

THE SELF IN LONDON'S SPACES: MIRIAM'S  
DWELLING AND UNDWELLING IN  
*PILGRIMAGE*

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‘... I’m sure, Space is full of glorious stars’, claims Miriam in chapter four of *The Tunnel* (II 93), but she observes that, ‘Space is of full of dead worlds’, in chapter twenty four of the same novel (II 222). Miriam’s apprehensions of space in *Pilgrimage* are full of contrasts. The differing, even polarised ways space is conceived in the novel affect Miriam’s interactions with space and place. Her encounters exhibit a certain versatility, embracing both the positive and the negative. In examining Miriam’s interactions with space in two early works of the sequence, *Backwater* and *The Tunnel*, Heidegger’s poetic notions of dwelling and undwelling, which gather both the materiality and immateriality of man’s relationships with space, open up the text of *Pilgrimage* in enlightening ways, as the philosopher purports that dwelling alone characterises man’s relationship with space.<sup>1</sup>

Studies in space and place have been a vital part of Richardson scholarship. The publication of Elizabeth Bronfen’s milestone book, *Dorothy Richardson’s Art of Memory: Space, Identity, Text* in 1999 was a watershed moment in this regard, addressing both the spaces in, and the space of *Pilgrimage*. However, with its focus on memory and identity, the trope of dwelling does not feature prominently in Bronfen’s analysis. In 2008, Melinda Harvey’s article ‘Dwelling, Poaching, Dreaming: Housebreaking and Homemaking in Dorothy Richardson’s *Pilgrimage*’ brought forward the topic of dwelling more explicitly. Yet, while her article emphasises the dialectical tensions between inner and outer spaces, between the private and the public spheres in *Pilgrimage*, which then highlight the porosity of space, the role of the body and the assemblage of

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<sup>1</sup> Martin Heidegger, ‘Building Dwelling Thinking’, in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter [1951] (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), p.151.

the spaces that comprise Miriam's dwelling are left unexplored.<sup>2</sup> Harvey's article concentrates more on the positive and nurturing dimensions of Miriam's relationships with space, leaving the negative facets of these relationships unexamined.<sup>3</sup> Deborah Longworth is more attentive to the negative overtones of Miriam's interactions with space in her article 'Subject, Object and the Nature of Reality: Metaphysics in Dorothy Richardson's *Deadlock*', published in 2009. However, given Longworth's focus on metaphysics, it is perhaps inevitable that she is less concerned with the materiality of Richardson's treatment of space. What follows will use the concepts of dwelling and undwelling to deal more directly with material spaces in *Pilgrimage*, in order to elucidate how Miriam interacts with a variety of spaces in both positive and negative ways. It is through the notion of dwelling and undwelling that we unveil the assemblage of the spaces that operates in Miriam's interactions with spaces.

### *(Un)Dwelling: the Body, Affect, and Matter*

We often preserve the memory of an indefinable charm from these towns we've merely brushed against. The memory indeed of our own indecision, our hesitant footsteps, our gaze which didn't know what to turn towards and that found almost anything affecting.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> In *Dawn's Left Hand*, Richardson writes '[t]here's more space within than without' (IV 168), a line that has been the beacon of Richardson scholarship for decades. Citing this line, Melinda Harvey in her article advocates the importance of observing the 'outer' spaces in *Pilgrimage*, alongside with the 'inner' spaces. For further reference, see Melinda Harvey, 'Dwelling, Poaching, Dreaming: Housebreaking and Homemaking in Dorothy Richardson's *Pilgrimage*', in Teresa Gómez, Aránzazu Usandiza (eds), *Inside out: Women Negotiating, Subverting, Appropriating Public and Private Space*, (Amsterdam, New York: Rodopi 2008), pp.167-189.

<sup>3</sup> In Juliet Yates' article, 'Feminine Fluidity: Mind versus Body in *Pilgrimages*', in *Pilgrimages: The Journal of Dorothy Richardson Studies*, 2 (2009), she mentions how Jean Radford considers the inner-outer movements between Miriam's body and her mind as being 'fluid' (p.61).

<sup>4</sup> Georges Perec, *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces*, trans. John Sturrock, (London, England; New York, (New York: Penguin Books, 1997), p.38.

This lively passage from Georges Perec's *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces* brilliantly captures our sentimental feelings of, or nostalgia for a place we wish we had known more. However, a less romantic approach to this emotional passage would conclude that it contains the three indispensable spatial elements that underscore our perception and experience of dwelling in space: the presence of the body (footsteps, gaze), of the material (towns), and of affect (memory, indecision, hesitation, and so on). In *Pilgrimage*, these three elements also underline Miriam's experience of dwelling and undwelling in various places. Before probing into these, our main concepts, it is worth offering a few notes on how Heidegger configures the notion of dwelling by way of an introduction to the analysis that follows.

The spatial element of the body is relatively unpronounced in Heidegger's thinking, and the same applies to the notion of dwelling. It is not, however, entirely absent.<sup>5</sup> This comparatively somatic passage from the essay gives us a sense of Heidegger's thinking on the matter.

