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Reading Non-Places in *Brief Encounter*

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Introduction

The core purpose of this thesis is to take a look at non-places and how they are represented in film from the perspective of cultural studies. In order to arrive at a valid result, it is worth noting that an analysis of a filmic work (the production of which is remote enough in time as to be considered free from any baggage of spatial theories formulated over the past four decades) is likely to yield more interesting results than a close reading of contemporary works. *Brief Encounter*, a romantic film by David Lean based on the play *Still Life* by Noel Coward, was produced in 1945 and due to its spatial emphasis on a train station is an ideal object for examination.

The title of this thesis, “Going Nowhere. Reading Non-Places in *Brief Encounter*”¹ is not meant to limit the outcome of my research to nothing. By nowhere I am referring to the notion of the concept of the non-place: a concept encompassing the manifold transitory spaces of our days that have become necessary in order to go from one place to another. The non-place, as will be demonstrated, is an incomplete place (i.e. “always non”), an amorphous entity, and has emerged as the 'nowhere' of our time. There is also a social dimension of the non-place to be looked at: the non-place in the real world has become the nowhere of society, as those deemed unfit for a proper integration find themselves in danger of ending up in such transitory spaces as the nodes of the public transport network, transit shelters or refugee camps.

Another aspect of the non-place that can be observed in the real world is the significance of space and tactics of the Other. Over the past weeks and months a movement has emerged in various cities of the world known as “Occupy” which is spatially articulated by the occupation of parks or streets in or near business quarters. These men and women have arrived at spaces as a last resort for expressing their interests. Space transformed into language will be a part of the discussion in this paper.

1 “Going Nowhere” is a phrase that has lingered in the author's memory since first listening to the 1994-song *Nowhere* by British band *Therapy?*, where it makes up most of the chorus

The theme of space as a means of expression will be dealt with in the following analysis. *Brief Encounter* negotiates the story of a romantic couple coming to terms with the extra-marital status of their love. Similar to the example above, they find themselves limited to public spaces such as a train station, parks, restaurants or a movie theatre; space, therefore, has become their last resort. Marc Augé would nominate such spaces a non-place decades later.

Feeding on the notion of the non-place in order to arrive at a cultural studies perspective on *Brief Encounter* makes it necessary to frame this feed in sections dealing with the following theoretical fields: spatial studies, concept of identity and, to take these two and bring them as close to the concept of the non-place as possible, space and the negotiation of identity in cultural studies. For the former two I have included a detailed discussion of the non-place concept and of Michel Foucault's *heterotopia*, a spatial concept for otherness. Regarding the concept of "space", a model of social space developed by Henri Lefebvre will be outlined. Its multi-layer structure allows for a dynamic perception of space crucial for understanding the dynamics within the non-place. Covering space and the negotiation of identity, the concept of *Thirdspace* by Edward Soja, which combines identity and spatiality and still manages to accommodate otherness in the choices performed by individuals, will be discussed in detail. In order to examine identity, it is necessary to have a look at the forces governing the formation of identity. I have therefore included a chapter on discourse and space, which deals with Michel Foucault's work on epistemological space.

Following these theoretical concepts is the analytical part, the focus of which will be on space and its role in the film as well as the non-place as the place for the negotiation of identity. There will be mise-en-scene analysis of selected scenes inside the train station and in the interior of the train carriage. In both settings the concept of the non-place will be applied to frame results regarding cinematographic factors such as lighting, character positioning, focus and others. The third main part of the analysis will be dealing with the non-place as marginal space and how this is integrated into the film.

Adhering to the idea that space is the place where our thoughts become not only visible but might also turn into matter and consequences, it is now time to embark on the itinerary of this thesis located within the two-dimensional space of these pages.

1. Marc Augé's Concept of the Non-Place

The purpose of this section is to provide a detailed outline on Marc Augé's concept of the non-place and to explain its relevance for the analysis of *Brief Encounter* pertinent to this thesis. Thus, there will be a detailed discussion of Marc Augé's book *Non-Places, Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*. Emphasis will be put on sections germane to this paper. Brief information on Marc Augé himself will open the chapter followed by a concise discussion of the concept of place and that of the non-place. The emphasis will be on the latter key dynamics and relevant framework such as supermodernity and the three figures of excess at play within that concept. Finally, a sub-chapter on the construction of identity and communication in non-place settings will be presented.

The French socio-anthropologist Marc Augé has had quite a career since he decided to study the Alladian Riparian people west of Abidjan on the Ivory Coast in the late 1960s. People of West and North Africa were the subjects of his initial works. The shift of focus in his work from the peoples of Africa to the city spaces of the "Western civilisation" was an unusual one for an anthropologist of the 1980s.

Augé's attention was drawn to life in urban settings. He began applying tools of anthropology such as a set of approaches originating in the teachings of Emile Durkheim and Max Weber to phenomena of the post-modern days. After giving a prosaic account of one day in the life of an urban dweller -an account of himself - in *La traversée du Luxembourg* (in 1984), he published *In the Metro in 1986*, in which he examined the Parisian underground travel system through the looking glass of an ethnologist / anthropologist. Augé provided an analysis of reference systems at work on the subway, thus representing patterns of identity constructions at play. He managed to come close to what he refers to an "anthropology of the near", which is also the title of the first main chapter of his book on non-places released 1992.

1.1 Place and Non-Place

Before arriving at the concept of the non-place, it is worthwhile to look at Marc Augé's understanding of place. Augé states that "anthropological place [...] is a principle of meaning for the people who live in it, and also a principle of intelligibility for the person who observes it" (Augé 1995: 52). He goes on stating that "[t]hese places have at least three characteristics in common. They want to be - people want them to be - places of identity, relations and history" (Augé 1995: 52). By these three functions, Augé appears to encompass most of what is known to be a place. We can think of examples: a living room as a place of identity, a pub as a place of relations and a town centre as a place of history. These are places clearly featured in *Brief Encounter* and the analysis of them, or rather their counterpart – the non-place - in accordance to this concept, will follow in the analytical chapter.

For the relational function, Augé mentions Michel de Certeau's theory on place, who "[...] perceives the place, of whatever sort, as containing the order 'in whose terms elements are distributed in relations of coexistence' " (Augé 1995: 53, Certeau in Augé 1995: 53). Thus, in a place there are systems at play that seem to govern the ideological navigation of its visitors and elements within its area. These systems are referred to by Augé as systems of reference and the dynamics they are subject to will be discussed in ensuing paragraphs.

Augé explains the historical aspect as follows: "[...] place becomes necessarily historical from the moment when - combining identity with relations - it is defined by a minimum stability." (Augé 1995: 54). The stability mentioned can be interpreted as the development of an anthropological life within a constant scene, in terms of a group of at least one individual and its established setting. The historical aspect is mobilised as the relations and identities in that place overcame time. "This place which the ancestors have built [...], which the recently dead populate with signs whose evocation and interpretation require special knowledge [...]" (Augé 1995: 54f.). The references we discover is a kind of history that lies outside the scientific domain of the same name. Augé himself writes that "[t]he inhabitant of an anthropological place does not make history;

he lives in it" (Augé 1995: 55). We can think of the individual walking his or her path along lines written by ancestors. The individual has knowledge in order to read him or herself into the place and establish a relation with it, making the historical aspect of place strongly connected to the relational. The former is achieved by spatial features Augé refers to as monuments, which will be explained by discussing Marc Augé's approach to the idea of space.

Augé has a geometrical notion of anthropological space. Space, according to him, can be divided into three "spatial forms" (Augé 1995: 56), as he calls them: "[...] the line, the intersection of lines and the point of intersection" (Augé 1995: 57). This geometrical model of anthropological space can be projected onto contemporary space. Augé finds their 'real life' correspondences in "routes, crossroads and centres" (Augé 1995: 57).

The model of centres explains the function of relationships between individuals and meanings in anthropological place. Augé mentions town centres; here the section on the monument is of special interest for the non-place concept as there are three passages of particular significance quoted below:

"The monument, as the Latin etymology of the word indicates, is an attempt at the tangible expression of permanence or, at the very least, duration" (Augé 1995: 60). Thus, in the web of relations, identities and history, monuments are meant to support the recurrence of political or other concepts; that is to say, to permanently embed them in space and time. This trick is necessary. Because, as Augé notes, "[w]ithout the monumental illusion before the eyes of the living, history would be a mere abstraction" (Augé 1995: 60). We can now envision the anthropological place outlined by Marc Augé: a web of lines, intersections and points of intersection. These points of intersection are the monuments referred to above. Their content is meaning and their effect comes in reciprocity with individuals moving along the lines and passing through these intersections. It is identification and relation. These intersections are the carpets anthropological life is enacted upon. The monuments are necessary disruptions in what I like to refer to as the 'tunnel of time'. Augé notes that "[t]he social space bristles with monuments [...] which may not be directly functional but give every individual

the justified feeling that, for the most part, they existed before him and will survive him. Strangely, it is a set of breaks and discontinuities in space that express continuity in time" (Augé 1995: 60). As an example, walking down a busy shopping street, watching architectural structures, the malls will not yield the impression of permanence, but old buildings next or behind them will. In *Brief Encounter* we will find a clear split between the non-places of transport visited and the anthropological places inhabited by the characters.

A non-place is, as quoted below, a place clearly void of relations to identity, history and other reference systems at play in its geographical context. It can be seen as the opposite of the place discussed above (Augé 1995: 79). Augé puts it this way:

If a place can be defined as relational, historical and concerned with identity, then a space which cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity will be a non-place. The hypothesis advanced here is that supermodernity produces non-places, meaning spaces which are not themselves anthropological places and which [...] do not integrate the earlier places: instead these are listed, classified, promoted to the status of 'places of memory', and assigned to a circumscribed and specific position.

(Augé 1995: 78)

What Augé is saying here is that the aspect of not integrating earlier places (i.e. such of history, relation identity) is ruled out in supermodernity. Augé argues for a place of such qualities to negate place; to be a non-place. When he states that non-places are a product of supermodernity, the question arising is where and how? Motorways are a good example for such non-places. These places of literal transit can be thought of as the role-models for non-places. The term 'transit places', however, is not meant to grasp solely the idea of motorways, train stations and airports; although places of train travel are of course the most prominent in *Brief Encounter*.

Motorways constitute a good example for the spectacularisation of history discussed further below:

Every town or village not of recent origin lays public claim to its history,

displaying it to the passing motorist on a series of signboards which add up to a sort of 'business card'. Making the historical context explicit in this way [...] coincides with a reorganization [sic] of space (the creation of bypasses and main motorway routes avoiding towns) that tends, inversely, to short-circuit the historical context by avoiding the monuments that embody it.

(Augé 1995: 68)

This allusion to the reference system of history - found on motorway signs - describes the spectacularisation of places within the non-place itself. Here, other places or history are transformed into something similar to an object in a museum. This change is achieved by the aforementioned incorporation via references in signs or texts. A good example for a non-place with heavy historical reference to its geographical and cultural context is the subway station Arts et Métiers in the Parisian metro; its design is inspired by the fictitious submarine Nautilus from Jules Verne's novel *Twenty Thousands League Under the Sea*. The author is part of French literary culture and, although Jules Verne may not have much to do with subways, the theme is used for the purpose of contextualisation; for tying nodes of reference.

This dynamic is not a process solely attributed to supermodernity. For Augé, it can already be investigated and observed in modern times. Augé mentions a “[...] presence of the past in a present that supersedes it but lays claim to it” (Augé 1995: 75). Thus, the historical is present even though often only referred to in terms of signs on a motorway. An example of such a reference in *Brief Encounter* would be the sign reading "Milford Junction" in the train station.

Augé takes this model one step further. The space written about so far has been of an anthropological nature. The centres with their historical load, to some extent even the motorways of modernity mentioned in the above paragraph, have been set into relation with their regional context despite the fact one might not be able to tell a French spot of tarmac from a British one. But what if we subtract the load of history in motorway signs? Augé writes that “motorway travel [...] avoids, for functional reasons all the principle places to which it takes us; and it makes comments on them” (Augé 1995: 97).

Places of transport can be seen as their own class of place around the world. Motorways, airports, rails, train stations or ports add up to one homogeneous category of places. This homogeneity does not appear to allow for an accumulation of larger chunks of identity one could refer to as "collective identities".

For Augé, the notion of transit is expanded considerably, as we shall see in the quote below:

A world where people are born in the clinic and die in hospital, where transit points and temporary abodes are proliferating under luxurious or inhuman conditions (hotel chains and squats, holiday clubs and refugee camps, shantytowns threatened with demolition or doomed to festering longevity).

(Augé 1995: 78)

A non-place, according to this definition, is not only a place of transit in the sense of transport but also in any other sense of passing through. Emer O'Beirne, in her article discussing Augé's book on non-places, writes that in non-places there is "[...] little or no trace of our passage as we negotiate them" (O'Beirne 38). The hospital - a place of transit for its patients and their visitors - is a good example. Patients walk, or are walked, through them like goods. The patients, or passengers, or visitors, are not given a chance to mark the space of the non-place.

Areas can be referred to as non-places because, as a place, they don't seem to function in the same way as a relational and anthropological place does. Shantytowns are such places. They seem to be by-products of adjacent urban centres. The same can be said of refugee camps and squatted buildings or sites. Their actual purpose is of a temporary nature. The spirit of supermodernity seems to produce many such non-places. Non-places of a transitory quality are, as Augé calls it, "doomed to [...] longevity" (Augé 1995: 78). It seems the political and economical dynamics of supermodernity contribute vastly to the multiplication of what I would like to refer to as politically or socially implied non-places.

A category of non-places found in *Brief Encounter* is the actual means of transport and structures connected to them which means referring to a non-place not only encompass buildings such as train stations and airports:

But non places are the real measure of our time; one that could be quantified – with the aid of a few conversions between area, volume and distance – by totalling all the air, rail and motorway routes, the mobile cabins called 'means of transport' [], the airports and railway stations, hotel chains, leisure parks, large retail outlets, and finally the complex skein of cable and wireless networks that mobilize [sic] extraterrestrial space for the purpose of a communication so peculiar that it often puts the individual in contact only with another image of himself.

(Augé 1995: 79)

Before going into detail on the construction of individual and eradication of collective identity, Augé's definition of the non-place will be briefly outlined. Augé states the following:

[p]lace and non-place are rather like opposed polarities: the first is never completely erased, the second never totally completed; they are like palimpsests on which the scrambled game of identity and relations is ceaselessly rewritten.

(Augé 1995: 79)

The notion of non-place conveyed in this quote is buoyant and therefore unstable. It creates the impression of space that, in its abstract dimension, is never completely elaborated upon nor spelled out in its entirety. A non-place can only exist between places and is a critical acknowledgement when it comes to writing about the web of identity, space and its correlation in a non-place. It is a study of an incomplete version of the construct of space and identity. One might think of the non-place as a kind of radio-shadow: a zone where the strength of the anthropological signal (i.e. reference systems supporting processes of relation and identity) “emitted” by adjacent places is less apparent. This results in the severance of relations mentioned above. The concept of the palimpsest employed by Augé goes hand in hand (i.e. synonymously) with the image of radio shadow.

For Augé, the space travellers move in a kind of archetypal non-place (Augé 1995: 86). He writes that:

We could say [...] that the act of passing gives a particular status to place names, that the faultline resulting from the law of the other, and causing a loss of focus, is the horizon of every journey (accumulation of places, negation of place), and that the movement that 'shifts lines' and traverses places is, by definition, creative of itineraries: that is, words and non-places.

(Augé 1995: 85)

The act of passing mentioned here refers, on the one hand, to a kind of spectacularisation of history and other spatial and ideological aspects (in the sense of idea). On the other hand, the articulation of itineraries is also meant as an articulation of space. Augé refers to French social-anthropologist Michel de Certeau. Certeau wrote that “[t]he act of walking is to the urban system what the speech act is to language or to the statements uttered” (Certeau 97). Nevertheless, Augé stresses that his understanding of place, when it comes to the concept of the non-place, is different from Certeau's. For Certeau, as we shall see later, space is what is produced when pedestrians walk a place. For Augé, on the contrary, the term is more suitable for “non-symbolized surfaces of the planet” (Augé 1995: 82). The potential for probable actions, relations and experiences of a place alone are reasons enough for Marc Augé to accept place as articulated: “[W]e include in the notion of anthropological place the possibility of the journeys made in it, the discourses uttered in it, and the language characterizing it” (Augé 1995: 81).

1.2 Supermodernity

The concept of the non-place is set in a temporal frame, an era, called supermodernity. Augé states that:

We could say of supermodernity that it is the face of a coin whose obverse represents postmodernity: the positive of a negative.

(Augé 1995: 30)

Supermodernity is, as the name suggests, an era superseding modernity. For some scientific fields, supermodernity already started as early as World War I (González-Ruibal 249) and can be seen as equivalent to postmodernity (ibid). In Marc Augé's work it seems to become more visible towards the end of the twentieth century. Although this supermodernity seems more appropriate as a term encompassing the technological, economical and social developments of the second half of the past century, this state of development can be examined at an early stage in Noel Coward's motion picture *Brief Encounter*, which is set in the late 1930s (Dyer 13). Witnessing rapid transit, the steel-constructions at the train platform and the busy people rushing through the streets, the borders between postmodernity and supermodernity blur.

In order to further discuss supermodernity, it is necessary to examine its dynamics. Transformation is a key-word for supermodernity. Supermodernity is an era of growth, qualification and upgrading (González-Ruibal 249). The changes taking place in this period are of a rapidly evolving and growing character. Marc Augé identifies three groups and labels them overabundances, or figures of excess, which grasp the rushing spirit of the late twentieth century. They are the overabundance of time, space and the self. In order to project the concept of the non-place onto an analysis of *Brief Encounter*, these figures of excess will be explained.

1.2.1 Overabundance of Time and Events, Space and the Ego

The first figure of overabundance is that of time (Augé 1995: 27). The excess of time refers to an acceleration of history, meaning an overabundance of events (Augé 1995: 28). French historian Francois Furet provides supporting arguments for Augé, when he writes about revolution, defining it as an event arising from an "overinvestment of meaning" (Furet qtd. in Augé 1995: 28). It seems also that the non-places of Marc Augé are a kind of pre-stage for places of tomorrow. Thus, they are the dawn of a different spatial age. Also Augé proposes a parallel to the contemporary world of supermodernity where he senses a global drive for denomination or making of meaning:

What is new is not that the world lacks meaning, or has little meaning, or less than it used to have; it is that we seem to feel an explicit and intense daily need to give it meaning [...] This need to give a meaning to the present, if not the past, is the price we pay for the overabundance of events corresponding to a situation we could call 'supermodern' to express its essential quality: excess.

(Augé 1995: 29)

There is a theme present in all three figures of excess of supermodernity: the loss of systems of reference and their re-writing. This momentum of re-writing can be seen as an analogy to the dialectical and materialist concept of history in Marxist theory (Avineri 174). Here, I would like to draw attention to a parallel to the revolutionary process, underlined by the Furet-quote on page 28 (Augé 1995). Furet carried out research on the French revolution; his writing is a reflection of a view through the prism of historical emphasis. Nevertheless, the eradication and reloading of systems of relevance at play in a political revolution has its likeness to the eradication and relational reload given in the spatial transformation proposed by Marc Augé. A certain vacuum resulting from the loss or weakening of reference systems is the space in which the love relationship in *Brief Encounter* sees the light of day. The excess of time triggered by an overabundance of events, the temporal and spatial holes created by a train schedule are the sources for the momentum that is of interest here.

One more point significant for the excess of time is that of the individual's perception:

The extension of life expectancy, the passage from the normal coexistence of three generations to four, are bringing about gradual, practical changes in the order of social life. By the same token they are expanding the collective, genealogical and historical memory, multiplying the occasions on which an individual can feel his own history intersecting with History, can imagine that the two are somehow connected. The individual's demands and disappointments are linked to the strengthening of this feeling.

(Augé 1995: 30)

The perception of history while it is actually being 'made' is emblematic for the immediacy. It seems that, through the vast circulation of meaning and

information, the individual is growing more and more aware of history's position in relation to space and time.

