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**The Spatial Dynamics of Vienna in *The Third Man*:
Narrative, Film and the Postwar Cityscape**

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0. Introduction:

0.1 Greene and Postwar Space

Critics have widely noted Graham Greene's ambivalent position within twentieth-century literary history. To understand this ambivalence, his work must be situated against the backdrop of modernism, a movement generally understood to have reached its fullest expression in the early decades of the twentieth century through writers such as Henry James, Joseph Conrad, James Joyce, and Virginia Woolf. Modernist writers pursued increasingly experimental forms capable of representing what Tawfiq Yousef describes as the "inner self and consciousness," producing works that were "basically psychological and experimental" (35). Rejecting purely external description, modernist fiction turned inward, privileging memory, subjective experience, and the complexities of mental life. As Woolf argues in "Modern Fiction," the novelist must "look within" because reality resides not in external events but in the movements of consciousness itself (qtd. in Yousef 35). Consequently, modernist literature frequently presents reality as "a matter of perception" rather than objective fact (Yousef 35), privileging a fragmented temporality and the instability of individual identity over linear narrative progression.

This psychological inwardness profoundly shaped modernist representations of space. Urban, domestic, and natural environments frequently function as extensions or projections of inner experience, i.e. acquiring meaning through the interiority of those who inhabit them. In this tradition, the external world is filtered through human consciousness and becomes inseparable from a character's emotional state; space effectively serves as an externalisation of the psychology within. Whether observing Clarissa walking through London in Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* or Stephen Dedalus navigating Joyce's Dublin in *Dubliners*, the city reflects and becomes an extension of the characters' inner lives. The human subject remains central as space is experienced, interpreted, and organised by the mind that perceives it. By contrast,

postmodernism, which gained prominence after the 1960s, shifted away from this earnest psychological depth. Commonly associated with metafictional self-awareness, irony and intertextuality, postmodernism embraces “the belief that there are no universal truths” and “challenges the basic assumptions of ‘modernism’ concerning the role of reason, rationality, or scientific reasoning in guiding our understanding of the human condition” (Yousef 35). Writers such as John Fowles employ self-reflexive narrative strategies that foreground the artificiality of storytelling itself, reversing the assumption that literature can offer a coherent representation of either the internal psyche or the external world.

Greene occupies an uneasy position between these two dominant literary formations, operating within a uniquely “mid-century” literary space. As Michael Sinowitz observes, Greene’s fiction neither displays the radical formal experimentation commonly associated with high modernism nor aligns comfortably with the experimental, metafictional tendencies later associated with postmodern fiction (408–9). His novels remain largely committed to recognisable narrative structures and accessible forms of storytelling. Yet, as Sinowitz also argues, Greene’s work is simultaneously permeated by modernist concerns such as moral uncertainty, spiritual crisis, and the search for meaning in an increasingly unstable world, even when it avoids modernism’s more overt stylistic innovations (409). However, it is precisely within this generic threshold that Greene reconfigures the relationship between the subject and the environment. In Greene’s *The Third Man* (1950), high modernism’s presentation of urban space as an externalisation of inner consciousness is fundamentally reversed. Space instead becomes an active agent. It acts upon the subject, systematically altering his/her body, perception, and experience. Vienna’s divided territories, ruined architecture, occupied zones, and subterranean network materially condition the characters’ movement, visibility, and agency before those elements can even be interpreted psychologically. Rather than expressing the characters’ inner states, the geopolitical and

physical reality of Vienna actively produces their disorientation, estrangement, and vulnerability. Ultimately, within Greene's mid-century landscape, space reorganises consciousness. This theoretical reversal makes a spatial approach uniquely productive for understanding the psychological destabilisation at the heart of *The Third Man*.

The centrality of space in postwar literature cannot be separated from the profound geographical and social transformations that followed the Second World War. Across Europe, bombings, military occupation, the displacement of thousands because of the destruction of their homes, and the redrawing of political boundaries disrupted established relationships between individuals and the environments they inhabited. Millions of Europeans were forced to negotiate unfamiliar territories, such as the ethnic Germans who were expelled from Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary after 1945. In this context, questions of movement, belonging, borders, and national identity acquired renewed urgency. Space could no longer be understood as a descriptive background to historical events but emerged as one of the principal sites through which the consequences of war were experienced. Among the cities most visibly marked by these transformations was Vienna. Although it escaped the total devastation experienced by cities such as Berlin or Dresden, wartime bombing and combat nevertheless left substantial physical damage. According to Jeffry Diefendorf, "[t]wenty-eight per cent of the city's buildings suffered some damage, and 4% were totally destroyed," which rendered thousands of dwellings "uninhabitable" and left large quantities of rubble embedded within the urban landscape (Diefendorf 3). The city was simultaneously confronted with political upheaval. Following the collapse of the Third *Reich* (Third Empire), the totalitarian Nazi regime in Germany from 1933 to 1945 of which Austria had become a part after the *Anschluss* of 1938, Vienna was occupied by the Allied powers and divided into four administrative zones controlled by the Soviet Union, the United States of America, Britain, and France. Although not separated as rigidly as Berlin, Vienna