Indeed, the loss of rapport with things that occurs in states of depression would be wholly impossible if even such a state were not still what it is as a human state: that is, a staying with things. Only if this stay already characterizes human being can the things among which we are also fail to speak to us, fail to concern us any longer.<sup>6</sup>

Here, the body is indirectly present in relation to its inseparable, primal staying with things that characterises the 'human state', and it functions as the pre-requisite that foregrounds mortals' cognition of, and dwelling in space. Acknowledging the primacy of the body in dwelling, Edward Casey argues, 'we deal with dwelling places only by the grace of our bodies, and a dwelling without our

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<sup>5</sup> A recent work devoted to the subject of the body in Heidegger's philosophy was authored by Frank Schalow, entitled *The Incarnality of Being: the Earth, Animals, and the Body in Heidegger's Thought* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006).

<sup>6</sup> Heidegger, p.157.

bodies is not imaginable'.<sup>7</sup> In this way, the indispensability of corporeal contribution in dwelling becomes understandable. In what follows, we shall see how Miriam's various bodily senses enable her to dwell and undwell in *Backwater* and *The Tunnel*.

The spatial element of affect in dwelling is felt when Heidegger stresses that 'even when mortals turn inward, taking stock of themselves, they do not leave behind their belonging to the fourfold'.<sup>8</sup> Here, the word 'inward' refers to the interiority of mortals, thus signalling the presence of affect in dwelling. Moreover, Heidegger considers the inner world of mortals as a component of the fourfold. Trying to emphasise how the two can never abandon one another, Heidegger adds that when 'we come to our senses and reflect on ourselves, we come back to ourselves from things without ever abandoning our stay among things'.<sup>9</sup> By reiterating that 'building and thinking are, each in its own way, inescapable for dwelling'.<sup>10</sup> Heidegger confirms the presence of affect in dwelling. Given the hyper-sensitive nerves of Miriam, her rich emotional responses to places are relevant to a consideration of dwelling and undwelling in *Pilgrimage*.

The spatial element of matter deserves a more comprehensive treatment here among the three elements in this discussion, as our focus centres on Miriam's interactions with space, which cannot be accomplished without the material support of various built

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<sup>7</sup> Edward Casey, *Getting Back into Place: Towards a Renewed Understanding of the Place-World*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), p.132.

<sup>8</sup> Heidegger, 'Building Dwelling Thinking', p.157. As has been observed by many commentators, Heidegger's notion of the fourfold was never clearly defined and or fully developed. In his essay 'Dwelling, Building, Thinking', Heidegger considers the concept of the fourfold (Geviert in German) as a kind of 'primal oneness the four - earth and sky, divinities and mortals' (p.157), and these four elements 'belong together in one' (Ibid). Each element inter-links, mirrors, and constitutes the other, and this 'simple oneness of the four we call the fourfold. Mortals are in the fourfold by dwelling' (Ibid). As far as this article is concerned, the fourfold can be interpreted as a kind of dynamic unity or unifying oneness, which is composed of the intrinsic interrelations between the four elements. This net of innate and primal interrelations in turn comprises the world in which human beings dwell.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, p.160.

environments. Given the essential role the built place plays in this discussion, it is necessary to elaborate the relationship between building and dwelling a little further.

The relationship between building and dwelling has three dimensions: etymological, causal, and material. Introducing the High German root for 'building, *buan*', which 'means to dwell', Heidegger uncovers their etymological link.<sup>11</sup> Drawing upon this semantic connection, he pins down the causal bond that unites them, that 'dwelling and building are related as end and means'.<sup>12</sup> In materializing this causal relationship through constructing and erecting edifices, we are actually 'founding and joining' material spaces, transforming them into 'locations'.<sup>13</sup> In this way, the built environment concretises and contextualises man's dwelling by its tangible materiality. Shedding light on the mental aspect of the bond between building and dwelling, Norberg-Schulz considers that 'a work of architecture is...not an abstract organization of space. It is an embodied Gestalt...Thus it brings the inhabited landscape close to man, and lets him dwell poetically'.<sup>14</sup> Buildings or built places mirror and mould our state of mind, and give us the vision of the world to which we belong. In the following discussion, we shall witness how different buildings and built places in *Pilgrimage* give Miriam a variety of perspectives on the world and on herself through dwelling and undwelling.

### *Dwelling-In-The-World and Being-In-The-World*

Heidegger renders dwelling as being in his essay 'Building Dwelling Thinking' by advocating that '[d]welling, that is, as being on the earth, however, remains for man's everyday experience that which is from the outset "habitual"'.<sup>15</sup> Elsewhere, the philosopher

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid, pp.146-7.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, p.146.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, p.155.

<sup>14</sup> Christian Norberg-Schulz, 'Heidegger's Thinking on Architecture', in *Towards a New Agenda for Architecture: An Anthology for Architectural Theory 1965-1995*, (New York : Princeton Architectural Press, 1996), p.437.

<sup>15</sup> Heidegger, 'Building Dwelling Thinking', p.146.

notes that being-in-the-world is also 'being-within-space',<sup>16</sup> which implicates that dwelling as being, is spatial. This spatial nature of dwelling, brought forth in the preposition within 'being-in-the-world', together with our spatial-material emphasis, composes the two pivotal aspects that can guide our discussion on dwelling in *Pilgrimage*.