Mediatisation is the process of re-interpretation of the world and all phenomena through the quick embrace of media coverage. Apart from desires and values affected by the impact of mass media, there is a change in the way individuals read their own existence. The way of memorising it is changed by the evolving and progressing parameters mentioned by Augé in the quote above (i.e. “collective memory”). Due to its expansion, there are gaps that do not allow vacancy for too long. Individuals experience history, not only via mass media consumption, but also by the perception of information in everyday life. Due to the process of mediatisation, to which almost everything is subject to, life could one day be seen as a full-time media consumption experience. Even History, with a capital H - referring to the great and global narration, is not immune to mediatisation. Due to the evolution of mass media and the phenomenon of mediatisation, it is safe to say history itself has been mediatised and turned into a kind of spectacle. History has become a personal desire, a commodity; this theme is found to be less present in *Brief Encounter*.

The second overabundance is that of space. Again, we touch upon mediatisation. But not only media coverage has made the world a smaller place; means of transport as well have reduced the perceived distances between cities. Augé refers to these transformations as “changes of scale” (Augé 1995: 31):

[...] the excess of space is correlative with the shrinking of the planet
[...] We are in an era characterised by changes of scale (...) rapid
means of transport have brought any capital within a few hours' travel of
any other

(Augé 1995: 31)

This “shrinking of the planet” is less of a factor in the setting of *Brief Encounter*; we do not yet encounter symptoms of globalisation, such as exotic foods in the market around the corner, or TV bombardment via hundreds of channels transmitted by satellite. However, taking into account distances made by the

protagonists during the hours of the day, we find a shrinking of mid 20th century British citizens' daily life. At one point, Laura and Alec meet one another on a corner in Milford and, there, exchange information on their respective destinations. Apart from the latter's sarcastic comment, this also reveals the impression of rapid movement, overcoming of distances between cities and, at the same time, concentration of goods and services at neuralgic points: a day-commute as early advancement of globalisation.

The plot of *Brief Encounter* evolves around the train schedule at Milford Junction. In the proceeding quote, Augé makes the first mention of travel as the central aspect of the concept of the non-place. As with media and mediatization, travel seems to have the effect of appropriating the world; the outcome is a feeling of nearness placing the individual firmly in the passenger seat of supermodernity. Distant places evolve from merely being distant into being familiar. For Augé, the images transmitted into our homes "(...) assemble before our eyes a universe that is relatively homogeneous in its diversity" (Augé 1995: 32). This homogeneous universe not only comes with pure entertainment, but also establishes links between the individual and global history. News programmes inform viewers on global politics, economics, and societies on a global level. Individuals now become familiar with faces of politicians or, as in *Brief Encounter*, with stereotypical impressions of Africa. This, however, is what Augé calls a "false familiarity" (Augé 1995: 32). This falseness is crucial in the concept of supermodernity. Supermodernity is about connecting and about appropriation in the sense of a new system of references. The immediate communication is not able to grasp the full weight of what is conveyed; it only transmits an image of it. Thus, in the case of the politician mentioned above, we arrive at an image fit for mass media. As we shall see later, similar dynamics can be found in a non-place. What is created in the supermodern climate of transformation and excess, is what Augé calls a "universe of recognition" (Augé 1995: 33). Augé goes on to explain: "The property of symbolic universes is that they constitute a means of recognition, rather than knowledge [...]" (Augé 1995: 33).

Marc Augé fathoms changes in scale and sees new horizons for anthropological

research. The focus on place is prevalent in studying places of transit. Augé goes into detail when he writes that the spatial overabundance

[...] is expressed in changes of scale, in the proliferation of imaged and imaginary references, and in the spectacular acceleration of means of transport. Its concrete outcome involves considerable modifications: urban concentrations, movements of population and the multiplication of what we call 'non-places', in opposition to the sociological notion of place, associated by Mauss and a whole ethnological tradition with the idea of a culture localized [sic] in time and space.

(Augé 1995: 34)

It is within the figure of excess of space where Augé settles the idea of the non-place. Its physical articulation can be found, as mentioned, in the public transport domain. Two words are of special interest: concentrations and movement. 'Concentrations' refers to abundance, overabundance, or excess. As an example, the public transport in *Brief Encounter* seems to concentrate the movement of people, thus also that of the protagonists, around urban space. Obviously, movement is inherent in the process of going from one place to another. Between the places lies the non-place; a space between spaces.

The third figure of excess is that of the ego. In brief, Augé also outlines this as "individualization [sic] of references" (Augé 1995: 40). This excess takes us back to the eradication of reference systems making the process dissimilar to the intersections between individual and collective history mentioned above. Augé states that:

Never before have individual histories been so explicitly affected by collective history, but never before, either, have the reference points been so unstable. The individual production of meaning is thus more necessary than ever.

(Augé 1995: 37)

Augé refers to the supermodern drive as "to give a meaning to the present, if not the past" (Augé 1995: 29). The eradication of reference systems is also included and followed by a rewriting of meaning that comes with a strong notion of concepts emphasizing the articulation of the ego. Advertising plays a decisive role in this process of individualising references. This process, however, bears

the strong potential of putting the individual in limbo, for it has to balance its individual and collective identity.

Augé writes:

[...] the singular character of the production of meaning, backed by a whole advertising apparatus (which talks of the body, the senses, the freshness of living) and a whole political language (hinged on the ideas of individual freedoms) [...] relates to what might be called local anthropologies [...] the systems of representation in which the categories of identity and otherness are given shape.

(Augé 1995: 37 - 38)

Thus, supermodernity is an era of the individual. The “local anthropologies” mentioned by Augé above can be seen as the onset for forming new systems of reference. Another aspect of the excess of the ego is what Augé describes as “changes affecting the major categories people use when they think about their identity and their reciprocal relations” (Augé 1995: 40). The premise of the ego discussed above affects the way people ponder the balance between individual and collective identity. This supermodern effect on the ego will be of importance when it comes to analysing the paths protagonists in *Brief Encounter* choose to walk.

1.3 Construction of Identity in Non-Places

The construction of identity in a non-place is a process allowing little to no collective identity. Transit places are places of solitude; another touching point to *Brief Encounter* as the film features many scenes shot inside a train station. However, there are connections established between the visitors of such a building and are identities of a shared nature.

The clandestine and doomed love relationship between Alec and Laura mirrors, or in a way foreshadows, the impossibility of collective identity in a non-place. The non-place is space that is not appropriated (O'Beirne 38). The force of adjacent places erodes its soil and makes all visitors mere passers-by as Augé states:

[...] non-places mediate a whole mass of relations, with the self and with others, which are only indirectly connected with their purposes. As anthropological places create the organically social, so non-places create a solitary contractuality.

(Augé 1995: 94)

Individuals at a non-place do not intermingle in terms of forming a group strongly tied together by interrelations. Passengers of a train, for example, do not form groups as do members of a family or the inhabitants of a village. There is no collective, only individual and shared identity. Speaking about passengers as a homogeneous group means that one employs the view of a non-place, as do public transport providers. Before these institutional eyes, all individuals are absolutely equal and may only be distinguished by age, route and their product of choice.

A solitary non-place employs a particular kind of communication different from that in a place. Whereas, what is referred to as anthropological place boosts with communication that is taking place between individuals, the non-place offers a different and mostly more institutionalised sort of communication. Augé writes that “[t]he link between individuals and their surroundings in the space of non-place is established through the mediation of words, or even texts” (Augé 1995: 94). Augé gives a list of examples in the following quote:

But the real non-places of supermodernity - the ones we inhabit when we are driving down the motorway, wandering through the supermarket or sitting in an airport lounge [...] - have the peculiarity that they are defined partly by the words and texts they offer us: their 'instructions for use', which may be prescriptive ('Take right hand lane'), prohibitive ('No smoking') or informative ('You are now entering the Beaujolais region').
(Augé 1995: 96).

According to Augé's assertion, there is no communication between individuals in non-places even though this theory is not meant to rule out a possible conversation among the commuting passengers. But the better part of communication is the one between the individual and the relevant institutions at a non-place itself. By employing the term 'institutionalised', I mean to refer to information necessary for the purpose of the non-place (e.g. information on a

train ticket).

Augé in his book also refers to messages of vending or cash machines. In the following example, he refers to the equality among customers mentioned above.

The information I have referred to above is here called “remarks”:

All the remarks that emanate from our roads and commercial centres, from the street-corner sites of the vanguard of the banking system ('Thank you for your custom', 'Bon voyage', 'We apologize [sic] for any inconvenience') are addressed simultaneously and indiscriminately to each and any of us: they fabricate the 'average man', defined as the user of the road, retail or banking system.

(Augé 1995: 100)

Thus, the 'average man' referred to here is the solitary passenger, the lone customer, the isolated unit travelling along its itineraries and, while on its way to a destination, moving in a non-place. We need to remember that the non-place is a non-relational place. Similar to this quality of the place, the individual in a non-place, in its solitude, experiences the same loss of references or relations, and a weakening of connections to anthropological places.

Returning to the construction of identities in non-places, it is noteworthy that the identity of the passenger is not entirely his or her own. Despite the seeming improbability of collective identity in a non-place, Augé comes within reach of it when he states that

“'Anthropological place' is formed by individual identities, through complicities of language, local references, the unformulated rules of living know-how; non-place creates the shared identity of passengers, customers or Sunday drivers. [...] Alone, but one of many, the user of a non-place is in contractual relations with it (or with the powers that govern it). He is reminded, when necessary, that the contract exists”

(Augé 1995: 101)

This reminder is realised by the messages referred to above. Apart from these instructions, there is a vast range of advertisements meeting the eye of the passenger. They too function as reminders for they call into mind the passenger's role as customer: a member of a society keen to consumption.

These reminders don't seem to change the solitude of the individual in the non-place. There are only few points for individual identity to resurface. Augé refers to them in the following quote:

[t]he passenger through non-places retrieves his identity only at Customs, at the tollbooth, at the check-out counter. Meanwhile, he obeys the same code as others, receives the same messages, responds to the same entreaties. The space of non-place creates neither singular identity nor relations; only solitude, and similitude.

(Augé 1995: 103)

There are certain rules of engagement in a non-place. In order to enter, and sometimes also to exit, visitors have to perform access formalities such as buying a ticket at a train station, demonstrating a perfect example. Such access formalities have a de-socialising effect on the individual (O'Beirne 42). The shared identity of the passenger discussed above is activated upon entering the non-place and vice-versa.

There are further aspects of the ego in the non-place to be considered relevant for the analysis of *Brief Encounter*. Despite Marc Augé's focus on contemporary structures from the sphere of shopping and concepts of advertising, the dynamics described can also be found in this melodrama from the mid of the last century.

In correlation to the construction and reflection of individual identity articulated in a mirror-like process in accordance to the model of Lacan (Evans 117) as well as the individual's confrontation with others, there is a confrontation with the self. This confrontation, reminiscent of the mirror-stage, is achieved by the texts that govern a great part of the non-places of supermodernity. Augé writes that "[a]ssailed by the images flooding from commercial, transport or retail institutions, the passenger in the non-places has the simultaneous experiences of a perpetual present and an encounter with the self" (Augé 1995: 105). There are two aspects of this encounter: the first is realised by a galaxy of advertisement texts. Augé is aware of the power of the image, the idealisation of the individual, when he states that:

Encounter, identification, image: *he* is this well-dressed forty-year-old, apparently tasting ineffable delights under the attentive gaze of a blonde hostess; he is this steady-eyed rally driver hurling his turbo-diesel down some god-forsaken African back-road; and that virile-looking fellow at whom a woman is gazing amorously because he uses toilet water with a wild scent: that is him too.

(Augé 1995: 105)

Encountering the image of an advertisement triggers a process of identification. Thus, a non-place has a double-rail-system for identification. Apart from the encounters passengers have with other passengers, there is the identification provoked by advertising texts. However, in contrast to identification with other travellers, advertisements offer a more stable mirror. Their invariability could even assume the task of providing the individual with a beacon for orientation, suitable for constructing what can be deemed a personal map in order to navigate the solitary corners of individual identity emphasised in a non-place; here Augé provides the example of the supermarket. To Augé, the world of products and their advertisements create what he refers to as “cosmology” (Augé 1995: 106). Consumption here may only seem to play a role of secondary importance but is crucial for the formation of individual identity. What is also of significance here is the act of recognition and identification resulting from it. The world paved with advertising texts is, as Augé puts it, “[...] objectively universal, and at the same time familiar and prestigious” (Augé 1995: 106). Augé goes into detail when he names global brands as what could also be called vocabulary for a lingua franca of the product-universe. This we shall see in the following two quotes.

Augé notices two results from this dynamic of the non-place: identification to the degree of narcissism and recognition (Augé 1995: 106). For the former, Augé writes that

[o]n the one hand, these images tend to make a system; they outline a world of consumption that every individual can make his own because it buttonholes him incessantly. The temptation to narcissism is all the more seductive here in that it seems to express the common law: do as others do to be yourself.

(Augé 1995: 106)

A global identification grid provided by the advertising industry is what Augé appears to be unearthing. The corporate identity of global players in world economy radiating into the field of shared and, according to well paid advertising creative-directors, individual identity. The concept of a hedonistic way of life, propagated so heavily over the past decades, is fully circulated, i.e. promised and affirmed, in the product-discourse of the non-place. Advertising is present in *Brief Encounter* and its effects on the protagonists will be analysed in the analytical chapter.

As far as the second result, recognition, is concerned, Augé writes that “[...] like all cosmologies, this new cosmology produces effects of recognition” (Augé 1995: 106). For Augé, the non-place produces a “paradox” (Augé 1995: 106), as it offers anonymity on the one hand and identification on the other. Augé gives the example of the foreigner lost in a strange place:

[He] can feel at home there only in the anonymity of motorways, service stations, bi stores or hotel chains. For him, an oil company logo is a reassuring landmark; among the supermarket shelves he falls with relief on sanitary, household or food products validated by multinational brand names.

(Augé 1995: 106).

The aspects of anonymity and identification are of vital importance for a love-relationship such as the one in *Brief Encounter*. The two protagonists do not only seek the space offering cover from the relationships outside the non-place, but they also have the longing to identify with one another.

1.4 Language and Dynamics in the Non-Place

Language in non-places is often limited. Some of the purposes for this limitation have been outlined in the sub-chapter on the construction of identity. Communication in *Brief Encounter* does not seem to ignore the different parameters of a non-place.

When we think of non-places such as airports, supermarkets or train stations and the language employed there, we may arrive at the conclusion that it

consists of a rather limited set of syntax and vocabulary. Again, I want to exclude a probable elaborate conversation between two philosophers engaging in a discussion on their topic of choice while waiting for their plane or train to a congress in Vienna, Paris or London. The focus shall be put on the shallow conversation among travellers in a queue or words swapped between the busy minds of a customer and a cashier in a supermarket. What we are likely to notice here is the set of reduced vocabulary mentioned above. This vocabulary in travel can be referred to as “Lingua Franca”, that is, according to the Oxford paperback dictionary, “a language used as a common language between speakers whose native languages are different” (“Lingua Franca” 522). According to Augé, this has not much to do with the dominance of the given third language, but can, in terms of supermodernity and its non-places, more likely be linked to “[...] the invasion of all languages by a universal vocabulary” (Augé 1995: 110).

The emergence of a simplified language has been made necessary by the fact that the spoken word is not the appropriate level of communication in a non-place. The prevalent channels for information flow are the eyes and ears of the individual. Spoken language is only necessary when written discourse fails to reach the consumer. Thus, some cases of cash-transfer or the calculation of combined prices in a supermarket require human-to-human linguistic communication. But travellers in train stations, for example, are pushed towards communication that sees them “interact” with machines that calculate fares and offer opportunities for money transfer. Once more, the analysis of *Brief Encounter* will offer insight into an earlier and less automated stage of railway travel.

The collapse of spoken language contributes to the taste of anonymity and solitude the individual experiences in non-places. Augé arrives at a concept that can be called “rhetorical home”, when he quotes French philosopher Vincent Descombes, who wrote:

Where is the character at home? [...] The character is at home when he is at ease in the rhetoric of the people with whom he shares life. The

sign of being at home is the ability of making oneself understood without too much difficulty [...] A disturbance of rhetorical communication marks the crossing of a frontier, which should of course be envisaged as a border zone, a marchland, rather than a clearly drawn line.

(Descombes qtd. in Augé 1995: 108)

The absence of linguistic and social intelligibility undoubtedly increases the intensity with which the individual perceives the placelessness in a non-place. Legibility may or may not be given amongst two individuals speaking the same language. Here I expand the idea of legibility by trust. The individual will feel even more at home when the language spoken is understood and trusted. The degree of intelligibility and trust found in communication in a non-place underlines the notion of anonymity.

Dichotic pairs help explain the difference between place and non-place and characterise the movement within them. These pairs are of significance for the film analysis as they help interpret the behaviour of characters: interchange – crossroad, transit - residence, passenger - traveller, housing estate - monument and communication - language (Augé 1995: 107).

An airport is what Marc Augé refers to as “interchange” (Augé 1995: 107). The interchange is described as a non-place, where “ [...] nobody crosses anyone else's path” (Augé 1995: 107), as opposed to “ [...] the crossroads (where people meet)” (Augé 1995: 107). Thus, the tight regulations governing an interchange may be a reason for the isolated paths of passengers.

Augé writes that the passenger is “defined by his destination” (ibid), whereas the traveller “strolls along his route” (Augé 1995: 107). The route of the traveller may lead to a number of places to intersect with while the passenger goes from the point of departure to that of arrival. There will be no real stops, no crossing with other places or itineraries. This leads us to the aforementioned pair of interchange - crossroads: the passenger is tied to the former, while the traveller may traverse the latter.

The housing estate is mentioned as an opposite to the monument. Augé

argues, that the former is “[...] where people do not live together and which is never situated in the centre of anything (big estates characterize [sic] the so-called peripheral zones or outskirts)” (Augé 1995: 107f.). The monument, according to Augé, is “[...] where people share and commemorate” (Augé 1995: 108). The subversive character of a secret love-relationship will turn this dichotomy upside down. The peripheral becomes a desired space as it offers the possibility of being together while the relations around a central monumental structure would be woven too tightly to allow for a secret love to surface.

Henri Lefebvre thought about the periphery as a space of passion and desire which he also referred to as 'a space of representation and a lived space' that is “passionate, 'hot', and teeming with sensual intimacies” (Soja 30). The centre, on the other hand, is a conceived representation of space; conceived spaces are “intellectual, abstract, 'cool', distancing (Soja 30). The outskirts of a city can be seen as a kind of non-place once they are the projection of a desire just like a holiday-destination is a non-place for the tourist; these dichotic pairs will be of further interest in the analysis chapter

The concept of the non-place, as a space that is the opposite to place, is considered suitable for the analysis of melodrama. On the one hand, there are dynamics such as the eradication and re-writing of systems of reference, which are also present in melodramatic films, when the protagonist often has to re-evaluate. On the other hand, the analogy of interchange between non-place and place lovers in a film that cannot go on without one another as well as being incapable of fully realizing or articulating their relationship is existent. The non-place is a point of rupture, not only for the above-mentioned reference systems, but for lovers as well.

2. Spatial Concepts similar to the Non-Place

In this chapter I am going to discuss concepts representing attempts in trying to chart space not fully explained by theories on anthropological place. Thus, the topic of this section are concepts that deal with the obverse side of place, sites referred to by Michel Foucault as „counter-sites“ (Foucault 24), i.e. places that cannot be fully grasped by theories investigating the usual place of history, relation and identity. These places can therefore be seen as an alternative concept to the non-place. However, due to their characteristics they might also be considered complementary concepts to that of the non-place. All of them have been published before Augé's non-places.

I consider discussing these concepts important for the analysis aimed at in this paper as they help delineate the non-place. Concepts discussed include Michel Foucault's *heterotopia* and Michel de Certeau's definition of the non-place.

The term non-lieux has its origin in law, where it refers to a case in which the court cannot arrive at a verdict. It can neither decide on a guilty, nor on an innocent party and therefore withdraws the case (Kamuf qtd. in Bosteels 17). Perhaps the application of this term in (legal) space deemed too vague to be judged, has inspired Marc Augé to appropriate it for anthropology. The function of denoting the in-between or, as De Certeau referred to it, the unnameable, has also been dealt with by other scholars. I shall give an outline on a few concepts I consider most relevant for this thesis.