remained under Allied supervision until the Austrian State Treaty of 1955, leaving its political future unresolved for a decade (Diefendorf 2). The result was a city characterised by fragmentation at multiple levels. Physical destruction coexisted with reconstruction projects, occupied territories intersected with everyday urban life, and traditional social and political certainties gave way to instability and transition. Diefendorf observes that postwar planners viewed reconstruction not simply as repair but as an opportunity to reshape the urban fabric according to new political and functional priorities (4–5). For a long time, the city remained suspended between preservation and transformation, its recovery complicated by the continued foreign occupation.

Graham Greene's *The Third Man* emerges within this historical and spatial context. Set in occupied Vienna shortly after the Second World War, the novella repeatedly foregrounds the material effects of the built environment. Streets, architecture, ruins, and subterranean sewer systems reconfigure movement, perception, and experience. Rather than functioning as a passive setting, Vienna becomes an active force that structures both characterisation and narrative development. It is this relationship between space and narrative that forms the central concern of the present thesis.

0.2 The Genesis of *The Third Man*

The genesis of *The Third Man* underscores Greene's spatial determinism. The novella is set in February 1948, a year prior to its 1949 publication. This period saw Vienna as a city visibly damaged by the war, struggling with the severe effects of a brutal winter and widespread food scarcity. The atmosphere was charged with burgeoning Cold War anxieties, amplified by the recent communist coup in Czechoslovakia. At the same time, the occupation and severe shortages fueled widespread black market activities. In September 1947, Greene had the idea for his book during a walk through London, where he had initially intended his

story to be set (R. Greene 179). He later presented this unfinished idea to producer Alexander Korda, who proposed developing it as a film set in the Austrian capital. Greene subsequently relocated the narrative from London to postwar Vienna, a decision that fundamentally shaped the work's spatial imagination. Upon arriving in the city, Greene was immediately struck by the vast Vienna Central Cemetery, recognising it as the inevitable opening image of the narrative (179). Graham Greene's Biographer, Richard Greene, explains that Vienna was then "in a desperate state, with piles of rubble everywhere and people struggling to find the basics of life. It was a setting perfectly suited to Greene's imagination" (179). Before the plot had fully taken shape, Greene wandered through its streets, nightclubs, theatres and amusement parks, searching for places "suitable for filming"; It was only after learning of the underground police network and touring the sewer system that the narrative assumed its final form (179).

0.3 The Novella and Film

The origins of *The Third Man*¹ complicate any strict separation between the novella and Carol Reed's 1949 film. Although Graham Greene is primarily known as the author of the novella, the project was conceived from the outset with cinema in mind. After Greene proposed the initial idea to producer Alexander Korda, the narrative was developed simultaneously as a literary and cinematic work, with Greene ultimately writing both the novella and the screenplay. The two versions therefore emerged from the same creative process and together constitute complementary manifestations of a single narrative project. The unusual relationship between the novella and the film has generated considerable critical discussion. In the preface to the novella, Greene famously remarked that the story had been

¹ In this thesis, references to Greene's novella *The Third Man* will appear as *TMN*; and references to the screenplay as *TMS*.

written primarily as a preliminary stage in the production of the screenplay and that the film represented its “finished state” (TMN 4). Such statements have encouraged some critics to view the novella as subordinate to the cinematic version. Yet this characterisation is difficult to sustain given Greene’s decision to publish the work and continue republishing it throughout his career. As Richard Greene notes, despite the author’s later insistence that the novella was “never written to be read but only to be seen,” it was originally conceived as “straight fiction” and completed as a literary work before filming began (ch. 25). The novella therefore possesses a degree of autonomy that exceeds its function as preparatory material for the screenplay.