Heideggerian dwelling, in its simplest and broadest sense, is residing in the midst of things in a lived-space, a man-made environment. According to Heidegger, the 'in' in the phrase 'being-in-the-world' indicates neither geographical position nor closed inclusion.<sup>17</sup> Rather, this 'in' is 'a situated and contingent process of engagement with the environment', in other words, 'involvement'.<sup>18</sup> Instead of merely being a locational pointer under certain specific circumstances, this 'in' signals our innate engagement and involvement with the world at any time, anywhere. Given that 'the primordial sense of 'in' is 'to reside', 'to dwell',<sup>19</sup> being-in-the-world becomes a dwelling or residing in the world. As being is always already amidst-the-world, our way of involving with and relating to the world is also our way of dwelling in it.<sup>20</sup> In this way, we can see that the enigmatic idea of dwelling encompasses, on the one hand, how one is involved or engaged with one's surroundings, and on the other, one's sense of place. These two key questions are fundamental to our discussion on dwelling, since they highlight the sense of security and protection from, and the sense of belonging and identity in various places. When Miriam dwells, she engages positively with her surroundings. Feeling safe and secure, Miriam identifies with and belongs to her surroundings. On the contrary, when Miriam undwells, she is negatively estranged from her surroundings. Feeling unprotected and detached, Miriam finds herself displaced and disconnected from where she does not belong. These two poles of dwelling as

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<sup>16</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (New York: Harper, 1962), p.135.

<sup>17</sup> Norberg-Schulz, 'Heidegger's Thinking on Architecture', p.435.

<sup>18</sup> Pau Obrado Pons, 'Being On Holiday: Tourist Dwelling, Bodies and Place', *Tourist Studies*, 3, 1 (2003): 47–66.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

two facets of Miriam's dynamics with place have their manifestations in *Backwater* and *The Tunnel*.

### *Dwelling and Undwelling: The Sense of (In)security*

In chapter one of *The Tunnel*, Miriam feels 'the extremity of relief' (II 15) when she first settles down into her lodging, and is thrilled by the 'happiness' that 'streamed along her arms and from her head' when sitting down in her own room (II 23). However, at the beginning of *Backwater*, Miriam envisions herself 'to be shut up away from the grown up things, the sunlit world, and the people who were enjoying it' in a repellent place (I 198). While the space of Miriam's room in Central London in *The Tunnel* is permeated with joy, the space of North London in *Backwater* entails isolation, darkness, and suffocation. The gaps between them reveal not only their discomfiting sensuous contrasts, but also Miriam's dissimilar relationships with the two worlds she experiences in London: her beloved Central London in *The Tunnel* where she dwells, and the ugly North London Wordsworth House in *Backwater* where she undwells. As we shall see, it is these feelings of security and insecurity which play a defining role in Miriam's dwelling and undwelling. While the feeling of security in Central London strengthens Miriam, the feelings of desolation and loss in North London smother her.

Miriam's likelihood of dwelling and undwelling is implied in the early pages of these two novels. The first few pages of chapter four of *The Tunnel* describe Miriam's flâneur-like wander around Central London, a motif that constantly reappears throughout the volume. Yet, what makes these pages noteworthy is the manner in which they convey Miriam's strength and posture as an independent Londoner, leading a life in the capital city. However, *Backwater* opens with a rather different prelude. At the beginning of the novel, the Wordsworth House and the North London environment appall Miriam, to the extent that 'she could find no word for the strange impression they had made' (I 195). From the opening sections of the two novels, the themes of dwelling and undwelling can already be sensed.

### *Dwelling and the Sense of Security: The Tunnel*

Upon leaving the Wimpole Street dental practice where she works as an assistant, Miriam finds herself standing 'in the Strand', looking for an A.B.C. café for her usual, yet pitiful dinner: 'boiled egg and roll and butter...and small coffee' (II 76). Settling down into the café, Miriam observes the Londoners around her in detail, and feels 'alive' in their silent company. When the café and the people around her breathe life and energy into Miriam, the narrative voice shifts from she to I. Speaking as the enchanted subject, Miriam chants:

I'm free—I've got free—nothing can ever alter that, she thought, gazing wide-eyed into the fire, between fear and joy. The strange familiar pang gave the place a sort of consecration. A strength was piling up within her. She would go out unregretfully at closing time and up through wonderful unknown streets, not her own streets, till she found Holborn and then up and round through the squares. (II 76-7)

In between the she-I-she shift within one line, words and phrases such as 'free', 'between fear and joy', 'consecration', 'strength', 'unregretfully', and 'wonderful' invite specific attention, as they implicate Miriam's mixed, yet on the whole merry London life. The stress on the word 'free' here indicates the pre-requisite of the strength that Miriam feels: she has to be free to sense the strength arising from within. The word 'consecration' which connotes religious sacredness further condenses and concretises for the reader how Miriam feels in receiving this psychological empowerment. This injection of psychical strength prepares Miriam to face the wonderful unknowns of the nightly London streets with 'unregretful' grit. When the space of Central London nurtures Miriam's sense of strength and self-esteem, which enables her to face her London life without regret, it is clear that she shares a harmonious relationship with this place. This positive bond between Miriam and her surroundings, as we shall shortly

see, is the catalyst that brings about her dwelling in Central London.

A page later, when Miriam arrives at her lodging after walking through the wonderful London streets, she sees herself to be surrounded by the 'huge thick walls' of her room. These walls 'held all the lodgers secure and apart, fixed in richly enclosed rooms in the heart of London; secure from all the world that was not London, flying through space, swinging along on a planet spread with continents—Londoners' (II 77). In this episode, the domestic space inscribed by these walls 'held all the lodgers secure and apart', 'secure from all the world', and 'fixed' them safely in their place—London.

