company lines, which were at the top of the hill, I paused and looked back at the camp, just coming into full view below me through the grey mist of early morning.<sup>54</sup>

In the programme, the first word, ‘when’ becomes ‘here’: ‘Here, at the age of thirty-nine, I began to be old.’ The immediacy of the ‘here’ is disingenuous. It supposes that we know where he was at the age of thirty-nine, but he gives no details, apart from a reference to the Army. The image merely informs us that the setting is a military dormitory. His feelings are revealed without the novel’s contextual information. His comparison of the Army to a collapsing marriage merely hints that he has experienced

<sup>52</sup> Evelyn Waugh, ‘Preface’, in *Brideshead Revisited* (London: Penguin, 2000), p.7.

<sup>53</sup> David Lodge, *The Modes of Modern Writing: Metaphor, Metonymy, and the Typology of Modern Literature* (London and New York: Arnold, 1979), p.211-212.

<sup>54</sup> Waugh, *Brideshead Revisited*, p.9.

the latter. Charles's confessions are initially introverted, the antithesis of the omniscience granted by the high vantage point in the novel. The camera offers us no establishing shot equivalent to the novel's panoramic first paragraph. The programme opens with a nondescript mid-shot of an anonymous soldier asleep in bed (Fig. 4.17). A pan around the dormitory slowly arrives at Ryder. His introversion continues; in the following sequence, the novel's 'whatever scene of desolation lay ahead of us, I never feared one more brutal than this,' is accompanied by a shot of Charles's worn body in a shower, not a landscape. It seems that the 'brutal scene of desolation' describes him, rather than the camp.

When the narrative does move outdoors, Ryder remains an often elusive figure. In these scenes, extreme long-shots place him at one remove, countering the intimacy of the voiceover. In the first exterior scene, when he disappears behind a hut, (Fig. 4.18) the camera searches for him in an elaborate track and zoom, only to discover him, at a distance on the other side of the hut (Fig. 4.19).



4.17 The first shot: an unknown soldier (episode one).



4.18 Ryder disappears behind a hut...



4.19...and the camera eventually finds him (episode one).



4.20-22 Picturesque partial concealment of Ryder (episode one).



Charles is often partially hidden in the landscape, by the mundane objects of army life: ammunition boxes (Fig. 4.20); a jeep (Fig. 4.21); a signpost (Fig. 4.22). Picturesque semi-concealment is used to make an obscure figure of Charles and detracts from the immediacy of the voiceover. This is a doubly ironic picturesque: it not only distances



the viewer from the protagonist, but uses camouflaged military objects rather than bushes and trees to do so.

In the novel, it is the full appearance of Brideshead Castle which is tantalisingly delayed, rather than exposition. Ryder the soldier hears its name, but does not see the house. He describes the landscape, partly from memory, as some of it is picturesquely concealed from the camp. Though the Bride stream and the Bridesprings farm are mentioned, the name of the house is not revealed to us until several pages later, when, in 1923, Sebastian says that his plovers' eggs are sent from Brideshead. This toponymic reticence complements the gradual unfolding of the landscape seen by Charles in 1923, when he first visits the house.

Before the first edition of the Waugh's novel was published, an earlier version of the book was serialised in *Town and Country*. The alterations he made between this and the novel version reveal the way that he worked picturesque composition into the diction and syntax. Charles's arrival at the house in 1923 is portrayed as follows in *Town and Country*:

In the early afternoon we came to our destination: lodge gates, a lime avenue, more gates, a turn in the drive into the open park land and, at last, half a mile ahead of us, inevitable but unexpectedly splendid, prone in the sunlight, grey and gold against a screen of bosage, shone the dome and columns of an old house.<sup>55</sup>

There are slight, but significant differences in the novel version:

We drove on and in the early afternoon came to our destination: wrought-iron gates and twin, classical lodges on a village green, an avenue, more gates, open parkland, a turn in the drive; and suddenly a new and secret landscape opened before us. We were at the head of a valley and below us, half a mile distant, prone in the sunlight, grey and gold amid a screen of bosage, shone the dome and columns of an old house.<sup>56</sup>

Robert Murray Davis points out that Waugh's revisions 'establish more firmly the surprise that Ryder feels.'<sup>57</sup> It is, however, the picturesque that Waugh utilises to do this. The turn in the drive is now after the park land. Inevitability is replaced by sudden

<sup>55</sup> Quoted in Robert Murray Davis, 'The Serial Version of Brideshead Revisited', *Twentieth Century Literature*, vol. 15, no. 1, April 1969, p.36.

<sup>56</sup> This is from the pre-1960 version. Evelyn Waugh, *Brideshead Revisited* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1957), p.34. The 1960 version omits 'prone in sunlight': see Waugh, *Brideshead Revisited* (London: Penguin, 2002), p.36.

<sup>57</sup> Murray Davis, 'The Serial Version of Brideshead Revisited', p.36.

surprise; a 'new and secret landscape' now stands between the 'open park land' and the house'; the house stands 'amid a screen of bosage', rather than 'against' it.

In the programme's prologue, Ryder the soldier actually sees the house: this is also our first view of it. Waugh's picturesque composition is displaced onto this earlier scene, though with an ironic tone; here Army vehicles fulfil the pleasing concealment effected by the bosage and valley in the novel. When a sergeant tells him that they are at Brideshead, Charles begins to walk, his destination unclear. His pace and bearing are like those of a somnambulist (Fig. 4.23). The voiceover recalls:

It was as though someone had switched off the wireless and a voice that had been bawling in my ears, incessantly, fatuously, for days beyond number, had been suddenly cut short. An immense silence followed, empty at first, but gradually filled with a multitude of sweet, natural and long-forgotten sounds: for he had spoken a name that was so familiar to me, a conjuror's name of such ancient power, that, at its mere sound, the phantoms of those haunted late years began to take flight.

The voiceover is intimate in its confessional tone, but not in its choice of extravagant metaphors: the turning-off-the-wireless simile declares an incongruous aversion to the radio. The audience listens to this narrator on television complaining about broadcast sound. The narrator is therefore placed at one remove from us. Furthermore, when he says 'an immense silence followed', the diegetic soundtrack contradicts him, with noises from lorry engines and horns. Ryder is either an unreliable narrator or solipsistic and out of place.



4.23 Entranced, Ryder walks...



4.25... but is obscured by a lorry...



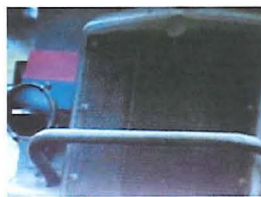
4.25...and then disappears from view.



4.26 In the next shot, the corner of the house is visible...



4.27...until a lorry approaches...



4.28...and completely obscures it.



4.29 As the lorry passes Ryder is found...



4.30...yet still partially concealed.



4.31 The camera pans right as...



4.32...the house finally comes into view...



4.33... with Charles now clearly positioned as a figure in the landscape.



4.34 A reverse shot clarifies his position in relation to the road and lorries.

In contradistinction to his metaphors, the *mise-en-scène* is reminiscent of the opening of Hemingway's novel, *A Farewell to Arms*, where war machines and ecosystem are woven into a rhapsody of mundanity. The irony between the mundane images and Charles's profuse metaphors is accentuated in the framing and the camera movements. Both allow parts of army vehicles and soldiers to obscure views of Charles and to teasingly defer the first sight of Brideshead Castle. As Charles is followed in a tracking shot, a lorry intervenes between him and the camera (Fig. 4.24). When the lorry has passed, Ryder has disappeared from view (Fig. 4.25). Then there is a cut to a road, with the bottom corner of the house now in view (Fig. 4.26). As another lorry approaches (Fig. 4.27), blocking out the view of the house, the camera pans left (Fig. 4.28), so that when it has passed, Ryder appears (Fig. 4.29), though he is momentarily concealed as another vehicle passes (Fig. 4.30). As he walks across the road, the camera then pans right (Figs. 4.31-4.32), finally capturing Ryder and the whole house in one frame (Fig. 4.33). A reverse shot, with the camera now placed between Ryder and the house, precisely locates Ryder in relation to the road and the army vehicles (Fig. 4.34), after this disorientating sequence in which army vehicles have concealed both the house and Ryder. The 'new and secret landscape' is secret, not just in a purely aesthetic sense, but also in the sense of camouflage. Camouflaged vehicles are aestheticised, becoming metonyms for Pope's 'bounds' that 'pleasingly confound'; the camouflage takes on picturesque qualities, as the camera tracks and pans around it in serpentine movements. Thus, as in Nikolaus Pevsner's interpretation of town planning, the historical picturesque is carried over into modernity.<sup>58</sup>

The vehicles and soldiers, as picturesque 'bounds', are emphatic markers of distance between the contemporary audience and the atavistic aesthete Charles, as well as, crucially, between the camera as storyteller and Charles as rememberer. In its deferral

<sup>58</sup> See Nikolaus Pevsner, *The Englishness of English Art* (London: Penguin, 1997).



of gratification, the picturesque tends heavily towards landscape narrative and, therefore, metonymy. Charles's obsessive contiguity disorder is thus contrasted with the camera style, which draws on a metonymic landscape mode. Through this marked distance between Charles's narration and the screen discourse, the programme arguably ironises more successfully than Waugh's novel. However, the ironic distance is placed by the programme between Charles as narrator and the directors, Lindsay-Hogg and Sturridge, *not* between Charles and Waugh.

An author's note at the start of the novel reads 'I am not I: thou are not he or she: they are not they.' Waugh was keen to stress that *Brideshead Revisited* was not a *roman à clef*, though he drew on many elements of his life – particularly his relationship with the Lygon children of Madresfield Hall, whose father Lord Beauchamp fled abroad when his homosexuality was uncovered.<sup>59</sup> The television serial does not need to distance Waugh's voice from Charles's, because Waugh is not the sole or even the dominant author. Instead the series intensifies the connection between Waugh's biography and his narrative. The programme's iconography is inflected with many incidental details from Waugh's life: for example, the make-up for Anthony Blanche was based on a cartoon of Brian Howard,<sup>60</sup> one of Waugh's inspirations for the character; Sebastian on his motorcycle (Fig. 4.35) is an allusion to a well-known photograph of Waugh (Fig. 4.36); the type of long-necked jumper worn by Charles in several scenes had particular significance for Waugh.<sup>61</sup> Whether it portrays Waugh as Sebastian, Ryder or both, the programme disparages Waugh's relationship with landed families, for, by association, Waugh becomes the victim of the lethal charm that Anthony Blanche criticises so forcefully. This is surely a rare case – an adaptation that distances itself from the source text, by moving closer to the writer of that text. Ryder's use of extravagant metaphors is the result of a pernicious relationship with an aristocratic family; when the programme satirises Ryder it also satirises Waugh.

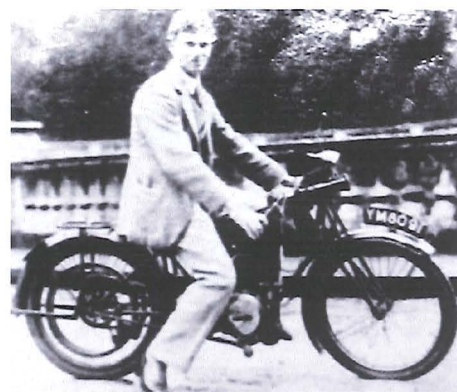
<sup>59</sup> Christopher Sykes, *Evelyn Waugh: A Biography* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977), p.342 and *passim*.

<sup>60</sup> Nikolas Grace, commentary to '1. Et in Arcadia Ego', on the *Brideshead Revisited* DVD (Granada Ventures, 2005), disc one.

<sup>61</sup> Richard Jacobs, 'Introduction', in Evelyn Waugh, *Vile Bodies* (London: Penguin, 2000), p.xxv.



4.35 Sebastian in winter 1923/24.



4.36 Evelyn Waugh in 1924.

More important than any of the above incidental details, though, is the choice of locations. The interior of Marchmain House, where Ryder executes his first commission as a painter is portrayed by Tatton Park.<sup>62</sup> It was here that Waugh broke his ankle on a parachuting exercise and managed to get leave to write *Brideshead Revisited*.<sup>63</sup> The start of Ryder's professional career is aligned with the beginning of the writing process of the novel. Waugh had also visited Castle Howard.<sup>64</sup> Collins had published Christopher Sykes's *Evelyn Waugh: A Biography* in 1975, just three years before pre-production began on the programme: Sykes, a close friend of Waugh, was the first to suggest that Castle Howard was the main architectural inspiration for Waugh's descriptions of Brideshead Castle.<sup>65</sup> However, Brideshead in the novel is a pastiche. It certainly includes elements inspired by Castle Howard, such as the obelisk, dome and temple. The Howards, like the Flytes, are also aristocratic Catholics. On the other hand, Brideshead was, we are told, designed by Inigo Jones.<sup>66</sup> It also features a chapel inspired by the one at Madresfield;<sup>67</sup> a 'Soaneseque' library; and a terrace with colonnades: all features which differentiate it from Castle Howard. Apart from dressing the chapel to resemble Madresfield's, the programme's crew correlated the diegetic space more closely with Castle Howard.<sup>68</sup> Thus, like Castle Howard, Brideshead in the programme is (as Charles states) designed by Vanbrugh.

<sup>62</sup> Anonymous, 'Wonderful Brideshead now on tape release, but only in some shops', *Video Viewer*, August 1982, p.52.

<sup>63</sup> Sykes, op. cit., p.320; Derek Granger, 'The Writing of "Brideshead Revisited"', *The Listener*, 8 October 1981, p.394.

<sup>64</sup> Michael Davie (ed.), *The Diaries of Evelyn Waugh* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1976), p.420

<sup>65</sup> See Sykes, op. cit., pp.239, 342.

<sup>66</sup> Waugh, *Brideshead Revisited* (London: Penguin, 2000), p.77.

<sup>67</sup> Lady Dorothy Lygon, 'Madresfield and Brideshead', in David Pryce-Jones (ed.), *Evelyn Waugh and his World* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1973), p.54.

<sup>68</sup> On the dressing of the chapel, see Granger, DVD commentary.

Different elements of Castle Howard's estate – its, temple, mausoleum, fountain and approaches – characterise different parts of the plot, so that the reappearance of a particular element immediately creates resonances. Moreover, the settings are more than motifs. The programme draws heavily on the associations of each part of the estate in order to relate the story of Charles's decline from naïve student to metaphor-obsessed narrator. Charles's tone as narrator evolves first through his paintings. The painter of its landscape, Charles is also in a sense Brideshead's landscaper: through his art he rearranges the estate. Of Waugh's Ryder, Robert Murray Davis argues, 'Because [he] is an outsider, he can see more clearly than the members of the Flyte family both the aesthetic harmony of the house and the discord among its inhabitants.'<sup>69</sup> The programme develops this trait through landscape. It is Charles's arc that links the elements of the estate in a plotted trajectory and his artistry that brings disparate parts of the landscape together as murals in the house's Garden Room. In order to understand what happens to Charles in this process – how he is formed as a protagonist, artist and narrator by the estate – it is necessary first to explicate the way the various ornamental buildings and approaches are deployed by the programme.

## Approaches

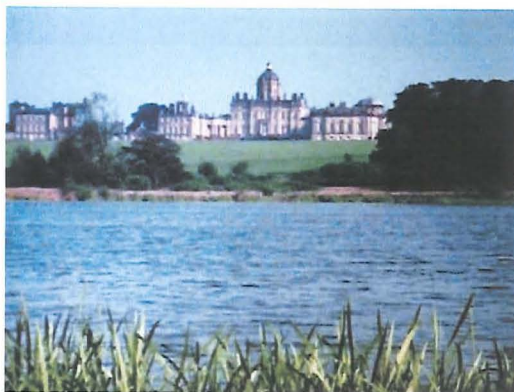
A general transition from perspicuous landscapes to picturesque occlusion is traced through different approaches to the house. The use of different approaches reflects the gradual evolution of Charles's mutually affective relationship with the estate and his symbolic perception of the house. When the young Charles visits Brideshead Castle for the first time in 1923, his perspective is depicted without irony. Sebastian stops the car and asks, 'Well?' Then there is a cut to a shot of the house from Charles's point of view (Fig. 4.37). The road is not part of the intended approach to Castle Howard or, we later infer, Brideshead Castle: the charming Sebastian takes Ryder to see the house from an unusual vantage point, which no other driver takes him to again. The chosen spot shows the house across a lake. The lake forms a moat-like barrier.<sup>70</sup> However, a telephoto lens

<sup>69</sup> Davis, 'Imagined Space in *Brideshead Revisited*', p.27.

<sup>70</sup> John Dixon Hunt has remarked upon the playful, castellar qualities of Castle Howard's Carrimere and Pyramid Gates, in 'Castle Howard Revisited', pp.22-24. The point-of-view shot, in which the house is seen across the Great Lake, as if across a moat, not only draws on the eighteenth-century convention of



is used, so that distance is considerably flattened and the house seems within reach. Here the young Charles looks at the North Front, its wings projecting forwards like welcoming arms.



4.37 Charles's first point of view shot of the house, represented with a telephoto lens (1923).



4.38 In the next shot of the house, a shorter lens makes the distance between car and house seem greater (episode one).

The next shot of the house, however, counters any sense that he has fetishised it as an icon of landed wealth (Fig. 4.38). It follows an exchange in which Charles says he should like to meet Sebastian's family, only to be told he cannot, as they are in London, dancing. The shorter lens for this shot makes the house barely visible. It seems that he has associated Brideshead with the family; the absence of the family makes the house seem distant and unobtainable. Ryder's yearning for the family is understandable at this point: after all, he has no mother and his father is something of a lunatic. He becomes an arriviste later.

However, it is the first of the point-of-view shots of the house in this scene which emblematises his stay in the summer of 1923: it reappears as a blown-up detail in the end credits of episode one (Fig. 4.42), as the first shot of episode two and again as a blown-up detail in the end credits of that episode (Fig. 4.43). Briefly, under the boys' dispensation, the house is accessible and perspicuous. In diametric contrast, when Charles the soldier first sees Brideshead in 1944, he looks at the South Front: the house has turned its back on him (Fig. 4.33). A serpentine road curves capriciously to the left, away from the house. He also gazes upwards from the bottom of a hill. The house is much higher than him, raised as an object of veneration. Similar picturesque views appear throughout the intradiegesis, in the various bleak seasons after his relationship with Sebastian has collapsed (Figs. 4.39-4.41), as well as in the end credits of episodes

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depicting a house from the other side of the estate's lake, but also extends the medieval characteristics described by Hunt; this scene follows a shot of Charles and Sebastian driving through the Pyramid Gate.

four, five, ten and eleven, (Figs. 4.44-4.47) the episodes in which love dies between Charles and Sebastian (four and five), and Charles and Julia (ten and eleven). The end credit stills summarise the tone of each episode through weather conditions, but also chart, over time, Charles's changing perception of the house: from summery perspicuity to brumal picturesque opacity. Appropriately, they are blow-ups of frames; the increased grain accentuating the sense of fleeting Monetesque impressions.



4.39 Winter 1923/4 (episode four).

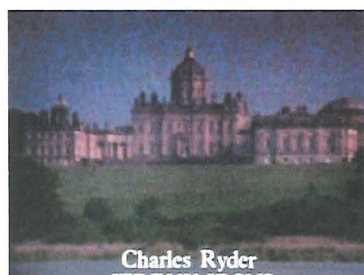


4.40 Winter 1924/5 (episode five).

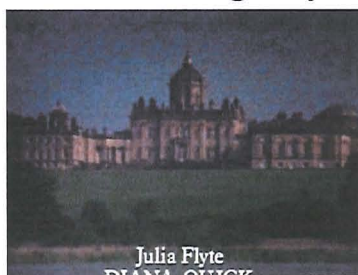


4.41 Winter 1924/5 (episode five).

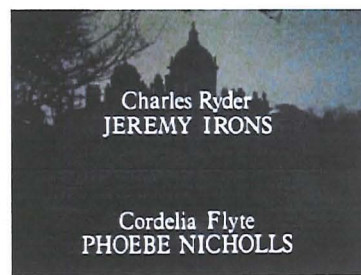
### *Brideshead Revisited's* grainy end credits:



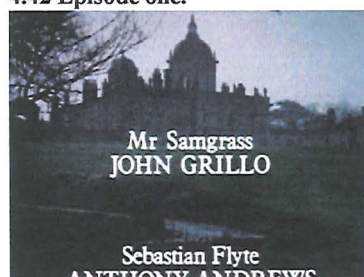
4.42 Episode one.



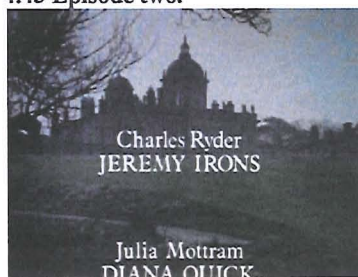
4.43 Episode two.



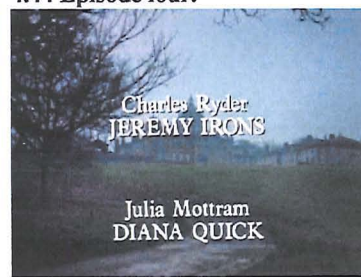
4.44 Episode four.



4.45 Episode five.



4.46 Episode ten.



4.47 Episode eleven.

## The Temple 1: Bacchic Refuge

The trajectory adumbrated by the approach motifs is charted in more intricate detail by the deployment of the estate's ornamental buildings. The Temple of the Four Winds is where, in the summer of 1923 (episode 2), Charles and Sebastian's bond of inebriety is cemented through an evening of wine-tasting. When the butler leaves the temple at the



start of the evening, an extreme long shot captures the whole of the building, still bathed in sunlight (Fig. 4.3). The symmetrical composition adds to the mock-ceremonial air in the ensuing scene, as the boys follow an instruction booklet on wine-tasting. More seriously, the whole of the temple is shown. At this point in the story, when Charles is innocently happy, wide shots are used; the estate's structures are contained within the frame of the television screen. Such holistic shots depict the estate as navigable and perspicuous, in contrast to the synecdochic picturesque landscape in the prologue, where semi-concealments make for a deceptive, occlusive space. The openness of the landscape in the 1923 scenes is appropriate to the young Charles's ingenuousness.



4.48 The temple interior, with a window looking out to the Arcadian landscape of summer 1923.



4.49 The temple as Bacchic refuge (episode two).

A shot from within the temple in 1923 is composed so that the top middle third of the frame includes a window looking out on the sunlit grounds (Fig. 4.48). The temple and the boys' activities are thus associated with the Arcadian landscape. Modelled on pagan classicism, the temple is also a refuge for Sebastian from Catholicism. A later exterior shot, reproducing the earlier set-up, establishes the temple as a Bacchic refuge (Fig. 4.49): we look at the temple again as an enclave. Amidst the dark surrounding landscape, the light of the window shines.

Why do they need a refuge in what appears to be a sympathetic landscape? Arcadia is a place that is defined by its otherness. The 1923 Arcadia in *Brideshead Revisited* not only contrasts with the brumal picturesque landscape of 1944, but also contains the seed of its own decline.

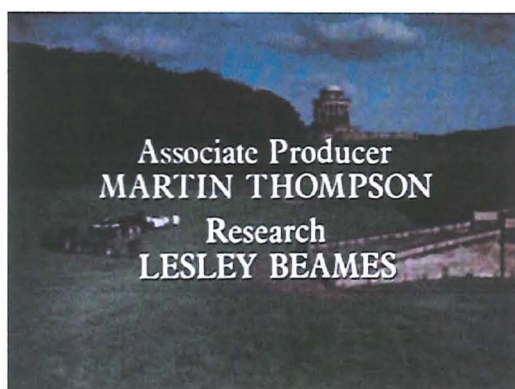




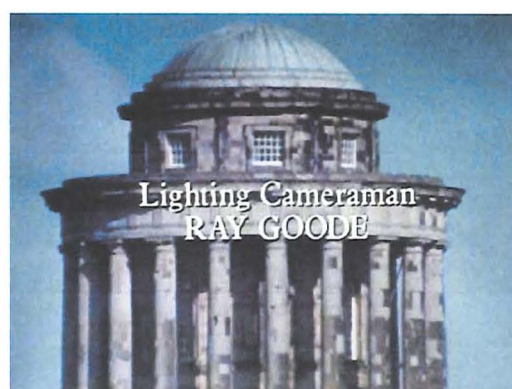
4.50 The vista seen from the temple. Note the top of the mausoleum peeping over the clump of trees, frame left.



4.51 Detail from 4.50 – the mausoleum (episode two).



4.52 At Lady Marchmain's funeral, the mausoleum is first shown in its entirety...



4.53 ...and then in a closer shot, as the camera tilts upwards (episode seven).

During episode two, Charles sits on the steps of the temple with Sebastian and points at the vista (Figs. 4.50-4.51). In doing so, he gestures to the landscape as narrative plot, a place in which past and prolepsis inhere. Prospection and performance are inscribed in the location. As John Dixon Hunt shows, the Claudesque perspective 'is orchestrated into some large theatrical representation'.<sup>71</sup> The view commanded from the temple, the last 'a visitor encounters in a walk from the house', reflects 'both an awareness of history and a sense of the future'.<sup>72</sup> The past is embodied by the Classical architecture.<sup>73</sup> Futurity is represented by Hawksmoor's mausoleum and the temple's Sibyl statues, overlooking the landscape (flanking the top of the stairs, Fig. 4.3). When it was landscaped by Vanbrugh and Hawksmoor in the early eighteenth century, the vista was modern in the way it blended the grounds with the agricultural land beyond, part of

<sup>71</sup> Hunt, 'Castle Howard Revisited', p.42.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., p.44.

<sup>73</sup> Charles Saumarez Smith describes the 'elements of the Roman *campagna* translated into...English parkland', in *The Building of Castle Howard* (London: Pimlico, 1997), p.xvii.

what Hussey calls an ‘increasing trend to picturesqueness’.<sup>74</sup> The view conveys the sense of ‘future prospects of agricultural prosperity’.<sup>75</sup> In the context of the serial’s narrative, Charles and Sebastian take on the prophetic role of the Sibyls, gazing out on an optimistic Arcadian prospect. However, death is also in Arcadia: the dome of the mausoleum peeps over the top of the boscape on the left, anticipating the death of their relationship. It is apposite too that the mausoleum appears as a synecdochic menace: the picturesque is also in Arcadia, threatening to engulf it with (disingenuous) partial concealments.