The present study takes the novella as its primary object of analysis because it represents the earliest sustained articulation of the spatial concerns that would later define the film. More importantly, the novella provides direct access to Greene’s narrative construction of postwar Vienna through its vivid descriptions and deep exploration of character psychology. In his preface, he underscores the formal necessity of this initial literary stage, arguing that space and mood must be captured textually before they can be translated visually:

To me it is almost impossible to write a film play without first writing a story. Even a film depends on more than plot, on a certain measure of characterisation, on mood and atmosphere; and these seem to me almost impossible to capture for the first time in the dull shorthand of a script. One can reproduce an effect caught in another medium, but one cannot make the first act of creation in script form. One must have the sense of more material than one needs to draw on. *The Third Man*, therefore, though never intended for publication, had to start as a story before those apparently interminable transformations from one treatment to another. (3)

The city, with its wrecked interiors, dark streets, partitioned territories, and subterranean spaces, is clearly organised through literary form before being translated visually in the film. Examining the novella therefore makes it possible to investigate how spatial experience is structured at the level of narrative itself. Nevertheless, the film remains essential to

understanding the full development of *The Third Man*. While the novella establishes the narrative's spatial logic, Reed's adaptation renders that logic perceptible through cinematography, sound, framing, lighting, and architectural composition. Reed's expressionistic visual style, indebted to German Expressionism and its subsequent incorporation into Hollywood film noir by filmmakers such as Orson Wells, employs canted angles, deep shadows, bomb-damaged exteriors, and the Viennese sewer system to transform Greene's spatial concerns into a striking visual language of disorientation and estrangement. The film therefore occupies an important place within this thesis, receiving dedicated attention in the final chapter as a distinct but inseparable realisation of Greene's postwar Vienna. Rather than treating the novella and film as competing versions of the same story, this study approaches them as complementary explorations of a shared spatial imagination. Together, they reveal how postwar Vienna functions not just as a setting but as an active force that controls the characters' movement and experience within the city.

0.4 Scholarship Review & Gap

The enduring popularity of *The Third Man*, particularly its film adaptation, has generated a substantial body of scholarship devoted to both the novella and the film. Examples of these film critics include Michael Sinowitz (2007), Joseph A. Gomez (1974) and Lynette Carpenter (1986). The film has been treated on the aspect of genre by Sinowitz, for instance, who reads it as a site of struggle between high modernism and low popular art, specifically the Western genre. Gomez and Carpenter focus in their analysis on the setting of Vienna as one that mirrors the mind, comparing it occasionally to the novel. For Gomez, the film visually embodies Greene's "divided mind" with Vienna being of a meaningful presence that reflects moral and psychological ambiguity (333). Carpenter, on the other hand, offers a political reading of the film as the final "microcosm" of the postwar world, and views the city's

physical and political structure as a symbol or portrait of Western Cold War ideology (56). More recently, Eva Horn (2025) reads the novella, and, comparatively, the film, as an allegory of postwar Europe; she posits that the plot's many inconsistencies are intentional symptoms of a world where traditional social logic has collapsed into a "heart of darkness" modeled after Joseph Conrad. In fact, an example of Greene's modernist sensibility in *The Third Man* is its intertextual dialogue with Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, particularly in its exploration of the darkness at the heart of modern civilisation and the moral corruption concealed beneath apparently ordered societies. Greene's choice to name one of his characters Kurtz, for instance, is a reference to Conrad's enigmatic figure at the heart of his novella. Collectively, these readings establish Vienna as the principal component of *The Third Man*. Yet the city is most often approached as a reflection of psychological, political, or historical realities rather than as a material force in its own right. Even when space occupies a prominent position within critical analysis, it tends to function as a symbolic register through which broader concerns are expressed. A notable exception is Tijana Parezanović's "Narrative Flâneurism in *The Third Man* – A Method for Constructing the Other City." This study of characterisation in the novella argues that Greene employs a heterotopic mode of narration that constructs space through the perspective of the flâneur—or the urban stroller. Space in this case remains primarily conceptual and narrative rather than materially operative. By asking what becomes of the flâneur in a ruined Vienna, Parezanović places this character, not the city, at the center of her urban analysis.

Within this body of scholarship, a critical gap becomes visible: few readings begin from the material organisation of Vienna itself—its divided urban fabric, ruined architecture, and charged interiors. It is precisely these spatial conditions, I argue, that generate the detachment characteristic of the flâneur that Parezanović identifies, not merely as a reflection of inner malaise but as its material precondition. Rather than mirroring psychological or

collective unease, Vienna's spatial configuration actively produces and imposes it upon the characters, shaping characterisation and narrative form. In this sense, spatial disorientation emerges not as a consequence of narration but as one of its material preconditions.