2.2 “Walk with me” or Michel De Certeau's Space of Everyday Life

Michel de Certeau's book *The Practice of Everyday Life* is, next to Marc Augé's work on non-places, among the most important ones for this thesis. In his work, Certeau impressively succeeds in developing a scientific discipline allowing an investigation of what he refers to as “consumer practices”. In order to eliminate the danger of becoming mixed up with terms from consumer studies or economics, it must be explained that Certeau excludes these from the schools

of thought and science. Certeau's concept of a non-place will be outlined next followed by a discussion on the dynamics in urban space, as studied by Michel de Certeau, by elaborating on their relevance for reading the space in *Brief Encounter*.

Certeau, twelve years before Augé, arrived at a concept of a non-place, when he wrote about pedestrians and their articulation of urban space by walking (Certeau 197). To Certeau, a non-place was a place that homed no individuals (a place only traversed by its visitors, but otherwise ignored). Thus, in parallel to the non-place of Augé, we find blank space that offers little for identities to perch on. In *Practice of Everyday Life*, Certeau puts these non-places in a web of stratified places that fulfil a predetermined purpose. Here, the notion of non-place does, structurally speaking, not exclude that of place. In order to navigate the streets of this theory, I am also going to discuss what Certeau wrote on pedestrian speech acts.

Certeau splits up the web of relations governing places and relocates it into the space of pedestrian acts. Space is turned into a consequence of place and the way it is experienced by its visitors or trespassers as it becomes the mere product of experiencing place. As far as the Augéan non-place is concerned, we are facing what I call a reversal in political direction: whereas the Augéan non-places are governed by institutions and blend out, or weaken, systems of references governing surrounding anthropological places, the Certeauian non-place can emerge whenever pedestrians traverse space without articulating it in terms of its reference systems. In a very brief example, the latter can be compared to an un-read book, the pages of which are merely turned for the sake of arriving at its end, for the purpose of transit. Certeau's concept of non-place puts the visitors, or the readers if you will, in the agent position. This comparison puts Certeau near the deconstructivism of Derrida and Barthes. The latter, in his essay titled "Death of the Author", advocates the idea of the reader (in our case, the individual visiting a place, i.e. reading it) as the active member of the writing-reading axes:

The reader is the very space in which are inscribed, without any being

lost, all the citations a writing consists of; the unity of a text is not in its origin, it is in its destination; but this destination can no longer be personal: the reader is a man without history, without biography, without psychology; he is only that someone who holds gathered into a single field all the paths of which the text is constituted.

(Barthes 1974 in Aspen)

The pedestrian walking in space is the reader who decides which reference systems, which set of relations are active in a place, to read or to adhere to. To a considerable degree, the choice of which threads to pull or which references to read is up to the reader (i.e. pedestrian). It can be said of a place that its destination is in its visitors. A place unvisited is a place unarticulated or a text unread. The passage of the individual/the work of the reader brings into being the actual place/the literary text. Much room can be found for this emphasis on the pedestrian in Augé's theory of the non-place. The solitude discussed in the concept can either be seen as one possible interpretation among many - all of which are at the non-place-visitors' disposal – or, on the other hand, solitude can be seen as a mental studio the pedestrians are developing their choices in.

2.2.1 Meander Me- Pedestrian Speech Acts

A brief explanation of how pedestrians operate in urban settings according to Michel de Certeau In his essay titled *Walking in the City*, Certeau developed what he refers to as “pedestrian speech acts” (Certeau 98). The speech act is a term from the discipline of linguistics and was developed by John Austin (1962) and modified by John Searles (1969). Whereas the linguistic speech act theory splits human utterances into layers, locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary, Certeau compares the moves and corresponding decisions of pedestrians, (i.e. speech acts), to rhetorical figures. These include the *present*, the *discrete* and the *phatic*. Certeau links the first of these figures - the present - to the pedestrians wandering through the urban setting. On his way, the pedestrian encounters streets, paths, walls, stairs, possibilities, or obstacles. By this encounter and realisation of givens, things come into existence. Certeau underlines this in the following quote:

“If it is true that a spatial order organizes an ensemble of possibilities

(e.g., by a place in which one can move) and interdictions (e.g. by a wall that prevents one from going further), then the walker actualizes some of these possibilities. In that way, he makes them exist, as well as emerge.”

(Certeau 98).

Here, Certeau links the coming into being, the emerging, and the resulting existence of a spatial given to the rhetorical figure of the *present*.

The rhetorical figure of the discrete is linked to the pedestrian's selective spatial articulations. Certeau explains this by quoting Roland Barthes who said, “[t]he user of a city picks out certain fragments [...] in order to actualize them in secret” (Barthes qtd. in Certeau 98). This, for Certeau, is the *discrete* rhetorical figure mentioned above. It encompasses the Yes and No the pedestrians utter by either frequenting one way, or another.

“He [the pedestrian] thus creates a discreteness, whether by making choices among the signifiers of the spatial “language” or by displacing them by the use he makes of them. He condemns certain places to inertia or disappearance and composes with others spatial “turns of phrase” that are “rare”, “accidental” or illegitimate.”

(Certeau 99)

The phatic rhetorical figure emerges as pedestrians create a spatial continuum by articulating the urban space they frequent. Certeau derives this from the phatic function “isolated by Malinowski and Jakobson, of terms that initiate, maintain, or interrupt contact” (Certeau 99). Through this function, pedestrians create a “phatic topoi” (Certeau 99). Certeau deems this third rhetorical figure fit for describing the pedestrians' moves creating a “here – there” (Certeau 99) dichotomy. The axes of location, together with the figures of present and discrete, accumulate to the pedestrians' picture of frequented places. It can be compared to a bat's vision of a place, built solely on the space “frequented” by its sonar signal, whereas a geographical map represents, with its given limitations, all the space, and all the constructed buildings, roads and pathways in existence.

Given these choices, pedestrians can pass through a place and transform it into

a non-place by ignoring its governing institutions and using everyday ruses Certeau refers to as tactics. These tactics are an opposition to actions exercised by powerful institutions i.e. strategies. Certeau describes them as follows:

“In the technocratically constructed, written and functionali[s]ed space in which the consumers move about, their trajectories form unforeseeable sentences, partly unreadable paths across a space. Although they are composed with the vocabularies of established languages (those of television, newspapers, supermarkets, or museum sequences) and although they remain subordinated to the prescribed syntactical forms (temporal modes of schedules, paradigmatic orders of spaces, etc.), the trajectories trace out the ruses of other interests and desires that are neither determined nor captured by the systems in which they develop.”
(Certeau xviii)

The parallel between pedestrian navigation and linguistic speech act becomes apparent here. Trajectories are routes – or sentences - and the actions of the individual are its operations, or, linguistically speaking, the words and syntax of its sentences. Between the lines formed by these sentences, Certeau senses what he calls “ruses of other interests” (Certeau xviii). These ruses represent the individual's motives outside its assigned political and economic role. As an example, we can think of a group of people using a supermarket as a place for regular meetings; they subvert this place of commerce by altering its purpose.

The ruses Certeau writes about are part of his dichotic concept of strategies versus tactics. This dichotomy covers the clash between the web of governing institutions ruling in a place and the aspirations of individuals traversing it and, thereby, articulating space:

“I call a “strategy” the calculus of force-relationships which becomes possible when a subject of will and power (a proprietor, an enterprise, a city, a scientific institution) can be isolated from an “environment.” A strategy assumes a place that can be circumscribed as proper [...] and thus serve as the basis for generating relations with an exterior distinct from it [...]”
(Certeau xix)

“I call a “tactic”, on the other hand, a calculus which cannot count on a “proper” (a spatial or institutional localization), nor thus on a borderline distinguishing the other as a visible totality. The place of a tactic belongs

to the other. A tactic insinuates itself into the other's place, fragmentarily, without taking it over in its entirety, without being able to keep it at a distance. It has at its disposal no base where it can capitalize on its advantages, prepare its expansions, and secure independence with respect to circumstances."

Certeau (xix)

One is tempted to take into consideration a class conflict, or any other constellation of opposing interests, be it a rebellion of sorts. Space, or, as Certeau refers to, "the proper" (Certeau xix), is the foundation for being in a position of formulating one's own set of rules. The pedestrians do not own this prerequisite and therefore become the arena of a constant struggle between following the fixed set of rules laid out by institutions governing a place and following the routes of their own will. Certeau states that "[t]he "proper" is a victory of space over time" (Certeau xix).

Whereas institutions have their space, the individual pedestrian has to make use of loopholes to make ends meet. Certeau speaks of these loopholes as opportunities. He states that "[...] a tactic depends on time – it is always on the watch for opportunities that must be seized" (Certeau xix). Connecting this to *Brief Encounter*, the train schedule and the ruses of the two protagonists come to mind. There, Alex and Laura write their story between the lines of a weekly repetitive timetable. By applying these ruses, they generate opportunities. Certeau writes that "Whatever it [the tactic – to which the ruse is related like a word to a sentence] wins, it does not keep. It must constantly manipulate events in order to turn them into opportunities" (Certeau xix). A quote fit for finalising this section, after which approximate one third of the stage for analysing the constant struggle of the individual in urban space is now set.

3 - Space in Cultural Studies – Container or Consequence

After having used the former two chapters to provide an outline on what to examine – the non-place - this third section is meant to elaborate on how to look at it. In other words, the non-place unearthed in chapters one and two now needs to be framed in a proper spatial concept.

The third chapter of this thesis is an attempt to provide a concept on space suitable for application in the discipline of Cultural Studies and in the salient and adjacent fields of sociology and geography. The quest for such a concept was initiated from the departing point of the non-place. After finding the concept of *Thirdspace* developed by Edward Soja, Henri Lefebvre's *Production of Space* was the obvious choice. His model of social space seems valid for the analytical work expressed here, using *Brief Encounter*, as the spatiality of its protagonists can be broken down to the layers of space Lefebvre introduced in his work. These are layers upon which Edward Soja based his concept of *Thirdspace*.

Apart from Lefebvre, the decision to include Michel Foucault's model of epistemological space is related and therefore of consequence. The work of Foucault, with its intelligent focus on the dynamics of power and discourse seems like the right tool for carving out an elaborate model of forces at play in the society depicted in *Brief Encounter*.

Nowadays, a prominent on-going discussion is whether space is a container or a consequence. As we shall see in this chapter and in the following ones, the spatial turn in Cultural Studies is best understood and realised by the use of a hybrid concept: an understanding of space that allows for both space as a container, i.e. something static and independent and space as a consequence, i.e. as a quality dependent on the actions carried out by its actors. The dialectic of container space and relational space is crucial for my reading of *Brief Encounter* as the entire film is centred around the love-relationship of Alec and Laura, which is, to a considerable extent, located at a train station. Thus the film offers the container-space train station, meant for public transport, and the emerging, relational space of a hideaway for the two lovers. Whereas the

container concept has validity on the initial level, that of relational space will become more prominent on a more epistemological level.

3.1 *Heterotopias*

The first concept of interest is that of Michel Foucault's *heterotopia*. As given in the essay's title *Of Other Spaces*, *heterotopias* pose a parallel to non-places, since both space categories are meant to propose alternatives, or supplements, to the existing mainstream discourse on places. Heterotopias, according to Foucault "[...] are sites with no real place. They are sites that have a general relation of direct or inverted analogy with the real space of Society" (Foucault 24). Thus, they are not part of societal space in an anthropological way, i.e. meaningful in terms of contextual functionality, but they are mere exceptions in the place-fabric of society.

The only way a non-place, in terms of a place of travel, can be referred to as *heterotopia*, would be as a kind of crises *heterotopia* (please note other transitory spaces such as hospitals, also considered *heterotopias*, are not reflected upon in this thesis). Crisis heterotopias, according to Foucault, are channels of society into which individuals whose current psychological or physical condition makes them less acceptable, are transferred. A non-place such as a train station or an airport can be seen as crisis heterotopia for people who are in a state of temporary homelessness or whose present status leads to social exclusion or stigmatisation. These individuals can either be travellers on a train or on a station platform; or refugees on a return-flight to their country of origin. By using the term 'homelessness', all kinds of homelessness are referred to. The term includes not only the homelessness of poverty-stricken persons without shelter but also the temporary homelessness every travelling person experiences regardless of how many warm homes await them upon their return.

Foucault, in the first principle of the heterotopia, explains that events falling under a certain taboo in society had to take place in such crisis heterotopias. As an example, he mentions the honeymoon trip as, according to Foucault, "[t]he young woman's deflowering could take place "nowhere" and, at the moment of

its occurrence the train or honeymoon hotel became this nowhere, this heterotopia without geographical markers“ (Foucault 24f.).

Although Foucault describes how these heterotopias of crisis are disappearing and heterotopias of deviation are taking their place (Foucault 24f.), the concept still works for the sort of non-place centred in *Brief Encounter*: a non-place of travel. The train station signifies the heterotopia of crisis, the crisis of two lovers leading a secret love-relationship. It is also a heterotopia of deviation as the two lovers are led astray, away from their socially tolerated and perfectly respectable marriages, into their undercover relationship.

Even though the idea that heterotopias are similar to non-places comes within reach, there are differences working against such a hypothesis (ie. differences between a heterotopia and a non-place):

What differences between non-places and heterotopias are there?

“There are also, probably in every culture, in every civilization, real places - places that do exist and that are formed in the very founding of society - 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.”

(Foucault 24)

According to this quote, heterotopias pose as cornerstones in a society of places. They function as intensifiers, reversals and evaluations. Returning to the example of the honeymoon trip above, we encounter a heterotopia that is representative of the social norms governing sites, i.e. real places.

One major difference between heterotopias and non-places is that the former inverts 'real sites', whereas the latter are interruptions in a global web of places. Non-places are, as stated in the preceding chapter, blind spots or radio shadows. The signal of place is weakened though it may never fade out entirely. Nevertheless, the ability of non-places to spectacularise their relational environment is similar to the intensification of places found in heterotopias. The effect of representing the world of places by compressing them is an aspect

common to heterotopias as well as non-places. However, the purpose of this representation is different in both cases. Whereas that of the heterotopia lies in exclusion from society (similar to Foucault's other works on prisons and governments, i.e. *delinquency* and *governmentality*), that of the non-place can be found in intensification fit for quick legibility (i.e. superficiality).

Foucault compares the heterotopia to a mirror. In fact he refers to the mirror as a heterotopia. A mirror is, on the one hand, a utopia for it shows you what does actually not exist. But on the other hand, it is also a heterotopia because it is physically there; its frame and glass and dark background are real. Its inverse vision makes it a heterotopia.

Foucault refers to the mirror as a counteraction to the real world. He sees the mirror as connection between utopia and heterotopia. Thus, the latter is a counteraction to the 'real sites'. Non-places are not counteractions. They are links between anthropological places and they are symptoms of globalisation.

The origin of heterotopias is described when Foucault explains that the crucial aspect of sites up to the medieval ages used to be localisation. However, after Galileo's (re-)discovery of the Earth revolving around the Sun, localisation became the major aspect of a site. This new scientific fact made clear that nothing remained where it was. Arriving at the present, Foucault formulates that "Our epoch is one in which space takes for us the form of relations among sites" (Foucault 23). This statement draws a clear parallel between heterotopias and non-places. In the latter, the reference systems – systems of relations crucial for individuals and institutions navigating and operating the places Foucault refers to as sites (Foucault 23), are weakened. These systems of references, or relations, are explained by Foucault by naming examples as follows:

"One could describe, via the cluster of relations that allows them to be defined, the sites of temporary relaxation -cafes, cinemas, beaches. Likewise one could describe, via its network of relations, the closed or semi-closed sites of rest - the house, the bedroom, the bed [...]"
(Foucault 24)

Neither in opposition, nor next to them, but among these sites Foucault locates his concept of heterotopias. Foucault writes that:

“[...] among all these sites, I am interested in certain ones that have the curious property of being in relation with all the other sites, but in such a way as to suspect, neutralize, or invent the set of relations that they happen to designate, mirror, or reflect. These spaces, as it were, which are linked with all the others, which however contradict all the other sites, are of two main types.”

(Foucault 24)

These two types of sites being the utopia and heterotopia, the former is, as known from the study of literature (Thomas More in 1514) as a place that has “no real place” (Foucault 24). The aspect of inverting real sites can also be found in the latter type mentioned above: heterotopias. Departing from their characteristics previously outlined in this chapter and from the mirror example, it is noteworthy that the heterotopia is capable of letting the individual know about the notion of the absence of the real place. The non-place is capable of conveying a similar notion to its visitors. Whereas the mirror in Foucault's example does so by showing the individual a place it is not present at (Foucault 24) - as the place does not exist, it is a mere mirror-reflection – the non-place does so by over-emphasising contexts of changing scales wherever its visitors are. The resulting superficiality of place “reminds” these visitors of their own actual absence from all places for as long as they linger in a non-place.

Heterotopias in *Brief Encounter* would be found in the cinema scene. A heterotopia often referred to is the hospital where Alec occasionally works as a doctor. However, despite the fact that heterotopias seem to partially grasp the notion of transitory space clearly articulated in the concept of non-place, I conclude that the latter is more appropriate for a description of individuals' subversive dynamics in a space of weakened reference systems.

3.2 The Space of Michel Foucault

I am now going to produce an outline on how and why I want to use Michel Foucault's model of (discursive) space for analysing *Brief Encounter*. Perceived

parallels between his model and the spatial landscape discussed in the analytical chapter will be exemplified. To achieve this goal, the chapter will begin with a discussion of Michel Foucault's epistemological space, which will then culminate in a shift towards a three-dimensional model that will be referred to as episteme. The light used to examine the concept of epistemological space will mostly come from Russell West-Pavlov's work *Space in Theory: Kristeva, Foucault, Deleuze*.

Michel Foucault wrote about the spatialisation of knowledge, language and mind (West-Pavlov 120). His work sheds light on the interrelations between the individual and society, emphasising the spatial aspects of these connections. Apart from a one-to-one focus on discourse, there is, as I mentioned, a strong analogy between Michel Foucault's epistemological space, which will then be developed into an episteme, and space in *Brief Encounter*.

Milestones in the work of Michel Foucault are manifold and include significant achievements in spatial studies, such as his lecture on heterotopias discussed in the previous chapter. At the centre of the current chapter's attention, however, we find the root of Michel Foucault's spatial thought and its connections to cultural studies. The discursive models developed by Foucault shall supply this paper with discursive context and highlight some of the dynamics governing the non-place.

According to Russell West-Pavlov, Foucault's work is marked decisively by an initial focus on what he refers to as "spatial discourse" (West-Pavlov 112), and a subsequent shift to a concept discussed under the term "discursive space" (West-Pavlov 112). West-Pavlov describes the former as "[...] discourses described with the help of an array of spatial metaphors [...]", and the latter as "[...] spaces in which discourses about space interact with physical space in its architectural, urban, institutional forms [...]" (both West-Pavlov 112). Now, establishing a link to the role of space in *Brief Encounter*, there are the following relevant points fit for observation: the discursive space is present when Alec and Laura struggle to find a place for their love and, finally, succumb to the burden of dominant discourse, which does not leave their hearts much room to breathe.

But I am now going to draw a detailed sketch of how I arrive at such a conclusion.

For the relevance of space in Foucault's work West-Pavlov states that space is "[t]he invisible framework which makes literature possible in the first place" and has gone unnoticed by traditional meta-literature (West-Pavlov 119). This statement paves the way for a spatial analysis of literature in its widest sense: in the sense of written as well as audio-visual texts. For Foucault, a character in a literary text could be analysed as a space of its own. Others have thought so too, as West-Pavlov shows when he cites author Alessandro Barrico, who states about his own novel *City* " [...] The stories are districts, the characters are streets." (West-Pavlov 119). West-Pavlov goes on to stating that Barrico tells the reader "[to] conceive of a sub-plot as a district, and not as a strand in a thread, that we imagine characters as spaces, not as points moving along a line" (West-Pavlov 119). Finally, in Barrico West-Pavlov already finds a strong connection to Foucault's discursive spaces: he states about Barrico's work that it " [...] may be hinting at the city itself as a generator of stories, as the matrix out of which literature, especially in its modernist and post-modernist avatars (viz. Joyce [...]) arises" (West-Pavlov 119). What we find emphasised here is the idea of space as a carrier for literature, a layer underneath or behind the text, and space as a narrative itself.