### **The Mausoleum and Lady Marchmain: ‘Et in Arcadia Ego’**

The mausoleum appears in its entirety only once in the serial, during the end credits of episode seven, when a funeral procession carries Lady Marchmain’s body to be interred there.<sup>76</sup> It appears first at a distance (Fig. 4.52) and then, more imposingly, in a closer shot as the camera tilts upwards (Fig. 4.53). Sturridge and Granger followed the advice Waugh gave MGM when they were planning to film *Brideshead Revisited* in 1946: to situate the Flyte tombs in the estate and not, as in the novel, in the parish church.<sup>77</sup> However, rather than place the tombs in the chapel, as Waugh had recommended, they set them in Castle Howard’s mausoleum, thus situating a *memento mori* in the landscape and drawing on the pro-filmic composition of the grounds. Hawksmoor’s mausoleum is at the very edge of Castle Howard’s grounds and therefore marks the termination of any walk towards the east of the estate; as Christopher Hussey remarks, it ‘forms both the visual and logical climax’ of the estate.<sup>78</sup>

At the end of *Brideshead Revisited*’s seventh episode, it marks the serial’s first climax: Sebastian is never seen again by Charles or the viewer. The death of Lady Marchmain marks the final separation of the erstwhile friends. By only showing the mausoleum in full during her funeral, the programme associates the symbol of death in the landscape

<sup>74</sup> Tom Williamson, ‘Estate Management and Landscape Design’, in Christopher Ridgway and Robert Williams (eds.), *Sir John Vanbrugh* (Thrupp: Sutton, 2000), p.28; Hussey, *English Gardens and Landscapes*, p.121.

<sup>75</sup> Hunt, ‘Castle Howard Revisited’, p.46. Hunt comments on the way Switzer used the word ‘prospects’ to describe the landscape as both a vista and an anticipation of future opulence.

<sup>76</sup> This scene was cut in the three-video release of *Brideshead Revisited* that circulated during the 1990s.

<sup>77</sup> Evelyn Waugh, ‘*Brideshead Memorandum*’, quoted *in toto* in Jeffrey Heath, ‘*Brideshead*: the Critics and the Memorandum’, *English Studies*, no.56, June 1975, p.227.

<sup>78</sup> Hussey, *op. cit.*, p.128.

with her. She is, to some extent, certainly to blame for destroying Sebastian and Charles's love, though she is, it seems, in turn killed by Julia and Sebastian's waywardness. As Sebastian comments when he learns of her illness, 'She really was a *femme fatale*, wasn't she? She killed at a touch.' As he says this he looks at an icon of Mary with the infant Jesus, as if Lady Marchmain's attempt at being a holy mother is inextricably related to her killing touch. Her lethal role is also defined by the programme in pagan terms, though; she brings death into Arcadia.

The idea that Charles and Sebastian's friendship takes place in Arcadia is introduced via the title of episode one, 'Et in Arcadia Ego'. As Erwin Panofsky explains, this phrase has meant either 'I, too, lived in Arcadia', from the viewpoint of someone remembering a pastoral past that no longer exists, or 'I [Death] am even in Arcadia'.<sup>79</sup> Which interpretation we choose depends on context. In oil painting, the latter meaning is often reinforced when the phrase appears with a tomb or a skull. As Panofsky points out, Waugh employs the same device in *Brideshead Revisited*: Charles keeps a skull adorned with the motto in his rooms at Oxford. In the programme, however, interpretation of the phrase is carefully plotted. In episode one, we see Charles's skull, but not the inscription (Fig. 4.54). At this point, the skull is simply a comical device; we are amused as Cousin Jasper, clearly appalled, gazes at what he calls a 'peculiarly noisome object'. That Charles has 'paid cash' for the skull is merely an incidental detail. Without the inscription being visible, skull and episode title remain distinct. 'Et in Arcadia Ego', in episode one, means 'I [Charles], too, lived in Arcadia'.



4.54 The skull can be seen in episode one, but not the inscription on it.



4.55 The inscription becomes visible in episode four, when Lady Marchmain admires Charles's drawings.

<sup>79</sup> See Erwin Panofsky, 'Et in Arcadia Ego: Poussin and the Elegiac Tradition', in *Meaning in the Visual Arts* (London: Penguin, 1970), p.341 and *passim*.





4.56 Detail from 4.55: the motto.



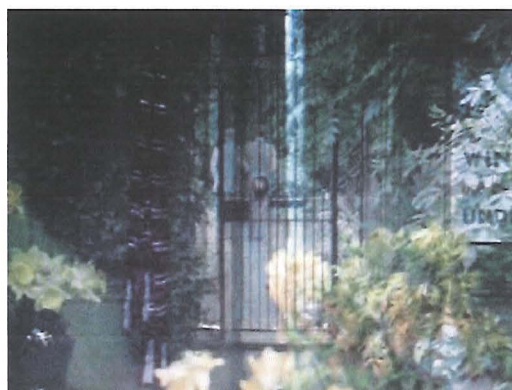
4.57 The 'low door' is literalised.

The definition of the phrase is transformed in episode four, though. Lady Marchmain visits Charles's rooms. As she looks at Charles's sketches and says, 'These really are delightful, Charles,' the camera tilts to show the drawings (Fig. 4.55). On the right of the frame, her hands gesture to them. The skull, with the motto 'Et in Arcadia Ego' now visible on its forehead, is in the top right hand of the frame (Fig. 4.56). Suddenly the other definition is invoked: death is even in Arcadia, brought by Lady Marchmain. She has invaded Arcadia by invading Charles's rooms. Charles's rooms become an extension of Arcadia in episode one, when Sebastian takes Charles to see the ivy in the botanical gardens. After Charles has entered the garden, Sebastian closes the gate behind them: the shot symbolises the fact that Sebastian has led him into the 'enchanted' garden he has been yearning for (Fig. 4.58). The low door, literalised in an earlier shot (Fig. 4.57), is again literalised here. A dissolve links this space with Charles's rooms, filled with Sebastian's flowers (Fig. 4.59). In episode three, Charles's voiceover suggests that it is Anthony Blanche's departure that has made the 'enchanted garden' inaccessible: 'he had locked a door and hung the key on his chain.' However, the image later contradicts this unreliable narration. Charles, seduced by Lady Marchmain's charm, walks out of a college quadrangle with her, and closes behind them a gate similar to the one in the first episode (Fig. 4.60). The shot is particularly salient because the voiceover discusses the extent to which he can blame Lady Marchmain. Charles is evidently partly to blame for having shut the gate to the 'enchanted garden' himself. Later, a garden, closed off by a gate, is visible between Charles and Lady Marchmain as they discuss Sebastian (Figs. 4.61-4.62). Ironically, the images negate the voiceover on its own terms; the 'low door' and the 'enchanted

garden' are literalised in the programme's mise-en-scène, but such visual literalisms offer more veracious versions of the voiceover's metaphors.<sup>80</sup>



4.58 Having taken Charles into the botanical/enchanted garden, Sebastian closes the gate.



4.59 A dissolve suggests that the enchanted garden has entered Charles's rooms, as the trees from one shot become indistinguishable from the flowers in the next (episode one).



4.60 Charles shuts a gate behind him as he follows Lady Marchmain out of a quadrangle (episode three).



4.61 When Charles and Lady Marchmain debate Sebastian, there is a garden between them, closed off by a gate...



4.62...which Charles gazes at wistfully after she has gone (episode four).



4.63 The drawings, the skull and its motto (episode four).



4.64 Charles paints an urn during a conversation with Lady Marchmain (episode five).

The conversation and the framing in episode four, with Charles's sketches placed between Lady Marchmain and the skull, implies that death is carried into Arcadia

<sup>80</sup> The programme's ironic use of literalisms contrasts with those more earnest examples described by Paul Willeman (who coined the term) and Ian Christie. See Paul Willeman, 'Reflections on Eikhenbaum's Concept of Internal Speech in the Cinema', *Screen*, vol.15, no.4, Winter 1974/5, pp.59-70; Ian Christie, 'Alienation Effects: Emeric Pressburger and British Cinema', *Monthly Film Bulletin*, vol.51, no.69, October 1984, p.320.



through her encouragement and patronage of Charles's art. As she walks away from the sketches, she charmingly adds, 'Everyone loves your paintings in the Garden Room. We'd never forgive you if you didn't finish.' The scene later reiterates the relationship between Charles's art and death in Arcadia. As they leave the room, the camera tilts downwards, again framing the skull and the sketches (Fig. 4.63) and the narrator says, 'That night Sebastian had his third disaster.' The role of Charles's art in Sebastian's downfall and the bringing of death to Arcadia are made apparent in episode five. While Sebastian is out, drinking away the money lent him by Charles, Lady Marchmain talks to Ryder, as he works on a mural (Fig. 4.64). Charles is painting a huge urn, thus himself placing death in the landscape he creates with the murals in the Garden Room. In episode seven, Lady Marchmain's funeral procession, carrying her dead body through the Arcadian prospect seen in episode two, firmly places death in Arcadia. In doing so, it brings to the fore an action already effected by Lady Marchmain and Charles. Charles, specifically as an artist, is also to blame. From here, he declines further still. His fatal transition from a flawed artist to a meretricious narrator is depicted in episode 10, around the fountain.

### **The Fountain: Time and Narrative**

In his memorandum to MGM, Waugh stated that 'the fountain represents the worldly eighteenth century splendour of the family'.<sup>81</sup> The Ryder in the novel draws the fountain before anything else on the estate. After he has been converted to Catholicism he becomes attracted by the chapel, instead. The novel's fountain is a Baroque pastiche: Waugh named Bernini's Trevi, Piazza Navona and Piazza Minerva fountains as influences and suggested that MGM find photographs of these in books to help with the design.<sup>82</sup>

The fountain is explored more systematically in the programme. Instead of recreating one of Bernini's pieces, the crew used Castle Howard's Atlas Fountain, designed by John Thomas for the Great Exhibition and transplanted to the estate in 1850 by William

<sup>81</sup> Waugh, 'Brideshead Memorandum', p.227.

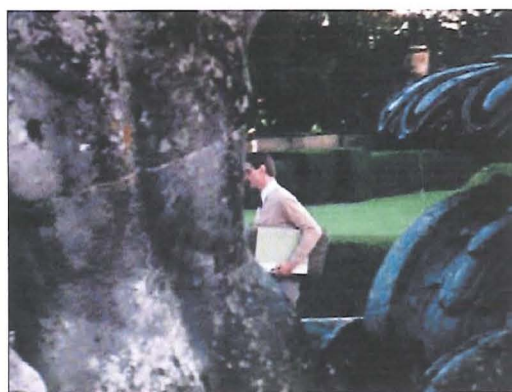
<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

Nesfield.<sup>83</sup> The tritons around the fountain pick up on Charles's thalassic metaphors; the key exchanges between Julia and Charles take place by the fountain. The Atlas sculpture connotes their struggle to support their (pagan) world.

Episode 10, set in 1938, opens with a near-fantastical scene. The butler is shown walking down the steps of the house towards the fountain. A pan carries us to Charles and Julia sitting by the fountain (Fig. 4.65). The following shot (Fig. 4.14) shows them in the same pose as Charles and Sebastian, fifteen years earlier. They happily recall their two years together. Julia and Charles, in all their anti-Catholic adultery, have taken up the pagan strength of Atlas, represented by the fountain, holding up the weight of the world with their fond memories. For this moment only, it seems to work, as time (figured in a slow track around the globe) can be recalled by them, but is also virtually frozen; the butler takes over three minutes to reach the fountain. As is plain to the eye and as any visitor to the location knows, the distance can be walked in several seconds, even by an elderly butler: he should have arrived at the fountain much sooner, but time is paused. However, along with the fatalistic crepuscular glow and the audience's memory of Sebastian by the fountain, the dialogue stresses the fact that time – future and past – will break this moment of rest. This is reinforced when Julia says, 'Sometimes I feel the past and future pressing so hard on either side there doesn't seem room for the present at all.' The perspicuous views of the fountain are followed by a picturesque shot when Charles disappears behind Atlas (Fig. 4.66), in ominous anticipation of his elusive 1944 self.



4.65 A perspicuous wide shot of the fountain.



4.66 Charles becomes an elusive protagonist (episode ten).

<sup>83</sup> Ridgway and Howard, *Castle Howard*, p.66; Hussey, op. cit., p.131.

Charles, in a futile effort to preserve the moment, has been sketching Julia. This attempt to frame her, to place her within the confines of his art, becomes more desperate in the next two fountain scenes later in the episode. Charles searches for Julia, after Bridey has reminded her that she is living in sin. As he walks around the fountain, the Atlas sculpture appears indicatively smaller in size (Fig. 4.67), compared with the earlier scene (Fig. 4.66). When he finds her crying on a bench, we see his point of view: the bench, lit like a theatrical prop by some hidden footlight, seems unreal (Fig. 4.68). Julia's religious guilt is a threat to their relationship; Ryder can only see it 'second hand', as Julia puts it when they return to the fountain later: safely reduced to a piece of theatre. He still has this second-hand perspective when he narrates the story.



4.67 The sculpture seems smaller as Charles begins to view life as a drama.



4.68 Theatrical lighting (episode ten).

In this third scene, the sculpture seems still smaller than in the opening scene. Charles proudly talks about his treatment of events as if they were a play. He wants the fountain to become a scenic prop: 'It's like the setting for a comedy. Scene: the baroque fountain in the nobleman's grounds.' The camera complies by making the once overbearingly figurative fountain appear smaller, less imposing. Charles the artist has become truly egregious here, by virtually taking on the role of set designer his arriviste wife Celia tried to win him. Julia is perceived by him as a character in a play.

She rebels, striking Charles's face. He fails to subjugate her and is himself reduced in episode eleven to an automaton, in another ironic literalism. He boasts that his unspoken thoughts keep pace with Julia's on the Atlantic, but when following her across the landscape at Brideshead, this metaphor becomes a forced and artificial dance, as he mechanically copies her steps (Figs. 4.69-4.72). It is, however, Charles's return to the



temple, at the end of episode 10 that really marks the final stage in his transformation into the soldier/narrator of 1944.

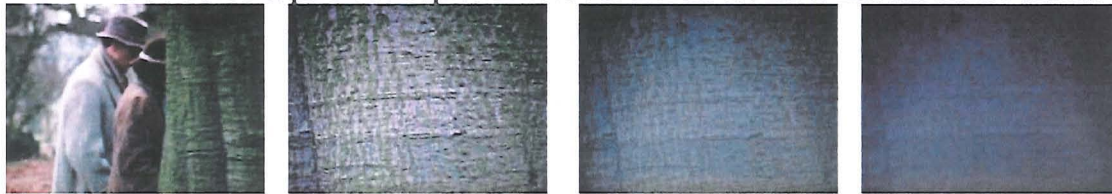


4.69-4.72 Charles cautiously copies Julia's every step (episode eleven).

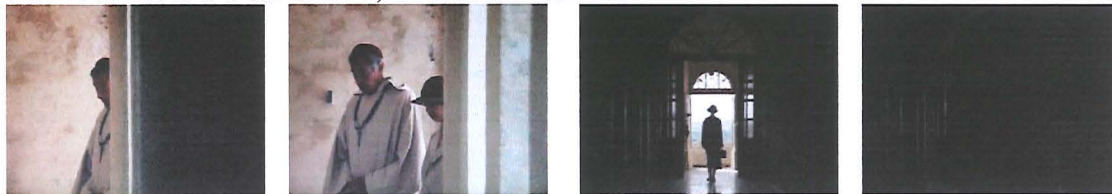
## The Temple 2: Emergence of the Picturesque



4.73-4.76 A slow crane shot parallels the split trunk of a tree until the two halves meet and enclose Charles.



4.77-4.80 Trees intervene between the camera and Charles: when the camera pauses on one of these, a dissolve carries us to a wall in Tunis, in Cordelia's flashback.



4.81-4.82 Cordelia and a priest emerge from behind the wall.

4.83-84 In the hospital, Cordelia walks towards the camera, blocking out the light.



4.85-4.88 A dissolve carries us to the wall of the temple. In symmetry with the flashback, Charles and Cordelia emerge from behind the wall (episode ten).

Like the fountain scene at the start of the episode, this scene also complements earlier parts of the serial featuring Sebastian. The sequence begins on the south-west of the estate. Recalling Sebastian, Charles the narrator says 'Every stone of the house had a memory of him.' The remark is reminiscent of Sebastian's wish, to 'bury something

precious in every place I've been happy, so when I'm old and ugly and miserable I could come back and dig it up.' It is Charles who fulfils this prophecy, not Sebastian. There is an elaborate crane shot which moves down, parallel to two trunks which are gradually revealed to be joined (Figs. 4.73-4.76). The shot is multiply symbolic. Charles's fall from elevation is figured. Charles and Cordelia are framed by these trunks; the crane shot suggests that two branches of the plot are meeting. The way in which Charles is eventually enclosed and obscured by the trunks also indicates his entanglement in the estate and its plots; his long relationship with the estate has led to many complications. Above all, the picturesque is in ascendancy here. Charles and Cordelia thread through the wood, often picturesquely concealed by trees intervening between them and the camera. The bare deciduous trees evoke an atmosphere of postlapsarian decay. The perspicuous shots from episode two have been superseded by a convoluted, obscure landscape, just as the ingenuous young Charles has become a cold, withdrawn figure in the landscape.

As Cordelia recalls her last meeting with Sebastian, the camera pauses on one of the intervening trees. A dissolve carries us to a stone wall in a Tunis monastery, as her flashback begins: it is not only the stones of the estate which contain memories, but also the tree trunks (Figs. 4.77-4.80). The camera then pans left to edge of the wall, just in time to reveal the Superior and Cordelia as they walk around the cloisters, from right to left (Figs. 4.81-4.82). The Superior takes Cordelia to the entrance of the infirmary where Sebastian is staying. The camera is static, as Cordelia walks forward, eventually blocking out the light from the door (Figs. 4.83-4.84). In voiceover, she talks about her meeting with Sebastian, but this obscure shot represents Sebastian's absence; only traces of Sebastian remain, memories entangled in the trees. Instead of showing him, the frame goes black and dissolves to a wall (Figs. 4.84-4.85). In precise symmetry with the flashback, the camera now pans right as Charles and Cordelia walk from left to right around the temple (Figs. 4.86-4.88).

The symmetry and the way that Cordelia's recollection transports them, as if by magic, to the temple, suggest that memories and storytelling now hold sway: life is a mere imitation of the past. Of Sebastian, Charles says, 'it is not what one would have foretold.' On the contrary, the (prophetic) prospect the boys see from the temple in episode two has now been realised. Death has entered Arcadia; the dark, wintery



landscape is offset by the flashback to a hot and sunlit Tunis. The 'new and secret' landscape is a space of deceduous occlusion, where the fallen Charles's motives and morals have become inscrutable.

### ***Brideshead Revisited* as a *Künstlersendung*: Charles's Landscape Paintings**

The different ornamental buildings symbolise and embody distinct elements: death and futurity (the mausoleum), Arcadia (the temple) and the weight of time (the Atlas fountain). It is the plotting of the landscape, through Charles's arc, that links these elements and catalyses the fatal changes that occur. Charles's culpability is made manifest through his art, for the murals provide the means by which the ornamental buildings are juxtaposed in one space, the Garden Room. We see Charles working on the murals in earlier episodes and infer that he finishes them, but they are only revealed as a complete set of finished paintings at the end of episode nine, when Charles returns to Brideshead with Julia and walks into Rex's party. Episode nine is intrinsic to the programme's thematisation of landscape painting, for it also includes Charles's exhibition, *Ryder's Latin America*. Prior to this episode, the audience has only seen his temple mural and, from the side, his Marchmain House interior; the exhibition reveals what kind of artist he has become.

Waugh does not seem to have had any particular living artist in mind; his Ryder resembles more a movement in British art: Neo-romanticism. This emerged in the 1930s and was consolidated three years before the publication of *Brideshead Revisited* with John Piper's book, *British Romantic Artists*, which saw Neo-romantic painters such as Paul Nash and Graham Sutherland as the most recent artists in a tradition that stretched back to Gilpin and the picturesque.<sup>84</sup> Waugh hints that Ryder, like himself, is concerned with picturesque decay; Ryder's first mural in the novel is a naïve work, a 'romantic landscape... without figures, a summer scene of white cloud and blue distances, with an ivy-clad ruin in the foreground.'<sup>85</sup> The only other clue we are given is that Ryder makes a career as a county house painter and then goes to South America to work, producing at least one 'jungle landscape'. As a painter of country houses, Ryder is presumably an

<sup>84</sup> John Piper, *British Romantic Artists* (London: William Collins, 1942).

<sup>85</sup> Waugh, *Brideshead Revisited* (London: Penguin, 2000), p.80.

artist in the vein of Rex Whistler or John Piper, who painted Castle Howard in 1943.<sup>86</sup> Caroline Dakers perceives similarities between Ryder's career path and that of Richard Wyndham, who knew some of Waugh's friends and also painted in a naïve style. Wyndham's art similarly made a transition from country houses to exoticism, though the 'Other' for Wyndham was Africa.<sup>87</sup> However, Waugh's vagueness about Ryder's art makes it more a pastiche of the Neo-Romantic Zeitgeist than a specific parallel.

Conversely, the paintings in the programme are artist-specific. They were all painted by Felix Kelly.<sup>88</sup> Kelly was a late Neo-romantic, whose first large exhibition in Britain was in late 1944.<sup>89</sup> Donald Bassett states that Kelly's work emerged too late to have influenced Waugh's description of Ryder, though his later life uncannily echoed Ryder's.<sup>90</sup> Kelly also had a long friendship with an aristocratic family, the Howards of Castle Howard. He contributed drawings of the estate to a guidebook sold in the 1970s and 1980s and painted a capriccio of the house in 1975.<sup>91</sup> Bassett does not mention Kelly's role as painter for the television production, but he rightly argues that art imitated life when Kelly painted murals in Castle Howard's Garden Hall in 1982.<sup>92</sup> In fact, Kelly painted Ryder's murals in the Garden Hall after it had been restored by Granada. When these were removed, Kelly painted similar, if more fantastical, capriccios on the Howards' permanent walls (Fig. 4.94).

There is, then, a documentary impetus behind the decision to commission Kelly to paint Ryder's works. Through Kelly, the programme's phenomenology of the country estate acquires specificity. The fatal relationship between a painter and an upper class family in the serial satirises both Waugh and Kelly. Kelly's works for *Brideshead Revisited* resemble his other work in their florid, exotic intensity. Compare the valley painting in *Brideshead Revisited* (Fig. 4.92) with Kelly's 1981 *Talylllyn Castle and Railway* (Fig. 4.93).

<sup>86</sup> See John Piper, *Paintings, Drawings & Theatre Designs 1932-1954* (London: Faber & Faber, 1955).

<sup>87</sup> Caroline Dakers, *Richard Wyndham: A Retrospective Exhibition Catalogue* (Hungerford: Fineline, 1993), pp.35-37.

<sup>88</sup> Charles Sturridge, email interview with the author, 11/05/07.

<sup>89</sup> Donald Bassett, *Fix: The Art and Life of Felix Kelly* (Auckland: Darrow Press, 2006), p.45.

<sup>90</sup> Donald Bassett, 'Felix Kelly and Brideshead', in *The British Art Journal*, vol.6, no.2, Autumn 2005, pp.52-57.

<sup>91</sup> See George Howard, *Castle Howard* (Castle Howard: Castle Howard Estate, second edition: 1974), pp.7, 8, 26 and 35; Bassett, *Fix*, p.225.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

In the exhibition scene, the floridness of the paintings becomes a reflection of the aristocratic visitors to the gallery: slow dissolves superimpose details from the paintings over the visitors, as if they are tangled in the jungles depicted (Figs. 4.89-4.90). This is not an adoption of Waugh's recurrent notion that the jungle and barbarism had overrun civilisation.<sup>93</sup> Rather, it asserts that the English upper class's perception of the exotic is a home-grown fantasy, an unwitting self-portrait. Indicatively, Anthony Blanche asks Ryder at the exhibition, 'Where...did you find this sumptuous greenery? The corner of a hothouse at T-t-trent or T-t-tring? What gorgeous usurer nurtured these fronds for your pleasure?'

Ryder is also tainted by juxtaposition with his paintings. When a photographer takes a picture of Charles and Celia, the painting between them captures their relationship: it portrays a silhouetted, decaying pyramid (Fig. 4.91). Their marriage is collapsing; each has committed adultery and kept secrets from the other. Charles, in his mendacity, has become as obscure as the pyramid, or the silhouetted hills in the moody painting that appears in a later shot. This later image depicts Charles trapped by his florid art (Fig. 4.92). He sits in the background on the bottom left, below one painting, while the valley painting, hanging on a pillar in frame middle and right, dominates as it protrudes into the foreground. Blanche later surmises, on the evidence of the paintings, that charm has killed Charles. This is perhaps the single most accurate, penetrating and frank line of dialogue in the entire serial. However, Blanche describes Charles's death by charm as a passive experience. The murals in *Brideshead* tell another story.

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<sup>93</sup> See William Myers, *Evelyn Waugh and the Problem of Evil* (London and Boston: Faber & Faber, 1991), p.69; Davis, *Brideshead Revisited: The Past Redeemed*, p.4; Heath, *The Picturesque Prison*, pp.104, 122.



4.89-4.90 Dissolves superimpose the paintings over the exhibition: the florid style of the paintings reflects the vanity of the people attending the exhibition.



4.91 The state of Charles and Celia's marriage is perfectly encapsulated in the obscure, dilapidated pyramid in the painting between them.