0.5 Aim and Methodology

To investigate these spatial dynamics, this thesis draws upon insights from spatial theory, psychoanalysis, and cultural geography. Its primary theoretical framework is Henri Lefebvre's conception of space as socially produced, which provides a means of approaching Vienna as a spatial formation whose material, political and experiential dimensions are inseparable. Lefebvre's work is particularly useful to examine how urban space structures the subjects' visibility and orientation. This materialist framework also calls for the use of Sigmund Freud's theories of dream logic and the uncanny, to account for the psychological effects generated by Vienna's fragmented spatial organisation. Freud's concepts help explain how repetition, doubling, and the return of the repressed past contribute to the novella's dream-like atmosphere and uncanny spatial experiences. Michel Foucault's notion of heterotopia further informs the analysis of exceptional spaces such as the cemetery and the sewer network, sites that occupy an ambiguous position within the city's geographic layout. Finally, selected insights from Yi-Fu Tuan and Edward Relph contribute to the thesis's examination of lived spatial experience. Their emphasis on perception, fear, and everyday encounters with the built environment helps articulate how occupied Vienna is experienced by those who inhabit and move through it. Together, these approaches allow the study to move from the material production of space to its lived and psychological consequences, providing a framework for understanding how Vienna actively shapes narrative form and human experience in *The Third Man*.

0.6 Thesis Argument and Research Questions

This study thus analyses the function of space in *The Third Man* by asking: How does the novella's spatial and architectural configuration construct Vienna as an active agent? How does the city's material fragmentation reorganise narrative structure, character movement, and perception? And in what ways does spatial disorientation give rise to dream-like logic and Freudian uncanny effects? Drawing on Lefebvre's theory of the "production of space," I want to demonstrate that the city's political division, architectural fragmentation, and postwar ruins constitute a socially produced environment that actively conditions the experiences of its inhabitants. Rather than reflecting psychological estrangement, Vienna generates it through its material organisation imposed by the occupation. Living within the city's permeable borders and unstable built environment, the characters' orientation is repeatedly disrupted as they move in and out of public and private spaces that feel both familiar and unfamiliar at once. These spatial conditions give rise to the dream-like logic and uncanny effect visible in both the novella and the film adaptation. By shifting attention from what Vienna symbolises to what it does, this thesis demonstrates that space operates as a material force that structures bodily experience and spatial awareness in both versions of *The Third Man*.

0.7 Chapter Overview

To address these questions, the thesis is organised into one theoretical chapter followed by three analytical chapters. Chapter One establishes the theoretical framework of the study, drawing primarily on Lefebvre's theory of the production of space while also incorporating insights from Freud, Foucault, Tuan, and Relph. Together, these approaches provide the conceptual tools through which Vienna's material, experiential, and psychological dimensions can be examined.

Chapter Two analyses Greene's novella through the lens of spatial production, arguing that Vienna functions as a socially produced environment that organises the characters' everyday experience. The chapter examines the city's four-power division, streets, interiors, and architecture of ruins, demonstrating how these spatial conditions generate surveillance, entrapment, and disorientation. The urban landscape therefore assumes an agentive role within the narrative.

Chapter Three turns to the uncanny and dream-like dimensions of Greene's novella. Building on Freud's theories of repression, dream logic, and the uncanny, the chapter examines how Vienna's spatial fragmentation established in the previous chapter produces experiences of doubling and repetition, leading to the collapse of chronological order. It argues that the city's material disorientation gives rise to psychological and narrative instability, transforming occupied Vienna into a space where the familiar becomes threatening and where the past repeatedly returns within the present.

Chapter Four examines Carol Reed's film adaptation and explores how cinematic form visualises and intensifies the spatial concerns developed in the novella. Through its representation of ruins, underground spaces, expressionistic lighting, shadow, sound, and Gothic atmosphere, the film renders Vienna's fragmentation perceptible through sight and sound. By examining the relationship between literary and cinematic space, the chapter demonstrates how Reed transforms Greene's postwar city into a distinctly visual landscape of haunting and loss of spatial orientation.