3.2.1 Epistemological Space

It can be said that, departing from the point of the study of literature, Michel Foucault saw context, the absolute surrounding of the written text, as vital for understanding the role of space when it comes to language, thought and knowledge (i.e. discourse). Before going into detail on spatial discourse, it is advisable to take a brief look at the definition of these three factors.

Language, to begin with, is what is the appearing signal in the act of communication. Thought is the act of processing material in the mind, either for further contemplation or for uttering via language in the mind. It is the applied form of the third factor, knowledge: knowledge is the core for thought. And

thought, to remain inside the mine-metaphor, is the cave bringing knowledge to the surface, where one of its dominant appearances is in the form of language.

For Foucault, the analysis of language, thought and knowledge was carried out on a one-dimensional level. As mentioned above, the analysis of literature used to examine a plot or a narrative as a linear development, a movement from A to B. Thus, the spatiality itself was lacking. Foucault, however, unearthed interrelations, referred to as practices between language, thought and knowledge. West-Pavlov named them “mutually enabling social practices” (West-Pavlov 120). These practices consist of “practices”, “power relations” and “material spatial environments” (During 1992: 1-23 qtd. in West-Pavlov 120). These mutually enabling social practices are fertile soil for a regulatory mechanism of social, political and economical dimensions. Foucault named this mechanism the “dispositif” (“apparatus”) (West-Pavlov 120). The space within which these processes are taking place is labelled “epistemological space” (West-Pavlov 120).

3.2.2 The Border / the Limit – Ruptures in Discourse

When he begins to write about madness, the notion of inside and outside gains importance in Foucault's concept of space. To Foucault, madness was a discourse located outside the dominant field of ideas. The concept of inside/outside is mirrored in the dichotomy of dominant discourse and excluded (or suppressed) discourse. Throughout his career, Foucault has dealt with the inside and outside, the dominating ideas and the suppressed currents underneath. It comes as no surprise that the concept of the border perfectly frames the area of interest for linking the given spatial concept to the non-place. Because putting a border to a thing, or a concept, puts the observer in the position of being able to relativize the object of interest. West-Pavlov put it this way “To bracket thought was to frame it but also to relativize it, and thus to set it to one side so as to regard it from a different perspective. His [Foucault's] bracketing instrument was the notion of the limit” (West-Pavlov 121). The limit is useful for locating the individual or an entity. In *History of Madness*, Foucault describes the identity-declaring and delineating function of the limit as follows:

“We could write a history of limits – of those obscure gestures, necessarily forgotten as soon as they are accomplished, through which a culture rejects something which for it will be the Exterior; and throughout its history, this hollowed-out void, this white space by means of which it isolates itself, identifies it as clearly as its values.
(Foucault 2006 xxix qtd. in West-Pavlov 123)

West-Pavlov puts it this way:

“An element gains its identity from its place in a system, and that place is constructed negatively, via its contrast with those neighbouring slots. The limit, the border is thus what defines identity no less than some putative core or essence”
(West-Pavlov 123)

Taking a look out of the window, or simply into today's news, we can find clear parallels to contemporary politics: migration laws, geopolitical conflict. These issues are matters of space and of identity. They are also a matter of inclusion and exclusion of individuals or concepts from a dominant system. This initial political aspect of Foucault's epistemological space finds a highly accurate realisation in *Brief Encounter*, where Alec and Laura find their love relationship threatened by outside forces, i.e. the dominant discourses of their social settings.

The limit discussed implies the end of one and the emergence of another idea. In a very physical manner, we can project this idea on to urban space: the limit of one place implies the beginning of another. This border, this change in discourse is, according to Foucault, never achieved in an entirely peaceful atmosphere. West-Pavlov underlines this by quoting Foucault's following lines: “What is found at the historical beginning of things is not the inviolable identity of their origin; it is the dissension of other things.” (Faubion ed. 1998: 371f. Qtd. in West-Pavlov 124). West-Pavlov goes on quoting Foucault who wrote that “emergence designates a place of confrontation [...] no one is responsible for an emergence; no one can glory in it, since it always occurs in the interstice” (Faubion ed. 1998: 377 qtd. in West-Pavlov 125).

3.2.3 Conditions of Discourse, a Third Dimension

Down to here, the Foucauldian model of epistemological space has shown an emphasis on the diachronic aspect of discourse. However, Foucault does add a synchronic dimension. This dimension represents the “synchronic conditions of possibility of knowledge at any given moment in time” (West-Pavlov 125). What we need to imagine here, is a web with more physical factors. These factors form “a framework or grid which made a concept conceivable or a notion thinkable at all in any certain epoch” (West-Pavlov 125). Thus, apart from the social mores surfacing in *Brief Encounter*, we need to take into account structural factors as well. The spatiality of the love relationship between Alex and Laura, with all the supporting and opposing discourse around it, finds architectural analogies in the urban (train station, cinema, park, boat house) and sometimes rural (river, bridges) scenes. The epistemological space of Michel Foucault is a useful tool when breaking down non-places and their neighbouring places into a bundle of inter-human dynamics. I am now going into detail on how Foucault arrived at his three-dimensional model of epistemological space.

The model is derived from Foucault's description of nineteenth century thought, which he saw as “a volume of space open in three dimensions” (Foucault 2004: 378f. in West-Pavlov 130). This model became necessary as the development of ideas from that historical area seemed to change from a linear movement into a rhizome-like structure. The third dimension already mentioned in the section on epistemological space will factor in at this point in time. This third dimension is the precondition for discourse. Whereas discourse, with its bandwidth, can be imagined as a two-dimensional plateau, the precondition of interest here can be seen as the altitude, or the terrain this plateau is born in. West-Pavlov refers to it as “sayability” (West-Pavlov 131). West-Pavlov paints a relatively clear picture of a figurative model in the following quote:

“These stretches of [...] discourse can be imagined as two-dimensional surfaces in which many different discourses knit together to form an episteme. These discourses are sustained by similar underlying assumptions. The episteme has the form of a plateau stretching through time, for as long as [a] century or two, not for ever. At some point comes

an abrupt cliff or ravine which marks the end of the episteme.”
(West-Pavlov 131)

This three-dimensional model is a very compatible one for the concept of the non-place. Analysing this phenomenon via the Foucauldian episteme allows us to take into account the relevant framework outlined by Marc Augé (i.e. supermodernity with its three figures of overabundance). Following is an outline of how to put the non-place into the episteme previously explained.

If we take the model of Michel Foucault's episteme and project it into urban space, we can draw clear analogies for an analytical investigation. The non-places of supermodernity can be compared to the ruptures mentioned in the explanation of the above episteme. The continuum of dominant discourses is represented in the places surrounding, and separated by, the non-places. Resulting from the non-place taking on the role of the rupture in discourse, it is possible to analyse the non-place not only as a barrier between two places, but also as a nexus between dominant discourses. Aside from being a place of transit for people and a crossroad for travellers, the non-place becomes a discourse vacuum, despite it not being completely void of discourse. There are rules and perceptions in every non-place. Therefore, I consider it more appropriate to compare the 'atmosphere' of the non-place to interplanetary space.

Every planet has its gravitational rules articulated in a forcefield: the farther away one moves from a celestial body like the Earth, the weaker this forcefield becomes. On an itinerary to a neighbouring planet, the gravitational field of the Earth would become weaker, until finally blending out, while the forcefield of the next planet might already have come into play. Thus, just as there probably never is a total gap of energy in interplanetary space, there is hardly ever an interstice between places that is totally free of the rules, or systems of reference, of the anthropological settings at play in the places surrounding it. However, the third dimension in Foucault's episteme is highly useful in analysing the currents intermingling in a non-place, i.e. in a rupture between two places.

The episteme outlined above has found its emphasis in being applied in literary studies. Russell West-Pavlov explains as follows:

“Why the privileged focus upon literature? Because of literature's innate affinity with discursive space and its recasting. Literature, it would seem, is a seismograph for language both as a system of rules, conditions of possibility (langue), and as the body of statements which emerge (parole).”

(West-Pavlov 136)

The scope of this paper is a film analysis. But the episteme of Foucault, as will be demonstrated, can easily be adapted for this purpose. When West-Pavlov explains the use in studies of literature, he does so by referring to language. Language, for a literary text, can be compared to the lines drawn by a painter in order to achieve completion. When it comes to film, visuals are added to the language. Thus, we have language and the perception of space. Therefore we need to apply the episteme not only to what is said or written, but also, and foremost, to the spatial script of the story.

3.2.4 Space as Language

Language, according to West-Pavlov, “[...] is the ideal indicator for rifts and ruptures in the episteme” (West-Pavlov 136). In this paper, space is treated as a language of sorts, although the properties of language defined by George Yule (Yule 19ff.) are not fully realised in it. This being a precondition for applying the episteme by Foucault to filmic space, there are but a few parallels that need to be drawn between language and space. The three above-mentioned characteristics of language - the system of rules, the conditions of possibility and a body of statements emerging (Yule 19ff.) – can be found in space. A system of rules is given in the three dimensions of space. Another rule is the presence of a here and there. Then, as shown by Michel De Certeau (Certeau 98), there are the conditions of possibility which find their articulation in the architectural or natural, structures present in space, predetermining the individual's possible itineraries and already outlining the probability of movements, developments and consequences (i.e. places). The body of emerging statements has also been formulated by Michel De Certeau (Certeau

98) under the heading of “pedestrian speech acts” (Certeau 98).

Once more we encounter the question of space being either container for or consequence of social interaction. On the one hand, we have the rules of space and the given natural and architectural structures predetermining the possible actions. On the other hand, there is the articulation of space so heavily referred to by Certeau, who wrote about the pedestrians: “Their intertwined paths give their shape to spaces. They weave places together. [...] They are not localized; it is rather they that spatialise” (Certeau 97). Therefore, we have the articulating and producing quality of the individual in space versus the predetermining character of space itself. These two threads woven together result in what has been called discourse on the previous pages. In the film analysis it will be of interest to investigate the itineraries of individuals in the light of the conditions of discourse found in the given settings.

3.2.5 Instead of a Puppet Master - the Dispositif

One final aspect in Michel Foucault's theories of interest for the given paper is that of the dispositif. I have discussed the conditions of discourse and the outside of language, knowledge and thought, all adding up to a three-dimensional model of discourse and its space. However, one crucial factor in Michel Foucault's teachings has been left out: power.

In order to fully grasp the complete set of power relations at play in society at a certain point and place in time, as well as the all-encompassing notion of mechanisms at play, that fulfil the task of navigating the course of individuals and other entities alike, Michel Foucault coined the term dispositif. During my attempt at *Brief Encounter*, the concept of the dispositif was helpful for screening levers working inside, as well as outside the minds of the protagonists. Thus, the work of the dispositif as a set of controlling mechanisms can be witnessed in terms of structure and, as I expand the scope of the dispositif by dominant social mores, mentality. In order to convey the gist of the concept, I am going to discuss what Russell West-Pavlov wrote, following Michel Foucault's work about the dispositif. The latter's description of the

dispositif is quoted as follows:

“[...] a thoroughly heterogeneous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions [...] The apparatus itself is the system of relations that can be established between these elements.”

(Foucault qtd. in West-Pavlov 149)

The dispositif can be seen as a bias in the law of probability governing the ways of individuals and institutions, whereas that bias is determined by the factors named as parts of the ensemble in the quote above. Thus, the dispositif will influence what is said and done at a certain point and place in time. As far as the structure of the dispositif is concerned, West-Pavlov defines it as something immediate when he describes it as:

“[...] something which does not pre-exist its own functioning. It is not a thing, but a dynamic which comes into play through the manner in which the elements, as process, as events, work together and work upon each other”

(West-Pavlov 150).

By now we already know about the impalpable nature of the actual dispositif. However, there are certain material realisations of its outcome. An example provided by Foucault and West-Pavlov is that of madness (West-Pavlov 151): the 'invention' of madness allowed for the mad to be assigned a position, or a location within society that did not question the latter, but rather confirm it. The space given to the mad was the asylum. The same can be said of criminals and delinquency, as can be read in Foucault's 1975-work *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (English translation published 1977). The dispositif in these cases is neither the prison, nor the asylum. It is the combined forces and reactions at play in both fields. The concept of the dispositif helps explain and analyse the turning points and the mental and physical itineraries of Alec and Laura in *Brief Encounter*. The love relationship between the two is something that the dominant discourse will not tolerate assigning its location into a point of rupture - a non-place. In the analysis, I am outlining spaces where the dispositif can be measured. I am now going to turn your attention to space as a

consequence, i.e. space as a product, a model developed by Henri Lefebvre.

3.3 Henri Lefebvre - Social Space / The Production of Space

Henri Lefebvre's model of the production of social space represents a cultural idea of space: Space as something that never comes to a halt; something that is always reinventing itself, or reinvented by others without the full or total awareness of its authors: space as consequence and, therefore, as practice.

French sociologist Henri Lefebvre outlines his concept of space and processes relevant for its perception and conception in *The Production of Space*. Lefebvre's concept of space requires three “facets” as Gayle Letherby and Gillain Reynolds wrote (Letherby and Reynolds 30). These are “imagined representations of space; representation of space such as those mediated through advertising, and the experienced 'real' space” (Letherby and Reynolds 31). Whereas Letherby and Reynolds consider these 3 factors preconditions for the concept of place, I regard Henri Lefebvre's focus on the practical aspect of space to be of similar interest for the present paper.

The practical aspect is clearly outlined in what can be perceived as the main proposition in his work: “(Social) space is a (social) product” (Lefebvre 26). This already is a strong beacon lighting the way towards the significance of practices written about by Michel de Certeau (1988) and the Practical Turn in cultural studies. In order to give an outline of Henri Lefebvre's concept of space and social space, and discussing the relevant concept of relational space, I would like to briefly highlight details on some quotations taken from the introduction and the chapter on social space in *The Production of Space*.

In the introductory chapter of his book, Lefebvre takes us through a quick journey across theories on (the perception of) space. Lefebvre begins with Descartes, who “[...] had brought to an end the Aristotelian tradition which held that space and time were among those categories which facilitated the naming and classing of the evidence of senses” (Lefebvre 1). He writes that

“[w]ith the advent of Cartesian logic, however, space had entered the realm of the absolute. As Object opposed to Subject, as *res extensa* opposed to, and present to, *res cogitans*, space came to dominate, by containing them, all senses and all bodies.”

(Lefebvre 1)

Space, in accordance to what has been quoted here, was a frame for perception and action. Space was above and outside of what mankind achieved, because it was always present and did not disappear when Descartes or Leibniz shut their eyes at night. Thus, space was imagined as a fixed container for human interaction.

However, the notion of space necessary for Lefebvre's concept of produced space is one of practices and of knowledge. He attributes the invention of mental space for knowledge to the scientific domain of epistemology. Here is how Lefebvre arrives at a space for knowledge. Nevertheless, he criticises epistemological thought for having

“[...] eliminated the 'collective subject', the people as creator of a particular language, as carrier of specific etymological sequences. It has set aside the concrete subject, that subject which took over from a name-giving god. It has promoted the impersonal pronoun 'one' as creator of language in general, as creator of the system.”

(Lefebvre 4)

According to this quote, what Henri Lefebvre misses is the people being considered a productive force in the production of meaning - and of space. The discourse of production and of Marxist theory, such as base and superstructure, are present in Lefebvre's concept of social space. Production as such, as the manufacturing of goods for sale, bears the taste of Marxism and is articulated when Lefebvre outlines the characteristics of (social) space. On the one hand, he sees the dichotomy of the product and the work, which is later used to describe natural and social space, while on the other hand, he also defines the relevance of property and ideological superstructures. Allow me to first draw your attention to the dual theme of product: work.

Henri Lefebvre proposes a dichotic concept of space: it is a dichotomy between

natural and produced space. In order to outline this concept, Henri Lefebvre elaborates on it by drawing on the aforementioned analogy to the dichotic relation between the production of a product and the achievement of a work. He arrives at this by tracing the term *production* to Marx and Engels and embedding it into his own thought (Lefebvre 69).

“Humanity, which is to say social practice, creates works and produces things. In either case labour is called for, but in case of works the part played by labour (and by the creator qua labourer) seems secondary, whereas in the manufacture of products it predominates.”

(Lefebvre 71)

Lefebvre writes that “[t]here is nothing, in history or in society, which does not have to be achieved and produced” (Lefebvre 68). When it comes to what Lefebvre refers to as “the production of space” (Lefebvre 68), the author encounters the slight dilemma of clearly defining the meaning of the term *production*. Lefebvre launches an attempt at parsing (i.e. semantically narrowing) the term, since he sees it having been used in ways distant from the meaning given by Marx and Engels. Lefebvre traces the term *production* back to the meaning of referring to a process, in which goods or products are created. These products are things that are not unique.

For Lefebvre, space was natural space before mankind inflicted the weight and consequences of civilization, with all its industrial progress, on it. This natural space has, over the course of human development of the past centuries or even millennia, been transformed into what Lefebvre deems a “[...] subordinate feature” (Lefebvre 83). He goes on as he states that “[i]nversely, the social character of space - the social relations it implies, contains and dissimulates - has begun visibly to dominate” (Lefebvre 83). Thus, according to Henri Lefebvre, all space has become social space.

To further elaborate on qualities of Lefebvre's space, I want to return to the figure of “product versus work” mentioned above. There is an illustrative analogy to this dichotic relation. Lefebvre states that, “[...] whereas a work has something irreplaceable and unique about it, a product can be reproduced

exactly, and is in fact the result of repetitive acts and gestures” (Lefebvre 70). This repetitive character represents one half of the notion of space at play in Lefebvre's work. To the French sociologist, the idea of the work and the concept of the product represent the dichotic structures observable when examining what he refers to as social space. The architecture of a metropolis offers much of what we would categorise, in accordance to Lefebvre's model, as 'repetitive space'. The similarities among industrial structures, the identical knots in a web of infrastructure, transport and countless objects determined in their qualities by what we understand as corporate identity, be it either architectural or ideological, accumulate to repetitive space.

Space, for Lefebvre, is a web of relations among things, objects, or even persons, within the boundaries of that spatial unit. These boundaries may not always be clearly defined, but they do exist. The model of social space provided by Lefebvre does not refer to vertical borders delineating that social space. Lefebvre states that “[...] the worldwide does not abolish the local” (Lefebvre 86). Thus, many of the changes that might occur in space (and time) do not always need to erase the hitherto dominant or present concept or meaning of a space. Changes may simply add a new layer to the horizontal structure of a social space. Using the term layer may evoke association to the domain of geology. But Lefebvre states that:

“Social spaces interpenetrate one another and / or superimpose themselves upon one another. They are not things, which have mutually limiting boundaries and which collide because of their contours or as a result of inertia. Figurative terms such as 'sheet' and 'stratum' have serious drawbacks: being metaphorical rather than conceptual, they assimilate space to things and thus relegate its concept to the realm of abstraction. Visible boundaries, such as walls or enclosures in general, give rise for their part to an appearance of separation between spaces where in fact what exists is an ambiguous continuity.”

(Lefebvre 86f.)

What appears to be of vital importance to an understanding of Lefebvre's notion of social space is its continuous quality. This means that no clear boundaries can be pointed out. But still it should not be difficult for an individual moving in this social space to figure out, what layer or part of it he or she is in right now.

The different aspects of social space are expected to be perceived easily. Lefebvre's rejection of metaphor or abstraction seems to be fuelled by the continuous quality. This stance, however, comes to a slight halt when he presents another analogy to his readers:

“A much more fruitful analogy, it seems to me, may be found in hydrodynamics, where the principle of the superimposition of small movements teaches us the importance of the roles played by scale, dimension and rhythm. Great movements, vast rhythms, immense waves - these collide and 'interfere' with one another; lesser movements, on the other hand, interpenetrate. If we were to follow this model, we would say that any social locus could only be properly understood by taking two kinds of determinations into account: on the one hand, that locus would be mobilized, carried forward and sometimes smashed apart by major tendencies, those tendencies which 'interfere' with one another; on the other hand, it would be penetrated by, and shot through with, the weaker tendencies characteristic of networks and pathways.”