4.92 Charles is dominated by his florid art (episode nine).



4.93 Felix Kelly's *Tallylyn Castle and Railway* (1981).

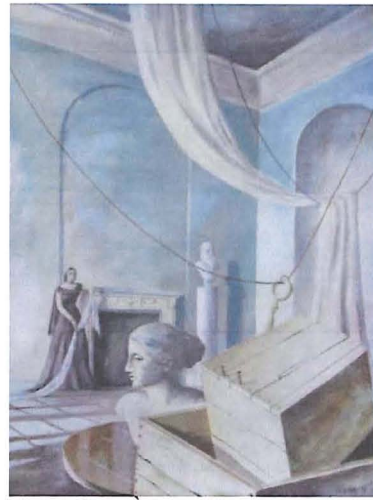


4.94 Kelly's murals at Castle Howard (1982).





4.95 Kellyesque mise-en-scène (episode two).

4.96 Kelly's *À la Recherche du Temps Perdu* (1945).

4.97 Ryder, framed by theatrical curtains.



4.98 The murals, picturesquely concealed in episode nine.

Significantly, the murals as a finished collection are shown after Blanche's judgement on the exhibition has been heard. Their appearance confirms his judgement, but also Charles's culpability. To emphasise that Ryder's style imbues the Garden Room with its aura, the crew dressed the location with busts (Fig. 4.95) after such Kelly paintings as *À la Recherche du Temps Perdu* (Fig. 4.96). The mausoleum and obelisk murals also feature theatrical curtains like that painting (Fig. 4.100). When the murals are revealed in episode nine, the theatrical curtains have even become props in the Garden Room, framing Ryder as a gambler in his own contrived drama (Fig. 4.97). In contrast with the open, airy space in the mural scene in episode two (Fig. 4.95), the murals in episode nine are partially concealed by the guests (Fig. 4.98). The convolution and disingenuousness of the picturesque has entered the garden room. In this knotty, plotted space, Charles weaves his own desperate scheme. A juxtaposition of Julia and the temple mural represents this scheme: Julia will replace the Sebastian of 1923, as captured in the mural (Fig. 4.99).



In episode ten, it becomes clear that Julia is trapped in a plot contrived by Ryder. Before their third visit to the fountain, she often stands between two murals. One of these is of the mausoleum, while the other is of the urn sketched by Charles during a conversation with Lady Marchmain (Fig. 4.64); death has entered Arcadia again, via Charles's art, under Lady Marchmain's influence. The urn capriccio also features Castle Howard's obelisk. The obelisk itself is never clearly shown by the programme. In terms of Castle Howard's landscape, it marks the beginning of the visitor's experience of the estate proper. It stands on the approach to the house. Its inscription also records the building of the house 'for posterity'. Via the mural, these associations are conveyed into the Garden Room.

The shots of Julia next to these two murals place her between the symbols of the approach to/creation of the estate (the obelisk) and the estate's climax (the mausoleum, where one exits from the estate and life). Julia's entrapment between the past and the future has, it seems, been partly engineered by Charles, through his murals. It is evident that he wants her to resemble the past (that is, the Sebastian of 1923), but it is equally clear that he has helped Lady Marchmain to bring death into Arcadia. The prophecy of episode two is fulfilled once more.



4.99 Julia as a replacement for Sebastian (episode nine).



4.100 Julia, caught between murals depicting the obelisk and the mausoleum (episode ten).

## Conclusion: The Picturesque and Eschatology

As well as featuring the return of the mausoleum, via a mural, episode ten traces Charles's return to parts of the estate once occupied by Sebastian and himself fifteen years earlier: the fountain and temple. Its integral (a)symmetry with episode two (the

second and penultimate parts of the serial), not only encapsulates the difference between 1923 and 1938, but also the sense of cyclical drama: what happens to Charles and Sebastian after episode two will happen to Charles and Julia. The patterns that emerge and the sense of the inevitable raise the question of whether events are the result of characters' actions, chance or predestination.

Episode ten is entitled 'A Twitch upon a Thread', the name of the last section of Waugh's novel. Waugh took the metaphor from G. K. Chesterton's Father Brown story, 'The Queer Feet', which Lady Marchmain reads to her family in novel and programme alike. However, Waugh altered the meaning of the phrase: in Chesterton's story, the thread, a metaphorical angling line, represents the Roman Catholic religion and the priest-detective as the 'fisher of men'. Father Brown reels in the thief by exploiting his religious guilt. In Waugh's novel, the twitch that brings characters back to Brideshead and sees them return or convert (in Charles's case) to Catholicism is not effected by any representative of the church. In what could be read as an inadvertent protestantisation of Chesterton's metaphor, Waugh's implication is that the twitch is eschatological: presumably God is the fisherman, rather than any mortal character. In his 'Warning' on the dust jacket flap of the 1945 first edition of *Brideshead Revisited*, Waugh asserted that the novel's central theme was 'at once romantic and eschatological.'<sup>94</sup> His preface to the 1960 revised edition reinforced the point, describing the topic as 'the operation of divine grace on a group of diverse but closely connected characters.'<sup>95</sup> In this interpretation, the idea of predestination is also a plot device: the vagaries of plotting symbolise Waugh's interpretation of destiny and vice versa.

Trusting the tale rather than the teller, however, in the novel the theme emerges chiefly through the Chestertonian metaphor, when Cordelia discusses it with Charles, two-thirds of the way into the novel. The idea is more pervasive in the television adaptation. It is introduced just before Sebastian vomits through Charles's window, when Collins says,

If God is ultimately responsible for formulating Newton's Law of Gravity, may he not... fulfil his purpose by using the infinite instances which we call chance? Shouldn't we say, then, that chance is the very basic principle of our life in this rational universe?

<sup>94</sup> Evelyn Waugh, 'Warning', quoted in Davis, *Brideshead Revisited: The Past Redeemed*, p.13.

<sup>95</sup> Waugh, 'Preface', p.7.

Predestination is thereby brought to the fore in the programme during Charles's first meeting proper with Sebastian. Collins's argument is absurdly pompous, though, just as the apparently fortuitous encounter between Sebastian's vomit and Charles's open window during a monologue about chance, is highly farcical. By introducing the notion of predestination through this comical scene, long before the solemn dialogue between Cordelia and Charles, the serial gives precedence to the theme, yet also ridicules it. The question of whether Charles's recurring contact with the Flyte family is aleatory or predetermined is thus left open by the programme. Far more so than in the novel, we are invited to consider the extent of characters' culpability and free will in the tragic events that unfold.

Picturesque determinism is intrinsic to the programme's treatment of eschatology and culpability. This is unsurprising, given that the picturesque encompasses the tension between chance encounters and design, as Sidney K. Robinson argues in the passage quoted in the epigraph.<sup>96</sup> Robinson also points out that our interpretation of picturesque design depends on whether 'the presence of concealment, deception, and manipulation are considered benign or threatening.' These elements can only be threatening in *Brideshead Revisited*.

The programme's manifestations of plottedness, its fatalistic prospection and mournful nostalgia, both point, in their different directions, to the same type of tragedy: the tragedy of relationships destroyed. More than Sebastian's alcoholism, it is Charles's nostalgia that is the most pernicious outcome of the events in the serial. Nostalgia, Linda M. Austin reminds us, was and still can be conceived of as a sickness.<sup>97</sup> *Brideshead Revisited* has been compared unfavourably with Trevor Griffiths's television play, *Country* (1981), which was first broadcast at the same time as the second episode of *Brideshead Revisited*.<sup>98</sup> *Country* is a stridently Marxist account of the social woes produced by a brewing dynasty, but *Brideshead Revisited* is far more effective at portraying the personal tragedies that are caused by a landed family. Its

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<sup>96</sup> Robinson, *Inquiry into the Picturesque*, p.155.

<sup>97</sup> Linda M. Austin, 'Emily Brontë's Homesickness', *Victorian Studies*, vol.44, no.4, Summer 2002, pp.573-596.

<sup>98</sup> John Wyver, 'Country', in Jayne Pilling and Kingsley Canham (eds.), *The Screen on the Tube: Filmed TV Drama* (Norwich: Cinema City, 1983), p.50; *Country* (Richard Eyre, BBC, 1981).

narrative of gradual decline, in which Ryder is crushed by his relationship with the Flytes, is a sustained and unrelenting account of the damage an estate causes to an outsider, by imperceptible degrees over two decades.



4.101 The abraded mural mirrors Sebastian's physical deterioration (episode four).



4.102 Charles and Julia separate: the long take in episode eleven.

When tragedy erupts, *Brideshead Revisited* is unrelentingly visceral. As Julia tells Charles that they must separate, a six-minute long take captures the dialogue without the relief of an edit or even, after an excruciatingly slow zoom-in, the possibility of focussing on anything other than their faces, racked with pain (Fig. 4.102). The scene, set on Castle Howard's Grand Staircase, parallels an earlier one, in which Sebastian expresses his anguish to Charles on another staircase (Fig. 4.101). Catharsis – honesty, even, can only take place in this world in the intermediate and uncomfortable space that is a flight of stairs. Tragedy can only be acknowledged in spaces separate from the daily routine of the family's life, as is apparent in the scene when Sebastian weeps. Lady Marchmain, Cordelia and Bridey are shown walking to chapel below the stairs, oblivious to what is taking place above them. Sebastian's outburst also occurs against a worn wall, his physical decline reflected in architectural dilapidation. Bodies and estate atrophy together. As the picturesque emerges in the serial, it not only articulates brumal decay, but also represents the fragmentation caused by the family. Charles becomes a synecdochic figure in the landscape, parts of his body concealed, as he starts 'pretending to be whole', as he puts it.

At the same time, the picturesque places his decline in the context of the chance/determinism question. Charles as landscaper brings metaphysical questions to the fore. His art as painter, then as narrator, invites us to view *Brideshead's* landscape as



‘sacred, magical or in some way special’, to use John Dixon Hunt’s terms.<sup>99</sup> While his voiceover draws on Chesterton’s Catholic metaphor to suggest divine influence on the estate, his first mural depicts the pagan temple in a magical, Neo-romantic landscape. The temple appears to exercise its magical powers in episode 10, when, during Cordelia’s flashback, Charles and Cordelia are spirited across the estate, to appear at the temple after the flashback. By telling a story about Sebastian, they are drawn towards the temple that symbolises his happy summer with Charles.

Charles’s narrative also portrays Brideshead as the magical centre of the universe. He will always return there. There is no city/country opposition between Brideshead and Oxford. The two are linked by dissolves. Charles’s failure to separate spaces is represented through a system of dissolves which link time and space in a thread. Thus the enchanted garden enters his room via a dissolve (Fig. 4.59). A dissolve linking Venice and London implies that the mood (represented by rain) is carried over from one country to another by the boys’ arc (Fig. 4.103)

The way that Rex’s grotesque present to Julia, the tortoise bejewelled with her initials, functions as a ‘needle-hook of experience’, is figured by a dissolve linking it to the hunt outside (Fig. 4.103). Such dissolves do not always imply twitches on a divine thread, however. After upsetting Sebastian by having another little chat with Lady Marchmain, Charles joins his friend at clay pigeon shooting. Charles shoots and misses the clay pigeon: the shot continues to ring out as there is a dissolve from the clay pigeon in the sky to Oxford, where, we are told Sebastian continues to decline (Figs. 4.105-4.108). The dissolve emphasises that there is a causal chain linking Charles’s actions at Brideshead to Sebastian’s despair in Oxford. This thread is man-made.

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<sup>99</sup> Hunt, *Greater Perfections*, p.167.





4.103 A dissolve implies that the rain in Venice follows the boys to England (episode two).



4.104 A dissolve figures the way the tortoise becomes, in Charles's words, a 'needle-hook of experience': events inside are linked to those outside (episode five).



4.105-108 Charles fires, misses and the sound of the shot is carried over to Oxford via a dissolve (episode three).

Whatever Charles's beliefs at the end, the image places the secular and the pagan (literally) above anything else. Ryder the Catholic soldier never regains the elevated position he often occupies with Sebastian. The emergence of the picturesque over the course of the serial complicates our interpretation of motivation and agency, rather than making 'divine purpose' clearer.



4.109



4.110



4.111



4.112



4.113



4.114



4.115



4.116

4.109-4.116 Charles drives away from the house, his jeep threading through the picturesque landscape: he is still elusive. Suddenly the house appears again, as the camera pans to assume the same shot set-up used for his first view of the house as a soldier.

At the very end of the programme, Charles is reconciled with his memories and looks happier, now he has prayed. He drives away from Brideshead Castle, through

picturesque partial concealments (Figs. 4.109-4.111). The repeated use of picturesque composition represents Charles the soldier as a synecdoche. These synecdoches emphasise the fact that Charles is still incomplete, a ‘small part of himself pretending to be whole.’ Catholicism does nothing to re-assemble the fragments left after a relationship with a landed family has shattered him.

It appears, though, that he can finally leave the house. However, in a surprise turn, the road takes him up again and the house suddenly appears behind him (Figs. 4.112-4.113). The programme’s last shot gives the precedence of finality to a bleak image of Brideshead, with Ryder’s jeep splashing through a dirty puddle (Fig. 4.114). It is the antithesis of the novel’s upbeat last line: “‘You’re looking unusually cheerful today,” said the second-in-command.’ This line is spoken in the programme, but whatever makes Charles’s disposition improve – whether his recollections or his new-found religion – is firmly undermined in the programme’s last shot. It is not only the house that reappears, but a way of looking at it; this is the same camera set-up seen countless times in the serial: from Charles the soldier’s first sight of the house, to frequent views of it as his relationships with Sebastian and Julia collapse. Ryder’s departure is yet another return. The house/framing appears as if by chance, but the familiarity of the set-up reinforces the fact that this return is the result of design. It is not Catholic eschatology that is asserted here, nor Charles’s free will. The landscape is designed to bring him back; he is the victim of the estate’s picturesqueness: a worldly, aristocratic trap set to catch an arriviste and imprison him as the estate’s *genius loci*.

## V

## ***The Draughtsman's Contract: Syntax in Search of the Picturesque***

One of the essential conceits of the film is that the camera does not move... Now there are three reasons for this. First, the facetious reason: paintings don't move. Secondly, with a still camera you throw the emphasis on the dialogue and soundtrack... Thirdly, it is a sheer reaction to the St. Vitus [sic] dance of filmmaking over the last years. It seems to me that most camera work is done for no good structural reason.

– Peter Greenaway<sup>1</sup>

Innocence, in the world of detective fiction, is lack of experience: stasis.

– Franco Moretti<sup>2</sup>

### **Introduction**

*The Draughtsman's Contract* (1982) overtly thematises the history of the landscape garden. While this history is implicit in, yet integral to the other *genius loci* films, no other director deals with the rise of the English landscape garden as directly and as comprehensively as Peter Greenaway does in *The Draughtsman's Contract*. It features all the key historical figures: a landscape artist, a hermit of sorts (the living statue), a landscape designer, landowners who discuss garden theory, gardeners, an estate manager and even the sheep used to cut the grass. Like *The Ruling Class*, it also has a binary structure that contrasts formal emblematic gardens with a picturesque park, thus dramatising one of the most significant paradigm shifts in the history of English landscape design. If *Brideshead Revisited* extended and developed Losey's approach to landscapes in *The Go-Between*, *The Draughtsman's Contract* can be seen as an

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<sup>1</sup> Karen Jaehne, 'The Draughtsman's Contract: An Interview with Peter Greenaway', *Cineaste*, vol.13, no.2, p.14.

<sup>2</sup> Franco Moretti, 'Clues', translated by Susan Fischer, in *Signs Taken For Wonders: On the Sociology of Literary Forms* (London and New York: Verso, 2005), p.145.

extension of *The Ruling Class*'s approach to landscape designs through oppositions. It is significant that two audiovisual narratives about landscape artists – *Brideshead Revisited* and *The Draughtsman's Contract* – emerged within one year of each other. The artist figure is appropriate to their self-conscious, even mannerist deployment of the styles developed by Losey and Medak.<sup>3</sup> In their different ways, *Brideshead Revisited* and *The Draughtsman's Contract* mobilise their artist figure and the pictures he produces to explore the pictorial representation of the country estate.

Like *The Ruling Class*, *The Draughtsman's Contract* engages with popular fictions. However, in Greenaway's film, these fictions are exclusively associated with the landed estate; the film consists of an amalgam of genres, encompassing the country house murder mystery, the comedy of manners and the *genius loci* narrative, though its cinematography owes more to the British structural landscape film than to these popular genres. The film problematises conventions of landscape representation and country house fiction through this complex assemblage; it emphasises not only the connection between landownership and power, but also that between landscape aesthetics and power. When Sarah Talmann throws her 'connecting plot' over Mr Neville's first six drawings of the gardens, she assumes the dominant, authorial position; by interpreting the drawings and their garden iconography, she transforms the articles of her father's clothing from props in a garden comedy of manners to evidence in a country house murder mystery. Through Sarah's 'connecting plot', it becomes clear that landownership (ironically represented by the dead owner's clothes), garden iconography, country house narrative genres and the aesthetics of landscape art are inextricably linked. Sarah subverts the common analogy in garden history between landscape and the female body.<sup>4</sup> The film explicitly refers to this analogy, with repeated comparisons made in the dialogue between fruit and the female anatomy, and between women and landed property.<sup>5</sup> However, both Mr Herbert and Mr Neville become literal and symbolic bodies in the garden by the end of the film. They are transformed into spirits of place at Compton Anstey, when they are killed and their clothing becomes part

<sup>3</sup> A tacit part of the film's reflexive strategy, the drawings were produced by Greenaway himself.

<sup>4</sup> Karen Lang, 'The body in the garden', in Jan Birksted (ed.), *Landscapes of Memory and Experience* (London: Spon Press, 2000), p.107. See also chapter 2 of this thesis.

<sup>5</sup> See Amy Lawrence, *The Films of Peter Greenaway* (Cambridge: CUP, 1997), p.56.

of the '*mise-en-jardin*': part of what Mr Noyes, the estate manager, calls 'an obscure allegory' in the garden.

The connection between landscape aesthetics and power is again made apparent towards the end of the film, when Neville returns to the estate in the autumn. He is told that Mrs Herbert and her daughter have invited the Dutch landscape designer, Van Hoyten, to 'soften the geometry that [Mr Herbert] found to his taste and to introduce a new ease and complexion.' The implication is clear: Mrs Talmann and her mother will remove any traces of Mr Herbert's taste by commissioning a landscape in a diametrically opposed style. A change in landscape style is the last stage in the murderous removal of Mr Herbert as the estate's owner. 'Ease' and 'complexion' suggest the 'natural' tone of the picturesque. Neville unsuspectingly anticipates the picturesque tendencies of their schemes at the beginning of the film, when he notes that their 'supplication has a long and diverse path.'

Neville's unwitting complicity in the scheme is made apparent by Mrs Herbert, when she says that, 'It is probably you, Mr Neville that has opened [Mr Talmann's] eyes to the possibilities of our landscape.' This line is spoken over a picturesque shot of the house, which substantiates her comment (Fig. 5.1), from the same set-up as an earlier image seen through Neville's viewfinder grid (Fig. 5.2): a view he has selected, framed and drawn. 'Possibilities' suggests 'capabilities', a word used by Sarah to describe Neville's skills: both words invoke Lancelot Brown's way of viewing landscape in terms of potentiality. In its picturesqueness, the finished drawing by Neville (Fig. 5.3) can be placed somewhere between the two Benjamin Pouncy engravings after Thomas Hearne of an 'undressed park' (Fig. 5.4) and a park 'dressed in the modern [Brownian] style' (Fig. 5.5).<sup>6</sup> Large, unkempt trees mark the foreground and middle distance, while a thick arboreal mass fills the background and partially conceals the house. Neville's drawing lacks the serpentine river used by Pouncy to guide the eye and to gradate perspective, but the boscage forms coulisses, which lead the eye to the house, while the flanking tree in the foreground partially frames this view and establishes the perspective

<sup>6</sup> The engravings are from Richard Payne Knight, *The Landscape: A Didactic Poem* (London: W. Bulmer & Co., 1794).



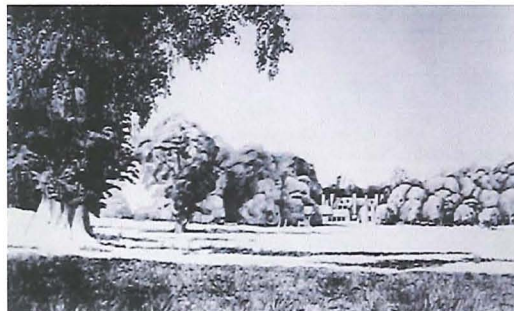
and the scale. His drawing is clearly in the same (picturesque) idiom as Pouncy's late eighteenth century engravings, rather than in the form popular in the 1690s: the bird's-eye prospect with staffage, which Leonard Knyff and Jan Kip used as a topographical system in their *Britannia Illustrata* [Fig. 5.6]. Even the few paintings of the late seventeenth century that feature irregular boscase in English estates are elevations and/or symmetrical compositions [Figs. 5.7-5.8]. It is not only Neville's pencil that is anachronistic, but also the style and content of his drawings.



5.1 A picturesque view of Compton Anstey...



5.2...is seen earlier through Neville's frame...



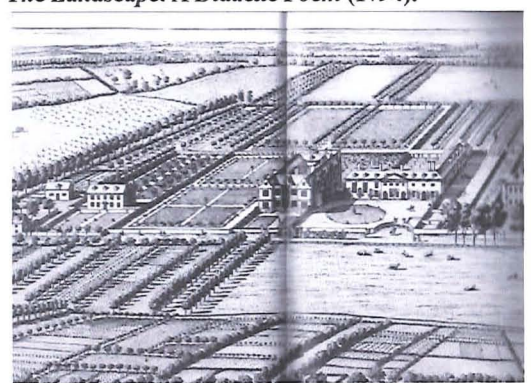
5.3...and drawn by him.



5.4 Benjamin Pouncy, after Thomas Hearne, *An Undressed Park*, from Richard Payne Knight's *The Landscape: A Didactic Poem* (1794).



5.5 Benjamin Pouncy, after Thomas Hearne, *A Park Dressed in the Modern Style*, from Richard Payne Knight's *The Landscape: A Didactic Poem* (1794).



5.6 Jan Kip, after Leonard Knyff, *Chiswick House* (1707).



5.7 Jan Siberechts [attrib.] *Bifrons, Kent* [detail] (c.1680s).



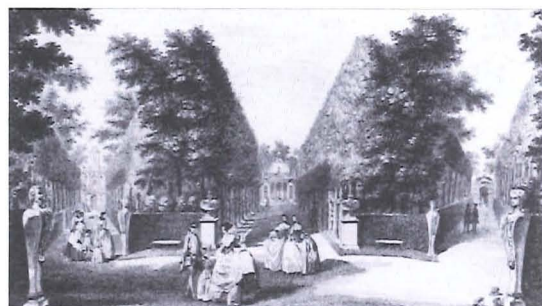
5.8 Adriaen Ocker, *Bridge Place, Kent* (late 1670s).

Despite his mockery of Van Hoyten's schemes, many of the sites drawn by Neville anticipate the 'ease and complexion' that the landscape gardener has been commissioned to introduce. Indeed, the formal garden views he depicts are nearly all framed or terminated by picturesque boscape. The formal garden he draws from nine to eleven o'clock is emblematic both in content, with its herm, obelisks and orange trees in Versailles cases, and in form, with a symmetrical layout and a geometrical bed (Fig. 5.9). The drawing echoes this form, with its herm placed next to the edge of the frame. In this way, as in the classical tradition, the herm marks boundaries: the right-hand edges of both the formal garden and the drawing. However, the lines of perspective lead the eye away from this classical iconography, towards the far left of the drawing, where, just beyond the hedge, there is a tight and irregular clump of trees, half-concealing the house. The symmetry of the garden is skewed by the perspective Neville chooses, which is off the axis marked by the obelisks. This can be contrasted with, for example, John Donowell's 1753 engraving of the *patte d'oie* at Chiswick (of which, more below) [Fig. 5.10], which may have influenced Greenaway's decision to position the herm at the edge of the frame. Donowell flanks both sides of his engraving with herms, emphasising the symmetry of the *patte d'oie* and of the drawing itself.

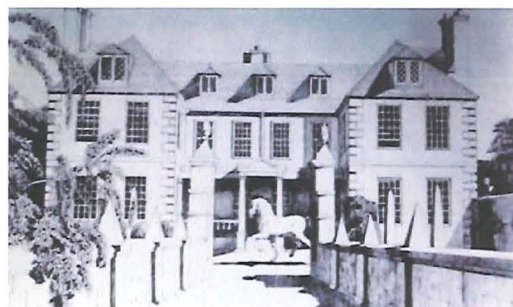




5.9 Neville's drawing of the formal garden.

5.10 John Donowell, *The Patte d'Oie, Chiswick* (1753).

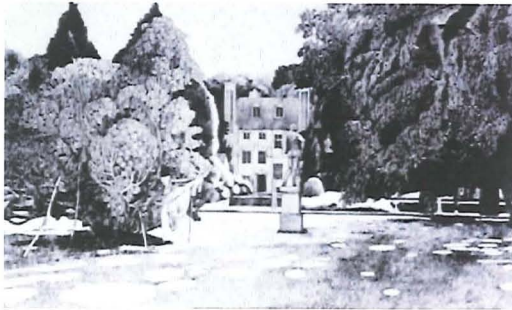
5.11 Neville's drawing of the yew tree walk.



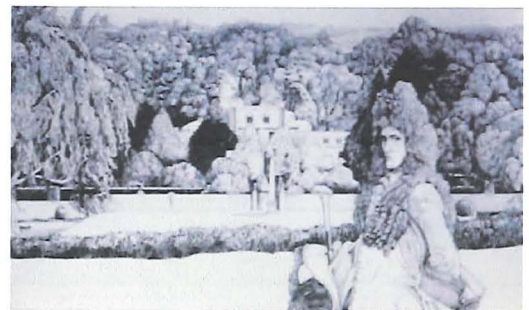
5.12 Neville's drawing of the front of Compton Anstey.