Here, the repetition of the word 'secure', as the word 'free' in the café scene just discussed, is not merely a rhetorical presence, or a random addition. It serves to accentuate and consolidate the physical, as well as the psychological security and protection provided by the anchoring effect of these substantial walls. Within these walls, Miriam and her fellow lodgers are securely placed. This sense of security, in Julian Young's interpretation, is a significant component of dwelling, since 'to dwell is to experience oneself as, in spite of risks and dangers...in some ultimate sense, *secure*'.<sup>21</sup> With the anchoring effect granted by the walls in her room, Miriam and the lodgers dwell within the pristine presence of London, and are safely protected 'from all the world that was not London' (II 77). When 'dwelling means to be at peace in a protected place',<sup>22</sup> which equates the sense of security, stability, and protection as the synonym of dwelling, the repetition of the very word 'secure' here marks Miriam's state of dwelling in Central London.

Once we apprehend that the feelings of security, protection, and safety characterise the state of dwelling, the opposite of dwelling, undwelling, becomes relatively graspable. 'Radical insecurity, however, is always understood by Heidegger as incompatible with,

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<sup>21</sup> Julian Young, *Heidegger's Late Philosophy*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p.64 (emphasis in original).

<sup>22</sup> Norberg-Schulz, 'Heidegger's Thinking on Architecture', p.425.

as the opposite of, dwelling', argues Julian Young.<sup>23</sup> Here, Young observes that the feeling of 'radical insecurity' denotes the opposite of dwelling, that is, undwelling. Norberg-Schulz also considers that the feeling of security distinguishes dwelling, which connotes that the sense of insecurity could also be conceived as the opposite of dwelling. In his opinion, the opposite of dwelling is the feeling of loss.<sup>24</sup> Here, Young and Norberg-Schulz's approaches which formulate the notion undwelling as the sense of insecurity and loss spring, perhaps, from Heidegger's emphasis on the sense of security in his essay 'Building Dwelling Thinking'. In this essay, the philosopher writes that '... [I]o dwell, to be set at peace, means to remain at peace within the free, the preserve, the free sphere that safeguards each thing in its nature. *The fundamental character of dwelling is this sparing and preserving.* It pervades dwelling in its whole range'.<sup>25</sup> As Heidegger suggests, when mortals dwell, they are freed and safeguarded in a secured environment. In this way, mortals are 'spared' and 'preserved' as they dwell in the world. To the philosopher, 'this sparing and preserving' is 'the fundamental character of dwelling'. Given the significance of this sparing and preserving in identifying and constituting the notion of dwelling, Heidegger continues to elaborate what precisely is this sparing and preserving. '[I]o spare and preserve means: to take under our care, to look after ....', expounds Heidegger later in the essay.<sup>26</sup> To take care and to look after, which instil the idea of nurturance, protection, and security, is what the philosopher believes to be the crux of dwelling. Here, an etymological exploration of these two words will testify to their connection.

'Spare' has its etymological root as 'sparian', a fourteenth-century word which meant 'to refrain from harming, to allow to go free'.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Julian Young, 'What Is Dwelling? The Homelessness of Modernity and the Worlding of the World', in Mark Wrathall and Jeff Malpas (eds), *Heidegger, Authenticity, and Modernity: Essays in Honor of Hubert L. Dreyfus*. Vol. I (Cambridge, Mass: London : MIT Press, 2000), p.189.

<sup>24</sup> Norburg-Schulz, 'Heidegger's Thinking on Architecture', p.423.

<sup>25</sup> Martin Heidegger, 'Building Dwelling Thinking', pp.149, 151 (emphasis in original).

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, p.151.

<sup>27</sup> Sparing, Oxford English Dictionary Online.

<http://dictionary.oed.com.ezphost.dur.ac.uk/cgi/entry/50232248?>

The word 'preserved' originated from the sixteenth-century Latin, as the word for 'protected, kept safe; maintained, retained'.<sup>28</sup> When the origins of sparing and preserving both specify the meaning of protection, safety, stability, and distance from harm, the intrinsic bond between the sense of security and dwelling is thus established. The multiple occurrences of this pair of words throughout the essay speak of its significance in shaping the notion of dwelling.<sup>29</sup> Endorsed by this etymological examination of the bond between dwelling and the sense of security, we can now affirm that the opposite of dwelling, undwelling, can be articulated as the sense of insecurity, which is discerned by the elements of harm, peril, loss, and instability. Therefore, Miriam's experience of this sense of insecurity in a certain environment attests her state of undwelling in that place. In this regard, the novel *Backwater* demonstrates gradually how this negative state of being entraps Miriam, and compels her to eventually escape from North London, where she cannot dwell.

### *Undwelling and the Sense of Insecurity: Backwater*

Unlike the liberation experienced in Central London that effortlessly absorbs Miriam in *The Tunnel*, the North London environment intuitively repels Miriam in *Backwater*. The North London manner of speaking is a case in point. Verbal expressions such as 'a *rum* little party' (I 228) (with Richardson's original italic), people pronouncing 'girls' as 'gels' (I 242), or 'Chopin' as 'Chopang' (I 275) all repulse Miriam. To her upper-middle class upbringing, they appear 'beastly' (I 228), a sense that inevitably draws her further away from this place, both intellectually and emotionally. The obvious contempt embedded in Miriam's

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Date Accessed, 7 Sept 2010.

<sup>28</sup> Preserved, Oxford English Dictionary Online.