(Lefebvre 87)

Lefebvre's model of space here firstly shows linkage to what this paper is interested in: the pathways and networks in space. Inherent in the model described above is, once more, the important notion of blurred or fuzzy, but nevertheless highly functional, boundaries within social space. The hydrodynamic model provided can be compared to spatial boundaries in language, of which I have been taught the following in my university education: taking a look at the Romanic languages in Europe, excluding Romania, we find, in a macro view, clearly distinct regions where the dominant language is either Italian, Spanish or French. On a micro level, however, the borders between these languages would become less clear, revealing a continuum of gradual alterations similar to that of social space described above.

Concluding the chapter on space, there is a tendency towards the school of regarding space as a consequence, rather than a container. Space, judging by Lefebvre's work, has lost its container-qualities by gaining the attribute *social*, thereby building its foundation within the field of human actions and interactions, i.e. on consequences of these two.

Michel Foucault's spatial model is full of dynamics and regulatory mechanisms

that help explain the decisions and itineraries chosen by individuals moving in, predominantly urban, space. However, from what we have learned in Michel de Certeau's pedestrian speech acts, space can function as a predeterminer for actions of and interactions among individuals. In order to further examine the points of contact between space as a container and social space as a consequence, and to approach our surveying point for the film analysis, the acting individual and its interactions with other actors and a surrounding will be of interest in the next chapter. Now our focus will shift to the identity of the actors.

4 – *Thirdspace* and Identities

The current chapter will provide an overview on concepts of identity the thesis resorts to in order to investigate the construction of the manifold identities of individuals visiting or, in case of a longer stay, inhabiting a non-place. I am making use of the plural-form identities here because, as known from Homi K. Bhabha (1994) and his work on *hybridity*, one individual may be operating on several layers, each constituting an identity. The double/multi-sidedness of identity is due to its two main functions: to define the individual, to keep it separate from others and to define the group (Mathews 17). Concepts of floating identities, such as Homi Bhabha's *hybridity* and *Thirdspace* by Edward Soja, are highly compatible to the world of travel and transport encountered in non-places. Departing from a cultural studies view on identity-concepts, I am going to arrive at, what I hope to be, a sufficiently complete outline of the identity of the traveller. In doing so, I have no intention to explicitly exclude the tourist. However, emphasis will be given to the act of travel as a mere progression from location A to destination B and therefore, tourism as such might be found in the very background of the issues discussed on these pages.

Despite the brilliance of the concept of the location of culture and the Homi Bhabha's *Third Space*, I deem a different route towards the concept of the non-place more adequate. The urban, modern and European context of *Brief Encounter* has led me to the conclusion that the identity structures, i.e. the negotiation of identity in a non-place, can be best described with the help of a concept developed by a scholar from the discipline of geography: Edward Soja and his concept of *Thirdspace*. The wealth in references found in the non-place is likely to trigger a cascade of identity-negotiations that leads up to a strong notion of ambiguity or ambivalence. In examining this multitude of factors at play I have found valuable thermal lift in *Thirdspace*, as it is a concept re-evaluating the reception of space by the individual. I consider this point of perception as an event horizon where not only space is defined by its viewers or articulators but identities are negotiated as well. Therefore, *Thirdspace*, with its *Trialectics of Space* (more later in this chapter) will become the main pillar for my discussion of identity-construction.

When Edward Soja discusses human beings and their operations/navigations in space, he employs the term “social spatiality” (Soja 1996). The term “spatiality”, with the inflectional suffix “-ty” indicating the word-class of adjectival nouns, puts the question of space where it truly belongs: inside our heads. Space, in Soja's work, is created in the act of perception. This puts *Thirdspace* in the corner of the “space as consequence, rather than a container”-faction.

4.1 - *Thirdspace* – Space of Choices

“I use the concept of *Thirdspace* [...] to highlight what I consider to be the most interesting new ways of thinking about space and social spatiality [...]. In its broadest sense, *Thirdspace* is a [...] term that attempts to capture what is actually a constantly shifting and changing milieu of ideas, events, appearances and meanings.”

(Soja 3)

Thirdspace as a concept grasps the choice performed by the individual when navigating space. Navigation here is not limited to the mere bodily movement in physical space. Dynamics include perceiving and pondering space confronted with in either physical or theoretical context. *Thirdspace*, according to Soja, is a term referring to a floating matter: an idea, an event, a meaning. For Soja, *Thirdspace* is an answer to the question of postmodernism. While he argues that most have used the emergence of postmodernism either to abandon ideas of modernism, or to reaffirm them, he vows to venture into new answers (Soja 4) and overcome dichotomies. Soja sees *Thirdspace* as an inclusive “both/and also logic” (Soja 5) and not as an exclusive mechanism. This mechanism, as I am going to show in this chapter and in the subsequent analysis, is capable of encompassing the negotiation of identities in the non-place.

During the course of this chapter, I will be providing an overview on the layers of the concept of *Thirdspace*, including *Firstspace* and *Secondspace*. In order to meaningfully combine these layers and understand the dynamics within this concept, I am then going to fathom Soja's theory of *Trialectics of Being* and sociality. Finally, Soja's idea of Thirling as Othering and linking the concept of

Thirdspace to the negotiation of identity in a non-place such as the train station in *Brief Encounter* will come full circle.

4.1.1 – *Firstspace*, *Secondspace* and *Thirdspace* – Parallels to Lefebvre's Social Space, an Antecedent to *Thirdspace*

Encountering the term *Thirdspace*, the first question coming to mind is “Why third?” What about first and second space? Consulting the work of Edward Soja, we encounter the terms *Firstspace* and *Secondspace*, which are exemplary of Soja's strong link to Henri Lefebvre's three-layer concept of social space (Lefebvre 39). *Thirdspace* is fully rooted in Lefebvre's theory on social space being comprised of three different layers:

“[...] what I think Lefebvre was writing about in the thematic “Plan” of *The Production of Space* fugue: a trialectics of spatiality, of spatial thinking, of the spatial imagination that echoes from Lefebvre's interweaving incantation of three different kinds of spaces: the *perceived* space of materialized Spatial Practice, the *conceived* space he defined as Representations of Space; and the *lived* Spaces of Representation (translated into English as “Representational Spaces”).
(Soja10)

All of the three layers mentioned in the quotation are plays performed on a stage in the human mind and, therefore, their conceived nature cannot be concealed. But in the model of Edward Soja perceived space is the physical sphere filled with objects we encounter throughout our lives, i.e. perceived space is the physical world as we know it. Lefebvre referred to this layer of space as Spatial Practice (Lefebvre 38). To him, it represented the analytical perception of space by a society:

“The spatial practice of a society secretes that society's space; it propounds and presupposes it, in a dialectical interaction; it produces it slowly and surely as it masters and appropriates it. From the analytic standpoint, the spatial practice of a society is revealed through the deciphering of its space.”
(Lefebvre 38)

Lefebvre's strong bias towards spatial theories understood as analysis and

deciphering of space by a society is echoed in Soja performing a brief excursion into epistemologies, naming a few scientific disciplines engaging in the study of *Firstspace* (Soja 73ff.). Soja mentions the dominance of *Firstspace* epistemologies which has finally been overcome during modernity and postmodernity.

Firstspace, the space of real objects, is the least abstract layer in Soja's concept. The term is employed for reference to physical space: physical space being, e.g. a door in a room, the walls surrounding that room and the landscape outside it - spatial features encompassed by the term *Firstspace*. In case of a non-place such as a train station, the station building, with all its rails, lights, pillars, posts and signs, would represent *Firstspace*. Let us picture *Firstspace* as the bottom and material layer of a three-tier model of space.

The treatment of *Firstspace* by mankind is taking place on an epistemological level. As stated by Soja in the following quotation, thinking about *Firstspace* is one mere step for the individual in realising its own spatiality:

“*Firstspace* epistemologies and ways of thinking have dominated the accumulation of spatial knowledge for centuries. They can be defined as focusing their primary attention on the “analytical deciphering” of what Lefebvre called Spatial Practice or perceived space, a material and materialized “physical” spatiality that is directly comprehended in empirically measurable configurations : in the absolute and relative locations of things and activities, sites and situations; in patterns of distribution, designs and the differentiation of a multitude of materialized phenomena across spaces and places; in the concrete and mappable geographies of our lifeworlds, ranging from the emotional and behavioural space “bubbles” which invisibly surround our bodies to the complex spatial organisation of social practices that shape our “action spaces” in households, buildings, neighborhoods, villages, cities, regions, nations, states, the world economy, and global geopolitics.”
(Soja 74f.)

According to Soja, there are two main streaks of reading *Firstspace* knowledge. One that deals with “the accurate description of surface appearances (an indigenous mode of spatial analysis), and the other which searches for spatial explanation in primarily exogenous social, psychosocial,

and biophysical processes” (Soja 75). The second level already contains a strong drive regarding identity formation. However, *Firstspace* is more of a level for scientists and artists, and not yet for the individual as such.

Secondspace, by definition of Edward Soja, is what Lefebvre referred to as Conceived Space. Thus, this second layer of space comprised out of abstract thoughts and ideas of space corresponds to Lefebvre's concept of Representations of Space, whereas, as seen in the following quotation, the French scholar attributed his idea of this spatial layer more to science itself, than Soja did years later:

“[C]onceputualized space, the space of scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers and social engineers, as of a certain type of artist with a scientific bent – all of whom identifying what is lived and what is perceived with what is conceived.”

(Lefebvre 38f.)

Apart from the discourse of scientists, planners and other scholars mentioned above, *Secondspace* is also home of the discourse on the “essence of space” (Soja 79) and on space being either a container, or a consequence or, as Soja put it: “whether it is “absolute” or “relative” and “relational,” abstract or concrete, a way of thinking or a material reality.” (Soja 79) This still leaves out a level of discourse capable of analysing any probability of the individual dealing with its own spatiality.

Briefly summing up this section, *Firstspace* and *Secondspace* are both levels of discourse concerned with the description of space as it is perceived and conceived by humankind. These two levels and their hard-to-ignore proximity to the school of Henri Lefebvre leads us to the question of what level is best fit for an examination of how the individual is actually interacting with its surrounding space, be it of physical or mental nature? In order to cope with this challenge, Lefebvre inserted a third layer in his model of social space, thereby laying the foundation stone for Edward Soja's *Thirdspace*. Lefebvre states that Representational space is:

“[...] space as directly lived through its associated images and symbols, and hence of 'inhabitants' and 'users', but also of some artists and perhaps of those, such as a few writers and philosophers, who describe and aspire to do no more than describe. This is documented – and hence passively experienced – space which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate.

(Lefebvre 39)

The point Lefebvre is driving at here, is that the images and symbols provided by the spatialisations mentioned regarding *Firstspace* and *Secondspace* are finally applied by the individual in any way possible. The acting individual - every individual - is turned into an author of space. Lefebvre goes on stating that:

“This is the dominated – and hence passively experienced – space which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate. It overlays physical space, making symbolical use of its objects. Thus representational space may be said, though again with certain exceptions, to tend towards more or less coherent systems of non-verbal symbols and signs.”

(Lefebvre 39)

The appropriation of space by the individual is the final practical stage of Lefebvre's model of social space. The symbolical use mentioned in the quote above is the mere handwriting of that individual, using the existing symbols in space as ink. The non-verbalism given above may point towards a spatialisation of symbols and symbolisation of space. The actual code is elevated from the two-dimensional scripture of writing to the three-dimensional architecture of space with a meaning – place.

Representational Space, the third layer in Lefebvre's concept of social space, is the consequence of the eventful confrontation between *Firstspace* and *Secondspace* epistemologies with the acting individual. Representational Space represents an action performed by the individual. This action is the choice constantly made by the individual in order to navigate *Firstspace*, thereby resorting to the rich tools of *Secondspace*. Here is a very simple and straightforward example: a person in a room is a person in *Firstspace* (the room). The fact that this person knows about being in the room is also attributed

to *Firstspace* knowledge as it is perception. If this person, however, knows in what kind of room it is, be it a bathroom, a bedroom or a lecture hall, this mind has arrived in *Secondspace*. The room is perceived as a room, but it is conceived as a room of a specific purpose. In the case of *Brief Encounter*, I am thinking of the very beginning, Laura's second scene in the film, when she enters the refreshment room and her *Secondspace* knowledge already told her about it being a refreshment room by the very likely interpretation of the sign outside. However, Laura entering the refreshment room and, knowing about its conception of providing beverages and snacks and space to consume them in to the customers, asks for a glass of water to clean her eyes. This request, being out of the actual beverage and snack scope of services offered by the refreshment room's services, is a good example of Representational Space. Laura is performing a choice. It is neither revolutionary in character, nor innovative in its spatiality, but still her appropriation of the refreshment room. It is, as we shall later see, an example of Laura's *Thirdspace*.

Edward Soja's *Thirdspace* is an evolved version of Representational Space. Whereas Lefebvre's concept grasps the epistemological dimension, i.e. describes levels of thought on human spatiality, *Thirdspace* is a theory emphasising the ontological aspect of space (Soja 81). This ontological bias allows for the scope of *Thirdspace* to become a looking glass oscillating between past, present and future and to create a level of spatiality that can draw on *Firstspace* and *Secondspace* and the consciousness and thought of the individual in order to explain the influence of the former two on the latter. *Thirdspace*, as compared to Representational Space, has a more simultaneous momentum. This notion of simultaneity moves *Thirdspace* into the vicinity of the non-place and the supermodernity, with its collapsing references and its bundles of excess, described by Augé. The divide between time and space is overcome by Soja when he refers to Joseph Frank's work on Marcel Proust in *Spatial Form in Modern Literature*:

“To experience the passage of time, Proust had learned, it was necessary to rise above it and to grasp both past and present simultaneously in a moment of what he called “pure time.” But “pure time,” obviously, is not time at all – it is perception in a moment of time,

that is to say, space.”

(Frank qtd. in Soja 81)

In the quotation above we see what Soja means by simultaneity: An overload of temporal perception resulting in the spatialisation of events and possibilities. According to Soja, Lefebvre once referred to the city itself as a “possibilities machine” (Soja 81).

The parallels between *Thirdspace* and the non-place become clearer as we take a closer look at the simultaneity-bit: Soja compares the simultaneous momentum of *Thirdspace* to the Aleph, a spatial phenomenon from a the short story of the same title written by Jorge Luis Borges. The Aleph is a sphere-like structure found by the protagonist in a cellar. In the Aleph, the protagonist encounters all there is, at once:

“What eternity is to time, the Aleph is to space. In eternity, all time – past, present, and future – coexists simultaneously. In the Aleph, the sum total of the spatial universe is to be found in a tiny shining sphere barely over an inch across.”

(Borges qtd. in Soja 54)

The overabundance of references found in the non-place, i.e. the semantic overload achieved by the vast array of information made available and by the speed of modern travel, moves the individual confronted with the sphere of the non-place into a position comparable to that of the Aleph's protagonist. This, in the short story as well as in the non-place, leaves the individual in a state of astonishment, fright and disorientation. Of course, the extent of the spatial mise-en-abyme found in the non-place is smaller than that found in the Aleph. But what I assume Soja had in mind when referring to Borges' work was the parallel between the perspective of the Aleph and that of *Thirdspace*. Soja admired its openness and multi-sidedness in perspective. He calls *Thirdspace* a place that was transcending all spaces (Soja 62). He underlines the comparison between the Aleph and *Thirdspace* in the following quotation:

““The Aleph” is an invitation to exuberant adventure as well as a humbling and cautionary tale, an allegory on the infinite complexities of

space and time. Attaching its meanings to Lefebvre's conceptualization of the production of space detonates the scope of spatial knowledge and reinforces the radical openness of what I am trying to convey as *Thirdspace*: the space where all places are, capable of being seen from every angle, each standing clear; but also a secret conjectured object, filled with illusions and allusions, a space that is common to all of us yet never able to be completely seen and understood, an “unimaginable universe”, or as Lefebvre would put it, “the most general of products.” (Soja 56)

Further aspects of this multi-sidedness bring us to the next section of this chapter, which will be dealing with the *Other* in *Thirdspace*, an important floating cornerstone in identity-formation.

4.1.2 - Thidding as Othering

The simultaneity of *Thirdspace* is homed in a branch of the concept Soja refers to as *Thidding as Othering*. Soja described this *Thidding* as an “[...] ontological, epistemological and theoretical rebalancing of spatiality, historicity and sociality as all-embracing dimensions of human life.” (Soja 10) *Thidding* refers to the result of the choice performed by the individual being an *Other* to the dominating *Firstspace* and *Secondspace* knowledge and, therefore, an alternative to the interpretation and deciphering of spatiality. *Thidding-as-Othering* is “[...] the first and most important step in transforming the categorical and closed logic of either / or to the dialectically open logic of both / and also” (Soja 60) and becomes the tactic of choice for the individual on the perimeter of *Firstspace* and *Secondspace* discourse or knowledge (Soja prefers looking at Lefebvre's *Production of Space* as discourse, not as knowledge (Soja 58). He stresses this difference, because knowledge here is seen as a more fixed concept than discourse).

Thidding-as-Othering creates a spatialisation that is capable of ignoring the preconditions set by *Firstspace* and *Secondspace*. This appearance of independence is realised as “Thidding recomposes the dialectic through an intrusive disruption that explicitly spatializes dialectical reasoning [...]” (Soja 61). *Thirdspace* is never finalised, never fixed but, nevertheless, the output cannot be denied a role in the ensemble of discourse contributing to the understanding

of human spatialisation; a role also contributed to *Firstspace* and *Secondspace*. An example of recomposing space is the concept of the non-place: the non-place did not precede its visitors: the individuals transiting through it attributed its non-place quality to it, thereby creating a new class of space (which was finally formulated and recorded into *Secondspace* knowledge by Marc Augé). Soja writes that “Thirling produces what might best be called a cumulative *trialectics* that is radically open to additional otherness, to a continuing expansion of spatial knowledge” (Soja 61).

The “critical Thirling-as-Othering” (Soja 10) is a process that creates a flow of spatial articulation carried out by the individual. Soja sees the individual using *Firstspace* and *Secondspace* knowledge in order to produce what he refers to as *trialectics*. These *trialectics* are, as Soja puts it, “not just a triple dialectic but also a mode of dialectical reasoning that is more inherently spatial than the conventional temporally-defined dialectics of Hegel and Marx.” (Soja 10) With *Thirdspace*, Soja is aiming at a dialectics of spatiality, and he goes about doing so by introducing two *trialectics*: that of being and that of spatiality.

4.1.3 – *Trialectics of Being* and *Trialectics of Spatiality*

Soja has opened the box of these *trialectics* because he needed to illustrate not just the levels the individual is reading its own spatiality on and from, but also because *Thirdspace* is better understood when a map of its underlying currents or jet-streams cutting through its layers is existent. The notion of *trialectics*, just like that of spatiality described above, is not a fixed one, but one of a flowing and open matter:

“Thinking trialectically is a necessary part of understanding *Thirdspace* as a limitless composition of lifeworlds that are radically open and openly radicalizable; that are all-inclusive and transdisciplinary in scope yet politically focused and susceptible to strategic choice; that are never completely knowable but whose knowledge none the less guides our search for emancipatory change and freedom from domination. Trialectical thinking is difficult, for it challenges all conventional modes of thought and taken-for-granted epistemologies. It is disorderly, unruly, constantly evolving, unfixed, never presentable in permanent constructions.”