In the composition of all the drawings there is a contrast between picturesque and formal styles. Neville's drawing of the yew tree vista leads the eye away from the clipped symmetrical contours of the yew trees, up towards an irregular clump of trees at the top middle of the frame [Fig. 5.11]. The symmetry in his drawing of the front of the house is unbalanced by some overgrown branches, which stray into the left side of the drawing, over the bridge wall [Fig. 5.12]. In the view from the lower lawn, the figure of Hermes marks an otherwise naturalistic garden as emblematic [Fig. 5.13]. Similarly, the drawing from the hilltop prospect features a token obelisk in the centre middle ground, in a view busy with bosky picturesque detail [Figs. 5.14-5.15]. This drawing is particularly indicative of the slippage between historical garden styles in the views selected by Neville/Greenaway, because it features one of the film's most salient anachronisms: an excessively long wig. In this drawing, the wig blends in with the boscape. Restoration wigs were associated with Louis XIV and, by extension, with the archetypal geometric garden, Versailles, but the wigs in the film have seemingly become overgrown, like the trees; they echo the picturesque rather than Versailles. Translated from his native German, Mr. Talmann's surname means 'valley man'. His wig has cuckold's horns: these are also appropriately shaped like two wooded hills, between which runs a valley. Groombridge Place/Compton Anstey is also situated in a valley, as the prospect shows. In this shot, the picturesque appears to spill over from the

background into the foreground, via the bosky wig. The central emblematic garden icon, the obelisk, is incongruous in this irregular composition [Fig. 5.15].



5.13 Neville's drawing of the lower lawn.



5.14 Neville's drawing of the hilltop prospect.



5.15 Neville's drawing of the hilltop prospect (detail, showing obelisk).

There are other anachronisms or apparent departures from period accuracy in the film's depiction of landscapes. When Mrs Talmann and Mrs Herbert explain Van Hoyten's plans, the absurdity of the scene becomes apparent. Firstly, apart from the anachronism of Brownian improvement in 1694, there is a self-conscious historical fallacy: Van Hoyten is Dutch, yet he is introducing the form of landscape that marked a shift away from French and Dutch styles.<sup>7</sup> None of the key landscape gardeners in eighteenth-century Britain were Dutch. Secondly, the 'geometry' has already been 'soften[ed]': the landscape the characters are standing in already resembles a Repton design [Figs. 5.16-

<sup>7</sup> Recent research has called into question the validity of the term 'Dutch garden' to denote a trend of garden design in England in the seventeenth century. However, when *The Draughtsman's Contract* was made, the term was widely used to describe a formal gardening style, partly imported by William of Orange from Het Loo. For a definition of the Dutch garden written not long before the film was made, see Christopher Thacker, *The History of Gardens* (London: Croom Helm, 1979), pp.168-169. For a more recent revisionist polemic, see David Jacques, 'Who Knows what a Dutch Garden is?', *Garden History*, vol.30, no.2, Winter 2002, pp.114-130.



5.17]. None of the emblematic sites from the first half of the film are shown at this point. The landscape in this scene is exclusively picturesque. The scene also takes place away from the immediate vicinity of the house, in an eighteenth-century-style park.



5.16 The Reptonian park.



5.17 The Reptonian park.

The film's anachronistic combination of formal and picturesque design has been neglected by critics. However, it is often pointed out that *The Draughtsman's Contract* is replete with deliberate anachronisms. Douglas Keesey remarks that

such divergences from received [historiographical] opinion emphasize the fact that all truth is mediated, and that they are Greenaway's own way of making history.<sup>8</sup>

Does Greenaway thereby '[create] an imaginary world', as James Park puts it?<sup>9</sup> On the contrary: the film's world consists mostly of historical details, in anachronistic combinations that are purposefully utilised. This purposefulness becomes particularly pertinent when we analyse the deployment of landscape in the film, for, like the other *genius loci* narratives, *The Draughtsman's Contract* is concerned with the way history is emplotted through landscape gardens.

The film's landscape is frequently mentioned in passing by Greenaway critics, but its specific garden *mise-en-scène* has not been analysed in detail. Critics tend to discuss the horticultural issues raised in the dialogue, rather than the onscreen landscapes. The emphasis of Simon Watney's pioneering essay, 'Gardens of Speculation: Landscape in *The Draughtsman's Contract*', is on the history and semantics of the emblematic garden style in general: he apparently views the landscapes in the film as an accurate

<sup>8</sup> Douglas Keesey, *The Films of Peter Greenaway: Sex, Death and Provocation* (Jefferson, NC and London: McFarland, 2006), p.13.

<sup>9</sup> James Park, *Learning to Dream: The New British Cinema* (London: Faber & Faber, 1984), p.88.



representation of garden styles around 1694, though he mentions the anachronisms in the draughtsman's approach to drawing.<sup>10</sup> John A. Walker, on the other hand, argues that,

given Greenaway's cavalier attitude to historical truth, there does not seem much point in discussing at length – as Watney does – the history of English society and landscape gardening in the seventeenth century.<sup>11</sup>

We need to find a middle ground between these arguments, supported by close textual analysis. To a certain extent, Walker is right: the film, as Greenaway puts it, 'takes cognizance of the 300 years of history that have passed since 1694'; we cannot rely solely on the historiography of landscape design at the end of the seventeenth century to interpret the film's landscapes.<sup>12</sup> However, *The Draughtsman's Contract* does engage with the history of landscape gardening in the late seventeenth century and beyond; its anachronisms and departures from received historiography are not simply 'cavalier'. They are carefully structured and each of them has a specific role. For example, Van Hoyten, the Dutch landscape architect, is not only an intertextual reference to Van Hoyten, the keeper of owls at the Amsterdam Zoo, a character mentioned in Greenaway's *A Walk Through H*; he can also be seen as an embodiment of the influence of Dutch landscape painting on the picturesque.<sup>13</sup>

The film relies on the audience's having some knowledge of the relevant history: without this, its anachronisms, as well as its innumerable allusions, cannot be entirely understood. In order to explore the film's thematisation of the relationship between landscape aesthetics and power, we need to consider the ways its anachronisms, exaggerations and departures from received historiography are deployed: we need to analyse its complex assemblage of landscape forms and genres from the seventeenth century to 1982.

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<sup>10</sup> Simon Watney, 'Gardens of Speculation: Landscape in *The Draughtsman's Contract*', in *Undercut*, no. 7/8, Spring 1983, pp.4-9. Watney argues that the audience is encouraged by the mystery plot to hunt for clues and thus 'Greenaway temporarily rid[s] us of that very sense of the Picturesque which, a generation later, was to lead to the wholesale destruction of most of the emblematic gardens which were established in the Restoration period.' He follows Greenaway in labelling the living statue as a '*genius loci*' and argues that this is the only hint of the picturesque in the film (p.8).

<sup>11</sup> John A. Walker, *Art & Artists on Screen* (Manchester: MUP, 1993), p.122

<sup>12</sup> Jaehne, '*The Draughtsman's Contract*: An Interview with Peter Greenaway', p.14.

<sup>13</sup> For an account of the influence of Dutch painting on picturesque theory, see John Dixon Hunt, *The Picturesque Garden in Europe* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2003), pp.13-14 and *passim*.

## Greenaway's Contexts 1: The British Structural Landscape Film

The release of *The Draughtsman's Contract* followed a decade of disparate innovations in British landscape filmmaking. Losey and Medak pioneered different ways of deploying the country estate as a location in the fiction film, while the structural landscape film emerged as a key avant-garde genre, which reached a wider audience in March 1975, through the Tate Gallery's *Avant-garde British Landscape Films* season.<sup>14</sup> If, as Philippe Pilard argues, Greenaway's 1970s landscape films were part of an '*air du temps*', then *The Draughtsman's Contract* can be seen as a more direct response to, and hybridisation of, landscape forms and genres which were prominent during the 1970s.<sup>15</sup> Filmed almost entirely at Groombridge Place, with shots through windows that emphasise integrity of location, *The Draughtsman's Contract* resembles *The Go-Between* and *Brideshead Revisited* in its use of a country estate as a setting. Its narrative of a (male) outsider destroyed by his contact with a landed family belongs to what had become, by 1982, a topos in British landscape fiction films.

However, *The Draughtsman's Contract* places more emphasis on motion across a landscape than any of the previous *genius loci* films. It does this through a dialectics of stasis and movement. Only five of its shots feature camera movements. These lateral tracking shots are demonstratively mechanical, their motion obtrusive: conversely, the insistent stillness of the camera during the rest of the film throws into sharp relief the movement of characters and animals across the landscape. Along with the self-consciously mechanical camera movements, this contrast between static frame and moving *mise-en-scène* is indicative of *The Draughtsman's Contract*'s stylistic debt to the structural film. P. Adams Sitney, who coined the term 'structural film', lists the 'fixed camera position' as one of the four characteristics of the genre, along with 'the

<sup>14</sup> David Curtis, *A History of Artists' Film and Video in Britain* (London: BFI, 2007), pp.95-96. See also Deke Dusinberre's catalogue notes for the season, reprinted as 'On British Avant-Garde Landscape Film', *Undercut*, no.7/8, Spring 1983, pp. 49-55.

<sup>15</sup> Philippe Pilard, 'Un Cinéaste Non Aligné', in Daniel Caux *et al* (eds.), *Peter Greenaway* (Paris: Dis Voir, 1987), p.11.

flicker effect, loop printing and rephotography off the screen'.<sup>16</sup> He adds that few structural films have all of these characteristics and, indeed, the common trait of the British structural landscape films of Chris Welsby, William Raban and others is the fixed frame, rather than any of the other characteristics Sitney describes. When the camera does move in the structural film, it is often a mechanical movement, as in Michael Snow's  $\leftrightarrow$ .<sup>17</sup>

The camera in *The Draughtsman's Contract* is not strictly fixed: it moves between shots; as in many of Greenaway's 1970s films, topography is mapped through montage. However, in its conspicuous avoidance of the pan, the forward track and the aerial shot – according to Sitney, the camera movements most associated with topographical cinema – and its deployment of static framing to explore a dialectics of stasis and movement, *The Draughtsman's Contract* can be compared with the British structural landscape film.<sup>18</sup> Greenaway did not belong to the London Filmmakers' Co-Op, with which much British structural filmmaking was associated in the 1970s.<sup>19</sup> The sources of inspiration for *The Draughtsman's Contract* acknowledged by Greenaway in interviews include a wide range of discourses on, and experiments with, 'structure' (variously conceived), but not any of the films exhibited at the Tate Gallery's *Avant-garde British Landscape Films* season. His avowed influences include structuralism (the academic discipline, as opposed to the filmic discourse),<sup>20</sup> Hollis Frampton's films;<sup>21</sup> Alain Robbe-Grillet's novels,<sup>22</sup> and his cinematic collaboration with Alain Resnais, *Last Year in Marienbad* (1961);<sup>23</sup> Jorge Luis Borges's fiction,<sup>24</sup> serial music and the work of John

<sup>16</sup> P. Adams Sitney, *Visionary Film: The American Avant-Garde, 1943-2000*, Third Edition (Oxford: OUP, 2002), p.348.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p.358;  $\leftrightarrow$  (Michael Snow, Canada, 1969).

<sup>18</sup> P. Adams Sitney, 'Landscape in the cinema: the rhythms of the world and the camera', in Salim Kemal and Ivan Gaskell (eds.), *Landscape, Natural Beauty and the Arts* (Cambridge: CUP, 1995), pp.107-108.

<sup>19</sup> For an account of Greenaway's idiosyncratic position as an experimental filmmaker in Britain in the 1970s, see Pilard, op. cit., p.11.

<sup>20</sup> Jonathan Hacker and David Price, *Take 10: Contemporary British Film Directors* (Oxford: OUP, 1991), p.189.

<sup>21</sup> Alan Woods, *Being Naked, Playing Dead: The Art of Peter Greenaway* (Manchester: MUP, 1996), p.229. See also Laura Denham, *Peter Greenaway* (Washington, London and Montreux: Minerva Press, 1993), p.11.

<sup>22</sup> Keesey, *The Films of Peter Greenaway*, p.12.

<sup>23</sup> Jaehne, 'The Draughtsman's Contract: An Interview with Peter Greenaway', p.13 and Woods, op. cit., p.229. For analytical comparisons between *The Draughtsman's Contract* and *Last Year in Marienbad* see Jill Forbes, 'Marienbad Revisited: *The Draughtsman's Contract*', *Sight and Sound*, vol.51, no.4, Autumn 1982, p.30; Lawrence, *The Films of Peter Greenaway*, pp.60-63; and Mary Alemany-Galway, 'Postmodernism and the French New Novel: The Influence of *Last Year at Marienbad* on *The*

Cage;<sup>25</sup> R. B. Kitaj's paintings;<sup>26</sup> and Christo and other Land Artists.<sup>27</sup> We will need to address some of these influences in due course, for they are all apparent to varying degrees in the film. Above all, though, *The Draughtsman's Contract* arguably both draws on and thematises the tendencies of the British structural landscape film. Peter Wollen directs to the defining characteristic of the genre: 'a new narrativity, in which both film-maker and "nature" as causal agent play the role of protagonist.'<sup>28</sup> In several of Chris Welsby's 1970s films, for example, static or mechanical cinematography is opposed to the contingency and asymmetry of nature. In his *Windmill 3*, a windmill with mirror blades is attached to the front of a static camera in a park: the fixity of the frame is offset by the irregular movement of the windmill, which breaks the perspective on the public park in front of the camera with reflections of the camera itself and the area behind it.

There are some comparable oppositions between cinematographic stasis and meteorological activity in *The Draughtsman's Contract*. As is often pointed out, the film establishes a correlation between Neville's viewfinder and the camera: occasional shots through the draughtsman's grid align his frame with that of the camera; their aspect ratios are the same, indicating a similarity between them as optical instruments; and Greenaway produced Neville's drawings.<sup>29</sup> Neville tries to superimpose a rigid structure on the landscape, with which the camera is, in these aligned shots, complicit. Like the aristocrats and their servants and sheep, who frequently provide unwanted

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*Draughtsman's Contract*', in Paula Wiloquet-Maricondi and Mary Alemany-Galway (eds.), *Peter Greenaway's Postmodern/Poststructuralist Cinema* (Lanham, Maryland and London: The Scarecrow Press, 2001), pp.115-135.

<sup>24</sup> Robert Brown, 'Greenaway's Contract', *Sight and Sound*, vol.51, no.1, Winter 1981/2, p.35. See also Bridget Elliott and Anthony Purdy, *Peter Greenaway: Architecture and Allegory* (Chichester: Academy Editions, 1997), p.29.

<sup>25</sup> Woods, op. cit., p.276 and *passim*. See also Peter Wollen, 'The Last New Wave: Modernism in the British Films of the Thatcher Era', in Lester D. Friedman (ed.), *Fires Were Started: British Cinema and Thatcherism*, Second Edition (London: Wallflower Press, 2006), p.40.

<sup>26</sup> Paul Melia and Alan Woods, *Peter Greenaway: Artworks 63-98* (Manchester: MUP, 1998), p.137. See also Wollen, op. cit., pp.37-38 and Walker, *Art & Artists on Screen*, p.113.

<sup>27</sup> Melia and Woods, op. cit., p.137; Elliott and Purdy, op. cit., p.120; and David Pascoe, *Peter Greenaway: Museums and Moving Image* (London: Reaktion, 1997), p.58.

<sup>28</sup> Peter Wollen, 'The Two Avant-Gardes', in Michael O'Pray (ed.), *The British Avant-Garde Film 1926 to 1995: An Anthology of Writings* (Luton: John Libbey, 1996), p.143n15.

<sup>29</sup> Watney, 'Gardens of Speculation', p.7; Waldemar Januszczak, 'The Draughtsman's Contract' in *Studio International*, vol.196, no.999, 1983, p.22; Woods, op. cit., p.45; Elliott and Purdy, op. cit., p.41; Lawrence, op. cit., p.52; Pascoe, op.cit., p.74; Alemany-Galway, op. cit., pp.122-123; Keesey, op. cit., p.17.

staffage in Neville's frame, the weather seems to mock his attempt at formal control. On the third day, during his 7-9am slot, his progress drawing the back of the house, from the stable block to the laundry garden, is hampered by thick fog. Later, after he has signed the second contract with Sarah Talmann, we see a shot through the viewfinder (Figs. 5.18-5.21): the wind gently shakes the viewfinder frame, as the sun gradually illuminates the space, from background to foreground. The sunlight, shining intermittently as the clouds move, and the wind both counter the fixity of the frame and make its presence more conspicuous; as the sunlight hits it (Fig. 5.21), the frame – a device used to depict three dimensions on a flat piece of paper – is revealed to be as three dimensional as the landscape.



5.18-5.20 The shade in the picturesque scene recedes and the clouds are blown away, revealing sunlight, as the viewfinder frame is shaken by the wind.



5.21 The sun hits the viewfinder.

Considered in isolation, this shot might confirm Ann Lawrence's argument that the film represents a 'hope for a natural world indifferent to social control'.<sup>30</sup> However, the film later implies that the apparently 'natural' and unpredictable weather is simply one of the controlled vagaries of the picturesque landscape, part of an obscure conspiracy. When Neville returns to the estate after Mr Herbert's funeral, he approaches on horseback through a smoke-filled landscape (Fig. 5.22). The image recalls an earlier shot, in which Mr Herbert's missing horse returns in mysterious circumstances, across a misty landscape (Fig. 5.23). The similarity between these shots not only hints that Neville's fate will be the same as Mr Herbert's, but also suggests that the appropriate weather of the earlier shot – the mysterious mist – has been contrived by the occupants of the estate. After Neville sees what appears to be Mr Talmann hiding in the smoke, a close-up of the fire emphasises the fact that it has been utilised to effect this partial concealment (Fig. 5.24).

<sup>30</sup> Lawrence, *op. cit.*, p.62. See also Keesey, *op. cit.*, p.12.





5.22 Neville's return on horseback and in smoke...



5.23...recalls the earlier return of Mr Herbert's horse, in mist...



5.24 ...which may have been produced by a fire, like the one which now produces smoke to conceal Mr Talmann.

Soon after this, Neville meets Mrs Herbert, as clouds cast intermittent shadows over the grounds. After a large shadow passes over him, he says, 'I confess I was curious to see the house and gardens again, to see what appearance they put on after this week of changing weather' (Figs. 5.25-5.27). What was a serendipitous cloud movement for the production team is, in the diegesis, part of the landscape architecture.<sup>31</sup> The film thus draws on what Wollen calls the 'new narrativity' of the British structural landscape filmmakers; the weather performs a role in the narrative.<sup>32</sup> The dialogue indicates the contrivance of the scene; Neville's reference to the 'appearance...put on' by the estate implies that the landscape is a performer. The timely shadow cast as Neville mentions 'changing weather' seems to be part of the contrivance: a reflexive mobilisation of the pathetic fallacy.



5.25 As Neville mentions the 'changing weather'...



5.26...the sky clouds over briefly...



5.27 ...and then the sun comes out again.

The film is less concerned with an opposition between nature and culture, than with a juxtaposition of different forms of landscape art and architecture.<sup>33</sup> Significantly, these two shots, in which mist and shadow seem to be controlled by the plotters, take place in a picturesque landscape; as a mode, the picturesque is, appositely, artifice that seeks to represent (and control) natural landscape. The film's ostensibly 'natural' *mise-en-scène*

<sup>31</sup> Greenaway discusses the filming and grading of this shot in Woods, op. cit., p.237.

<sup>32</sup> Wollen, op. cit., p.143.

<sup>33</sup> Several critics (including Greenaway) have argued that that the film is about the conflict between nature and art/artifice. See Robert Brown, 'Greenaway's Contract', p.38 ; Vernon Gras, 'Dramatizing the Failure to Jump the Culture/Nature Gap: The Films of Peter Greenaway', *New Literary History*, vol. 26, no.1, 1995, p.125; David Pascoe, op. cit., p.71; Alemany-Galway, op. cit., p.126; Keesey, op. cit., p.12.

is revealed as a form of contrivance associated with a specific historical mode of landscape design: the picturesque.

It is also significant that this picturesque scene marks the juncture in the film's plot when the aristocrats seem at last to be united in a clandestine scheme: Mr Talmann lurks in the smoke, while his wife lies to Neville about his whereabouts. The picturesque, with its partial concealments and unpredictable contours, provides an appropriate setting for this aristocratic conspiracy; in its pre-eminence towards the end of the film, the picturesque landscape forms both a metonym and a metaphor for the scheme that has arisen.

### **Greenaway's Contexts 2: The *Genius Loci* Film and Picturesque Cinematography**

The binary narrative structure of formal garden/picturesque landscape is similar to that in *The Ruling Class*, though the two types of gardening are not deployed as discretely as they are in Medak's film. The film's narrative can be divided into four main parts: the supplication and commission; the execution of the drawings; the disputes between the aristocrats after the discovery of Mr Herbert's corpse; the return of Neville to Compton Anstey.<sup>34</sup> The settings are utilised to demarcate these sections. Interiors are predominantly used for the first and third sections, while the second and fourth sections are largely set in landscapes and interiors with horticultural iconography. The *mise-en-scène* also divides the film into two distinct halves. Along with the oft-noted costume change, the shift in landscape styles indicates a change of circumstances.<sup>35</sup> In the first half of *The Draughtsman's Contract*, the characters walk mainly around the formal gardens near the house. In the second half of the film, Neville meets Mrs Talmann and Mrs Herbert in the picturesque park that surrounds the house and gardens.

<sup>34</sup> The execution of the drawings can be divided into two sub-sections; for an analysis of the shift in emphasis from 'recording' to 'reading' between the two sets of six drawings, see Elliott and Purdy, *op. cit.*

<sup>35</sup> In the first half of the film, the inhabitants wear white and Neville wears black. After Mr Herbert's corpse is found, the inhabitants wear black, while Neville is dressed in white. These stark, demonstrative oppositions can be seen as a gesture to the academic structuralism established by Claude Lévi-Strauss.

As the introduction to this chapter points out, however, the first half of the film does feature shots in which the picturesque frames the emblematic elements. Two of Neville's drawings of the house are also from vantage points in the park. Likewise, Neville's thirteenth drawing at the end of the film is of an emblematic monument: the horse. Greenaway rarely presents a rigid structure without qualification; his films both rely on and deconstruct such frameworks. However, there is a clearly defined shift in emphasis from perspectives with formal gardens as centrepieces to an exclusively picturesque landscape: a shift from the gardens to the park, which marks the transition from competing aristocratic interests to what seems to be a united aristocratic conspiracy against Neville. As the plot against Neville thickens, the landscape becomes more picturesque.

If *The Ruling Class* pursues dialectical atavism, then *The Draughtsman's Contract*, as a period film, deploys dialectical anachronism: a contrast between the emblematic style popular in the first half of the eighteenth century and the expressive or picturesque style popular in the latter half of that century. *The Draughtsman's Contract* differs from the *The Ruling Class*, however, in the way its formal-to-picturesque trajectory follows the layout of a single estate location: Medak's landscape is, as we have seen, a creative geography constructed from two different estate locations. Conversely, although obelisks and statuary were temporarily installed in Groombridge Place's grounds by Greenaway and the film's art director, Bob Ringwood, in order to intensify the contrast of garden styles, the landscape on screen otherwise corresponds exactly to the layout of Groombridge Place.<sup>36</sup> Through this correspondence, Greenaway ironises the hierarchical estate layout, as it was conceived in late seventeenth century garden theory. As John Dixon Hunt argues, there is a 'hierarchy of spaces' implicit in the topographical engravings of Kip and Knyff and in contemporaneous writing on garden design,

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<sup>36</sup> Some of the shots in the park scene, however, may have been filmed in or near the valley of the Nailbourne. Only one cut-away to a prospect of the house [Fig. 5.1] links the rest of the shots to the location. I have been unable to find more evidence to support its claim, but Internet Movie Database lists the valley as one of the film's locations. See <http://www.imdb.co.uk/title/tt0083851/locations> [Accessed 10/01/08].

whereby nearer the mansion are those [spaces] which demonstrate greater control than those further away, more intensity of labor and greater aesthetic delight...This hierarchy was physically represented on the ground in a scale of artifice that decreased as one moved further away from the mansion.<sup>37</sup>

In the layout of Compton Anstey, the landscape further away from the house is ostensibly 'natural', but is revealed to be as controlled as the garden close to the house; the artifice of the picturesque is foregrounded, as the labour involved in making a partial concealment from smoke is emphasised in the shots of men burning leaves. Gardeners are shown at work throughout the film, in both the gardens and the park.

Hunt adds that the 'hierarchy of spaces' charted history, a transition from first (uncultivated) nature, through second (cultural) nature, to third nature (art, a garden):

It is a historical development in that wild terrain came to be selectively enclosed for crops, rivers would be dammed, and then gardens were established, drawing on agricultural forms and technology.<sup>38</sup>

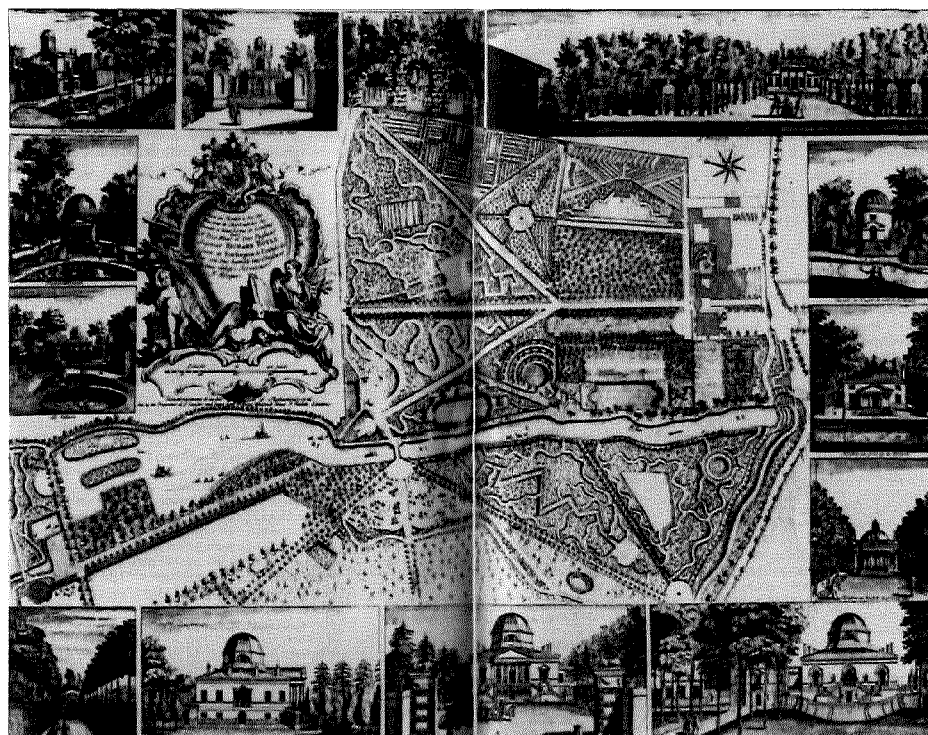
With the emergence of the picturesque, this spatial narrative was reversed: there was a movement towards wild terrain, which was now third nature, posing as first nature. It is the spatial narrative of the picturesque that the film's trajectory follows. *The Draughtsman's Contract* thus explores the tensions between the formal garden and the picturesque, between the former's patent artifice and the appearance of naturalness in the latter.