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<sup>29</sup> These two terms recur nine times in the first section of the essay.

descriptions of her surroundings portrays a proud, if not posh young woman frowning at an inferior place and its people. Considering herself to be superior to her surroundings, Miriam appears to be assured of her position and her power to despise where she is and whom she meets. However, as the novel develops, a reversal takes place. Miriam's stable sense of security and superiority is replaced by an acute sense of insecurity. North London mediocrity now threatens her once confident grasp on reality.

According to Norberg-Schulz, 'man dwells poetically when he is able to *listen* to the saying of things'.<sup>30</sup> This peculiar type of listening, in a Heideggerian sense, is the activity that involves a concentrated listening to one's surroundings. Dwelling, as an attempt to make sense of our existence, should also be mediated through this listening, since it establishes the communicative channel between men and the world.<sup>31</sup> Otherwise put, when one is able to listen to the saying of one's surroundings, albeit in a rather mystical yet interactive manner, one dwells. Therefore, a pair of veiled ears which disturb the dialogues between man and his surroundings will interrupt his poetic dwelling. In Chapter six of *Backwater*, the conversations between Miriam, the trees, and the air surrounding her are blocked by a thick, impermeable, and opaque 'veil'—the veil of her much loathed identity as the 'governess'. (I 279) In this way, it is Miriam's 'governess' façade that upsets her dwelling in her surroundings.

'One day...as she approached the giant trunks and the detail of' 'the great tree', Miriam 'felt' her 'the governess's veil, closely drawn holding them sternly away from her' (I 279). In addition to keeping Miriam away from the trees and intervening their engaging interaction, the veil breaks her once intimate communication with the air: 'the warm comforting communicative air was around her, but she could not recover its secret' (Ibid). Disrupted by her governess veil, Miriam is unable to 'listen' to the 'secret' she once

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<sup>30</sup> Christian Norberg-Schulz, *The Concept of Dwelling: on the Way to Figurative Architecture* (Milan: Electa; New York: Rizzoli, 1985), p.30.

<sup>31</sup> Adam Sharr, *Heidegger for Architects* (London, New York: Routledge, 2007), pp. 75, 79.

shared with the trees and the air, which implicates that she is no longer capable of dwelling with, or in them. At this frightening instant, a frustrating present is measured against a once fruitful past: 'the reality' Miriam 'had found' 'was leaving her again' at this very moment (I 279). Losing her hold over her interiority, as well as the externality, Miriam's cognition of the self and the world is under jeopardy: 'She looked fearfully about her' (I 279). When dwelling 'means to be oneself, in the sense of having a small chosen world of our own', it is clear that Miriam undwells when her sense of self is staggering in a world which is imposed upon her.<sup>32</sup> Return to the idea that 'radical insecurity' is the opposite of dwelling, the feelings of severe destruction, loss, and threat that Miriam experiences at this moment reflect thoroughly her state of undwelling in North London.

The negative state of undwelling that Miriam goes through in this North London school as analysed depicts a negative relationship Miriam shares with this place, and when it deteriorates to the point of no return, it pushes her to escape, 'to get away somewhere' (I 279) as the narrative evolves. When this state of being hits its 'utmost' in a later episode in the same chapter (chapter six), she cries silently in her heart that 'I'm going away from them. I must be going away from them, they can't keep me. This is the utmost' (I 287). Asserting her will to break away again as the subject I, Miriam accumulates her determination to 'go away' in an increasingly stronger manner: using 'must' with the repetition of 'going away from them', and echoing it with 'utmost' at the end. The repetition, the play around the sound, and the comparatively short brisk sentences fortify Miriam's resolution to 'go away'. The Heideggerian 'call' for dwelling and being 'in the world as firmly rooted in place', sharing 'an organic and spiritual bond between people and things', have their opposites soundlessly heard in these hidden thoughts of Miriam.<sup>33</sup> Rather than staying 'firmly rooted in place', Miriam experiences the breach of this ideally 'organic and

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<sup>32</sup> Christian Norberg-Schulz, *The Concept of Dwelling: on the Way to Figurative Architecture*, p.7.

<sup>33</sup> Kevin E. McHugh, 'Un-poetically "Man" Dwells', *ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies*, 13 (2007), [www.acme-journal.org/vol6/KEM.pdf](http://www.acme-journal.org/vol6/KEM.pdf). Date Accessed 28 May 2010.

spiritual bond between people and things', and desires a breakage from them.

The sense of security Miriam indulges in Central London sets her in peace and harmony with her surroundings and its people, thus providing her with the capacity to dwell in, and with them. However, when Miriam's sense of fear and insecurity endangers her communion with things and communication with others, she is incapable of dwelling in North London. When 'dwelling is the capacity to achieve a spiritual unity between humans and things',<sup>34</sup> the reasons behind Miriam's dwelling and undwelling in these two places (novels) become fairly evident.

### *Dwelling and the Sense of Belonging and Identity: The Tunnel*

Miriam's sense of identity trembles when she feebly and fearfully looks at herself, as if she no longer knows who she is anymore at this moment of undwelling. This collapse of Miriam's sense of self when she undwells reveals the close interrelation between dwelling, the sense of identity and belonging. When one cannot know, or cannot be who one is, one cannot dwell in the world, as Heidegger declares that 'dwelling is the basic character of human identity'.<sup>35</sup> In what follows, I shall examine the critical issues of identity and the sense of belonging in Miriam's dwelling and undwelling in various places.