(Soja 70)

Soja names historicity and sociality as the two factors in *the Trialectics of Being* that appeared to be dominant over the past century (Soja 71). He also identifies a third factor: spatiality. Soja calls these three factors “summary terms for the social production of Space, Time and Being-in-the-World” (Soja 71). Following is a diagram of the *Trialectics of Being* taken from the book *Thirdspace*:

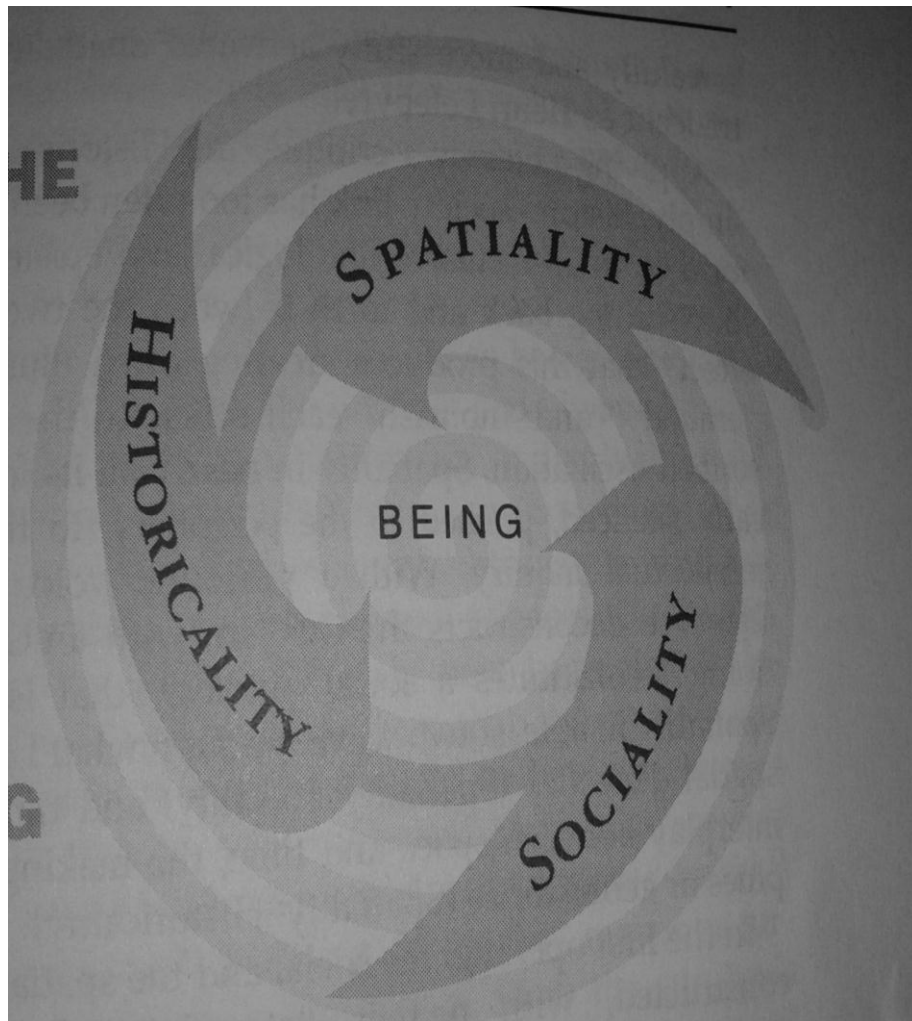


Figure 1: *Trialectics of Being* (Soja 71)

In a container-view concept of space spatiality would be pushed into a peripheral role, according to Soja (Soja 71). However, Soja strongly emphasises the need for a balance between the social, the historical and the spatial. He argues that critical reception of these three factors was never quite achieved in

balance, and that, exemplary of this, Henri Lefebvre was either conceived of as a historian, a geographer or a sociologist (Soja 73), but never quite as a scholar engaging in a school of thought operating in a balanced discourse of these three disciplines.

Balance is what the concept of *Trialectics of Being* is all about. However, Soja states that “the *Trialectics of Being* thus generates three ontological fields of knowledge formation from what for so long has only been one.” (Soja 72) These three fields are articulated in a mutually constructive relation between the social and the spatial that also bears a historic load (Soja 72). Furthermore there is a “spatio-temporal structuration of Sociality” (Soja 72) The interdependence of the three factors - Sociality, Historicity and Spatiality - is taken to the limit when Soja states that they contain each other (Soja 72) and that Spatiality functions as a kind of gatekeeper, securing the openness of “Historicity and Sociality to human lifeworlds to [new] interpretations, while simultaneously maintaining the rich insights they provide for understanding the production of lived space” (Soja 72).

The position of spatiality described above can be exemplified on an everyday level: sitting in my study, I am tightly woven into a web the strings of which are social practices I engage in, and the long veil of common history behind me. But, coming to a halt in this web of relations, looking around, letting my eye wander through the space of this rented flat, there is a wave of impressions channelled through my eyes that lets me sense a different web of relations. It is the meanings – social and historical ones - that are attached to the spatial surface; it is the texture of space that bears symbols of historicity and sociality. It is looking into the abyss because, once you attempt to black out all the social and historical load attached to space, you see the room you are in as it is; you see space as it is. It is infinite. It always is. And it is so because even the wall separating me from the neighbouring apartment right now, is only part of it. Thus, space, is the dominant other in the trialectics developed by Soja. Space can either be seen as a separating or a combining force. It is articulated by the individual and, in the moment of articulation, becomes Spatiality.

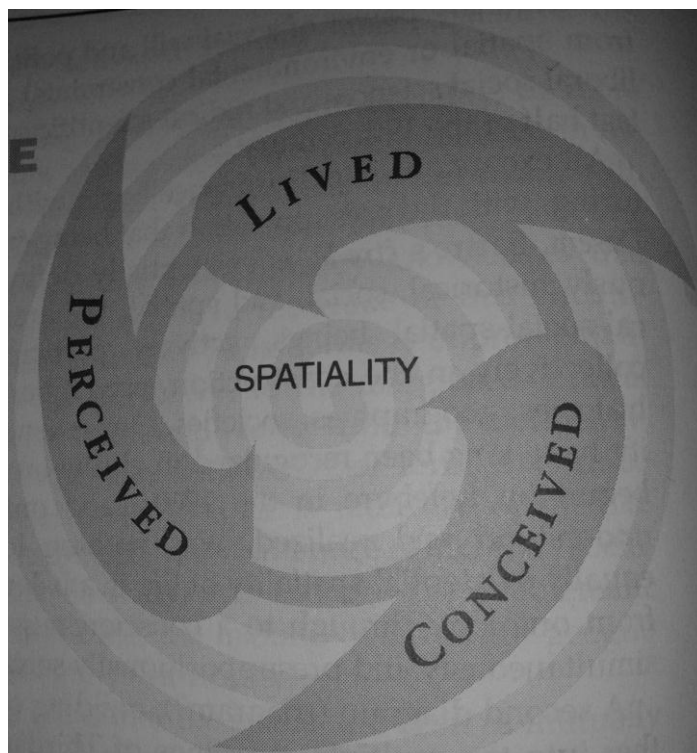
Soja states touches on this creative aspect of Spatiality in the following quotation:

“All excursion into *Thirdspace* begin with this ontological restructuring, with the presupposition that being-in-the-world [...] is existentially definable as being simultaneously historical, social and spatial. We are first and always historical-social-spatial beings, actively participating individually and collectively in the construction/production – the “becoming” - of histories, geographies, societies.”

(Soja 73)

The second step in trialectics proposed by Soja is called *Trialectics of Spatiality*. Whereas the *Trialectics of Being* focused on the preconditions for existence, the *Trialectics of Spatiality* deal with the epistemology of spatiality. Below we find a diagram of the Trialectics of Spatiality, taken from *Thirdspace* again.

Figure 2: Trialectics of Spatiality (Soja 74)



As in the previous *Trialectics of Being*, Soja stresses the mutually inclusive character of the three given factors: Perceived, Conceived and Lived Spatiality. These labels are taken from Lefebvre's model of social space. As mentioned

before, Perceived and Conceived Spatiality correspond to *Firstspace* and *Secondspace*. The third level, Lived Spatiality, corresponds to Representational Space and *Thirdspace*. *Thirdspace* here adheres to the semantic load of its ordinal number as it functions as “a means of combating the longstanding tendency to confine spatial knowledge to *Firstspace* and *Secondspace* epistemologies” (Soja 74).

The quotation above is what I have tried to underline with my “example on an everyday level”: *Thirdspace* is a loading bay for new knowledge on spatiality. *Thirdspace* is a gate for new interpretations of space. As characteristic of gates, they can be used to either enter or exit; hence there is the possibility to escape from dominant interpretations of spatiality and to circumvent dominance by articulating new spatial strategies. On the one hand, we are not approaching the tactics of pedestrians subject of Michel de Certeau's research (Certeau 99). And not on the other, but on the same hand we are also arriving at another Other aspect of *Thirdspace*: Postcolonialism.

4.1.4 – Postcolonial Aspects of *Thirdspace*

“Those who are territorially subjugated by the workings of hegemonic power have two inherent choices: either accept their imposed differentiation and division, making the best of it; or mobilize to resist, drawing upon their putative positioning, their assigned “otherness,” to struggle against this power-filled imposition. These choices are inherently spatial responses, individual and collective reactions to the ordered workings of power in perceived, conceived, and lived spaces.”
(Soja 87)

Although there are hardly any postcolonial elements in my analysis of *Brief Encounter*, I regard Edward Soja's writings on bell hooks and marginal space as relevant for writing about non-places. Non-places, as we have seen in the initial chapter, are transitory spaces. They are also marginal spaces. This transforms the non-places into important stages for marginalised groups or individuals. When I use the term marginalised, I am not only aiming to cover groups that might first come to mind – individuals stricken by poverty or other reasons for social exclusion – but also groups that are facing or expecting to face stigmatisation. Non-places become the space of those who fear to be deemed

defunct by those in power, judging them according to the dominant discourse.

The quotation above is a blueprint for the situation Alec and Laura, the two protagonists in *Brief Encounter*, find themselves in. The early postmodern qualities of *Brief Encounter*, with its decentering of family and matrimony, are silently heralding what bell hooks wrote, and it has been quoted by Soja as follows:

“Postmodern culture with its decentered subject can be the space where ties are severed or it can provide the occasion for new and varied forms of bonding. To some extent, ruptures, surfaces, contextuality, and a host of other happenings create gaps that make space for oppositional practices [...]

(bell hooks qtd. in Soja 83)

The hegemonic discourse is experienced by individuals in social space and they are facing a force inflicted upon them by their fellow citizens. Soja uses a term coined by Joan Cocks (Cocks qtd. in Soja 88) when he writes that “differences ascribed to gender, sexual practice, race, class, region, nation, etc., and their expression in social space and geohistorically uneven development, are appropriately seen as “brute fashionings” (Soja 88). In the case of *Brief Encounter*, such brute fashionings can be found when the protagonists are confronted with the hegemonic discourse their behaviour puts them on collision course with.

So far, the stage has now been set for analysing the negotiation of identities in the non-places of *Brief Encounter*. The array of tools consists of *Thirdspace* and all its underlying trialectics. I will also be carrying out returns to what I have discussed in the final section of this chapter.

5 – Reading Non-Places in *Brief Encounter*

This chapter is meant to provide a detailed analysis of those spaces in *Brief Encounter* fit to be referred to as non-places or that can be covered by similar spatial concepts discussed in chapter two. Emphasis will be put on the train station and the train itself. In order to fully discuss the non-places in *Brief Encounter*, some references to other liminal space will be included as well.

This discussion of *Brief Encounter* will begin with a brief summary of its plot, followed by a section featuring some information on the historical framework of the film and questions regarding its setting. There will also be a few facts regarding the sources of this production, as it is an adaptation of a play. The actual analysis of the film will follow, the first step of which will be shedding light on the role of space in *Brief Encounter*, i.e. spatiality in the film. Concepts of space that have been presented in the theory-part of this thesis will then be implemented. The actual selection of spaces will be narrowed down to those of a transitory nature. The following section will be dealing with how space is represented in the film. This section will feature mise-en-scene analysis of space and the representation of people in space. As in the final part of the analysis, this middle section will focus mainly on the train station and the train, i.e. the train carriage itself. The final third of the analysis will be opened with Marc Augé's concept of the non-place applied to the train station and the cabin of the train carriage again. Finally, there will be a discussion of the negotiation of identity in the non-places train station and train carriage based on Edward Soja's concept of *Thirdspace*. This is also the part of the analysis in which will be going into detail as far as the Other is concerned. Hence the female part in *Brief Encounter* will be brought to attention.

5.1 – Plot Summary

Brief Encounter, as the title suggests, is about a love affair between a man and woman - Alec Harvey, a general practitioner, and Laura Jesson, a housewife, both married parents - which, due to the extra-marital status and social mores operating inside the protagonists' hearts and minds, is destined to

remain a brief one. The film sets out at Milford Station, where Alec Harvey and Laura Jesson meet by accident. After another coincidental meeting the following week, they begin to develop a regular meeting schedule. Each Thursday, when Alec is working at the hospital and Laura is going to Milford for shopping and leisure, they meet again. Soon they discover their love for one another. In what turns out to be the short period of six weeks, i.e. seven Thursdays, they begin to come closer to one another and develop a serious affection past infatuation. However, bearing in mind the social rules of the society they live in and the well-being of their spouses and children they finally decide not to see each other again.

Brief Encounter is predominantly set at the Milford Junction train station and other public places, most of the scenes being indoors. The train and the station remain a principal theme throughout the film. Alec and Laura's thoughts circle around their weekly rendezvous and, on a few occasions, the distant sound of a train lets their thoughts return to their love-relationship. The railway theme can either be seen as continuation or remnant of the spatial setting in the original play *Still Life* by Noel Coward, upon which the film is based. *Still Life* is described by filmsite.org editor and author Tim Dirks as a “short one-act (half-hour) stage play” (Dirks 1). According to Dirks, the following rooms were added in the process of adapting the play:

“It was expanded from five short scenes in a train station (the refreshment tea room of Milford Junction Station) to include action in other settings (the married woman's house, the apartment of the married man's friend, restaurants, parks, train compartments, shops, a car, a boating lake and at the cinema), although the film still maintains chaste minimalism.

(Dirks 1)

As far as the temporal setting of *Brief Encounter* is concerned, it is difficult to figure out the exact time. However, Steven Russell, in his essay on *Brief Encounter* and *The Stars Look Down* featured on the website talkingpix.co.uk, states that:

“The main ambiguity of *Brief Encounter* is that, despite being released

just months after the end of the largest war in history, we never learn when it is set. We may assume it is set before the war as we do not see the bombed buildings we may expect of London or Liverpool, or we may assume it is set after the war as, quite plainly, this is when it was released.”

(Russell)

Another reason for the absence of any signs of war lies in the choice of filming sites. According to the online encyclopaedia *Wikipedia*, *Brief Encounter* was mostly shot in Lancashire; a strategic move to avoid the blackouts that were still part of civil defence in the more Southern parts of England in 1945 (“*Brief Encounter*”). Traces of the film's borderline-position between World War 2 and the successive period of peace and prosperity have been identified by film critic David Ng. Ng argues that the depiction of love in *Brief Encounter* is a remnant of the puritan attitude of World War 2 Britain (Ng 2000). Richard Dyer also writes that, despite the female protagonist being established as a reliable narrator, Laura Jesson is shown as a woman gone wrong and her flashback is “seen through guilt and remorse” (Dyer 24).

The Internet Movie Database (IMDb), on the other hand, sees *Brief Encounter* set during World War II, stating: “*Brief Encounter* is a classic romantic drama set in 1945 during WWII in and around the fictional Milford railway station” (IMDb). Despite these differing assumptions about its temporal setting, *Brief Encounter*, and the places shown in it, do not suggest a country ravaged by war. The absence of bombed buildings mentioned by Russell and the society represented are indicators for a post-war setting:

“Regardless of the construction of the text, its time of release would mean it is forever destined to be consumed by a post-World War Two society and its meaning reflects the ideology possessed by a society that has passed through the inevitable upheaval. “

(Russell)

As will be shown in a latter part of this chapter, *Brief Encounter* also contains other attributes that point to a post-war setting. The following observation might not be a very scientific statement, but it is interesting that *Brief Encounter* offers an ambiguity in terms of temporal location that is

reminiscing (or foreshadowing) that of the non-place, with its simultaneous overabundance and collapse of relations and systems of references.

There is also something peculiar about the loop-structure in *Brief Encounter*: the film begins with Laura Jesson and her friend Dolly Messiter in the refreshment room, albeit seen from a perspective more distant than the one given in the end of the film. Minutes later, we are in Laura's domestic sphere: the living room, where she is with her husband Fred. This situation is already close to the actual ending of the film. Laura's memory of her relationship with Alec is narrated in a loop intertwined into the lengthy period of time when she is sitting in the living room of her home, pondering her affair with Alec and unable to tell her husband Fred.

5.2 – Places and Non-Places in *Brief Encounter*

As mentioned above, *Brief Encounter* is primarily set in indoor locations. Nevertheless, the role of space is, as far as mise-en-scene is concerned, anything but limited by this choice. In order to point this out, I am first going to come up with a brief list of spaces (places) appearing in the film, followed by a discussion of the role of space in it. Finally, there will be more detail given regarding the significance of the train station and railway travel.

As seen in the quotation from *Filmsite*, *Brief Encounter* revolves around the following locations: Laura Jesson's house, the apartment of Stephen Lynn, friend of Alec Harvey, the Kardomah restaurant, a restaurant at the Royal Hotel, a park, a public square, two train stations (Milford and Ketchworth), train cabins, the refreshment room (also referred to as tea room) at Milford Station, shops, a car, a boating lake, a boat house, a cinema, streets and a stone bridge on a country road (Filmsite a). This selection of actual places is my point of departure for examining the role space plays for plot development.

5.2.1 – Place: Laura Jesson's Home

Noteworthy about the selection of places is that only one of them is of a

domestic nature. Laura Jesson's home seems to be a point of reference in the act of fathoming the position of Laura's life and thoughts in relation to her official life as a married woman. She is pondering her coordinates throughout the film as we hear her voice-over. Due to the loop-structure of the narrative, Laura is practically sitting in her living room with her husband Fred throughout the entire story.



Figure 3: Laura and husband Fred at the fireplace @ 00:33:54

Stephen Russell cites Higson and what he wrote about *This Happy Breed*, a film directed by David Lean in 1944: “the home is remarked upon not as a feminine space but as a national metaphor” (Higson qtd. in Russell). I agree with this statement and deem it valid for *Brief Encounter* as well, as this home is fulfilling the purpose of being a counter-pole to the physical and psychological developments that are channelled through space in the other places featured in *Brief Encounter*. The train station and the public places and what Laura experiences there, i.e. in spaces that are, as compared to the domestic home,

of a much wider architecture in terms of meaning and values, almost fade completely within the walls of the Jesson's home; this is why her home is a place of reconsideration for Laura. It is a kind of reconsideration Laura is probably not very fond of, as it is like homework. Conclusive of the role of the home in *Brief Encounter* is, however, that it is what all the other places in the film are not. It is, as all the other places can be labelled non-places, the only real place in the film.

5.2.2 – Public Places: Between Home and the Train Station

Apart from the Jesson's home, all the other locations are of a more (train station, train, streets, cinema, etc.) or less (Stephen Lynn's apartment) public nature. For the sake of further breaking down our list of places, I am now going to isolate places outside railway travel, thereby arriving at the following list: the Kardomah restaurant, a restaurant at the Royal Hotel, a park, a public square, shops, cars, a boating lake, a boat house, a cinema, streets, and a stone bridge on a country road.

The purpose of these places, thematically, is settled between the home of Laura Jesson and the train station with its tearoom. Whereas the domestic home functions as a counter-pole to Alec and Laura's love, these places have the ability of providing a stage for movement within the relationship: Alec and Laura coincidentally meet again on a corner in the streets of Milford, precisely one week after their first intermezzo at Milford Station. The Kardomah restaurant is where they bump into one another the following week which is going to be the location of their last meeting. Only one week later, they try to meet at the Kardomah again, but Alec fails to show up and this is when Laura begins to feel a sense of loss and begins to discover her feelings for Alec. The second restaurant featured is in a hotel named Royal Hotel. It is far more upscale than the Kardomah and Alec makes a reservation there to guarantee a proper and elegant prelude to a surprise car-ride to the countryside he has in store for Laura.