However, the layout of Groombridge Place/Compton Anstey is not shown as a whole in any shot; again, it is the picturesque, with its partial concealments, on which the film draws, rather than on the holistic elevated views and bird's-eye topographical engravings of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. While Neville selects discrete views of the house and gardens, which are similar to the boxes in John Rocque's survey of Chiswick [Fig.5.28], the film does not offer an aerial plan or map – like that at the centre of Rocque's engraving – in which to situate the selective views of the estate.

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<sup>37</sup> John Dixon Hunt, *Greater Perfections: The Practice of Garden Theory* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2000), p.182. As Hunt remarks, these distinctions stem from Cicero.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p.183.



5.28 John Rocque, *Plan of Chiswick* (1736), from *Vitruvius Britannicus*.

The film does not feature any of the crane or aerial shots employed in *The Go-Between*, *The Ruling Class* and *Brideshead Revisited* to place events in the context of the estate as a whole. Establishing shots are also conspicuously absent. The very first shot of the house, after the signing of the contract, shows only the stables and a small section of the west side of the house, which is partially concealed by trees [Fig. 5.29]. This semi-occlusion is sustained throughout the film.

Far from orientating the viewer, the hilltop prospect [Fig. 5.30] is occlusive and deceptive. As he climbs up the hill, Neville takes off some of his clothes: Greenaway thus stresses that this is an ‘undressed’ picturesque perspective. The house is enclosed and partly hidden by boscaje; without a map of Groombridge Place [Fig. 5.31], it would be impossible for the viewer to know that the formal gardens, lower lawn and yew tree walk are situated between the obelisk and the house. The map (showing the house and gardens as they were in 1902) includes the thirteen vantage points chosen by Neville,



numbered in the order he draws them, vantage points which the camera frequently shares (the hilltop prospect is vantage point 5 on the map).<sup>39</sup>



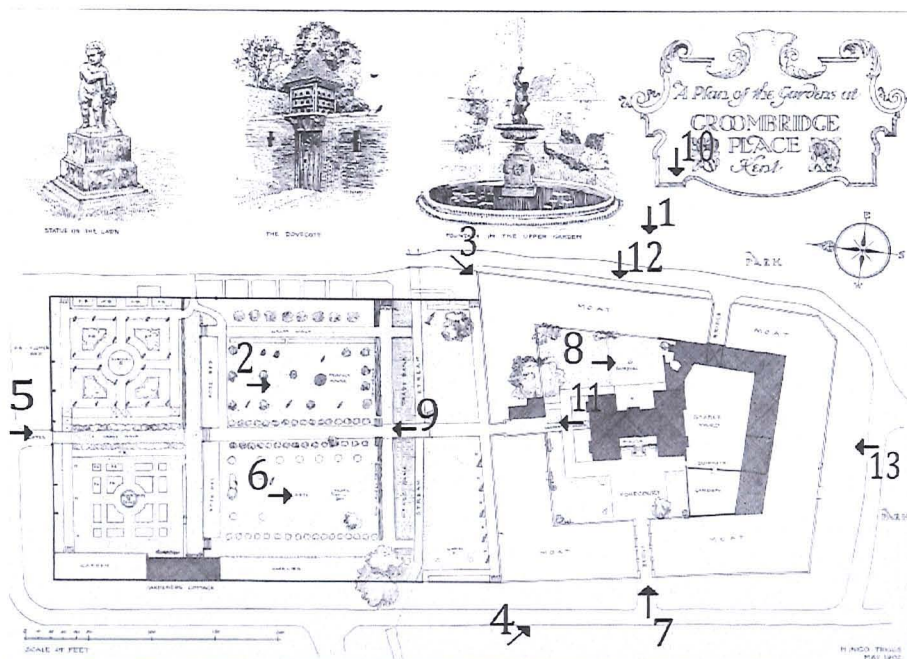
5.29 The first landscape shot in the film.



5.30 Neville climbs up the hill, from which he will draw the prospect.

Neville charts the estate with what appears at first to be systematic thoroughness: as the map shows, all sides of the house are depicted. However, the topography that emerges when the thirteen drawings are brought together is selective and intermittent [Figs. 5.32-5.45]. This is emphasised in the film in the montages of five drawings [Figs. 5.32-5.34 and 5.36-5.37] and then a further six drawings [Figs. 5.38-5.43], which appear just before the discovery of Mr Herbert's corpse. Because of the picturesque boscage that partially conceals space in most of the drawings, it is difficult, if not impossible, for the audience to create a mental map of the entire estate from Neville's drawings or, indeed, from the shots of the estate in the film as a whole. Neville's intermittent mapping characterises the topography of the whole film; there are unseen interstices between shots, which the audience becomes aware of as the film progresses: areas of the landscape that we do not see and we are conscious of not seeing. The cinematography clearly mimics Neville's way of selecting views: in this way *The Draughtsman's Contract* departs from the narrative film conventions of country estate representation, which involve wider perspectives of the location.

<sup>39</sup> The original map is by H. Inigo Triggs. See Plate 56, in H. Inigo Triggs, *Formal Gardens in England and Scotland*, Second Edition (Woodbridge: Antique Collectors' Club, 1988), p.150. Greenaway's camera positions marked by the author.



5.31 H. Inigo Triggs, *Plan of Groombridge Place* (1902), from *Formal Gardens in England & Scotland* [my numbers show Neville's vantage points; the arrows indicate the direction of his view in each case].



5.32 Drawing, Site 1.



5.33 Drawing, Site 2.



5.34 Drawing, Site 3.



5.35 Site 4 (no drawing of this is ever seen).



5.36 Drawing, Site 5.



5.37 Drawing, Site 6.



5.38 Drawing, Site 7.



5.39 Drawing, Site 8.



5.40 Drawing, Site 9.



5.41 Drawing, Site 10.



5.42 Drawing, Site 11.



5.43 Drawing, Site 12.



5.44 Site 13.



5.45 Drawing, Site 13.

Crucially, the camera remains static as the set-ups move from garden to park. Indeed, there are no camera movements at all in the final section of the film; an unconventional combination of static cinematography and picturesque *mise-en-scène* is sustained. The 'St. Vitus [sic] dance of filmmaking', attacked by Greenaway in the passage quoted in the epigraph to this chapter, has been interpreted as a reference to Hollywood cinema, but it could equally be seen as an allusion to the film and television country house narratives of the previous decade.<sup>40</sup> *The Go-Between*, *The Ruling Class* and *Brideshead Revisited* all employ a range of elaborate moving shots to describe the entrapment of a figure in a landscape. Although not jerky or gratuitous as 'St. Vitus's dance' implies, the movements are necessarily salient. In each case, the protagonist becomes the estate's *genius loci* through an exploration of the grounds, an exploration emphatically figured by camera movements.

This cinematographic motion through country estates corresponds to the geography of the locations: the innovativeness of each film/programme is evident in the specific way it draws on the resonances made available through this congruence. The elaborate serpentine camera movements of *Brideshead Revisited* mimic the contours of picturesque composition. Greenaway's decision to use predominantly static cinematography to map an estate can be seen as a resolute rejection of this kind of stylistic system, of picturesque movement, as well as a rejection of the subjective tracking shots in garden scenes in the key non-Anglophone country house films *Last Year in Marienbad* and *Cries and Whispers* (1972).<sup>41</sup> Groombridge Place is charted through static views, which together describe an intermittent circle around the estate. P. Adams Sitney argues that the structural film attempted 'to divorce the cinematic metaphor of consciousness from that of eyesight and body movement.'<sup>42</sup> The cinematography in *The Draughtsman's Contract* similarly eschews the conventional forward tracking shot that is used to represent a character's point of view as he/she

<sup>40</sup> Jaehne, 'The Draughtsman's Contract: An Interview with Peter Greenaway', p.14; for an interpretation of this remark as a reference to Hollywood cinema, see Keesey, op. cit., p.18.

<sup>41</sup> Ann Lawrence points contrasts a moving point-of-view shot in *Last Year in Marienbad* with the scene in *The Draughtsman's Contract*, in which Mrs. Talmann moves among the yew trees, planting items of clothing, while the camera is static. Lawrence, op. cit., p.63; *Last Year in Marienbad* [*L'Année dernière à Marienbad*] (Resnais, France, 1961); *Cries and Whispers* [*Viskningar och Rop*] (Bergman, Sweden, 1972).

<sup>42</sup> Sitney, *Visionary Film*, p.348.



penetrates the landscape. It divorces feet from eyes, as it were; the emphasis is on the different ways characters walk through the landscape, rather than on their experience of moving through the landscape.

Although there are many point-of-view shots in the film, the camera is aligned more with a particular mode of viewing landscape: to borrow Jonathan Crary's term for the relationship between viewing practices, theory and ideology, the camera is aligned with the 'technique of the observer'.<sup>43</sup> The static camera is picturesque, in the sense that it mimics Neville's mode of landscape drawing. The film returns, to a certain extent, to the notion of *ut pictura hortus*, which underpinned early theories of the picturesque.<sup>44</sup> *The Go-Between* and *Brideshead Revisited* often represent a subjective perspective of the picturesque, from the viewpoint of the garden visitor: Leo and Charles's experiences of movement through a landscape, enticed by partial concealments. Conversely, in *The Draughtsman's Contract*, the camera is aligned exactly with the picturesque theory that landscape, ideally, should be viewed as a succession of pictures.

## Structure and Narrative Space

As Greenaway suggests in the epigraph to this chapter, the film's almost entirely static cinematography engages with the ontology of the drawn/painted image, as well as with the iconography of specific landscape paintings, such as Danckerts's painting of Charles II receiving a Pineapple and Gainsborough's *Mr and Mrs Andrews* (of which, more below). The characters' verbal rhetoric is also foregrounded and, in turn, their competing interpretations of both the gardens and Neville's drawings direct the audience's attention back to the visual juxtaposition of gardens and drawings. Thus, through the predominantly static framing, a *paragone* emerges between cinematography, garden design, drawing/oil painting and the rhetoric of words and moving bodies. This *paragone* gestures to the theories and practices of *ut pictura poesis* (in this film, verbal and bodily rhetoric, rather than poetry) and *ut pictura hortus*, but it

<sup>43</sup> See Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: MIT Press, 1998).

<sup>44</sup> See John Dixon Hunt, *Gardens and the Picturesque: Studies in the History of Landscape Architecture* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: MIT Press, 1997), pp.105-136.

does so through a modern, hybrid idiom: a combination of *genius loci* narrative and structural cinematography.

In an interview, Greenaway states that the twelve drawings provide the film's structure.<sup>45</sup> To a certain extent this is true. The longest section of the film, in which the drawings are produced, follows Neville's curriculum, as he returns to each site at the same time every day. Despite this spatial repetition, the plot is chronological. However, apart from a few exceptions (such as the scene in the Talmanns' bedroom and occasional shots of the Talmanns walking through the grounds), the audience's epistemic access to the action on the estate is limited to Neville's timetable and to his technique of observation.

This structure was initially planned to be more complex. In an interview conducted by Robert Brown early in the post-production process, in September 1981, Greenaway compares *The Draughtsman's Contract* with his mock-structuralist film *Vertical Features Remake* (1978) and says that *The Draughtsman's Contract* will keep

going back to the same landscapes at different times of the day, to see how the light has made shapes, forms, verticals, how they've changed and what new significance they have at different times of the day.<sup>46</sup>

Brown's article also contains an interview with the film's executive producer, Peter Sainsbury, given a year later, in which he states that the released cut of the film differs considerably from Greenaway's initial edit.<sup>47</sup> He describes the first version of the film as a four-hour edit with 'elegant digressions' and says that, only after persuasion,

Peter accepted that the audience shouldn't be allowed to wander in and out of the film, either physically or metaphorically as they had been quite happily in *The Falls*.<sup>48</sup>

The implication in these two interviews is that the longer edit would have involved the ambiguousness that Peter Gidal describes as the structural film's 'freedom' from a 'repressive ideological structure', which 'posits each individual viewer...as subject: the

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<sup>45</sup> Januszcak, op. cit., p.21.

<sup>46</sup> Robert Brown, 'From a View to a Death', *Monthly Film Bulletin*, vol.49, no.586, November 1982, p.255.

<sup>47</sup> The editor credited on the released version of the film is John Wilson.

<sup>48</sup> Brown, 'From a View to a Death', p.256.



subject, that is, who forms *the* interpretation.<sup>49</sup> In this way, the emphasis would have been on the individual spectator's experience. Had the film been released in such an edit, it is arguable that it would have allowed the viewer time to consider his/her individual response to the landscapes. The released version of the film, on the other hand, certainly leaves a degree of ambiguity, but it does so more through what it does *not* show on screen, rather than through what it does show. What it does show is rigidly structured, but the film hints at the incompleteness of this structure.

The film's ambiguity emerges through its engagement with, and ironical mimicry of, a 'repressive ideological structure': Neville's mode of looking. Thus, in contrast with the four-hour version of the film described by Greenaway, we only see each site at the time Neville draws it (with just a few exceptions). As well as the shots through Neville's grid, the camera is demonstratively aligned with his way of looking, by rectilinear *découpage*: editing patterns of 90° or 180° lateral changes in camera position. During his first drawing session, the camera's frame is initially about 30° off parallel with the grid on the paper [Fig. 5.46]. In the same way, the camera is about 30° off a perpendicular shot of Neville [Fig. 5.47]. As his drawing takes shape, however, a rectilinear pattern begins to dominate the editing: the shots are all at 90° or 180° to Neville or from his point of view [Fig. 5.48-5.55], which constitutes the 0°/360° mark. The camera's frame is now precisely parallel with the grid on the paper [Fig. 5.50]. Ironically, as a maid disrupts his view by opening the window, the camera still mimics his system [Fig. 5.51-5.55]: the camera positions are motivated by the grid's rigid rectilinearity, rather than by the maid's actions. There is no cut to a closer shot of her, a shot from her elevated point of view or a shot inside the room where she is standing. The irony is consolidated when the final shot in the sequence shows Neville framed by his grid, imprisoned by his own way of seeing [Fig. 5.55]. Augustus, Mr Talmann's nephew, has more luck in adopting this system of framing. When he draws the house from the same position, the editing is again rectilinear [Figs. 5.56-5.57]: for him, however, the *mise-en-scène* is compliant. The sheep that, at other times, trouble Neville so much, here form a neat line for Augustus, parallel with the top of the drawing table [Fig. 5.57]. Even the sheep seem to be part of the conspiracy against Neville.

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<sup>49</sup> Peter Gidal, 'Theory and Definition of Structural/Materialist Film', in Peter Gidal (ed.), *Structural Film Anthology* (London: BFI, 1976), pp.3-4.



5.46 The camera is about 30° off an alignment with Neville's grid...



5.47... and about 30° off a perpendicular shot of Neville and the viewfinder...



5.48...but then the camera assumes his point of view...



5.49...and faces him at 180°.



5.50 An optical point-of-view shot...



5.51...and another....



5.52 are followed by a 90° cut...



5.53... and a third shot of the window.



5.54 There is another 90° cut...



5.55...and another, to Neville in medium close-up.



5.56 Augustus is shown in a similar shot...



5.57... followed by a 90° cut, with the sheep forming a line.

When we see Neville walk from site 4 to site 5 (see map: Fig. 5.31), the film follows both the geography of Groombridge Place and Neville's system of looking at the cost of a departure from editing conventions. Neville walks from the front of the house [Fig. 5.58], through a gate and over the moat [Figs. 5.59-5.60]. Then the 180° line is broken, as Neville passes his drawing apparatus in site 6, pausing to look through the viewfinder [Figs. 5.61-5.62]. With no camera movement to re-establish the position of the 180° axis, this is an obtrusive break in continuity editing. Neville walks off frame right [Fig. 5.60], but then enters the next frame from the right, as if he has changed direction between the shots [Fig. 5.61]. Finally, we see him walk towards the end of the garden [Figs. 5.63-5.64] and up to site 5, the hilltop prospect [Fig. 5.65].



5.58 From Site 4...



5.59 Neville arrives at the moat...



5.60... crosses it...



5.61...and passes through Site 6.



5.62 He pauses to look through the viewfinder...



5.63...then walks to....



5.64...the end of the garden...



5.65...and climbs the hill.

The sequence is representative of the geography of the film as a whole. The journey, charted through single static shots in each section of the garden through which Neville passes, is not comprehensively mapped. There are clearly interstices of garden space between the shots, just as Neville's restrictive curriculum leaves uncharted areas of the estate. Between the lower lawn [Figs. 5.61-5.62] and the end of the garden [Figs. 5.63-5.64], Neville must have passed through the yew tree walk, but we do not see it. If Greenaway had shown the yew tree walk, we would have been able to position these shots in relation to shots of the rest of the garden. There are also missing areas of the location which we do not even see at other points in the film. For example, we never see the spaces between the front of the house and the bridge Neville crosses and between the bridge and the lower lawn. What might be happening in these areas and at the other eleven of Neville's sites while he is working on each drawing? Neville's arrival at each successive part of the garden is also anticipated, as if he is being watched: at the start of each shot, the camera waits for him to walk into the field of vision. We see Neville walk on and off frame. This emphasises the predictability of Neville's movements (his curriculum states where he will be and at what time), as well as the fact that there is off-screen space to which we have no visual or epistemic access, liminal zones linking each section of the garden. His drawings are equally exclusive: the camera's restricted perspective mimics the limitations of his approach to landscape representation.

If the viewer knows Groombridge Place, the meaning of this sequence changes subtly, just as the scene featuring Januarius Zick's *Allegory of Newton's Service to Optics* acquires a different nuance if the viewer knows the painting.<sup>50</sup> For, despite the break in continuity editing, the geography of the location is respected: the bridge and site 6, the lower lawn, are both situated between the front of the house and the hill. This is, in a sense, the opposite of the conventions of creative geography, in which continuity editing is used to suture disparate locations/sets into a fictional whole. The knowledge that the film respects the location's geography, however, confirms the impression that there are spaces that the static, selective camera does not show. By following the geography of the location so precisely – to the extent that even Neville's references to the points of

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<sup>50</sup> For a detailed analysis of the painting and its role in the film, see Pascoe, *Peter Greenaway: Museums and Moving Image*, pp.67-71. Viewers are probably more likely to have visited Groombridge Place than to have seen this obscure painting.

the compass are an accurate description of Groombridge Place's orientation – Greenaway invites parallels to be made. The film's geography clearly looks like an intermittent selection of views from a larger whole, which it indeed is: in this respect, *The Draughtsman's Contract* resembles Richard Long's Land Art film, *Walking a Straight 10 Mile Line Forward and Back Shooting Every Half Mile*.<sup>51</sup> Put another way, Greenaway could have charted the film's space more thoroughly, with establishing shots, crane and aerial shots and faster montages covering each journey from one section of the garden to another. Alternatively, he could have stitched together a seemingly complete, unified fictional geography from his location. Instead, he uses a topographical system analogous to Neville's, and leaves conspicuous gaps in the film's mapping of the landscape. If *The Draughtsman's Contract* can be defined as a partly structural film, it is because Neville's way of looking motivates the editing and cinematography more frequently than any of the dramatic events do.

Just as the film's various murder mysteries are not explicitly resolved, so the structure itself is incomplete; we see the fourth site [Fig. 5.35], but not Neville's drawing of it. We also see the eleventh drawing [Fig. 5.42], but not the site itself. The use of the curriculum as a model for the film's structure evidences the influence of both the *nouveau roman* and the structural film on Greenaway, though the incompleteness of the structure is more characteristic of the former. Peter Brooks expresses reservations about use of the term 'spatial form' to categorise the structure of experimental narrative fictions, but in this case it is accurate, for a spatial system – the twelve views/sites, repeated with variations – is combined with a more linear plot.<sup>52</sup>

Douglas Keeseey and Greenaway himself both point to the formal similarities between the director's *Vertical Features Remake* and *The Draughtsman's Contract*.<sup>53</sup> The earlier film is a mock-structuralist work; it implies that any imposed structure is absurdly

<sup>51</sup> See Ulrike Groos, Barbara Hess and Ursula Wevers (eds.), *Fernsehgalerie Gerry Schum: Ready to Shoot* (Cologne: Snoeck, 2004), pp.74-75; on the influence of Land Art on some of Greenaway's earlier films, see Bridget Elliott and Anthony Purdy, 'A Walk Through Heterotopia: Peter Greenaway's Landscapes By Numbers', in Martin Lefebvre (ed.), *Landscape and Film* (New York and Oxon: Routledge, 2006), pp.268-277; *Walking a Straight 10 Mile Line Forward and Back Shooting Every Half Mile* (Richard Long, UK, 1969).

<sup>52</sup> Peter Brooks, *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1992), p.314.

<sup>53</sup> Keeseey, *The Films of Peter Greenaway*, p.10; Brown, 'From a View to a Death', p.255.



arbitrary, through the Institute for Restoration and Reclamation's ridiculous attempts to produce an accurate reconstruction of a Tulse Luper film. *The Draughtsman's Contract* similarly represents Neville's curriculum as an impossibly rigid scheme, easily disturbed by aristocratic stratagems. Neville relies on his frame to contain people and objects: the frequent alignment of the viewfinder with the camera frame equates the two, but film is a temporal medium, capable of portraying motion. Movement towards the viewfinder repeatedly disrupts his attempts at pictorial containment. Sheep initially framed by Neville's viewfinder frame move towards it and gradually exceed its bounds as they appear to become bigger [Figs. 5.66-5.67]. The perspectival system of containment, which makes more distant objects seem smaller, is turned upon itself here, as sheep approach and get larger.



5.66 The sheep are contained by the frame...



5.67...but go beyond it as they approach.

Such moments in the film are indicative of the narrative spaces (and parts of the location) which the camera does not show: the off-screen spaces, which the rectilinear editing never seems to recuperate. It is as if, in this shot, Greenaway literalises André Bazin's contrasting terms for painting and cinema: 'centripetal' and 'centrifugal', respectively.<sup>54</sup> The sheep are a centrifugal force, which break the centripetal enclosure of the viewfinder frame. However, as Stephen Heath points out, classical continuity editing is often used by filmmakers to 'contain' off-screen space, 'to regularize its fluctuation in a constant movement of reappropriation'.<sup>55</sup> Greenaway not only thematises the failure of the draughtsman's attempt to regularise space, but also leaves the viewer with a sense of uncontained off-screen space, the 'hors-champ', as Heath puts it.<sup>56</sup> The sheep indicate that there is space and action beyond the camera's frame.

<sup>54</sup> André Bazin, 'Painting and Cinema', translated by Hugh Gray, in *What is Cinema Volume 1* (Berkeley: University of California, 1967), p.166.

<sup>55</sup> Stephen Heath, 'Narrative Space', in *Questions of Cinema* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1981), p.45.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.



The rectilinear editing and intermittent mapping of the fictional estate and location leave self-evident gaps.

In an interview with Alan Woods, Greenaway states that,

In *The Draughtsman's Contract* great efforts were made to complement the nature of the demands for veracity that were integral to the plot by filming a location that would be fully comprehensible. More than one enthusiastic viewer, without assistance from extra-frame sources, and without visiting the place of filming has been able to recreate the location in geographical exactness solely from information taken from the frame.<sup>57</sup>

It is difficult to reconcile this account with the film's intermittent representation of the estate and the picturesque occlusion of much of the *mise-en-jardin*, in shots of the house and grounds. Besides, we can only be sure that the fictional geography of the estate corresponds with the geography of the location by recourse to a map or visit to Groombridge Place. For example, when Neville moves from site 1 to site 2, there is little in the montage to help us place the spatial relationship between the shots or to create a mental map of the fictional estate/location [Figs. 5.68-5.77].



5.68 Augustus and his maid approach...



5.69...while Neville passes the moat....



5.70...and the servants pick apples.



5.71 Neville strides forwards...



5.72...as if he will meet Augustus face to face.



5.73 Neville climbs stairs...



5.74...and there is a disjunctive cut.



5.75 Neville arrives...



5.76...and we see his point of view through the viewfinder.



5.77 The same shot (detail) shows Augustus arriving at the formal garden.

The sequence involves a parallel montage: Augustus and his maid are walking in one part of the estate [Fig. 5.68 and 5.72], while Neville is walking through another [Figs.

<sup>57</sup> Woods, *Being Naked Playing Dead*, p.117.

5.69, 5.71, 5.73, 5.75] and two servants collect apples from a tree in a third area [Fig. 5.70]. When Neville arrives at site 2, we see a point-of-view shot of the formal garden [Fig. 5.76], at the back of which Augustus and his maid appear [Fig. 5.77]. It becomes clear at this point that the line of orange trees is at the back of the formal garden and that Neville and Augustus have both been walking towards this garden. However, there is much to confuse us before we work this out. The building in the shot of Neville walking by the moat is partially concealed by the trees [Fig. 5.69]. Which building is this? If it is the house, which side of it is Neville passing? The servants are collecting apples near some yew trees [Fig. 5.70], which suggests that they are near to Augustus, who is also walking past some yew trees [Fig. 5.68]. However, where exactly is the apple tree in relation to the line of potted orange trees? We expect Neville and Augustus' paths to cross, but the combination of the shot of Neville walking forwards on a lawn [Fig. 5.71] and the shot of Augustus walking [Fig. 5.72] creates the false expectation that they will meet, face to face near the end of the line of orange trees, for Neville is walking away from the camera, while Augustus is approaching it. The low-angle shot of the gardeners [Fig. 5.74] is also confusing at first, as it precedes the shot of Neville arriving at the top of the garden gateway [Fig. 5.75] and its low angle seems, at first, as if it could be from a similar position to the previous shot [Fig. 5.73], as that is also from a low angle. It is only when the camera looks through Neville's viewfinder [Fig. 5.76] – the icon of containment – that we can see the spatial relationship between Neville, the gardeners and Augustus.