The protective walls of Miriam's lodging in *The Tunnel* ensure her that she is securely located in and connected to Central London, and is separated, or spared from anything that is not Central London. To Miriam, these concrete walls function not only as the architectural element that 'held all the lodgers secure and apart'. They are, in actuality, the material confirmation that Miriam, as one of these lodgers, is also a Londoner under their protection: 'fixed in richly enclosed rooms in the heart of London; secure

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<sup>34</sup> David Harvey, 'From Spaces to Place and Back again', in Jon Bird (ed.), *Mapping the Futures: Local Cultures, Global Change*, (London: Routledge, 1993), p.11.

<sup>35</sup> Martin Heidegger, 'Building Dwelling Thinking', p.148.

from all the world that was not London, flying through space, swinging along on a planet spread with continents – Londoners’ (II 77). The walls therefore become the external concretisation and manifestation of Miriam’s identity. In this way, they serve as the ‘objects of identification’,<sup>36</sup> which gather and ‘make a world visible’ to Miriam.<sup>37</sup> The world made visible to Miriam and held securely by these walls is the liberating space of London, within which she is free to be whom she desires. This reminds us of Norberg-Schulz, who asserts that ‘when we thus identify ourselves, we use the place as our reference. The particular place is part of the identity of each individual’.<sup>38</sup> When Miriam feels that she belongs to the capital city and identifies herself as a Londoner, she dwells in her ‘secret present’: ‘No one knew her here ... no past and no future ... coming in and out unknown, in the present secret wonder’ (II 77).

The choice of word ‘secret’ deserves a closer look, since it subtly explicates the pride that Miriam cherishes as a Londoner; a pride that is delicious, exhilarating, something too good to be shared. Miriam is extremely possessive towards this hard-earned identity, and she considers it must only be savoured in a solitary and private secrecy. ‘One can live peacefully or dwell appropriately only if one knows, at some profound level, who one really is’, contends Zimmerman.<sup>39</sup> Without achieving a profound level of self-recognition and self-actualisation, Miriam’s excitement of confirming herself as a Londoner would not possess such an intensity, to the extent that she forbids any forms of sharing. Here, Miriam’s heightened sense of who she is ascertains that she dwells appropriately in Central London. In Pat Sheeran’s rendering, ‘Heidegger provides us with the deepest, richest definition of

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<sup>36</sup> Christian Norberg-Schulz, ‘The Phenomenon of Place’, in Kate Nesbitt (ed.) *Towards a New Agenda for Architecture: An Anthology for Architectural Theory 1965-1995*, (New York : Princeton Architectural Press, 1996), p.425.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid. p.437.

<sup>38</sup> Christian Norberg-Schulz, *The Concept of Dwelling: on the Way to Figurative Architecture*, p.9.

<sup>39</sup> Michael E. Zimmerman , ‘The Role of Spiritual Discipline in Learning to Dwell on Earth’, in David Seamon, Robert Mugerauer (eds), *Dwelling, Place and Environment: towards a Phenomenology of Person and World* (Dordrecht Nijhoff 1985), p.249.

dwelling when he points out that it includes both *edificare*, to build and ... to cultivate - to cherish and protect, to preserve and care for'.<sup>40</sup> The manner in which Central London builds and cultivates Miriam's sense of self, how she is protected and preserved by the walls, and how she cherishes her identity as a Londoner define in the deepest and richest way, the meaning of dwelling.

*Undwelling: The Sense of Belonging and Identity in Backwater*

When Miriam dwells appropriately in Central London in *The Tunnel*, she knows clearly where she belongs to and identifies with. Yet, *Backwater* presents a reverse picture. In this novel, Miriam's is expelled from the North London Wordsworth House in every possible way.

The misery of exclusion Miriam suffers in chapter three of this novel explains how she cannot belong to and identify with the Wordsworth House. When Miriam and other governesses accompany their students to prayers and dinner, she pathetically confesses that the 'perfectly serene despair' on the maid, Flora's face is part of her 'daily bread'. Escaping from Flora's hopeless face and turns to Miss Perne, who then reads a 'short psalm', Miriam cannot help but again 'cast down her eyes and close her ears'. Unable to associate with anyone or anything in her surroundings, Miriam becomes desperately isolated and helpless, and feels 'all that went on during that short interval left her equally excluded from either party'. Nothing Miriam sees or hears can relieve her sense of alienation: she 'could not sit gazing at Flora, and Miss Perne's polite unvarying tone brought her no comfort' (I 237).

What Miriam actually sees excludes her, yet, what she imagines seeing disheartens her. The place where disheartening imagination breeds nurtures neither the sense of belonging, nor the hope for identification. Right before this prayer scene where Miriam is

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<sup>40</sup> Pat Sheeran, 'The Narrative Creation of Place: The Example of Yeats', in Timothy Collins (ed.), *Decoding the Landscape. Third Edition*, (Galway: Centre for Landscape Studies, 2003), p.8 (emphasis in original).

teaching, she imagines seeing her students engaging in 'their afternoon practice': 'the strangely moving hands', 'their intent faces, the pages of bad unclassical music, things with horrible names, by English composers'. Expanding her discontent beyond these imagined sights and sounds, Miriam denounces 'the uselessness of the house and terms and years of practice' (I 236). When the prayer scene lacks a consoling exit, this imagined scene depicts a life-sentence, in which a life is indefinitely wasted in 'uselessness'.