1. Theoretical Framework

1.1 The Spatial Turn and Literary Studies

During the second half of the twentieth century, literary and cultural studies experienced what has come to be known as the spatial turn. Whereas earlier critical approaches often privileged time, history, and chronology as primary categories of analysis, spatial criticism redirected attention toward geography, location, and the organisation of human environments. In this regard, Edward Soja famously explains:

For at least the past century, time and history have occupied a privileged position in the practical and theoretical consciousness of Western Marxism and critical social science. Understanding how history is made has been the primary source of emancipatory insight and practical political consciousness, the great variable container for a critical interpretation of social life and practice. Today, however, it may be space more than time that hides consequences from us, the ‘making of geography’ more than the ‘making of history’ that provides the most revealing tactical and theoretical world. This is the insistent premise and promise of postmodern geographies. (1)

One early precursor of this shift can be found in Joseph Frank’s influential essay “Spatial Form in Modern Literature” (1945), which argued that modernist texts increasingly force the reader to “perceive the elements of the [text] juxtaposed in space rather than unrolling in time” (227). Frank wrote that modern literature dismantles syntactic and narrative progression so that meaning relies on the “simultaneous perception of relationships” between fragmented elements, directly challenging strictly chronological modes of interpretation (229). Although Frank’s focus remained primarily formal and aesthetic, dealing with the mechanics of human perception instead of physical or political geography, his work fundamentally anticipated later attempts within the spatial turn to foreground space as a central, active category of literary analysis. While Frank’s framework was decidedly modernist and formal, subsequent scholars have linked this shift to the profound political and cultural transformations of the twentieth century. Mariya Shymchyshyn highlights in *Spatial Literary Studies* the “spatial turn in the humanities [as] a response to the postmodernist

condition” (18). Particularly, she locates the roots of this postmodern shift in the destabilising effects of World War II and postwar decolonisation, which challenged the “myth of history as a single, unified narrative”; massive displacements of populations and the redrawing of political borders intensified awareness of geographical difference and the specificity of place (18).

The growing interest in space generated a range of theoretical approaches. Robert Tally Jr. describes spatial literary studies as an interdisciplinary field associated with the broader “spatial turn” and notes that spatial criticism frequently establishes connections with disciplines such as “architecture, geography, history, politics, social theory, and urban studies” (2). Edward Soja emphasises the spatial dimensions of social life, while Bertrand Westphal’s *Geocriticism: Real and Fictional Spaces* (2011) investigates the relationship between literary representation and real geographical environments. Homi Bhabha’s concept of the “Third Space” similarly foregrounds questions of cultural negotiation and hybridity, examining how identities emerge within spaces of encounter and exchange. Rather than viewing cultural contact zones as simple sites of assimilation or rigid conflict, Bhabha posits that “it is not the colonialist Self or the colonised Other, but the disturbing distance in-between that constitutes the figure of colonial otherness” (61). By focusing on this “disturbing distance,” the Third Space becomes an ambivalent, active arena of enunciation where pre-given historical binaries break down. Consequently, identity ceases to be a stable or inherited essence. It emerges instead as a fluid process of hybrid translation continually redefined through shifting geopolitical structures. Despite their differences, these approaches share a common rejection of the notion that space functions merely as a neutral container in which events occur.

1.2 Producing Space: Henri Lefebvre

Among the various approaches that emerged from the spatial turn, Henri Lefebvre's theory of the production of space offers the most influential framework for understanding the dialectic between environment and social life. In *The Production of Space* (1991), Lefebvre challenges the longstanding assumption that space is an empty, neutral container or a passive backdrop within which history unfolds. Instead, he insists that “(social) space is a (social) product” (26), continuously produced through political, economic, and ideological systems. This intervention redirects critical attention away from static geographical settings and toward the active processes through which these settings structure social relations and materialise political power. Spatial arrangements are never innocent, for the organisation of architectural forms and urban landscapes reflects broader social hierarchies, privileging specific modes of movement, interaction, and visibility while shutting down others.

To map the operational complexity of this production, Lefebvre develops a conceptual triad of interconnected dimensions. The first is spatial practice (“perceived space”), which encompasses both a “daily reality (daily routine) and urban reality” composed of “the routes and networks which link up the places set aside for work, 'private' life and leisure” (38). The second is representations of space (“conceived space”), the dominant domain of planners and bureaucrats who use “sheets of paper, plans, elevations, sections, perspective views of façades, modules, and so on” to impose systems of ideological order upon the material world (361). Finally, representational spaces (lived spaces) denote the subjective, symbolic, and affective experience of inhabiting an environment, encompassing memory, imagination, and the distinct meanings individuals attach to specific places (39). These three dimensions operate simultaneously. Material environments are continually shaped by administrative structures, while lived experience is conditioned by both physical surroundings and ideological forms of spatial organisation. By understanding space through this triadic

production, it becomes clear that spatial organisation controls who moves through certain spaces, who regulates this movement, and who is completely denied access to them.