Questions still remain. How are the spaces all connected? Neville seems to cover much more ground than Augustus and his maid: what are the relative dimensions of the two different spaces they travel through? Which side of the house can be seen over the hedge at the back of the formal garden? On a second or third viewing an attentive viewer might connect the sheets in the shot of Neville walking past the moat with site 3 (the laundry), but we cannot be sure that the formal garden faces this side of the house. There are some clues for spatial orientation – the sheets and the yew trees – but these are clues only, and then there are red herrings – in this case, the edit which suggests that Neville and Augustus will meet face to face. An attentive viewer might be able to construct a model of Groombridge Place, but this would be difficult, if not impossible, without taking stills from the film and comparing them to a map. It would be much

easier to construct a model of, say, Castle Howard from *Brideshead Revisited* or even Melton Constable Hall from *The Go-Between*. The hints at the geography of the entire estate of Compton Anstey/Groombridge Place remain clues in a detective mystery of spaces.

## Space and the Murder Mystery

Bridget Elliott and Anthony Purdy invoke Peter Brooks's discussion of the 'semantic range' of the word 'plot', in order to analyse the allegorical relationship in *The Draughtsman's Contract* between the conspiracy (plot as scheme), the drawings/curriculum (plot as 'demarcation') and the narrative plot itself.<sup>58</sup> Elliott and Purdy perceptively note that the conspiracy is unpacked through the drawings when they are collected together. They compare this with Sherlock Holmes's demarcation of an estate's grounds in 'The Musgrave Ritual'.<sup>59</sup> However, they do not discuss the film's landscapes. There is another relevant possibility implied in Brooks's connection of the definitions of 'plot', which they ignore: landscape (a plot of ground) can become a diagram (a ground plan), and thus figure the narrative plot, or provide a model for it; in *The Draughtsman's Contract* the picturesque is present literally, in the landscapes on screen and in Neville's drawings. These picturesque spaces serve as both metaphors and metonyms for the occlusion of the film's murder narrative.

The implied and visible spatial occlusion is consistent with the film's other references to hidden deeds and concealed spaces: the moat, with its thick green surface, which 'might be mistaken for a lawn'; the occasional shots of people standing by one of Neville's empty seats, while he is drawing elsewhere; the gardener spying on Neville; and the traces of Mr Herbert which appear at each of the sites. The views themselves are revealed to be fatally exclusive; beyond the boundaries of each of Neville's framings there lies the rest of the estate, which his strict curriculum ensures he will not visit during the two hours he has set aside for each drawing. By announcing the curriculum

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<sup>58</sup> Elliott and Purdy, *Peter Greenaway: Architecture and Allegory*, pp.30-38. See also Brooks, op. cit., pp.11-12.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., p.38.

in advance, Neville has unwittingly assured the murderers that they will not be disturbed by him on other parts of the estate during each two-hour period. They are free to kill Mr. Herbert, dispose of his body on a site initially rejected by Neville (site 13) and leave suggestive clues in Neville's next site of the day, without the threat of interruption. Neville intends his timetable of two-hour slots to enable repetition of the same conditions, but instead it provides the villains with twenty-two hours to introduce variation into the landscape, in the form of Mr. Herbert's clothes. His choice becomes one of time: to finish the drawing of the site as it was the day before or alter it to include the article of clothing that has now appeared. In choosing to incorporate the new item, he inflects each picture with a temporal trace, which conflicts with his desire for spatial repetition; each item of clothing is a vestige of events that have taken place in the gap between his daily two-hour slots on the site.

The intermittent map of the estate that the drawings provide can be woven, as Sarah Talmann informs Neville, into 'a connecting plot' that can be used to incriminate him. The gaps between each drawing leave them open to interpretation, because there is no record of what has taken place in the temporal and spatial zones excluded from the drawings: the twenty-two hours he is absent from each site and the spaces between sites. Neville's neglect of the area beyond his frame leaves him vulnerable to conspiracy and clandestine surveillance. This becomes evident when the gardener spies on Neville from behind a yew tree, though this scene is probably a red herring, as the gardener is wearing red trousers when all the other characters are in black and white costumes [Fig.5.78]; as is frequently the case in the *nouveau roman*, a device used in the conventional detective story for retardation is instead employed to prevent closure. The links in the plot's story-chain are never entirely connected; the 'syntactic regression from *sjuzet* to *fabula*' that, according to Franco Moretti, typifies the detective story, is never fully completed in *The Draughtsman's Contract*.<sup>60</sup> Some ambiguity about who is guilty for which crime remains. However, this ambiguity has a function beyond formalist experimentation.

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<sup>60</sup> Moretti, 'Clues', p.137.





5.78 A red herring? Neville is spied on, from behind a yew.

The film self-consciously combines the country house murder mystery with period drama. In doing so, it detaches the country house detective plot from the abstraction identified by Raymond Williams and situates it in the historical context of the emergence of the landed Whig estate.<sup>61</sup> Thus the detective story's typical opposition of guilty individual/innocent stereotype, as described by Franco Moretti, is reversed; crime is no longer personified by the atypical individual – though the draughtsman is guilty of much – but by the landed family, which represents and perpetuates the pernicious socioeconomic apparatus of the country estate.<sup>62</sup>

Greenaway states that *Murder on the Orient Express* influenced him, but in Agatha Christie's novel, collective guilt is pan-social and mitigated by the killers' motive: to punish a criminal.<sup>63</sup> Poirot's travelling companion, Bouc, notes that on the train, "All around us are people, of all classes, of all nationalities, of all ages."<sup>64</sup> This observation becomes an important clue, as Poirot later deduces that all of the culprits could only have met in America.<sup>65</sup> Conversely, by the end of *The Draughtsman's Contract*, it is difficult to determine who is guilty of Mr Herbert's murder and why. Moretti states that 'Detective fiction...exists expressly to dispel the doubt that guilt might be impersonal, and therefore collective and social.'<sup>66</sup> In *The Draughtsman's Contract*, however, the guilt is 'collective and social'; the culprit is a class. Its group of villains could only have met at an English country house. The film's many deliberate anachronisms in no way lessen the force of this inculcation of the aristocracy. On the contrary, the historical span embraced by the film suggests that the culpability of the ruling class has been

<sup>61</sup> Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (London: Hogarth Press, 1985), p.249.

<sup>62</sup> Moretti, op. cit., p.135 and *passim*.

<sup>63</sup> Jaehne, 'The Draughtsman's Contract: An Interview with Peter Greenaway', p.15.

<sup>64</sup> Agatha Christie, *Murder on the Orient Express* (London: HarperCollins, 2007), p.38.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p.332.

<sup>66</sup> Moretti, op.cit., p.135.



sustained over the three hundred years following 1694. Neville is a poor detective, however. Stasis, in his case, reflects more than a 'lack of experience' or 'innocence'.<sup>67</sup> Unlike the spirits of place in previous films or the narrator of Greenaway's *A Walk Through H* (1978), Neville does not explore the serpentine contours of a landscape and is therefore unable to pursue a line of inquiry from one site to another.<sup>68</sup> The gaps between the drawings are indicative of Neville's blinkered naivety, a mode of viewing reflected in, and underlined by, the film's predominantly static cinematography.

### **Movement in the Landscape**

Through its static cinematography, *The Draughtsman's Contract* creates a poetics of garden movement, which foregrounds the different ways characters walk across the landscape and the relationship between modes of movement and power. The almost exclusively black and white costumes make the characters seem like avatars from Neville's drawings; their movement – offset by the camera's stasis – constantly suggests the diametric opposite of the drawings' stillness.

Michel Conan remarks that motion in landscapes is often discussed by academics through a cognitivist framework, which assumes that 'environmental behaviour is a function of the environment'.<sup>69</sup> He argues instead for a phenomenological approach to movement in a landscape, a 'discussion of intersubjectivity and of its role in the construction of individual experience' in the landscape, rather than an account of landscape experienced through the prism of science.<sup>70</sup> Country house films, as a rule, arguably treat motion more in a way that resembles the latter approach, rather than the former. This applies not only to, say, *The Go-Between* and *Brideshead Revisited*, but also to many non-English country house films. For example, *Cries and Whispers* begins with a montage of static shots of the landscape around a house, which establishes the setting, while the characters sleep. After the characters wake up, however, there are only two garden scenes, both of which are from Agnes's memory/diary: in these scenes the

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid., p.145.

<sup>68</sup> *A Walk Through H* (Peter Greenaway, UK, 1978).

<sup>69</sup> Michel Conan, 'Introduction: Garden and Landscape Design, from Emotion to the Construction of the Self', in Michel Conan (ed.), *Landscape Design and the Experience of Motion* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 2003), p.9.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., p.12.

camera moves. The motion of the camera here reflects human activity: the physical activity of walking and the mental activity of recollection. This is not simply a matter of narration: that is, of the moving camera telling a story. If, as John Dixon Hunt argues, the experience of an actual garden as artwork necessitates a relationship between the 'primacy of sight' and pedestrian mobility, then the way a mobile camera in country house films accompanies a protagonist moving through a landscape is in dialogue with this experience.<sup>71</sup> The camera's 'primacy of sight' corresponds to the character's mobility, and this correspondence relates to the experiences visitors have in actual gardens. Where a specific location is utilised, a more specific interrelation is established between visitors' experiences of that estate location on the one hand and, on the other, the protagonist's and viewer's experiences of the fictional garden represented by the location.

With its still cinematography and its mechanical lateral tracking shots, *The Draughtsman Contract* differs from other country house films: it has more in common with the cognitivist approach described by Conan, for it ironically applies Neville's abstract framework in its portrayal of movement in a garden, rather than supplying point-of-view shots representing the subjective experiences of each person walking through the landscape. Neville, it seems, is a man who can only experience gardens through his technique of observation, his professional way of marking out areas to draw and applying his static grid to them. That this mode of looking is abstract, mechanical and impersonal is emphasised in shots which depict the viewfinder apart from Neville [Figs 5.82-5.83]. Neville is, at such times, forced to leave his grid and become a moving protagonist in the landscape. However, we do not share his point of view while he is chasing sheep. Instead, the camera remains static, observing him at a distance. His viewfinder, standing between the camera and Neville, serves as a reminder that we are viewing movement from the type of static, impersonal, scientific perspective that this instrument gives.

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<sup>71</sup> John Dixon Hunt, "'Lordship of the Feet': Toward a Poetics of Movement in the Garden', in Michel Conan (ed.), *Landscape Design and the Experience of Motion* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 2003), p.187.



5.79-5.81 The disobedient sheep turn Site 1 into a picturesque park.



5.82-5.83 Neville ends up chasing them and becomes an actor in the garden theatre...



5.84...while the Talmanns take a stroll, with considerably more decorum.



5.85 Their stroll is observed by a mechanical lateral track.



5.86-5.87 The camera is intermittently blocked by yew trees.



5.88 Neville tells Phillip not to 'trot'.



5.89 Phillip strolls with the family...



5.90...who perform a mock bow.



5.91 Neville gestures with a boot...



5.92 at the blank face...



5.93... and, thereby, might well have 'put the boot in'.

At the same time, the modes of movement depicted in the film are suggestive of the different ways that competing aesthetic systems regulate conduct in the landscape of a country house. John Dixon Hunt divides movement in gardens into three categories: the 'procession or ritual, the stroll, and the ramble'.<sup>72</sup> The procession/ritual is a formal journey,

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., p.188.

that follows both a preordained path and purpose, which is, on account of its prescription, repeatable on innumerable occasions...The route – that is, both the movement itself and its reasons and objectives – is encoded, its prescriptions laid down in some formal record.<sup>73</sup>

This mode of movement describes Neville's progress from one drawing site to another, formalised in his curriculum and repeated over several days as the drawings develop. Where the film follows this curriculum – where its structure is determined by the twelve drawings – its plot can be said to be processional.

Neville clearly desires the conduct and bearing of Phillip, his servant, to be appropriate to the stateliness of this procession; when he sends Phillip to ask the aristocrats to move from site 6, he shouts after him, 'Don't trot!' [Fig. 5.88]. Before they move, the aristocrats then parody Neville's decorum, with a mock theatrical bow [Fig. 5.90]. This moment points to the way that a garden can become a theatre and that a garden visitor should always be aware that he/she is, as Hunt puts it, 'both a spectator of the elements in [the garden's] design and an actor in its dramas'.<sup>74</sup> When Neville is behind his apparatus, it seems at first that he is guaranteed the privileged, detached role of spectator [Fig. 5.88]. However, once Sarah throws her 'connecting plot' over the drawings, it becomes evident that by observing and recording what he sees, Neville has unwittingly become a writer/actor in the drama. This is first implied when Neville tells Mrs Herbert of his plan to draw Mr Herbert's face on a portrait of Mr Talmann's body. Neville uses his boot to point to the empty face in his drawing of site 5 [Figs. 5.91-5.92]. The next time we see site 5, Mr Herbert's riding boots have appeared [Fig. 5.93]: it is as if Neville, using his boot to gesture to a drawing of this site, has given the conspirators the idea of placing the boots here. Neville literally and metaphorically puts the boot in here, unwittingly becoming a '*metteur-en-jardin*' in the murder plot against Mr Herbert. Thus, Neville watches, directs and acts in the events on the other side of his viewfinder; the decorum and detachment of Neville's procession is subverted by the aristocrats.

The film also suggests that there are other types of ritual garden movement that lack the grandeur of a procession. We see gardeners and maids at work throughout the film.

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Hunt, *Gardens and the Picturesque*, p.117.



Their ritual movements conflict with Neville's stasis, the pauses in his intermittent procession. Despite (or because of) his orders, they continue to follow their working routine. The opposition between Neville's ritual and theirs is made particularly evident when, at site four, men raking the gravel approach Neville, as if threatening to rake him out of the way [Fig. 5.58]. The clash of rituals emphasises that Neville, like the gardeners, is a servant.

According to Hunt, the other categories of garden movement, the stroll and the ramble,

involve the undertaking or giving of oneself to movement. But the stroll implies an ultimate purpose within the site and a sense of destination...Strolling also implies a defined route between whatever incidents punctuate and give rhythm to the movement...Rambles, on the other hand, entail movement with no external prompt; they are promoted largely by the will or curiosity of an individual enjoying the leisure to wander.<sup>75</sup>

Most of the walking undertaken by the aristocrats can be described as strolling. It is purposeful, yet lacks the ritualistic repetition of Neville's curriculum. Through their sexual assignations, Neville attempts to regulate Mrs Herbert's actions, to restrict her movements to his curriculum. When he forces her to kneel [Fig. 5.94], there is a 90° edit [Fig.5.95], which emphasises the way she has been subjugated by his aesthetic framework (as well as by his sexual desires).



5.94 Mrs Herbert is forced to kneel...



5.95...and there is another 90° cut.

However, Neville is also forced to conform to other people's aesthetic modes. At the start of the second day, at site 1, the picturesque is in the ascendant [Figs. 5.79-5.83]. The sheep, which are capable of forming a procession when Augustus draws [Fig. 5.57], ramble now, grazing and defying the order that Neville wants to impose on the grounds. Sheep played an important part in the history of the iconography of the picturesque,

<sup>75</sup> Hunt, "Lordship of the Feet": Toward a Poetics of Movement in the Garden', p.189.



after sheep-folding became popular from about 1750.<sup>76</sup> As picturesque icons, the sheep are arranged in irregular groups in each of these shots [Figs. 5.79-5.81], marking the foreground and middle ground, while the background is occluded by an informal curtain of trees. They also draw Neville away from his spectatorial seat and onto the picturesque 'stage', where he engages in the ignominious, yet highly picturesque movement of sheep-chasing [Figs. 5.82-5.83]. Neville is similarly reduced to pacing, when the mist prevents him from working and he walks up and down, waiting for it to clear [Figs. 5.96-5.98].



5.96 The mist reduces Neville to pacing.



5.97 While the light forms picturesque views...



5.98...Neville continues to pace.

Sheep-chasing and pacing are not among Hunt's categories of garden movement: the problem with Hunt's typology is that it only covers leisure and enjoyment in the garden. As *The Draughtsman's Contract* shows, movement in the English landscape garden often took less enjoyable forms. If *The Draughtsman's Contract* is a comedy of manners, the comedy is partly enacted through conflicts between the competing rhetoric of different types of garden movement.

Neville's sheep-chasing is contrasted with the decorum, in the following shot, of the Talmanns, strolling along the yew tree walk [Fig. 5.84-5.87]. This is one of the film's five lateral tracking shots: although the Talmanns are moving, we do not share their point of view. Instead, the camera follows them and the yew trees regularly interrupt our view. The straight line in which the camera moves emphasises the fact that the Talmanns are also walking in a straight line (unlike Neville, in the previous shot [Fig. 5.83]). While the picturesque landscape filled with sheep provokes Neville's picturesque movements, here the formal layout of the yew tree walk provides an apt context/prompt for the formal stroll of the Talmanns. The shot also serves as an emblem

<sup>76</sup> John Phibbs, 'The Englishness of Lancelot "Capability" Brown', *Garden History*, vol.31, no.2, Winter 2003, pp.130-131.

for the intermittent occlusion in the film as a whole, with the yew trees hiding the Talmanns at regular intervals. That this occlusion is related to clandestine activities is emphasised later on, when Mr Noyes and Mr Talmann walk along the yew tree walk. The camera again tracks from side to side, while the yew trees interrupt our view of the men at regular intervals. Mr Noyes informs Mr Talmann that the drawings reveal that Neville has cuckolded him. The conversation, which takes place at night as if in secret, is about a hidden meaning and thus emphasises the role of the yew trees in the garden's occlusion.

A yew provides the gardener with camouflage when he spies on Neville in the formal garden [Fig. 5.78]. Just like Talmann in the picturesque grounds, the gardener here moves in a way that cannot be described with Hunt's terms: he sneaks. The living statue also sneaks around the garden: indeed, both men seem to be implicated in the conspiracy, when Sarah Talmann points out that it would take the strength of two men to move the ladder [Fig. 5.99] and there is a cut to a shot of the gardener and the living statue [Figs. 5.100]. Although Neville remarks on the mysterious activities of both men, he is less perceptive when it comes to occlusive spaces. His drawing of the part of the house against which the ladder is placed does not show the dark shadow on the wall [Figs. 5.101-5.102]. He also watches, without comment, as Sarah litters the yew tree walk with clothes, metonyms of her infidelity [Figs. 5.103-5.106]. She is strolling here, but at the same time she is composing a criminal *mise-en-jardin*. Her walk criminally combines the decorum of a stroll with the art of garden design.

The location for the yew tree walk in Groombridge Place was the Apostle Walk, where the twelve pairs of drum yews represent the apostles. Significantly, when we seen Neville's half-finished drawing when Sarah dresses the walk, the pairs of yew trees are numbered, from one to eight [Fig. 5.107]: the other four are behind Neville. This is the ninth drawing: the eight pairs of yew trees can be seen as emblems for the eight other drawings and Sarah's garden composition is emblematic of the criminal *mise-en-jardin* in each of these eight sites. Just as there are twelve pairs of yew trees at the location, twelve drawings have been commissioned from Neville. Greenaway again relies on our knowledge of Groombridge Place to read the garden composition in this scene. The religious connotations of the Apostle Walk are important: Neville initially wins an

argument with the Talmanns about religious garden iconography, essentially an argument between Catholicism and Protestantism, when he offers to find a snake for Mr Talmann's orangery. However, through her actions in the yew tree walk/Apostle Walk, Sarah 'plots' Neville's downfall, placing incriminating evidence of their sexual relationship in a garden space which represents the contested ground of Christianity. The ground her husband loses in the argument with Neville is thus regained, though she also manages to cuckold her husband in the process. We need to consider Greenaway's utilisation of the location and its associations, in order to understand fully the onscreen landscape designs.



5.99 Sarah says that moving the ladder would have taken the strength of two men...



5.100...and there is a cut to two likely suspects.



5.101 A shot of the ladder shows an occluded space at the centre...

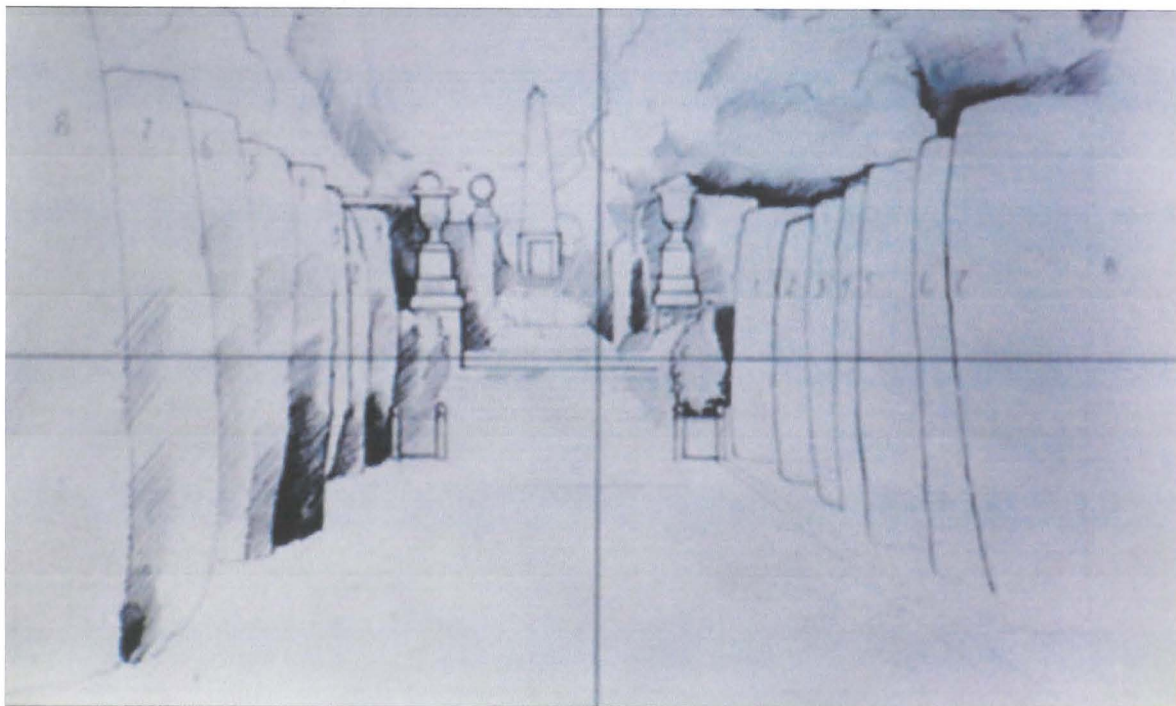


5.102...which Neville's drawing fills with a fully visible door.



5.103-5.106 Sarah creates a 'crime scene' in the yew walk.





5.107 Neville's work in progress, at site 9: note the pairs of yew trees, numbered one to eight.

### From Ham House to the Pineapples of Groombridge Place: Topographical Sources

Greenaway may have been inspired to make a film about an estate draughtsman by the publication in 1979 of John Harris's *The Artist and the Country House: A History of Country House and Garden View Painting in Britain 1540-1870*.<sup>77</sup> However, he evidently also undertook a great deal of primary research. The notes and script for *The Draughtsman's Contract* that Greenaway submitted in his application for funding to the BFI in 1980 show the extent of his detailed research into the history of country estates and landscape art.<sup>78</sup> In an appendix on language, he mentions the correspondence of the Lauderdales, who are referred to in the film.<sup>79</sup> These references in the dialogue to the Lauderdales implicitly invoke the Ham House group: the Dutch and Flemish painters

<sup>77</sup> John Harris, *The Artist and the Country House: A History of Country House and Garden View Painting in Britain 1540-1870* (London: Sotheby Parke Bernet, 1979). Harris's was not the first book on the subject, but it broke new ground in its comprehensiveness, particularly concerning country house engravings and paintings of the late seventeenth century.

<sup>78</sup> A scan of the entire proposal can be viewed online at: [http://greenaway.bfi.org.uk/\\_dvd\\_bonus/index.php?theme=2&type=Original%20Proposal&title=draughtsman](http://greenaway.bfi.org.uk/_dvd_bonus/index.php?theme=2&type=Original%20Proposal&title=draughtsman) [Accessed 28/08/07].

<sup>79</sup> [http://greenaway.bfi.org.uk/\\_dvd\\_bonus/display.php?theme=2&type=Original%20Proposal&title=draughtsman&folder=008\\_appendices&thumb=dc\\_proposal\\_112&fcount=8](http://greenaway.bfi.org.uk/_dvd_bonus/display.php?theme=2&type=Original%20Proposal&title=draughtsman&folder=008_appendices&thumb=dc_proposal_112&fcount=8) [Accessed 28/08/07].

patronised by the Duke and Duchess of Lauderdale after the Restoration.<sup>80</sup> Another appendix on locations lists Ham House and Chiswick House as possible choices.<sup>81</sup> The notes he provides on each of these reflect his concern to find a location with architectural and garden styles appropriate to the period in which the film's narrative is set. He states that Ham House covers

exactly the correct dates. Furnished and decorated in the last years of Charles II to the taste of the Lauderales. The Duke of Lauderdale was one of the five ministers who made up Charles II's Cabal...The gardens are usable – being in the process of reconstruction at this moment – but they are rather undeveloped, somewhat limited in size and a little boring.<sup>82</sup>

The gardens were being restored to their 1670s layout.<sup>83</sup> Greenaway dismisses the design of Chiswick House itself as being too late. However, he sees its gardens as ideal, listing a range of details, including 'trees in tubs...large Cedars of Lebanon, obelisks [and] dark hedges'.<sup>84</sup> It is clear from this evidence that period accuracy of house and gardens, post-Restoration associations and emblematic garden elements were all of high priority for him. As we will see, although neither Ham House nor Chiswick were ultimately used, they still influenced the composition of the film's garden scenes, just as Groombridge Place itself played a key role in the refinement of the script.

Greenaway went to great lengths to find a house built before 1694, with unaltered architecture.<sup>85</sup> However, he was also aware that the location would contribute to the film's style and narrative. In the proposal to the BFI, he states that

The script...needs rattling...[this] would in the long term be further accomplished when locations are chosen, for the locations are central to much of the action of the plot.<sup>86</sup>

In his introduction to the film on the BFI DVD release, he states that it took

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<sup>80</sup> Harris, op. cit., pp.43-44.