Whether it is a real life situation, or an imagined scene, words and phrases with negative emotion, such as 'strange' 'bad unclassical music', 'horrible names', 'despair', 'no comfort', and 'excluded' dominate these two continuous scenes, and serve to connote Miriam's inability to identify with where she is. The most revealing one among them is the word 'excluded': Miriam is emotionally and psychologically excluded from and disowned by the place where she physically belongs to. When 'identification with place is often experienced as a sense of being "at home"- of being comfortable, familiar, and "really me"',<sup>41</sup> Miriam's feelings of exclusion, discomfort, and isolation here convey explicitly her inability to feel at home and identify with her surroundings. This sense of estrangement and alienation Miriam endures here prevents her from dwelling in this North London boarding school.

If Miriam's sense of exclusion from Wordsworth House is compared with how she identifies with and dwells in Central London, the contrasts are alarming. When one cannot experience the sense of belonging to a certain place that characterises the state of dwelling, 'one is in a position of dislocated location', which refers to the mismatch between people and place, that is, undwelling.<sup>42</sup> Undwelling occurs when one is positioned in an 'improper location, where one cannot be let be, that is, to be who

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<sup>41</sup> David M. Hummon, Cuba Lee. 'A Place to Call Home: Identification With Dwelling, Community, and Region', *Sociological Quarterly*, 34, 1 (1993): 111-131.

<sup>42</sup> Alberto Moreiras, 'Harassed Unrest. Notes on Heidegger's "Building Dwelling Thinking"', September 2008, p.2

[www.abdn.ac.uk/spanish/basque/documents/albertomoreiras.doc](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/spanish/basque/documents/albertomoreiras.doc) Date Accessed 28 May 2010.

one is'.<sup>43</sup> In other words, it describes the state in which one is 'displaced', disconnected, and is 'deprived of proper location, of good space'.<sup>44</sup> When Miriam driven to despair by the feeling of exclusion in the prayer scene, and is enraged by the prospect of wasting her life in the imagined scene, it is obvious that she is deprived of a proper location: of good space in this place. This deprivation of good space Miriam undergoes in these two particular episodes already shows her state of undwelling in an unequivocal way. Yet, Miriam's state of undwelling in this place cannot be fully instantiated without considering her nostalgia for a place lost, Hanover, which accompanies and completes these two episodes.

In Edward Casey's configuration, 'among these symptoms [of displacement], nostalgia is one of the most revealing'.<sup>45</sup> 'Contrary to what we usually imagine', nostalgia 'is not merely a matter of regret for lost times; it is also a pining for *lost places*, for places we have once been in yet can no longer re[-]enter', writes Casey.<sup>46</sup> Place here entails not any random spatial-material vacuum, a mere 'where'. Rather, place is constituted by 'the interaction of what is there and what happened there'.<sup>47</sup> Nostalgia is a longing for this 'what is there and what happened there'; a longing for 'a whole sense of how life was, of the way things were, of what it meant to be someone living in a given time and place'.<sup>48</sup> Therefore, the loss of place is also the loss of 'the sensibility and worldliness that goes with it', i.e., the loss of a mode of being and living that a person once had.<sup>49</sup> When one is displaced, one longs to re-enter the place lost with the aid of memory, and in these episodes, Miriam's

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Edward Casey, *Getting Back into Place*, p.37 (emphasis in original).

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ronald Lee Fleming, *The Art of Placemaking: Interpreting Community through Public Art and Urban Design*, (London: Merrell, 2007), p.14.

<sup>48</sup> Bradley Bryan, 'Revenge and Nostalgia: Reconciling Nietzsche and Heidegger on the Question of Coming to Terms with the Past', Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Political Science Association, Vancouver, BC (5 June 2008), p.6. <http://www.cpsa-acsp.ca/papers-2008/Bryan.pdf>  
Date Accessed 2 September 2010.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

frequent re-entering into her former dwelling place, Hanover, highlights her state of displacement and undwelling in North London.

“Turning several pages at once”, Miriam ‘caught sight of the word Hanover’, and instantly, she finds the sheer presence of the place name ‘irresistible’. In between the spiteful prospect of wasting her life with the girls, and the present meaningless history lesson that Miriam is impatiently and indifferently giving, she is transposed to Hanover by the ‘magic’ word. Sitting in the North London classroom, ‘the rush took her to the German town, the sight and smell and sound of it, the pointed houses, wood fires, the Bürgerhans, had made her cheeks flare and thrown her out of the proper teacher’s frame of mind’ (I 236). When recalling and savouring the memorable qualities of Hanover, Miriam becomes near to it; the *then* and *there* first superimpose, then substitute the *here* and *now* at this nostalgic moment—Miriam can no longer be a teacher in this shabby North London classroom, since she is emotionally and mentally lost in another place: Hanover. The affective and sensuous proximity to Hanover that Miriam experiences here shows her emotional attachment to this lost place.

Miriam’s thrill of re-entering a distant past exemplifies lucidly the Heideggerian sense of nearness, a condition under which one feels ‘near to something far away, and far from something close at hand’.<sup>50</sup> What occurs when experiencing this nearness is that ‘... lost places or place not yet visited might be as immediate as actual tangible locations’.<sup>51</sup> Here, the ‘nearness’ of Hanover appears concrete and tangible with ‘the sight and smell and sound of’ it, as if Miriam can simply step into this lost place. When Miriam feels excluded from where she is, but gets ‘near’ to a place ‘far away’, it displays a mismatch between people and place, which portrays her state of undwelling in the Wordsworth House.