The following places are the interior of cars Alec borrows for their rides to

the countryside and the stone bridge crossing a river, where they stop and seem to dwell on their affection for one another above the small stream beneath them. Places of a similar purpose are the park and the boating lake Alec and Laura attend on the day they confess their love to one another. All these places have at least one thing in common: they are peripheral spaces. The boating lake - lakes in general - can be seen as peripheral as it is a rupture in land mass. Peripheral space is, according to Edward Soja, the place of difference.

As we shall later see, peripheral space is the place where Alec and Laura are able to negotiate their identities, away from the hegemonic values that allow them little room to do so. Soja's insights are based on Lefebvre's concept of the peripheral being the space of passion, whereas the centre is that of logic. The boat house, practically speaking, is a non-place par excellence. Boats departing or arriving, though not seen in the film, attribute the qualities of a tiny seaport to it and make it a transitory space. It is within these humble walls that Alec and Laura open up and confess their love. The boat house becomes their domicile in this very moment but not for any reason that has to do with this building's conception, but rather because the purpose of this structure leaves room for them: peripheral space as the space of choice for these two lovers.



Figure 4: Alec and Laura, first declaration of love @ 00:44:09

Then there is the flat Alec borrows from his friend Stephen Lynn. He does so with the intention of spending time with Laura alone, away from the public. Alec and Laura remain strangers in this flat: not strangers to one another but strangers to this flat. I am not trying to elevate this structure from the inanimate, but what I am trying to say is that the place that is Lynn's flat is devoid of the anthropological traits that make a flat a home. Alec and Laura are unable to resurrect those qualities from this space. To them, it is a mere hotel room and especially Laura seems to dislike it, even more so after she overhears the awkward communication between Alec and Stephen Lynn, who unexpectedly returns and utters his discontent regarding Alec's extra-marital intentions. The flat remains another transitory space that, maybe without the intrusion performed by Stephen Lynn i.e. them being invaded by a force representing the dominant discourse outside these walls, might have turned out to be a stronghold for their love. However, the notion of transitory space, and thus also that of the non-place, is one of little to no resistance against interference. That is why, to say it in a sloppy manner, everybody has the right to paint on this canvas. The transitory sphere Alec and Laura have become accustomed to is

altered by Stephen Lynn and ultimately destroyed by his words.

A place of a peculiar nature is the cinema. Alec and Laura attend it twice putting them into the passive role of becoming part of the audience, i.e. becoming the audience. The programmes they consume are works of fiction: one is titled "Flames of Passion": the events in these scenes foreshadow what is about to happen to Alec and Laura. This mirroring of what is shown on the screen, an imitation of life, is typical of the *heterotopias* the cinema can be attributed to (Foucault 24). In *Brief Encounter* the cinema puts the plot to a halt. What is shown to the protagonists and to the audience (us) here is a mere reflection of what Frank wrote and Soja quoted from him: "pure time" (Frank qtd. in Soja 81). It is also reminiscent of the Aleph (Borges qtd. in Soja 54). The cinema is transcending Alec and Laura's love relationship. As they sit in the dark and wonder at the images floating across the screen, they might be totally unaware, despite their sneaking out of the screening. "Flames of Passion" can be seen as symbolical of them abruptly ending their romance on its seventh day (six weeks). Another comment symbolical of their ill-fated relationship is Alec's "It's the big picture now. Here we go. No more laughter. Prepare for tears." during the small gap between the interlude-film "Donald Duck" and the main feature "Flames of Passion" (Dirks 2).

Summing up, the role of places belonging to the amount of space between the domestic life of Laura Jesson and the train station is to develop the plot and to discharge and charge the romance of Alec and Laura. The following space is that of the train station, including the refreshment room, and the train itself.

5.2.3 – Non-Places: The Train Station, the Train and the Refreshment Room

The final group of places I have identified is that of train travel. It consists of two train stations (Milford Junction and Ketchworth), a refreshment room (at Milford) and the inside of train carriages. These places are the complete opposite of the Jesson's home. They allow for Laura to roam freely as "a hopeful woman on the verge of romance" (Dirks 1), as Dirks puts it. As far as

the love relationship is concerned, the train station is where Alec and Laura seem to revive new energies. This is ironic, as the train station is the place where they always part but only meet on two occasions.

The train station, the unadulterated non-place, is capable of fading out the references and relations operated in the dominant discourse outside its boundaries. The non-place, as we have seen in the first chapter, is a space where the usual systems of references, those functioning in the counter-pole of the non-place - the place, are weakened or almost totally erased. This recalls the ruptures in discourse described by Foucault and how they can be projected into urban space (cf. chapter 3.2.4). This place of rupture is also a place of beginnings. The fact that Alec and Laura first meet one another inside the train station, inside the refreshment room to be precise, accounts for the creating forces at play in the non-place.



Figure 5: Refreshment room at Milford Junction @ 00:01:42

The refreshment room at Milford Station, despite its location within a non-place, is a safe haven for maintaining the set of references operated outside the

non-place as it offers a stage for interactions among the travellers and the station personnel. This can be witnessed in the humoristic scenes featuring the station attendant Albert Godby and the refreshment room hostess Myrtle Bagot. Shown from an outside perspective in the beginning of the film is the meeting between Alec, Laura and Dolly Messiter, a friend of Laura's. The same scene is shown again, this time from an inside perspective, towards the very end of the film. It is the last good-bye for Alec and Laura and, unfortunately and due to Dolly's intrusion, it is a rather quick one.

The interior of the train carriage is another non-place that has also been pointed out by Marc Augé (Augé 1995: 79). Apart from the train ride following their last good-bye, Laura is alone among other passengers in the cabin. The passengers play a passive role and function as a representation of society, as Laura, in a scene where there is a priest sitting opposite her, is immediately reminded of the immorality of her relationship with Alec. Thus, the major purpose of the space in the train cabin in *Brief Encounter* is to confront Laura with herself. This confrontation is not always as self-admonitory as in the priest-scene. On a different occasion, Laura is sitting in the cabin and picturing herself and Alec, remote in space (as she sees them in Paris, Venice and other locations of romantic connotation) and time (she mentions seeing them both as a bit younger). These dreams are projected onto the window, with the darkness of night behind the glass providing a mirror for Laura at first, and then a two-dimensional space for the dream-scenes.

Having now discussed the places appearing in *Brief Encounter*, it is time to sum up what has been accumulated so far. Three groups of places can be identified: the group of domestic places (consisting of only one place, the Jessons' home), the public places between the domestic sphere and the train station, and the places of train travel. After having discussed the purpose of these places, I can break these purposes down to the following three functions:

domestic: consideration, evaluation, support of hegemonic values

public: plot development, consumption, discharging and charging of

energies for Alec and Laura

train travel: charging of romantic energy for Alec and Laura, source for counter-hegemonic values

Space has the function of channelling the plot. Laura remains static when at home. Alec and Laura are active, running, walking and realising their aspirations when in public. Alec and Laura are mostly running and walking in the train station.

The role of space is to heighten the plot by allowing the protagonists actions and offering choices where possible. The anonymity of the station gives them the opportunity to recharge the batteries of their love relationship and help it gain momentum, the public space outside the station allows them to roam freely, though with a certain degree of suspense as they want to avoid being seen together, the Jesson's home is where Laura has the fewest possibilities for manoeuvring her sad heart but it is also a place where the ambiguity of the non-place has been totally erased. Laura is always willing to give up on Alec when she is at home. Space in *Brief Encounter* represents discourse. The dominant discourse is represented at home and in public. The counter-hegemonic discourse of Laura seeking a new romance, probably a new life, is partly located in public space and comes closest to its full realisation in the train station, with a final intrusion by the hegemonic discourse represented by Laura's friend Dolly. Space in *Brief Encounter* represents discourse and comes close to the state of a language. The domestic is "No", the public is a "Maybe" as it offers chances and dangers to Alec and Laura's love relationship, and the train station signals "Yes".

Alec and Laura, like the pedestrians in Certeau's *Walking in the City* (Certeau 91), articulate space and, hence, articulate their relationship. Their constant movement conveys the notion of being on the run, which is actually what they are. Despite this constant movement in public space and spaces of travel, they do not arrive at a place where their love can be articulated free from social restrictions. Ultimately, the pressure felt in the domestic sphere is too

much for Alec and Laura. Whereas Laura gives up on her romantic vision and returns to her husband and family, Alec, together with wife and children, finds himself deciding to go to South Africa.

5.3 – Representation of Non-Places in *Brief Encounter*

This part of the analysis will be looking at the representation of non-places and space in general in *Brief Encounter*. The following pages offer a mise-en-scene analysis, featuring a selection of the non-places of train travel. The romantic associations of train travel, with the notion of painful parting, may not have begun with *Brief Encounter*, but had obviously gained in popularity after its release. Another space to be analysed is the train cabin. In order to fully apply the theory of the non-place to a filmic analysis, these two spaces are suitably representative.

5.3.1 – Milford Junction Station

The fictitious train station of Milford is where the first meeting between Alec and Laura takes place and simultaneously the couple experiences a number of farewells in the same place. Ultimately, the last time they see each other is inside the station's refreshment room. After having discussed the significance in terms of plot development in the previous section, I am now going to point out scenes set in the train station and I am also going to frame my mise-en-scene analysis by applying the concept of the non-place. Two scenes shot in the train station have been chosen for this purpose and include the station platforms and the refreshment room.

In terms of categories for the analysis, I have carried out online research, resulting in a not-so-*Brief Encounter* with a long list of things to look at. For instance, the website slideshare.net contains a presentation shared by user kjera, suggesting the following steps for analysis:

1. object / subject dominating the shot
2. lighting

3. shot type
4. camera angle
5. symbolic meaning of colour
6. lens / filter
7. subsidiary contrasts
8. density regarding objects in the scene
9. arrangement of objects in the shot
10. form
12. deep focus
13. arrangement of characters
14. position of characters at camera. Which way do the characters look vis-a-vis the camera?
15. character positioning towards one another

(kjera 2008)

As far as this analysis is concerned, these points may not always be completely suitable to apply to all of the selected scenes. Some shots may not pertain to this pattern of analysis and offer opportunities for reasonable diversion from this path; an opportunity I shall not hesitate to make use of.

Scene 1 @ 00:00:19

The first scene of choice is the opening shot of the film (figure 6). Despite the fact that there are no characters in this shot, what I have arrived at in my analysis suggests it is of significance for the understanding of *Brief Encounter*. The purpose of this shot is to set the scene in a cinematic environment, allowing for the packs of chips and popcorn to be opened and the crowd to get seated. The shot also features the opening credits.

We see a train shooting through Milford station, heralding its passage with the loud cry of its steam whistle. Although the train is not immediately visible, its loud and rapid entering the picture draws all attention towards it and, thus, the train is the main object in this shot. There is thick, white and grey smoke emanating from the engine pulling the carriages. As this lengthy shot continues,

the smoke ascends, covering everything on the other side of the tracks. The only things left visible are a number of train carriages and the train platform the camera is perched on, creating the impression that the viewer himself is on that platform. The shot is one of the longest of the entire film, and after a minute another train, this time from the opposite direction, is passing through the station. David Lean seemed to have had an urge to make things clear in the very beginning: This film, although tightly woven around the fate of two people, has little space for human beings. The train, representing the irresistible force of life and its invincible partner, the passage of time, cuts through the shy aspirations of the human heart and mind, waiting for no one. Another significant observation has been made by Tim Dirks, who states that “The passage of the trains on different tracks clearly represent the lives of the two protagonists whose lives ultimately move, without romance, in different directions” (Dirks 1).



Figure 6: Opening Scene Milford Station 00:00:19

The lighting is low key, invoking night and, as Dirks points out in his essay,

the film bears a range of characteristics typical to the genre film noir: “[...] unglamorous locations, rain-slicked streets, dimly-lit interiors and dark train passageways in a tale of doomed, unfulfilled and frustrated love” (Dirks 1). The edge of the shot is kept dark and there is not much more light on the train. The lamps visible on the platform emit weak light. The shot is rather dark, with a diffuse light at the invisible end of the rails, somewhere outside the station. The train is heading right into the light. Once the train is passing through the picture, the smoke and steam produced by it diffuses the lighting, covering everything visible on the opposite platform.

The camera angle is low and suggests the point of view of a person sitting on the platform. This angle is best for immersing the audience into the scene, which, referring to the sound underlying this shot, is supported by the howling whistle of the train and the loud noise of its passage. The audience is fully drawn into the platform at Milford Junction, until the opening credits interrupt this immersion and seem to gently propel the audience into more shallow waters. The immersion is amplified by the type of shot: the long shot creates a static impression of the train station and of a spectator watching events unfold.

The colouring in this black and white film is, of course, strongly connected to its lighting. But, as regards symbolism, the lighting of the train, as diffuse as it turns out to be once the smoke fills part of the shot, functions as an opposite to the dark station. The train is the beating heart of the train station and, as in *Brief Encounter*, the ties are cut by carrying Alec and Laura away from one another, possibly weaving new ones in the future. We don't know. The choice of a wide-angle lens helps to fully convey the train's movement. However, despite a clear focus on the train, the platform is only slightly less dominant. The train's movement, with steam and diffusing light and its rapid movement away from the camera, is framed by the platform, the focus of which remains constant throughout the shot.

As far as the arrangement of objects in the shot is concerned, the image can be split in two: roughly one half is occupied by the train and the smoke emanating from it while other half is taken up by the platform. The latter seems

to be well populated with inanimate objects. We see three lamps, a basket, a box, a trolley, a telegraph pole and train signals on the far end of the platform. There is a sign saying "Milford Junction", but, due to its almost 90 degree position towards the camera, it is not very legible. This angle is the result of the view following the direction of the train. It also suggests the station giving in to the movement of the train, as the sign is, in what can be called a solidary way, aligned with the train. The angle also creates the idea of the audience, seated on the platform by the degree of immersion mentioned above, following the train, sending its gaze on a ride together with the passengers on the train. Hence, the notion of passage is created and the actual name of the station becomes irrelevant, as it is not a stop on the itinerary.

This following of the train's itinerary is what loosens the shot's finite aspect initially created by low key lighting, the arrangement of objects on the platform and the low camera angle. The shot is closed again by the smoke and steam of the train. The view behind the train is obstructed, apart from a lengthy structure, part of what appears to be an engine service tower, hovering in the space above the moving train carriages.

In regards to the symbolic meaning of this shot, the following points should be highlighted: whereas the dark and quiet non-place - the train station - frames the shot in a silent and patient way, the dusky train interferes in this dark silence. One structure of the train station clearly visible is the platform the camera is positioned on. This platform is symbolic of Laura and her life, i.e. her husband, son and daughter. The other platform is symbolic of Alec and his life, i.e. his wife and two sons. The train running through is what happens to Alec and Laura: for a brief moment their lives approach each other. Then, once the smoke has settled and the steam has disappeared, they are on separate platforms again.

This can be compared to the Hindu notion of life being a river and man standing on its bank, watching it run by. There is always the danger of becoming too involved with one's emotions and, as in *Brief Encounter*, people falling into that trap tend to get carried away. In *Brief Encounter*, Alec and Laura happen to

leave their platforms, their stable lives (their river banks) and step onto the rapidly moving trains.

This is symbolic of the non-place as a place of rupture: a place where old systems of references are erased and, at the same time, new ones are created. Remarkable about this opening shot is that there no characters are present. And after almost one minute another train passes through the picture, this time from the opposite direction.

Scene 2 @ 00:45:28

This scene is shown early into the second half of the film. Laura is walking Alec to his train through the underground tunnel connecting platforms 1 and 2 (figure 7).



Figure 7: Alec and Laura navigating the platform tunnel 00:45:28

The tunnel shot is significant for the solitary aspect of the non-place concept. As I am going to point out in the following paragraphs, the phenomena observed and published by Marc Augé in 1995, have already been valid in *Brief Encounter* in 1945. The selected shot holds a great analogy of the dynamics of identity formation and negotiation within the non-place.

The shot is a rather peculiar one, as the main focus lies on a sign showing the “Way out and to platform 1”. Alec and Laura, who are to the right of the sign, share a lesser degree of focus with their shadows positioned on the right side of the platform sign. Low lighting underlines the impression of Alec and Laura walking underground. The back light on the right side is responsible for the characters' shadows on the brick wall in the left area of the shot. Laura's shadow is more clearly cut than that of Alec. The medium wide shot allows for a good overview of the character's location, although a long shot would have already led to a reduced impression of being underground, in a rather narrow

space.

The choice of space in this shot is a great example of the role of space mentioned in the previous section. Alec and Laura, as they are heading for the platform where they will be parting once more, are navigating a tunnel that only leaves two possibilities to navigate: either they part on the platform, at the train that will leave them a chance to arrange for another meeting in the week to come, or they get out of the train station. Alec and Laura, both aware of the viscous cycle they have gotten into, decide for the train platform. The low camera angle, together with the shot being dominated by a dark grey and the lens providing a medium wide angle of the scene emphasize the notion of a tunnel and help isolate the train station from the town it is located in.

Another aspect of the dark grey colour is that Alec and Laura appear to blend in with the structures around them. The distance between them and the non-place is decreased.

The composition of the shot has a lot of symbolic meaning. But let us first go through what can be seen: two walls, one of which in the background suggests the tunnel continues around the corner, which is also shown by the preceding movement of characters. The walls also symbolize that, despite having just walked around the corner, Alec and Laura have their backs against those very walls and that there is only one direction for them to go. The form of the shot is tight and, apart from the blank brick walls and the dim light, a steel joist on top of the screen makes the whole place appear even less friendly and inviting: a place of transience and not meant to linger in. Other associations of the steel joist are railway travel, industrial structures and absence of emotions. This theme of absence of emotions is echoed in Alec and Laura's numb navigation of the tunnel passage.

A brick wall in a 45 degree-angle towards the camera is pointing the way for Alec and Laura. On that wall we see, apart from the platform sign, advertisements showing what appear to be landscapes. These might be travel advertisements. The platform sign is foreboding with a function of

foreshadowing. Augé later described that as the means of communication within the non-place. i.e. communication taking place by texts offering instructions for use within the non-place (Augé 1995: 96). Advertisements are capable of creating artificial references to the context of a place. Augé referred to signs on the motorway as “laying claim to [...] history”, as they emphasise the historical and geographical context of a place. However, the same is valid for advertisements in places of travel, as they inform passengers about the context of the place they are passing through and try to persuade them into taking a detour in order to consume what is offered in the ad. This practice is necessary in the non-place, which is what Lefebvre would have referred to as “repetitive space”; a space that is not unique and cannot be clearly contextualised by its own means. Thus, the non-place is void of identity (Augé 1995: 79).

With focus on the platform sign the entire shot has a strong transitory feel to it and, hence, on where Alec and Laura are moving toward. The itinerary is turned into a silent, invisible character. Despite its invisibility, the itinerary is a stringent force that cannot be out-manoeuvred throughout *Brief Encounter*. Alec and Laura never miss a train, except when Alec tries to lure Laura into Stephen Lynn's apartment. Laura, first taking flight and entering her train to Ketchworth just to get off again and return to Alec ultimately finds herself in an emotional nosedive. It seems to leave deep and lasting traces in her mind, as, not much later, she and Alec decide to part for good.

Regarding character placement, there is an interesting imbalance to be noticed. Whereas Alec and Laura, walking hand in hand, or arm in arm, are slightly out of focus, their shadows, supported by the light coming from the right margin of the screen, are much more focused. Especially Laura's shadow is clearly defined. Alec and Laura are positioned in a place within the screen that is well known in photography: the golden cut. The golden cut, straightforwardly explained as the positioning of an object on where the lines of a grid segmenting the picture into 6 parts intersect, is considered a guideline for aesthetics in photography. Now, whereas Alec and Laura take up the position of the right-hand golden cut, their corresponding shadows take up the position of the left-hand golden cut. Despite their shadows having no texture but the

shadow-grey itself, they seem to be as prominent in the picture as Alec and Laura themselves. It is my theory, that the shadows depict the travelling alter-egos of Alec and Laura. There are several scenes throughout the film in which shadows of passengers are seen walking along the platform, descending stairways or waiting at the station (Figure 8).



Figure 8: Passengers / shadows, Alec and Laura in front @ 01:15:51

The gloomy space of the train station, with its indirect and dim lighting appears to prefer the shadows. This film noir characteristic paints exactly that picture of the nameless traveller, the uniform and solitary passenger void of individual character traits, propagated by Marc Augé in the non-place's sphere.