<sup>81</sup> [http://greenaway.bfi.org.uk/\\_dvd\\_bonus/display.php?theme=2&type=Original%20Proposal&title=draughtsman&folder=008\\_appendices&thumb=dc\\_proposal\\_113&fcount=8](http://greenaway.bfi.org.uk/_dvd_bonus/display.php?theme=2&type=Original%20Proposal&title=draughtsman&folder=008_appendices&thumb=dc_proposal_113&fcount=8) [Accessed 28/08/07].

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Bridget Cherry and Nikolaus Pevsner, *London 2: South* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983), p.477.

<sup>84</sup> [http://greenaway.bfi.org.uk/\\_dvd\\_bonus/display.php?theme=2&type=Original%20Proposal&title=draughtsman&folder=008\\_appendices&thumb=dc\\_proposal\\_113&fcount=8](http://greenaway.bfi.org.uk/_dvd_bonus/display.php?theme=2&type=Original%20Proposal&title=draughtsman&folder=008_appendices&thumb=dc_proposal_113&fcount=8) [Accessed 28/08/07].

<sup>85</sup> Curtis Clark, interviewed by *Filmmaker*:

<http://www.kodak.com/US/en/motion/products/16mm/why/filmMaker/draughtsman.jhtml> [Accessed 16/01/2008].

<sup>86</sup> [http://greenaway.bfi.org.uk/\\_dvd\\_bonus/display.php?theme=2&type=Original%20Proposal&title=draughtsman&folder=001\\_intro&thumb=dc\\_proposal\\_005&fcount=8](http://greenaway.bfi.org.uk/_dvd_bonus/display.php?theme=2&type=Original%20Proposal&title=draughtsman&folder=001_intro&thumb=dc_proposal_005&fcount=8) [Accessed 28/08/07].



several months to find the ideal place and this was all relative to the actual making of the film because the place was going to somehow determine the narrative.<sup>87</sup>

The low cost of renting Groombridge Place may have been an incentive, but the date of the house, its garden iconography and associations were clearly also key factors in the decision to pick it as the main location.<sup>88</sup> The scene in which Sarah places her clothes along the yew tree walk, for instance, was set, in the original script, in a corridor inside the Herberts' house. In the film, the nuance of this scene is mostly due to the religious connotations of the Apostle Walk location. The site also provided Greenaway with the yew trees, which become emblems of the formal gardens' occlusion and deception, through the lateral tracking shots and the shot of the gardener spying on Neville. As one of the few remaining features of the garden from the 1670s, the Apostle Walk is also an authentic late seventeenth century formal garden element.<sup>89</sup>

The general layout of the estate contributed much to the film's thematisation of contrasts between different periods and styles of landscape design. The house was built around 1662: while its architectural detail was, as Nicholas Cooper points out, 'up-to-date', its H-plan was old fashioned.<sup>90</sup> Its owner and designer, Philip Packer, also built the house on the site of his family's old house, retaining the moat. This meant that the house was situated in a valley and not on a hillside, which would have provided Packer with a fashionable prospect.<sup>91</sup> Instead, the house combined fashionable detail with an unfashionable layout and valley site; Restoration elements were combined with a medieval moat. The valley meant that the site was more wooded than a hillside estate would have been.<sup>92</sup>

<sup>87</sup> Peter Greenaway, 'Introduction', in *The Draughtsman's Contract* DVD (BFI, 2004).

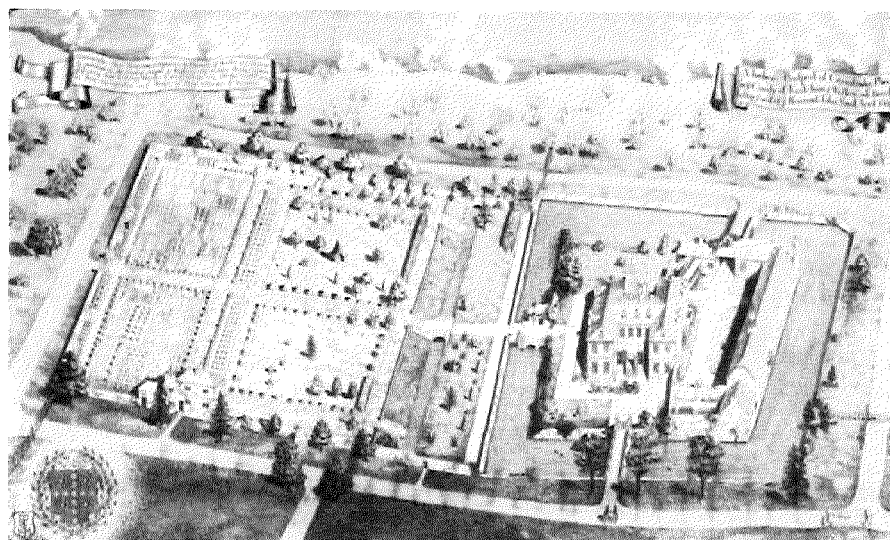
<sup>88</sup> On the rent paid for the location, see Hacker and Price, *Take 10: Contemporary British Film Directors*, p.199.

<sup>89</sup> [http://www.groombridge.co.uk/fg\\_knot.htm](http://www.groombridge.co.uk/fg_knot.htm) [Accessed 08/01/07].

<sup>90</sup> Nicholas Cooper, *Houses of the Gentry, 1480-1680* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999), p.215 and *passim*. See also John Newman, *West Kent and the Weald* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969), p.298; Alan Everitt, *The Community of Kent and the Great Rebellion, 1640-1660* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1966), p.325; Vita Sackville-West describes the estate as having 'one foot in the sixteenth, the other in the late seventeenth century': see Vita Sackville-West, *English Country Houses* (London: William Collins, 1942), p.37.

<sup>91</sup> Newman, *op.cit.*, p.298.

<sup>92</sup> John Evelyn visited the house in 1674, and described the site as 'a woody valley'. Quoted in: Oliver Hill and John Cornforth, *English Country Houses: Caroline, 1625-1685* (London: Country Life, 1966), p.127.



5.108 C. E Kempe, *Groombridge Place, as it was in the Reign of Charles II* (1884).

While it seems that the woodlands directly around the house were sparse in the 1670s [Fig. 5.108], they had evidently become thick, overgrown picturesque bosage by the 1980s.<sup>93</sup> If the film, as Greenaway puts it, ‘takes cognizance of the 300 years of history that have passed since 1694’, then it partly does this through its location: an estate where, in 1982, the house and yew trees remained more or less as they were in the late 1600s, and the other, overgrown trees embodied decades (in some cases, centuries) of growth.<sup>94</sup> The combination of medieval, Restoration and picturesque elements provided Greenaway with a location through which contrasts between different landscape styles could be pursued. The formal gardens, surrounded by thick woodlands, provide a setting where picturesque details constantly intrude on the draughtsman’s observation of the formal gardens. The moat, on the other hand, adds a touch of medieval intrigue to the disposal of Mr Herbert’s body.

The associations of the house also enrich the film’s narrative. Arthur Conan Doyle based Birlstone Manor, in the Sherlock Holmes novel, *The Valley of Fear* (1915), on

<sup>93</sup> I have been unable to find any evidence to support or contradict C.E. Kempe’s 1884 depiction of how the house would have looked when built. However, the sparseness of woodlands around the house in the drawing is consistent with the layout of most houses of that era. Even exceptions, such as Bifrons [Fig.5.7], were not entirely surrounded by thick woods. As John Anthony points out, tree growth and ageing often made a once formal garden appear irregular. See John Anthony, *Discovering Period Gardens* (Princes Risborough: Shire, 1997), p.60.

<sup>94</sup> Jaehne, ‘*The Draughtsman’s Contract: An Interview with Peter Greenaway*’, p.14.

Groombridge Place.<sup>95</sup> Although Conan Doyle/Watson provides a guidebook-style description of the estate when Holmes and his companions arrive at the house, the narrative gradually uncovers a series of hiding places. Holmes investigates what appears to be the death of the *paterfamilias*, Douglas, who is, in fact, hiding in a priest hole after killing an assassin and dressing the assassin in his clothes. Watson suspects that Douglas's wife conspired with their best friend to kill Douglas; Watson's suspicions are aroused when he finds them talking happily together behind a 'concealing hedge'.<sup>96</sup> Douglas has hidden the assassin's clothes in the moat. There are, then, echoes of this novel in Greenaway's film, in which a *paterfamilias* goes missing and is then found, a corpse, in the house's moat, while his clothes are placed in the garden: the conspirators use the concealment provided by the garden to carry out their scheme; the plot is effected through a plot of land.<sup>97</sup> These parallels enhance the film's murder mystery narrative, by pointing to a canonical example of the country house murder mystery.

Groombridge Place was also the model for Blackboys, the house in Vita Sackville-West's 1922 novel, *The Heir*.<sup>98</sup> A comparison of Sackville-West's description of the grounds with Greenaway's treatment of the same site is revealing. There are two key passages, in both of which Peregrine Chase, the house's heir, stands in the garden. The third person narrator describes what he sees:

The house lay in the hollow at the bottom of a ridge of wooded hills that sheltered it from the north, but the garden was upon the slope of the hill, in design quite simple: a central walk divided the square garden into halves, eased into very flat, shallow steps, and outlined by a low stone coping. A wall surrounded the whole garden. To reach the garden from the house, you crossed a little footbridge over the moat, at the bottom of the central walk. This simplicity, so obvious, yet, like the house, so satisfying, could not possibly have been otherwise ordered; it was married to the lie of land.<sup>99</sup>

<sup>95</sup> Ed Glinert, 'Notes', in Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Valley of Fear and Selected Cases* (London: Penguin, 2001), p.381.

<sup>96</sup> Conan Doyle, op. cit., p.53.

<sup>97</sup> Mr Herbert's body is left in an ornamental tank in the original script. See: [http://greenaway.bfi.org.uk/\\_dvd\\_bonus/display.php?theme=2&type=Original%20Proposal&title=draughtsman&folder=002\\_prologue&thumb=dc\\_proposal\\_028&fcount=8](http://greenaway.bfi.org.uk/_dvd_bonus/display.php?theme=2&type=Original%20Proposal&title=draughtsman&folder=002_prologue&thumb=dc_proposal_028&fcount=8) [Accessed 28/08/07].

<sup>98</sup> Vita Sackville-West, 'Foreword', in *The Heir* (London: The Richards Press, 1950), p.5.

<sup>99</sup> Sackville-West, *The Heir*, p.27.

In the place of stagnation, he recognized stability. And as his vision widened he saw that the house fused very graciously with the trees, the meadows, and the hills, grown there in place no less than they.<sup>100</sup>

In the first paragraph the garden layout is described in its entirety, as Chase stands still at the point where the gardens begin. The description ranges from the house to the wall and then back to the house, where a conclusion about the whole is reached: the estate is simple and its layout is natural, the only possible layout. This idea is developed in the second extract, in which Chase sees the house as a plant: something which has been grown naturally. In contrast to Watson, who moves from the general layout to the concealing details over the course of the narrative, Chase's horizon gets wider. In the second paragraph, his perspective is more inclusive than it was the first paragraph, for he observes that the house is in natural symbiosis with the surrounding countryside. In both paragraphs, the house is perceived to be part of a unified, transparent whole.

Conversely, as we have seen, in *The Draughtsman's Contract* landscape elements that appear natural – even the weather – are revealed to be part of a contrivance; the plot of land is used in a plot (that is, conspiracy) against Mr Herbert and Neville. By following Neville's curriculum and parodying his highly selective, intermittent topography, the film compartmentalises the estate and represents it as a series of episodes, between which there are interstices: gaps in our epistemic access to both the landscape and the conspiratorial events enacted in and through it. The kind of holistic view of a unified, natural, whole landscape depicted in Sackville-West's novel is controverted in Greenaway's film, from which the viewer can only begin to construct a mental map of the entire estate by following a series of clues. Groombridge Place is an estate location built at a time when total topographical views of demesnes were the predominant visual means of signifying power. Sackville-West's novel suggests that, in 1922, it was still possible and desirable to view the entire estate from a single vantage point. Indeed, Chase sees more encompassing, panoramic views as his philosophy of life becomes more singular, eccentric and immovable. Greenaway, on the other hand, draws on the location's detective story associations; he exploits its picturesquely overgrown foliage, its 'concealing hedges', to represent a fragmentary landscape.

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid., p.47.

Compartmentalised formal gardens were a common feature of late seventeenth century estates, but, paradoxically, the topographical views propagated by Kip and Kynff, among others, represented these sections as interlinked parts of a cohesive, legible whole, spread over the countryside. Their engravings aimed, not to portray garden parts as they might be experienced by a member of the household walking through each section of the estate, but to depict the estate as the owner would want it to be seen by outsiders: a massive, commanding, total prospect. The prospect, as Ann Bermingham points out, became associated in the early eighteenth century with the discourse of ‘Whig liberty’.<sup>101</sup> The Brownian style allowed people moving through the landscape to view it as a series of prospects, rather than as a series of rigidly demarcated, discrete compartments. Bermingham states that,

In artistic theory, the prospect, as exemplified by the gardens of Brown or the paintings of Claude, could aspire to what Reynolds deemed the “great style” because it literally rose above the individual features of a specific view in order to embrace the general effect.<sup>102</sup>

Bermingham also discusses the way later exponents of the picturesque, especially Price and Knight, eschewed systematic designs and preferred (visually and politically) occlusive layouts, in which the variety of the landscape and the details of different areas of the estate could be foregrounded.<sup>103</sup>

The gardens represented in *The Draughtsman’s Contract* juxtapose the different ways landscape was perceived and deployed by Whigs, from the late seventeenth to the end of the eighteenth century. The Herberts are *nouveaux riches*; Sarah informs her husband that her grandfather was an ‘army victualler’. The family, with its German connection and Dutch protestant leanings, is representative of the Whig landownership which rose to prominence with the shifts of power, first to William of Orange in 1688 and then, after the Act of Settlement in 1701 and the death of Queen Anne in 1714, to George I of Hanover. The part-formal, emblematic gardens next to the family’s house are contrasted

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<sup>101</sup> Ann Bermingham, ‘System, Order, and Abstraction: The Politics of English Landscape Drawing around 1795’, in W.J.T. Mitchell (ed.), *Landscape and Power*, Second Edition (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2002), p.84.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., pp.82-83.



with the later Brownian/Reptonian prospects in the park. However, the occlusion that characterises Price and Knight's picturesque is present in both the gardens and the park. In the emblematic part of the film, formal vistas (such as the yew tree walk) are terminated by irregular boscaje [Fig. 5.103], while emblematic statuary is placed at the centre of picturesque arboreal frames [Fig. 5.37]. In the park scenes towards the end of the film, the shots of the undulating hills [Fig. 5.16] are preceded by shots of a smoke-filled arbour [Fig. 5.22], while the shade appears to be a contrivance. In each case, Greenaway suggests that the (political and aesthetic) occlusion which became visible in the late picturesque landscape also characterised these earlier Whiggish landscape styles, (if less visibly); aesthetic systems of landscaping throughout the film are shown to conceal, embody and enable conspiracy. Thus through a system of opposition between emblematic and Brownian designs, and conflation of the late picturesque with these styles, Greenaway proposes that there was, essentially, an overarching continuity between the emblematic, Brownian and late picturesque landscapes, whatever the apparent political and aesthetic changes.

The picturesque concealment which punctuates the formal garden *mise-en-scène* provides a metonym for the occlusion between shots, the gaps in our epistemic access to the film's topography and the family's plots. The film's intermittent topography presents a series of self-evident syntagma or episodes: shots of discrete parts of the garden, spliced together, but missing interstices of garden space. This is syntax in search of the picturesque: a series of self-evidently syntactic garden scenes that together lean towards the occlusion characteristic of the late picturesque. That Greenaway rigorously followed the layout and orientation of Groombridge Place is, arguably, an invitation to make comparisons between what we see on screen and the location, between the intermittent representation of discrete spaces on screen and the whole estate as it is seen by a visitor to the location.

Films featuring country houses invariably interpolate shots of locations into a creative geography. As V. F. Perkins says of the construction of fictional worlds in film,

We are offered an assembly of bits and pieces from which to compose a world. Fragmentary representation yields an imagined solidity and extensiveness. The

malleability of the image is in a reciprocal relationship with the seamlessness and continuity that the image can evoke in our minds.<sup>104</sup>

This process, the composition of a fictional world, does not preclude a dialogue with the location and its associations, particularly if the ‘assembly of bits and pieces’ corresponds closely to the location’s layout. However, while this ‘assembly’ in *The Draughtsman’s Contract* respects the layout of Groombridge Place, it is also self-evidently fragmentary; the static camera and highly selective range of shots of the location are far less fluid and comprehensive than, for example, the topographies of *The Go-Between* and *Brideshead Revisited*. Compton Anstey does not seem to be the type of ‘seamless’ world described by Perkins; the landscape is too occlusive and the cinematographic mapping too intermittent. Greenaway, who was influenced by R. B. Kitaj, may have drawn inspiration from his fragmentary landscape paintings, which present an array of irreconcilable, discrete sections.

However, Greenaway also gestures towards the inclusiveness of gardens. When Augustus and his maid walk past the orange trees in Versailles cases, she recites a horticultural alphabet: ‘A is for apricot, *M ist für Marille*.’ The unifying language of this mixed German and English alphabet is horticulture. The capricious structure of the alphabet reflects the way an essentially arbitrary system – the emblematic, formal style – has been imposed on the garden, a connection reinforced by the horticultural structure of the alphabet.<sup>105</sup> Like Greenaway’s short film, *H is for House*, the scene also implies that a garden can be a physical, lexicographical assemblage.<sup>106</sup> Groombridge Place is seen as an inclusive collection of signifiers, a master-lexicon, of which we are shown only discrete, episodic sections in the film.

In this respect, Greenaway’s film can be compared with the meta-narratives of Jorge Luis Borges. In Borges’s ‘The Garden of Forking Paths’, a fictional novel called *The Garden of Forking Paths* is discussed. This book is like a maze; the author, Ts’ui Pen,

<sup>104</sup> V. F. Perkins, ‘Where is the world? The horizon of events in movie fiction’, in John Gibbs and Douglas Pye (eds.), *Style and Meaning: Studies in the detailed analysis of film* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), p.26.

<sup>105</sup> Greenaway’s frequent exploration of arbitrary systems such as the alphabet is noted by John A. Walker in his *Art and Artists on Screen*, p.115.

<sup>106</sup> *H is for House* (Greenaway, 1974; re-edited 1978).

has constructed a labyrinthine garden in the form of a novel, which collects 'all possibilities'.<sup>107</sup> This fictional, inclusive book is the diametric opposite of the over-determined, absurdly compressed plot Borges tells, in which the German spy, Yu Tsun alerts his superiors of the name of Albert, the city which the Allies are planning to attack, by shooting the one person in the telephone directory with the surname Albert, who, by an absurd coincidence, just happens to have solved the riddle of Ts'ui Pen, Yu Tsun's ancestor. Against the fictional novel, *The Garden of Forking Paths*, in which 'time forks' and all possibilities are available, Borges relates a story in which diverse paths are joined. He thus creates an imaginary master-text, a lexicon of plots, in the form of Ts'ui Pen's novel to represent the possibilities from which any writer (in this case, Borges) chooses. The master-text or lexicon of plots in Greenaway's frame of reference is, conversely, not imaginary: it is Groombridge Place, the location. By constructing a self-evidently fragmentary garden on screen, Greenaway gestures to the master-text of Groombridge Place: the collection of possibilities from which he has constructed the self-evidently fragmentary estate of Compton Anstey. Unlike the alphabet in Frampton's *Zorns Lemma*, we only hear part of the horticultural alphabet in *The Draughtsman's Contract*, just as we see some discrete sections of the garden.<sup>108</sup> The location or master-lexicon in this case appears larger than the world constructed on screen. Thus Greenaway points to the way in which aesthetic systems are used to control garden spaces and the movements of people in them. The draughtsman's grid; the aristocrats' murder plots; the different types of garden conduct, which clash and produce a comedy of manners; the women's picturesque plot to replace Herbert's patriarchal emblematic garden with a Brownian park: all of these schemes plot the grounds, creating intermittent, occlusive narrative spaces out of the master-lexicon of Groombridge Place.

However, Greenaway not only filmed what was already available at Groombridge Place; with Bob Ringwood, the film's art director, he also added emblematic items to the grounds of the location, creating a pro-filmic landscape design. It is here, in its interventions in a landscape, that the film comes closest to Land Art; the additions to the

<sup>107</sup> Jorge Luis Borges, 'The Garden of Forking Paths', translated by Andrew Huxley, in *Collected Fictions* (New York: Penguin, 1998), p.127.

<sup>108</sup> *Zorns Lemma* (Hollis Frampton, US, 1970).

landscape are self-evident interventions. The living statue, for example, foregrounds the way emblems are plotted across Groombridge Place's grounds; he emblematises the interventions made by Greenaway and Ringwood. The layout of the obelisks and orange trees is also patently not part of the way the garden was set out on 1670s. While obelisks and orange trees often featured in emblematic gardens, they have been placed in a different configuration in the film.

#### HAM HOUSE



5.109 Front cover to the 1970s guidebook to Ham House, showing a reproduction of Danckerts's c.1680 painting of the South Front.



5.110 Augustus' maid recites a horticultural alphabet, in a shot which opposes a monolith with orange tree serialism.



5.111 Pieter Andreas Rysbrack, *The Orange Tree Garden, Chiswick* (c.1728).

In his research on Ham House, Greenaway must have encountered Hendrik Danckerts's painting of the South Front (c.1680) of the house; it was on display there at the time he submitted his proposal to the BFI and it was reproduced on the front cover of the tourist guidebook to the house throughout the 1970s [Fig. 5.109].<sup>109</sup> Visual references to this painting provide an indirect allusion to the Lauderdalees and their patronage of Netherlandish painters like Hendrik Danckerts.<sup>110</sup> Sarah's posture strolling with her dog

<sup>109</sup> Ralph Edwards, Peter Ward-Jackson and Maurice Tomlin, *Ham House*, Third Edition (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 1973).

<sup>110</sup> Harris, op. cit., p.43.

about the grounds is comparable to that of some of the people depicted in the painting. More importantly, the arrangement of the orange trees in Versailles cases in the shots of August and his maid reciting the alphabet resembles the layout of orange trees and statuary in the painting [Fig. 5.110].

However, instead of a symmetrical layout, in *The Draughtsman's Contract* the orange trees line one side of the frame, while on the other side there is a single obelisk. This highly unbalanced arrangement contrasts with the order and symmetry of the emblematic garden in general. In the layout of the Orange Tree Garden at Chiswick [Fig. 5.111], for example, the obelisk forms the centrepiece in the circles of potted orange trees.<sup>111</sup> In *The Draughtsman's Contract*, the serialism of the orange trees, which echoes the serialism of the bass in Michael Nyman's score at this point in the film, is contrasted with the monolithic obelisk.

In the emblematic garden, a single, monumental obelisk was often placed as the central emblem, both in terms of position and meaning. For example, the obelisk at Castle Howard, a monument to the building of the new house, stands at the junction of the two main avenues, where carriages would turn to approach the house. Pope's obelisk, a memorial for his mother, was placed at the end of his garden: another privileged position.<sup>112</sup> At Chiswick House, a large obelisk stands in the centre of the *patte d'oie*, the classical associations of the obelisk enhanced by an antique sculpture fixed to its base. In the early eighteenth century, the obelisk was therefore literally and metaphorically central to the emblematic gardens' combinations of words and architecture, as well as to their dramatic positioning of classical iconography in an English setting. None of the obelisks in *The Draughtsman's Contract*, however, have inscriptions or sculptures; they are blank monuments. In the shot of Augustus and his maid, the obelisk also seems to have been displaced; its position as a symbol of monolithic Augustan values is offset by the orange trees (symbols of William of Orange), repeated at regular intervals [Fig. 5.110]. Garden emblems of power are brought into opposition in this shot and the order of the emblematic garden is thus

<sup>111</sup> This garden still exists. Greenaway may have seen it *in situ* and/or he may have been familiar with Rysbrack's painting, which hung at Chatsworth by 1979 and was reproduced in John Harris, *The Artist and the Country House*, colour plate XIXc.

<sup>112</sup> Hunt, *Gardens and the Picturesque*, p.110.



destabilised. The contrast is heightened by the juxtaposition of serialism with a monolith.

Emblematic order is also subverted by the positioning of multiple obelisks throughout the film's landscape: no emblematic garden of the eighteenth century featured so many obelisks. The repetition of the obelisk throughout the grounds makes its meaning and the values it embodies seem less secure, less unified. An obelisk also stands at the centre of perspective when Sarah decorates the yew tree walk [Fig.5.112]; the masculine, phallic power it represents is under threat, as her husband is about to be cuckolded and Neville sexually subjugated. The blankness of the obelisk here also makes its meaning uncertain, though in this case it arguably reflects Neville's intellectual and sexual arousal.



Fig. 5.112 The obelisk at the end of the yew tree walk: arousal.

As in eighteenth century gardens, an obelisk forms the centre of a conversation piece in the film [Fig 5.113], but, unlike Rigaud's drawing of the *patte d'oie* at Chiswick [Fig. 5.114], in which the positioning of staffage is similar, the characters are not discussing the obelisk, which is, in any case, blank. The topic of conversation, like the significance of the obelisk, is not made available to us.



5.113 The conversation piece and the blank obelisk.

5.114 Jacques Rigaud, *The Patte d'Oie, Chiswick* (1733).

In another conversation piece, however, the subject matter is more evident. An obelisk is placed to the left of the Talmanns and Neville in site 2 [Fig. 5.115]; the monolithic value that it embodies is tacitly questioned by their argument about Catholicism and Protestantism. It is as if the power it represents is contested in their argument. Instead of a single idea expressed on the obelisk, there is a verbal argument between two men. The emblematic garden's combination of inscription and architecture has been disaggregated here; the inscription seems to have been displaced onto, and split between, the competing verbal rhetoric of Neville and Talmann.