While the teaching scene records the first instance of Miriam’s nostalgia for Hanover (I 236), the prayer scene (I 237) which takes

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<sup>50</sup> Sharr, p.64.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

place a page later documents the second instance of Miriam's longing to re-enter this lost place. When leading the girls to their prayers, Miriam 'thought longingly of Prayers in Germany, the big quiet *saal* with its high windows, its great dark doors, its annexe of wooden summer room, Fräulein's clear, brooding undertone, the pensive calm of the German girls; the strange mass of fresh melodious sound as they all sang together'. The serene, harmonious, and refined sights, sounds, and air that Miriam experienced in Germany which she 'thought longingly', are instantly followed by a parallel description with what she sees here: 'there seemed to be everything to encourage and nothing whatever to check the sudden murmur, the lighting swift gesture of Nancie or Trixie'. While the Germans are described with adjectives such as 'clear', 'pensive', and 'melodious', the English are impetuous, who cannot 'check' their 'sudden murmur, the lighting swift gesture' (I 237). A pang of resentment imbues this pair of truly 'dramatic' contrasts, as mirrored by the choice of word. Their contrasts not only pain Miriam, they also deepen Miriam's longing for her lost place. 'Longingly' is the very word that betrays Miriam's 'desire and drive to return to' a lost place.<sup>52</sup> Here, the thirst to re-enter the place lost signals Miriam's acute sense of displacement and dis-belonging she bears in the North London Wordsworth House, which is a powerful manifestation of her state of undwelling in this particular place.

The contrasts in terms of word choice in these two images are obvious enough to unveil Miriam's state of displacement and undwelling in this place. Yet, what is more intriguing here is *where*, *when*, and *how* the memory resurfaces. The past is placed side-by-side with the present within one paragraph, which allows no room for the reader to prepare themselves for the sudden contrasts. The past strikes them directly, and ruthlessly forces them to witness the rift between the past and the present. Moreover, the timing of its resurgence is telling. This piece of cherished past appears right after Miriam's confession that 'Miss Perne's polite unvarying tone brought her no comfort' (I 237). Feeling this lack of 'comfort', the reappearance of the past testifies Miriam's attempt to seek comfort

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<sup>52</sup> Bryan, p.9.

and compensation from her mellow past to curb her present sufferings. In addition, the past recurs in an almost involuntary manner, and it is highly sensuous, encapsulating both aural and visual details which draw the reader even closer to Miriam's Hanover experience. When Miriam puts these two experiences directly alongside one another, she is actually measuring and comparing the delightful past against the depressing present.<sup>53</sup> Under certain circumstances, taking refuge from one's memory could be an illusory escape from one's present entrapment. Yet, Miriam's flashbacks and the resultant illusory happiness are brief, and they only intensify the feeling of dejection she currently undergoes. While the past becomes more precious, the present becomes more unbearable through immediate measuring. With the contrasts between them being amplified, what becomes sharper with her longing for the past is her hatred against the present, thus, her sense of displacement and undwelling in North London.

Norberg-Schulz's affirmation that 'when we have a world, we dwell, in the sense of gaining an individual identity within a complex and often contradictory fellowship'<sup>54</sup> is an effective, yet elegant remark that crystallises the notion of dwelling in relation to identity. Miriam's firm grasp of her own secret world of Central London and her sense of self in this place enables her to dwell where she is despite the maelstrom of city life. Yet, when Miriam is displaced, excluded from where she is, and craves for an escape from North London, she is denied from having a world of her own and a proper selfhood. As shown above, she undwells in that environment. In these ways, the extent to which identity shapes Miriam's dwelling and undwelling in *Pilgrimage* is conspicuously exhibited.

*Concluding remarks: Dwelling, Space, and Pilgrimage as a whole*

When Martin Heidegger writes in his *Hebel—the Friend of the House* that the world is 'the house where mortals dwell',<sup>55</sup> the various

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<sup>53</sup> Sharr, p.75

<sup>54</sup> Norberg-Schulz, *The Concept of Dwelling*, p.50.

<sup>55</sup> Casey, p.243.

spaces of London are where Miriam Henderson dwells and undwells. From the material space of London to the corporeal space of her senses to the affective space of Miriam's sense of place, security and identity, these episodes from *Backwater* and *The Tunnel* manifest that when Miriam dwells and undwells in these places, these three spatial elements effect and affect, through and upon one another. In this dynamic spatial interflow, we witness what Juhani Pallasmaa proposes that 'the experience of architecture is synthetic, operating at many different levels simultaneously'.<sup>56</sup> In other words, when Miriam dwells and undwells in different places, each layer of these spaces interacts and inter-fuses with one another in her synthetic experiences of place or architecture.

If we take the spatial cue from the pre-eminent Finnish architect and push it further, we can approach *Pilgrimage* as a spatial construct, focusing not only the spaces *within*, or the spaces *of* the sequence, but to see the entire sequence *as* a space. With its multi-layered spatial underpinnings, such as the space of place, of gender, and of arts, *Pilgrimage* can virtually belong to any of these specific realms; yet, none of them can completely pin it down and close it up. In this way, as a space in itself, *Pilgrimage* dwells in and through these various infinite spaces.

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<sup>56</sup> Juhani Pallasmaa, 'Introduction. The Geometry of Feeling: A Look at the Phenomenology of Architecture', in Kate Nesbitt (ed.), *Towards a New Agenda for Architecture: An Anthology for Architectural Theory 1965-1995*, (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1996), p.447.