The staging positions and the dense proximity between Alec and Laura are similar to how other passengers are depicted in other scenes. Thus, the given shot is an example of how Alec and Laura strip off their identity, sometimes even seemingly ridding themselves of their affection for one another,

and drift in the nameless and placeless space of the train station. As Alec and Laura are heading in the same direction, they do not look at each other or interact. Hence, they do not function as what I would like to call an “anthropological pair of individuals”. They are solitary in their togetherness. This is the solitary contractuality created by the non-place (Augé 1995: 94).

5.3.2 – Train Compartment

Scene 3 @ 00:47:05

We now arrive at a shot that opens on one of my favourite sequences in *Brief Encounter*. It takes place inside the train carriage, in the compartment where Laura is wrapped up in her own thoughts about Alec (cf. figure 9). However, the fact that she tends to dream about herself and Alec being a happy couple going to romantic and fancy places is not the sole reason for the peculiarity of this scene. What I am interested in here is the magic in this shot. It is the windowpane and Laura's projections onto it that create what Michel Foucault referred to as *heterotopia*. It is a place for crisis, as Laura projects her hopes and dreams onto the glass. The glass is the only thing separating Laura from the coldness and darkness of the night outside the train carriage. But before I go into further detail regarding the interpretation of the mise-en-scene, I would like to discuss the cinematic aspects at play.



Figure 9: Laura in the train compartment @ 00:47:05

The shot seen in figure 9 presents Laura in a close-range portrait-shot. Laura is clearly dominating the scene, which is underlined by medium lighting. We need to keep in mind that the train carriage is shown as a rather dark place. Therefore, the medium-key lighting is just about “as light as it gets”. The shot is meant to prepare the audience and to set the stage for what comes next. The camera is set at eye-level, focusing on Laura's facial expression. The colours are clearly split between the lighter shades of grey of Laura's face and her clothing, apart from her dark hair almost blending in with the dark background of the compartment-seat's headrest. The other half of the screen is filled with darker shades of grey and the black of night behind the windowpane. Due to Laura's reflection in the windowpane we get the impression of another Laura sitting in a parallel compartment behind the wall of glass. The notion of setting the stage is underlined by the angle of the shot, as it is focuses on Laura and a portion of the compartment containing the windowpane. Laura's reflection is, apart from the real Laura, most prominent. The emptiness of the shot, with little else to be seen apart from the two Lauras, the seat headrest behind Laura's head and the windowpane along with its frame, leave plenty of room for the

following dream sequence. A parallel world is about to emerge from the windowpane demonstrating visually either the doomed future or Laura's own thoughts on the inevitability of her situation. This is underlined by the tight angle of the shot. The focus is kept shallow and Laura and her reflection practically share equal portions of the screen. Gentle suspense is created by Laura looking down in a pose suggesting she is in a state of contemplation with only the window-frame between her and her reflection.

The train compartment meets the criteria of non-place as it is a mobile space void of identity. It is moving through a landscape and avoids any sort of fixed relations. Apart from that, the windowpane works as a *heterotopia* (as mentioned above); it forms a counter-site (Foucault 24) on the one hand, allowing Laura to invert the world and adapt it to her desires. On the other hand, the windowpane, and this will be pointed out in more detail by reference to Michel de Certeau, makes reference to the given geographical context (i.e. it allows you to see where you are).

As the train ride continues, Laura begins to picture herself with Alec in a series of romantic situations. The first is Alec and Laura dancing a waltz: the couple is happily turning and dancing, coming closer and closer to the windowpane, coming closer and closer to the border between Laura's imagination and the real world. The next dream scene is Alec and Laura taking their seats at the opera in Paris, later they are in Venice. The vision of the Italian city is the first that manages to fully hide the trees of the real world rushing by behind the windowpane. Next, Alec and Laura are riding in a car, now with the train landscape movement visible again. Further stages of Laura's dreams are the couple on a ship and on a tropical beach. During the beach scene, the reflection of the real Laura is seen, reminding the audience and her of the unreal nature of the images shown. The daydream sequence ends as the last vision disappears from the windowpane, granting Laura a view of willows and a canal, landscape feature telling her that the train is approaching her home Ketchworth.

I am now going to further elaborate on the non-place aspect of the in-train

scene. The train compartment in this very scene is not only a space for dreams, it is also a mechanism securing the limited nature of dreaming. Michel de Certeau had elaborated on the train compartment (Certeau 111). He notes that during train travel, something immobile, i.e. the passenger, is moving past something immobile, i.e. the landscape. Crucial to the act of railway travel are, according to Certeau, the windowpane and the rail for:

“The windowpane is what allows us to see, and the rail, what allows us to *move through*. These are two complementary modes of separation. The first creates the spectator's distance: You shall not touch; the more you see, the less you hold – a dispossession of the hand in favor of a greater trajectory of the eye. The second inscribes, indefinitely, the junction to pass on; it is its order written in a single but endless line: go, leave, this is not your country, and neither is that – an imperative of separation which obliges one to pay for an abstract ocular domination of space by leaving behind any proper place, by losing one's footing.”
(Certeau 112)

Thus, the idea of the non-place as a transitory space that is devoid of fixed systems of references, therefore a blank space, is fully articulated in this in-train scene. It is amazing how well the concepts developed by Augé and Certeau work here. The domination of space mentioned by Certeau in the quotation above reflects what Laura is achieving through her daydreams whereas the space ruled by Laura in this sequence is not real, it is inside her mind. The windowpane is the part of train travel offering her the transcending space for her dreams, whereas the rail, the itinerary of the train, the passage of time, the rapid movement is a tableau of factors quickly turning the pages, lowering the curtain and turning up the lights in her theatre of dreams.

The following is an interpretation of specific scenes in accordance to the concept of the non-place. Focus is now set on the non-place as space for marginalised groups. Alec and Laura, marked by their self-stigmatory handling of their love-relationship, represent these marginalised groups in *Brief Encounter*. This train of thought will be elaborated in the discussion of the following two scenes.

5.4 – Negotiation of Identities in the Non-Place

The scene selected as a platform of departure for the analysis of identity-negotiation in *Brief Encounter* is located at 00:45:39 and shows a romantic and passionate kiss between Alec and Laura in the tunnel of Milford Junction (cf. figure 10). This kiss in the non-place is a good example for the choice of liminal space performed by “those who are [...] subjugated” (Soja 87), i.e. Alec and Laura, two lovers in the place of rupture.



Figure 10: Alec and Laura kissing at Milford Junction @ 00:45:39

As I have described in the first chapter, the passenger in the non-place is void of his regular identity and has only a small chance of taking on a collective identity together with other passengers. Exceptions in *Brief Encounter* are the station attendant Mr. Goodby, and the refreshment room hostess Ms. Bigot. Both share the identity of station staff. As far as Alec and Laura are concerned, they have to come to terms with the slippery terrain of the train station that is

offering little space for them to dwell and watch their love. Thus, the kiss is taking place in the tunnel connecting the platforms. Alec and Laura have to negotiate the space they are trespassing in order to come to terms with their feelings for one another and to cope with the societal mores of their time. What Alec and Laura are left to contend with is the constant decision of whether to carry on with their love relationship, or to call it quits and bail out on their feelings for the sake of their families. The decision of abandoning their families never really comes into consideration; probably an opinion significant for the time the film is set and was produced in.

As Alec and Laura come to terms in a time and non-place unfit for their love, it is of interest to examine their decisions and their choices regarding the stage for their interactions. The train station, as has been mentioned in the section on the role of space, is where their love-relationship gains energy and momentum. But before we take a closer look at the negotiation of identity, we should discuss who Alec and Laura really are. Alec refers to himself as general practitioner and we learn that he is married and has two boys. He is a man earning money in a well-respected job. Being a medic, one is tempted to say that his position suggests considerable proximity to an upper middle class situation. Laura, on the other hand, is a housewife. Throughout the film, Laura does not seem to be the only housewife. All of Laura's female friends, with Dolly Messiter ("Shopping til I'm dropping") leading the way, seem to have similar occupations. The only women we see working are in the hotel and restaurant industry (as in the refreshment room or at the Kardomah restaurant), and in the field of entertainment (the nice lady playing the organ in the cinema and the cello at the Kardomah).

Now, assuming that *Brief Encounter* is set in a post-war Britain (I have pointed out difficulties in clearly determining its temporal setting in the beginning of this chapter), I want to now outline what appears to have been the position of men and women in those days. Alec is a married man with children in a job that seems to earn him respect. Laura is a married woman with children, she does not pursue any profession and in the film we see her spend her Thursdays for leisure, assuming that she is rather busy with her family on the remaining days

of the week. There is no resistance towards anything until Alec and Laura begin to develop an affection for each other. When the regulatory forces of the dominant discourse come into play and put strain on the minds of Alec and Laura, Laura is depicted as the individual more sensitive to social mores than Alec.

The dominant discourse of those days is conveyed in different ways. First, there is an innate force in Laura. It can be observed by the many doubts she utters about her relationship to Alec. Whereas this force is strongest in the domestic space of Laura's home, these doubts are weakened in the non-place. Ultimately the dominant discourse wins as Alec and Laura have to give in to reason within the very walls of Milford Junction. Thus, the eradication of references is never fully complete in the non-place. The non-place, as the negative prefix suggests, is not capable of completing:

[p]lace and non-place are rather like opposed polarities: the first is never completely erased, the second never totally completed; they are like palimpsests on which the scrambled game of identity and relations is ceaselessly rewritten.

(Augé 1995: 79)

Ultimately, Laura and Alec must cope with the dilemma. They have to employ in what Michel de Certeau referred to as tactics (Certeau 1988: xviii). Alec and Laura eventually build their own path between the *Firstspace* and *Secondspace* discourse that is represented by the town, the streets and public places where they wander. Alec and Laura use the boathouse to confess to their love and the train station as an altar of life and death, as it is where they meet first and where they part. The entrance gate and the connecting tunnel beneath the platforms is their playground. The non-place train station with its anonymity and weakened set of references (Augé 1995: 94) turns out to be an “ideal” space for their love-relationship.

In *Brief Encounter* we see the kind of social space Henri Lefebvre described in the *Production of Space*, a space consisting of spaces interpenetrating each other (Lefebvre 86). Similar to these spaces, the

epistemologies and discourses at play are interpenetrating each other, which is why Alec and Laura have to juggle a whole set of roles and to cope with a whole set of discourses: the social mores they feel obliged to adhere to, their roles as family father or mother and husband or wife, their professions and their love for one another. Whereas the roles and discourses mentioned first all have their space, Alec and Laura have no room assigned to their love. This is why they use the tactics of pedestrians Certeau wrote about. Alec and Laura articulate the space of the non-place in their own way. They find a mental detour from the predetermined route of the passenger in the train station. This way they outmanoeuvre the strategy of the dominant society and that of the railway company.

This tactic is also what Edward Soja wrote about when he referred to *Thirdspace*. It is the inclusive “both / and also logic” (Soja 5) applied by Alec and Laura as they traverse the non-place and manage to articulate its *Firstspace* (physical space), its *Secondspace* (the purpose of train travel) and its *Thirdspace* (in Alec's and Laura's case, a place for their love-relationship). The identities of Alec and Laura offer multiple layers. In the case of Laura's official identity of 'woman', 'wife', 'mother', 'housewife', 'passenger', there is the clandestine identity of 'lover of Alec'. Whereas the clandestine lover-identity cannot be fully articulated outside the non-place, it becomes Alec and Laura's major level of reality and identity inside Milford Junction. The train station as the non-place and the place of rupture, where, as pointed out in the chapter on the space of Foucault on page 39, the dominant discourse of society is briefly, though not entirely, fading out and the outside, referred to as “suppressed discourse” in the Foucault-chapter, becomes visible. Alec and Laura become part of the outside by their love-relationship. Keeping it secret allows the couple from becoming a victim of an exclusion mechanism of the dominant discourse, a regulatory stigmatisation of extra-marital love; a sentence carried out by Alec's and Laura's friends, family and acquaintances.

Thus, the negotiation of identity in *Brief Encounter* is carried out on two levels that are neatly kept apart by their owners (Alec and Laura). While these two loving hearts dare to talk about their feelings openly within the boundaries

of the non-place, they take on the identities of two friends casually knowing one another once they encounter space in places outside the train station. All in all, they employ highly hybridised patterns of identity which, coming as no small surprise, cannot be done for too long.

There is another interesting aspect about *Brief Encounter* and Laura's identity. Laura takes up two positions crucial for a film about an extra-marital love affair: she is the lover of a married man and she herself is married as well. This conflict is brought to a terrible climax when Laura, upon her ultimate farewell with Alec, storms out of the refreshment room, intending to jump under the approaching express train. We do not fully learn whether she came to reason in the very last second, or whether the train was quicker than her will to die. However, Laura's suicide attempt marks the following: Laura, in her double role of the 'good' because married-woman and the 'bad' because in-love-with-a-married-man-woman is unable to meet the sad fate of a bad person as she also has to carry on with her family commitments. This conflict within Laura is brought to such skilful realisation and solution towards the end of the film, is as "and/or both" as a *Thirdspace* identity can get. What we witness in this scene can be compared to a reversal in the magnetic field in terms of dominant discourses at play: the non-place, as the palimpsest referred to by Augé, all of a sudden is rewritten and Laura exits to proceed to her domestic home where she chooses to continue with the housewife / mother identity.

Having now gone through a number of what I would like to call spatialities in *Brief Encounter*, we have found out some crucial points about the space as a non-place and its role for negotiating identity. Applying Marc Augé's concept of the non-place, together with corresponding concepts on space and the individual by Henri Lefebvre, Michel de Certeau and Edward Soja, has yielded results that shed light on how space adds to determining the course of characters in film.

6 – Conclusion

Finally, it is time to draw a conclusion from the previous analysis. What has been shown over the past pages is that the concept of the non-place is fit for being applied in a cultural studies film analysis. It was easy to say from the outset that one could definitely think and write about a film or a book with such a concept in mind. What a film is capable of revealing by applying the concept of non-place is the most interesting aspect.

After a close look at Marc Augé's book on non-places and outline of the negotiation of identity in the non-place, the next logical step was to discuss corresponding theories regarding places of the other. The *heterotopia*-concept developed by Michel Foucault has proven to be capable of providing a similar space for the other, a task also fulfilled by the concept of the non-place. In order to discuss the movement of the individual in the space of the non-place, the practice of everyday life as described by Michel de Certeau turned out to provide more than sufficient material on the itineraries of the individual in an urban setting. These are the tactics and ruses of pedestrians, known as “speech acts”, as they transform space into a language. Certeau's work also yielded the dichotomy of strategies and tactics, which is already foreshadowing the dominant and subjugated groups brought to attention in the latter chapters. Whereas the social mores of society in *Brief Encounter* represent the static space Alec and Laura have to negotiate, the tactics are the ruses they develop; from Laura's telephone call to her friend, asking for a little lie, to Alec's borrowing of a car and then a flat. The biggest step in tactics for this romantic couple is of course their choosing the train station as a platform for their love.

In order to arrive at a concept of space, Henri Lefebvre's work *The Production of Space* has been chosen. The three-layer model of social space developed by the French scholar paves the way for a model of space that is less container and more consequence. Whereas this dichotic question has been pushed to the background of this thesis, the interpenetrating notion of space proposed by Lefebvre has become even more prominent in answering the question of negotiating identity.

Identity must be negotiated and negotiations always take place under certain preconditions. These preconditions have been outlined in the chapter on epistemological space, in which Michel Foucault's theory on how discourse governs space and where space can offer loopholes for a discourse to fade out and allow new knowledge to arise has been examined. The point of rupture has been brought to attention here. The non-place is the spatial correspondent of the epistemological point of rupture. The model of the rupture has been projected onto that of the non-place in the film analysis.

Edward Soja's *Thirdspace* allows the individual to perform a choice between the various epistemes at play. The dominant discourse, termed *Firstspace* and *Secondspace* by Soja, can be overcome or adapted in order to arrive at a space that bears more of the individual's personal traits; i.e. *Thirdspace*. Whereas the non-place constitutes the hardware of the train station in *Brief Encounter*, *Thirdspace* can be called the operating system of this spatial machine.

The theory of non-place has proven to yield good results in explaining the setting of *Brief Encounter* with the train station representing the perfect place for a floating construct such as a clandestine love affair. The powers at play in *Brief Encounter* are thoroughly explained by overlooking the systems of references governing the order of place (Augé 1995: 53). A mise-en-scene analysis has produced results mirroring what has been found out about the non-place and the identity of its visitors in previous chapters. A closer look at the train compartment scene through the eyes of Michel de Certeau's work on train travel has underlined the extension of the non-place from physically speaking immobile places (the train station) to mobile places. The scene also emphasizes the solitude of the traveller in a non-place. The tightly limited construction of collective identities in the non-place mentioned by Marc Augé is reproduced down to the very last detail in *Brief Encounter*. Perhaps, this thesis can be followed by more analytic work on films of other genres.

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Visual material:

Figures 1, 2 taken from Soja, Edward W. *Thirdspace. Journeys to Los Angeles and other real-and-imagined places*. Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1996.
 Figures 3-10 taken from *Brief Encounter*. Screenplay by Noel Coward, David Lean, et al. Dir. David Lean. Cineguild Independent Producers, 1945.

Appendix

Abstract

This paper is examining the representation of non-places in *Brief Encounter*, a film directed by David Lean. A non-place, according to Marc Augé, is a place that is void of the three anthropological categories identity, relations and history (Augé 1995: 52). Whereas *Brief Encounter* was released in 1945, the concept of the non-place has been formulated by socio-anthropologist Marc Augé half a century later, i.e. in 1995. The purpose of analysing a film more remote in time than the concept to analyse this filmic work with, is to elaborate the dynamics of the non-place postulated by Marc Augé in a work that is void of Augéan bias. The given analysis provides a closer look at how the actions and the plot of *Brief Encounter* are influenced by the spatial setting of the film. The protagonists' inner and outer itineraries are discussed by applying other spatial concepts such as *Heterotopia* and *Epistemological Space* (Foucault), *Production of Space* (Lefebvre), *Pedestrian Speech Acts* (Certeau) and *Thirdspace* (Soja). Examination of these itineraries shows that whereas what can be referred to as anthropological place leaves little room for the socially or morally stigmatised protagonists of *Brief Encounter*, the non-place provides an instable and unfinished refuge for them. These results can be seen in a philosophical light, as they do not represent mere figures or answers, but try to provoke thoughts on space and its role in film.

Kurzzusammenfassung

Diese Arbeit untersucht die Darstellung von Nicht-Orten im 1945 unter der Regie von David Lean produzierten Film *Brief Encounter* (dt. Titel *Begegnungen*). Ein Nicht-Ort, so Marc Augé, ist ein Ort, der die drei anthropologischen Kategorien Identität, Relation und Geschichte nicht erfüllt (Augé 1995: 52). *Brief Encounter* wurde 1945, genau ein halbes Jahrhundert vor Augés Buch zu den Nicht-Orten und somit bar jeder Kenntnis dieses Konzeptes umgesetzt. Die gegenwärtige Analyse soll zum Einen einen Einblick in die Spatialität, die Verortung und Verräumlichung der beiden Protagonisten in *Brief Encounter* gewähren und zum Anderen einen Erklärungsversuch für die Einflussnahme, bzw. Antwort des Raumes auf die Handlung darstellen. Die Kontextualisierung der Handlung der ProtagonistInnen erfolgt über die Anwendung weiterer raumbezogener Modelle wie den *Heterotopien* und dem *epistemischen Raum* (Foucault), dem *Sprechakt der FußgängerInnen* (Certeaus), der *Produktion von Raum* (Lefebvre) und *Thirdspace* (Soja). Die Analyse zeigt, dass der Nicht-Ort in all seiner Instabilität und Unabgeschlossenheit den einzigen “sicheren” Ort für die ob ihrer außerehelichen Affäre stigmatisierten Protagonisten des Films darstellt. Die Ergebnisse vorliegender Arbeit sollen, philosophisch betrachtet, Denkanstöße für weitere Fragen zum Raum und seiner Rolle im Film darstellen.

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