5.115 Another conversation piece: the Catholic, the Protestant, his wife and her father's blank obelisk.

Displacement and opposition are integral to the way Greenaway subverts or calls aesthetic landscape structures into question. His allusion to *The Presentation of a Pineapple to Charles II* (mid-1670s, attributed to Danckerts) is typical of his approach [Figs. 5.116-5.117].<sup>113</sup> In Greenaway's *tableau vivant*, Charles II has been replaced by Mr Porringer, the gardener, who has exactly the same stance, but stands on the right.

<sup>113</sup> Simon Watney mentions that the presentation of the pomegranate in the film is a reference to Danckerts's painting. However, he does not mention this shot. Watney, 'Gardens of Speculation: Landscape in *The Draughtsman's Contract*', p.7.



The gardener, therefore, is now placed in Charles II's position of power (which itself has been shifted to the other side of the frame), and the draughtsman's viewfinder/chair, fills roughly the place where the gardener kneels in the painting. The chair is empty: Neville's absence makes his seat seem extremely vulnerable to the meddling that has been going on at other sites during his absence. To the extent that the viewfinder represents the camera/director/painter, there has been a displacement, in that the representational apparatus is now part of the iconography in the frame. In a further displacement, the pineapple – the painting's symbol of fertility, loyalty and power – is no longer part of the foreground narrative, as it is in the painting, but is now multiplied, like the obelisks, as a double emblem on the gate posts [Fig. 5.118]. The house's architecture plays an important role in the allusion; it is as if the pineapple, which is an object of symbolic exchange in the painting, has now become petrified: an immovable symbol in the ossified power structure of the house.



5.116 Hendrik Danckerts (attrib.), *The Presentation of a Pineapple to Charles II* (mid-1670s).



5.117 Greenaway's version of the Danckerts painting.



5.118 Greenaway's version (detail, showing pineapples on the gate posts).

The following shot, of Neville and Sarah is an allusion to Gainsborough's *Mr and Mrs Andrews* (c. 1750) and it also involves displacement [Figs. 5.119-5.120].<sup>114</sup> Neville is not standing on the left, like Mr Andrews. Instead he is sitting to the right of Sarah. The use of the words 'sinister' and 'dexterity' in the conversation, about Neville's innocence and arrogance, can be interpreted as a pun on the reversal of the positions of Mr and Mrs Andrews. The displacement means that Neville is not in the dominant position assumed by Mr Andrews in the painting. Sarah says that she feels her significance is diminished further away from the house, but she is now on the left. The shot lacks the directness of John Berger and Mike Dibb's version of *Mr and Mrs Andrews* in *Ways of Seeing* [Fig. 5.121], which features a sign saying 'trespassers keep out' nailed to the Andrews' tree.<sup>115</sup> However, like Berger and Dibbs's sign, Greenaway's dialogue foregrounds the significance of property. The pun on the positioning of the man in relation to the woman places an emphasis on gendered power relations, which Berger and Dibb do not touch on in their treatment of the image.



5.119 Greenaway's version of...



5.120...Thomas Gainsborough's *Mr and Mrs Andrews* (c. 1750).

<sup>114</sup> David Pascoe argues that this shot is an allusion to Gainsborough's *Self-Portrait with his Wife Margaret* (1746). However, this is unconvincing. The artist and his wife sit almost at the centre of the frame in that painting: as in *Mr and Mrs Andrews*, Neville and Sarah are positioned towards the left, with the right side of the frame given to the landscape.

<sup>115</sup> *Ways of Seeing* (Dibb, BBC, 1972).





5.121 John Berger and Mike Dibb's version of *Mr and Mrs Andrews*, with a warning to trespassers, from *Ways of Seeing* (Dibb, BBC, 1972).

## Conclusion

The *Mr and Mrs Andrews* shot [Fig. 5.119] encapsulates the film's approach to landscape aesthetics; Gainsborough's painting becomes a structural opposition between Neville and Sarah, man and woman, artist and landowner's wife. The power relations of the painting are displaced and called into question. Neville's comments about symmetry, while holding up an object which resembles an obelisk in shape, refer to the symmetries of the formal garden, which the film repeatedly unbalances, just as Neville argues that his traits are not symmetrical. In a 1982 version of the *paragoni* of *ut pictura poesis* and *ut pictura hortus*, verbal rhetoric, inflected with a term relevant to garden theory ('symmetry'), is combined with a cinematic allusion to a painting. The power of both landscape and landscape oil painting is problematised by the dialogue.

It is significant that *The Draughtsman's Contract* was made during the post-production of *Brideshead Revisited*. Both texts, through their artist characters, bring questions about the pictorial representation of country houses to the fore. Although Greenaway's thorough historical research is evident on screen, *The Draughtsman's Contract* is concerned more with landscape styles and representations of the country house, than with the history of the country house *per se*. Through his version of *paragone*, Greenaway synthesises and subverts the popular fictions and aesthetic forms associated with the landed estate. As in *The Ruling Class*, the opposition of different landscape



styles detracts from their aesthetic pedigree. However, history is not ignored by *The Draughtsman's Contract*; the dialectical anachronisms are too carefully placed, too precise to negate any sense of history. Instead, they problematise the historiography of country house aesthetics; by a process of displacement and opposition, Greenaway draws the viewer's attention to the propertied and gendered power relations at stake in various country house genres. It is important to bear in mind that it was only in 1982, when Greenaway's film was released, that the Tate Gallery's exhibition, *Richard Wilson: The Landscape of Reaction* was, as John Barrell puts it,

the first exhibition of British art to attempt to suggest that it might help us to understand eighteenth-century British landscape painting if we placed it in the context of contemporary social and economic relations.<sup>116</sup>

By combining the structural landscape film and the *genius loci* narrative, *The Draughtsman's Contract* performed a similar feat in the cinema, while, at the same time, constantly drawing attention to its own aesthetic systems. Unlike the exhibition, *The Draughtsman's Contract* does not contextualise the art it refers to with detailed information about the socioeconomic history of the eighteenth or any other century. To a certain extent it demands art and political historical knowledge in order to be understood. However, through its displacements and oppositions, and its emphasis on occlusion, it points to the way power has been, at different times and in different forms and genres, symbolised in, enacted through, and made to seem transparent by, landscape art.

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<sup>116</sup> John Barrell, 'Mr and Mrs Equivalent', *TLS*, 8 November 2002, p.21; the exhibition was curated by David Solkin.

## Conclusion

We must recognise that it is the camera that simultaneously constructs and deconstructs the spatial configurations of the narrative.

– Wendy Everett and Axel Goodbody<sup>1</sup>

Landscape connects film both to the world and to the various traditions and reasons for representing it.

– Martin Lefebvre<sup>2</sup>

### *Ut Hortus Film*

One hermeneutic approach to landscape gardens in film or television is to consider whether there is any degree of reciprocation between a specific location or general mode of landscaping and the film/programme's style. When camera movements, for example, follow the contours of a landscape garden, we need to understand the relationship that is established between film and garden as artworks and what its implications are. Any such notion of *ut hortus film*, however, needs to be defined according to specific cases. Against the tendency in heritage criticism to focus solely on films' and programmes' 'constructions' of landscape imagery, this thesis has traced the emergence and development of a small genre: a genre characterised by the way it employs *genii loci* to deconstruct the semantics, forms and ideology of the historical English landscape garden. In this genre, the simultaneous processes of construction and deconstruction, described by Everett and Goodbody, not only involve landscape architecture as *mise-en-scène*, but are also in dialogue with different kinds of landscape

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<sup>1</sup> Wendy Everett and Axel Goodbody, 'Introduction', in Wendy Everett and Axel Goodbody (eds.) *Revisiting Space: Space and Place in European Cinema* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2005), p.12.

<sup>2</sup> Martin Lefebvre, 'Introduction', in Martin Lefebvre (ed.), *Landscape and Film* (New York and London: Routledge, 2006), p.xxviii.

*hors texte*: the generic picturesque; locations' associations; paintings; literary landscapes; and garden historiography.

The 'worlds' created in these works significantly overlap with country house locations and their historical associations. The landscape architecture they represent not only forms the *mise-en-scène* of the diegesis, but carries connotations, which link the diegetic world to the histories of both the specific location and the generic picturesque. By constructing such referential narrative landscapes, the films and programme achieve a historiographical deconstruction of the aesthetics of, and the cultural myths attached to, English landscape gardens. The various processes of deconstruction in these texts can be compared to many of the revisionist landscape histories that emerged after the Second World War, from Pevsner's mid-century work on the picturesque to the Tate Gallery's exhibition, *Richard Wilson: The Landscape of Reaction*, in 1982-3.

Between 1949 and 1982 – that is between the studio era and the zenith of estate location shooting – there was a shift in emphasis, from an engagement with generic picturesque structures, to more local, specific targets. *Kind Hearts and Coronets* harnesses the picturesque's sequentiality and gradation of depth to ironise the picturesque tradition; Leeds Castle's faux-medievalism and its faux-Brownian drive contribute to the film's landscape pastiche. The *genius loci* narratives of 1971-1982 resemble *Kind Hearts and Coronets*, in their mobilisation of ironic distances in landscape gardens. They also similarly deploy an outsider protagonist, whose re-mediation of the estate both compounds and exposes the evils of its ideological substructure. Above all, the two main strands of the genre can be traced back to *Kind Hearts and Coronets*.

The first of these strands is picturesque determinism: the subtle indication through screen landscapes of a chain of cause and effect, which is the underlying link between ostensibly unconnected deeds and events. Just as *Kind Hearts and Coronets* uses Mrs Mazzini's painting to imply her culpability for Louis's murderousness, so the representation of landscape in *The Go-Between* subtly links the aesthetics and ideology of the house to the tragic events that occur in its grounds. The picturesque in *Brideshead Revisited* reveals Charles's guilt, the consequences of his obsessive attachment to re-mediation and his unreliability as a narrator.

The other main strand is an emphasis on surface and parody. *Kind Hearts and Coronets*, *The Ruling Class* and *The Draughtsman's Contract* all employ landscape pastiche. This parodic patchwork of landscape styles is particularly complex in *The Ruling Class* and *The Draughtsman's Contract*. The dialectical atavism of the former and the dialectical anachronism of the latter both involve a structural opposition of the formal garden and the picturesque. In both films, the relationship between landscape and power is made evident, as the transition from one mode of landscaping to another corresponds to a shift in power relations.

However, the four *genius loci* texts of 1971-1982 feature more extensive estate location work than *Kind Hearts and Coronets*, which enables them to utilise the ontological connection between screen estates and their locations more complexly. *The Go-Between* takes a holistic approach; it maps a fictional landscape over Melton Constable Hall and nearby sites, so that a close parallel is created between Brandham Hall and the estate location. It thus explores the aesthetic, socio-economic and ideological structure that stretches from the house, over the landscape, to the land farmed by Ted. The social constraints placed on various figures in the landscape are revealed. At the same time, the film is concerned with the way a small boy is effectively crushed by his experiences in the landscape. The emotional disfigurement he suffers there leaves him 'all dried up inside': apparently unable to have a sexual relationship.

Conversely, *The Ruling Class* takes an atomistic approach, juxtaposing different sites and different modes of landscape design. In its contrast between formal gardens and a picturesque landscape, the film de-historicises both modes and represents them as surfaces. However, the locations are integral to the way the film denies the aesthetic pedigree of the landed estate, as they both provide appropriate pastiche gardens. The associations of these locations – particularly Cliveden's connection to the Profumo Affair – add to the film's subversiveness. More subtly subversive, *Brideshead Revisited* appropriates the constellation of emblems and picturesquerie at Castle Howard/Brideshead and uses it to deconstruct Charles's character and his fascination with the Flytes.

*The Draughtsman's Contract* finds a new purpose for the type of holistic match between fictional estate and location in *The Go-Between* and *Brideshead Revisited*.

Greenaway insists on adhering precisely to the geography and orientation of Groombridge Place, but his staccato *découpage* and static cinematography leave visible topographical gaps, which are indicative of the limitations of Neville's mode of representation; the *hors champ* (or off-screen space) is made conspicuously absent. Indeed, a sense of point of view is central to all five texts. They are not only landscaped narratives, but also thematise the way narratives and icons – pernicious myths – are constructed around country estates. The *genius loci* figure's attachment to a myth, or one way of seeing, is unravelled. There is a triangulation of camera, landscape and *genius loci*, which establishes ironic distances between the landscape's aesthetics, the *genius loci*'s interpretation of the landscape and the camera's visual commentary on both of these. Behind the landscape's aesthetics and the *genius loci*'s myth, a *paysage immoralisé* is uncovered, which invites the audience to dwell on the terrible consequences of the landed estate.

### Beyond the *Genius Loci* Genre

Although other fiction films and programmes have undeniably deconstructed the landed estate, a general overview of the history of the screen country house confirms the idiosyncrasy of these five texts. What unites them as a small genre and distinguishes them from other country house audiovisual narratives is their innovative appropriation of the picturesque and the way they often anticipate or echo revisionist landscape garden historiography. The two main strands in the genre – picturesque determinism and dialectical pastiche – are linked by a picturesque irony, by the ironic version of the *genius loci*, who alters, and is altered by, the landscape. As I have shown, other elements of these works can be compared with a broader range of films and programmes. The pastiche production design of *Kind Hearts and Coronets* is not far removed from that of some 1940s Gainsborough films, such as *The Man in Grey* and *The Wicked Lady*.<sup>3</sup> *The Go-Between* can be seen as a precursor to the gendered opposition of stillness and movement in 1990s Austen adaptations, which Julianne Pidduck analyses.<sup>4</sup> *Brideshead Revisited* can be historicised as a culmination of related

<sup>3</sup> *The Man in Grey* (Leslie Arliss, UK, 1943); *The Wicked Lady* (Leslie Arliss, UK, 1945).

<sup>4</sup> Julianne Pidduck, 'Of Windows and Country Walks: Frames of Space and Movement in 1990s Austen Adaptations', *Screen*, vol.39, no.4, Winter 1998, pp.381-400.



trends in television, towards landscape locations and the use of 16mm for period drama. *The Ruling Class* and *The Draughtsman's Contract* both deploy a form of landscape structuralism, similar in some respects to that of the British structural landscape films produced in the 1970s. Both of these *genius loci* films also parody the country house murder mystery. However, none of the examples of comparable films and programmes are concerned with the history of the picturesque in the way that the *genius loci* genre is. One of the Austen films discussed by Pidduck, *Mansfield Park* (1999), is an adaptation of an anti-improvement novel, so it probably had the most opportunity out of all of the Austen adaptations to engage with the picturesque, but the film's revisionism is focused more on gender and colonialism, than on landscape.<sup>5</sup>

The *genius loci* films, on the other hand, all address questions of gendered power, but in terms of their revisionist landscape historiography. The crisis of heredity that occurs in each *genius loci* film/programme is partly articulated as an identity crisis suffered at some point by the male figure in a landscape. In turn, this identity crisis is related to his desire for a woman, who is a metonym for the estate: Edith; Marian; Grace; Julia; Mrs Herbert and Mrs Talmann. The questions of gendered identity in the 1940s Gainsborough melodramas and the emphasis on gender and property that Pidduck identifies in the 1990s Austen adaptations suggest that there might be a female counterpart to the *genius loci*. There have been far more films and programmes featuring shots of women metaphorically 'trapped' in (often formal) gardens in the last fifty years than *genius loci* narratives. A history of this female figure would need to include a wide range of texts, such as *Shakespeare Wallah* (Fig. 6.1), the 1968 version of *A Portrait of a Lady* (Figs. 6.2-6.3), Granada's 1977 *Hard Times* (Figs. 6.4-6.5) and *New World* (Fig. 6.6).<sup>6</sup> These texts relate gender, identity and gardens: unlike the *genius loci* genre, however, there is no sustained dialogue with revisionist landscape historiography to link them. The *genius loci* genre, on the other hand, consists of a

<sup>5</sup> *Mansfield Park* (Patricia Rozema, US/UK, 1999). See Tim Watson, 'Improvements and Reparations at Mansfield Park', in Robert Stam and Alessandra Raengo (eds.), *Literature and Film* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), pp.53-70. Other adaptations of the novel have also overlooked the possibilities of responding to Austen's landscape theme: see *Mansfield Park* (David Giles, BBC, 1983) and *Mansfield Park* (Iain B Macdonald, Granada, 2007).

<sup>6</sup> *Shakespeare Wallah* (James Ivory, India, 1965); *A Portrait of a Lady* (James Cellan Jones, BBC, 1968); *Hard Times* (John Irvin, Granada, 1977); *New World* (Terence Malick, US, 2005).

smaller, more cohesive group of texts, united by their post-Second World War version of the English picturesque.



6.1 *Shakespeare Wallah* (James Ivory, India, 1965).



6.2-6.3 *A Portrait of a Lady* (James Cellan Jones, BBC, 1968).



6.4-6.5 *Hard Times* (John Irvin, Granada, 1977).



6.6 *New World* (Terence Malick, US, 2005).

The *genius loci* texts can also be historicised in relation to other landscape films or programmes that echo the historiography or theory of landscape. *The Draughtsman's Contract* was the culmination of the genre, in the sense that, like *Brideshead Revisited*, it constituted a mannerist version of the *genius loci* narrative. It was also the last audiovisual narrative to deploy such a protagonist in order to engage with the history of the picturesque. It was released just as the Tate Gallery began to provide an alternative popular forum for the type of historiography pursued by the *genius loci* narratives. It is arguable that the next significant landscape film genre to emerge in England was not any cycle of country house dramas, but a group of films mainly about urban space, including William Raban's 1986 *Thames Film* and Patrick Keiller's work: for these mirror in many respects the cultural geography movement that rose to prominence in the 1980s.<sup>7</sup>

However, country house fiction films and television programmes still emerge with sophisticated location work. New research also suggests that there is an audience which is prepared to engage with the way locations are mobilised in such screen narratives. According to a 2007 report by SPI to the UK Film Council, country houses are now one of the most popular types of film location for tourists.<sup>8</sup> However, what this report shows is that tourists see sites on screen and *then* visit them – not the other way round. They do not tend to go to the cinema to watch tourist attractions: instead, they go to locations to learn more about them, primarily *as locations*. Rather than thinking about country house films as simple advertisements for such sites, we need to consider the fact that tourism can be a form of popular research, as it equips audiences with historical and geographical knowledge about the location, which can then feed into subsequent viewings and interpretations of the film or programme in question.

Some recent period films can be seen as complex responses to such film-generated tourism. Joe Wright's 2005 version of *Pride and Prejudice* deploys the same location as *The Draughtsman's Contract*, Groombridge Place.<sup>9</sup> While locations are often used for

<sup>7</sup> *Thames Film* (William Raban, UK, 1986); see also, for example, *London* (Patrick Keiller, UK, 1994) and *Robinson in Space* (Patrick Keiller, UK, 1997).

<sup>8</sup> Olsberg/SPI, 'Stately Attraction: How Film and Television Programmes Promote Tourism in the UK': Report to UK Film Council *et al*, August 2007, p.19: [http://www.ukfilmcouncil.org.uk/media/pdf/a/6/Final\\_Stately\\_Attraction\\_Report\\_to\\_UKFC\\_and\\_Partners\\_20.08.07.pdf](http://www.ukfilmcouncil.org.uk/media/pdf/a/6/Final_Stately_Attraction_Report_to_UKFC_and_Partners_20.08.07.pdf) [Accessed 05/09/2008].

<sup>9</sup> *Pride and Prejudice* (Joe Wright, UK/France, 2005).

more than one film, the choice of Groombridge Place can be seen as a gesture to *The Draughtsman's Contract*, especially since the latter has acquired canonical status: in its complex hand-held, point-of-view tracking shots of Groombridge Place (the Bennet family's house), *Pride and Prejudice* arguably presents its location cinematography as the diametric opposite of *The Draughtsman's Contract's* mode of landscape representation.<sup>10</sup>

Conversely, trailers of Julian Jarrold's new film version of *Brideshead Revisited* – which was shot, like the Granada television serial, at Castle Howard – show parts of the location filmed in ways that resemble the approach taken in the television serial: in particular, there is an extreme low-angle shot of the *Fall of Phaeton* painting on the dome in the Great Hall. The same type of shot of the painting in the 1981 *Brideshead Revisited* contributed to the serial's complex symbolism. It remains to be seen whether the film version puts the shot to a similar use.<sup>11</sup>

The film can be seen as a remake of the television serial, in the sense that it too adapts both Waugh's novel and Castle Howard. The implication is that viewers are expected to compare the two versions, not only as adaptations of Waugh, but also as landscape narratives. Such self-conscious attention to sites' histories as locations indicates that filmmakers continue to construct reciprocal relationships between locations and narratives. It also implies that they expect audiences to respond to such reciprocity and to consider it in terms of earlier country house films or programmes.

Considering that filmmakers and audiences both show a sense of the history of country house location work, film and television historians need to take account of the complex ways in which country estate screen fictions have deployed landscapes. We also need to consider the fact that the tourist industry has both made more potential locations available and enabled cinephile tourists to discover more about locations and their associations. The *genius loci* narratives straddled the period roughly between the end of the Second World War and the emergence of cultural geography. In this period, there was a considerable rise in the number of country estates open to the public. While many

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<sup>10</sup> *A Cock and Bull Story* also alludes to *The Draughtsman's Contract*, by re-using parts of Michael Nyman's score for Greenaway's film. *A Cock and Bull Story* (Michael Winterbottom, UK, 2005).

<sup>11</sup> *Brideshead Revisited* (Julian Jarrold, UK, 2008). The film's UK release date is 3 October 2008: too late for the film to be considered in this thesis.

had been open to the public before, in the 1800s, it was during the decades after the Second World War that a new wave of country house tourism was accompanied by rigorous, revisionist historiography. It is somewhere in between these two phenomena – increased accessibility to estates and the emergence of revisionist historiography – that the *genius loci* narratives can be located: subversive history through popular media.



## List of Films and Television Programmes

- ↔ (Michael Snow, Canada, 1969)
- Barry Lyndon* (Stanley Kubrick, UK, 1975)
- Brideshead Revisited* [TV serial] (Michael Lindsay-Hogg and Charles Sturridge, Granada, 1981)
- Brideshead Revisited* [Film] (Julian Jarrold, UK, 2008)
- The Celebration* [*Festen*] (Thomas Vinterberg, Denmark, 1998)
- A Cock and Bull Story* (Michael Winterbottom, UK, 2005)
- Country* (Richard Eyre, BBC, 1982)
- Country Matters* (Various, Granada, 1972)
- Cries and Whispers* [*Viskningar och Rop*] (Ingmar Bergman, Sweden, 1972)
- A Day in the Death of Joe Egg* (Peter Medak, UK, 1972)
- Dead of Night* (Alberto Cavalcanti, Charles Crichton, Basil Dearden and Robert Hamer, UK, 1945)
- Diary of a Nobody* (Ken Russell, BBC, 1964)
- The Draughtsman's Contract* (Peter Greenaway, UK, 1981)
- The Falls* (Peter Greenaway, UK, 1980)
- Far From the Madding Crowd* (John Schlesinger, UK, 1967)
- Figures in a Landscape* (Joseph Losey, UK, 1970)
- Forever Ealing* (Andrew Snell, UK, 2002)
- Gangsters* (Various, BBC, 1976-1978)
- The Ghost Goes West* (René Clair, UK, 1935)
- The Go-Between* (Joseph Losey, UK, 1971)
- The Good Life* (Various, BBC, 1975-1978)
- Gosford Park* (Robert Altman, US, 2002)
- The Grass is Greener* (Stanley Donen, US, 1960)
- H is for House* (Greenaway, UK, 1974; re-edited 1978)
- Jassy* (Bernard Knowles, UK, 1947)
- Kind Hearts and Coronets* (Robert Hamer, UK, 1949)
- Last Year in Marienbad* [*L'Année dernière à Marienbad*] (Alain Resnais, France, 1961)
- Let Him Have It* (Peter Medak, UK, 1991)

*London* (Patrick Keiller, UK, 1994)  
*Lord of the Flies* (Peter Brook, US, 1963)  
*Love for Lydia* (Various, LWT, 1977)  
*The Man in Grey* (Leslie Arliss, UK, 1943)  
*Mansfield Park* (David Giles, BBC, 1983)  
*Mansfield Park* (Patricia Rozema, US/UK, 1999)  
*Mansfield Park* (Iain B. Macdonald, Granada, 2007)  
*The Mayor of Casterbridge* (David Giles, BBC, 1978)  
*Out* (Jim Goddard, Thames, 1978)  
*A Portrait of a Lady* (James Cellan Jones, BBC, 1968)  
*Pride and Prejudice* (Robert Z. Leonard, US, 1940)  
*Pride and Prejudice* (Joe Wright, UK/France, 2005)  
*The Prisoner* (Various, ITC, 1967-1968)  
*Robinson in Space* (Patrick Keiller, UK, 1997)  
*Rules of the Game* [*La Règle du Jeu*] (Jean Renoir, France, 1939)  
*The Ruling Class* (Peter Medak, UK, 1972)  
*Saraband for Dead Lovers* (Basil Dearden, UK, 1948)  
*Star Wars* (George Lucas, US, 1977)  
*Survivors* (Various, BBC, 1975-1977)  
*Thames Film* (William Raban, UK, 1986)  
*Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy* (John Irvin, BBC, 1979)  
*Tom Jones* (Tony Richardson, UK, 1963)  
*Vertical Features Remake* (Peter Greenaway, UK, 1978)  
*Viridiana* (Luis Buñuel, Mexico, 1961)  
*A Walk Through H* (Peter Greenaway, UK, 1978)  
*Walking a Straight 10 Mile Line Forward and Back Shooting Every Half Mile*  
(Richard Long, UK, 1969)  
*War and Peace* (John Davies, BBC, 1972)  
*Ways of Seeing* (Mike Dibb, BBC, 1972)  
*The Wicked Lady* (Leslie Arliss, UK, 1945)  
*Windmill III* (Chris Welsby, UK, 1974)  
*Women in Love* (Ken Russell, UK, 1969)  
*Zorns Lemma* (Hollis Frampton, US, 1970)

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Groombridge Place (visited April 2008: location for *The Draughtsman's Contract*)

Leeds Castle (visited July 2004: location for *Kind Hearts and Coronets*)

'Revisiting Brideshead', exhibition at Castle Howard, designed and produced by IDEAS (visited April 2003)

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