Conceived space, in particular, functions as a medium through which institutional power takes form, with borders monitoring physical movement, urban planning determining the patterns of circulation through the cities, and architectural structures dictating what can be seen, hidden, or controlled. Rather than simply reflecting preexisting power relations, these spatial arrangements actively participate in their maintenance and reproduction, serving as the concrete mechanisms through which modern societies organise and govern everyday life. Consequently, Lefebvre's materialism reveals that any analysis of a built environment must also be an analysis of how power enforces compliance or produces marginalisation through geography.

Although Lefebvre developed this socio-spatial theory primarily in relation to physical urban environments, his ideas possess profound utility within literary and cultural studies. Writers do not present settings in their narrative texts as static locations but as spatial environments through which characterisation, perspective, theme and plot come together. Therefore, literature can be understood as an imaginative arena through which the social production of space is represented and explored. Cinema extends this process further by rendering spatial relations visually and acoustically perceptible. Through framing, camera movement, colors, soundscapes, and editing, films contribute to the shaping of the viewer's phenomenological experience of space. A cinematic text can therefore render visible the interaction between Lefebvre's "conceived," "perceived," and "lived" space, allowing the viewers to look beyond the setting's material environment and recognise the institutional structures and subjective realities that sustain it. Lefebvre's framework thus serves as the primary theoretical foundation for this thesis, providing a comprehensive analytical lens to examine Vienna in *The Third Man* as an active agent of spatial formation. Both the novella

and the film present a spatial order deeply structured by military occupation, four-power partition, bureaucratic administration, and visible architectural destruction. Vienna becomes one of the narrative's principal organising forces, which, through its systems of surveillance and confinement, actively structures the characters' movements and conditions the narrative itself. The remaining sub-frameworks explored in this chapter, including humanistic geography, heterotopias, and psychoanalytic space, are deployed more selectively as targeted investigative extensions of this overarching Lefebvrian model, illuminating the distinct experiential, subterranean, and uncanny dimensions of Vienna's broader spatial production.

1.3 Experiencing Space: Yi-Fu Tuan and Edward Relph

While Lefebvre emphasises the social production of space, humanistic geographers such as Yi-Fu Tuan and Edward Relph draw attention to the relationship between individuals and the environments that they inhabit. Their work shifts the focus from large-scale political and social structures to the subjective dimensions of spatial experience, examining how places are encountered, interpreted, and emotionally invested with meaning in everyday life. For Tuan, human relationships with different spaces are shaped not only by material conditions but also by affective responses. In *Landscapes of Fear* (1979), he explores the ways in which fear becomes spatialised, arguing that anxiety emerges as "a diffuse sense of dread" that often arises in "a strange and disorienting milieu" where familiar sources of security are absent (5). Fear is therefore not read as an individual psychological response but a condition that becomes attached to specific spatial settings. He makes it clear that "'landscapes of fear' refers both to psychological states and to tangible environments," highlighting the inseparability of emotional experience and spatial surroundings (6). This relationship between fear and the built environment was later developed by Mike Davis, whose *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles* (1990) demonstrates how urban planning itself

may be organized around fear, exclusion, and social polarization. Whereas Tuan is primarily concerned with the lived experience of fearful environments, Davis demonstrates how urban space may be organized around the anticipation of fear. Tuan's insights are particularly useful for understanding how urban environments may generate feelings of anxiety and suspicion, transforming ordinary spaces into landscapes structured by perceived threat.

Relph similarly emphasises lived experience in his phenomenological approach to human environments in *Place and Placelessness* (1976). Instead of approaching environments as abstract geographical coordinates, he examines how individuals encounter and make sense of the spaces they inhabit. His work foregrounds perception, familiarity, and daily experience, emphasising that spatial environments are always mediated through human consciousness and practice. Relph specifies,

And in terms of the practical everyday knowledge that we need to organise our experiences of the world there can be little disputing this, for we have to know, differentiate, and respond to the various places where we work, relax, and sleep ... That the significance of place in human experience goes far deeper than this is apparent in the actions of individuals and groups protecting their places against outside forces of destruction, or is known to anyone who has experienced homesickness and nostalgia for particular places. To be human is to live in a world that is filled with significant places: to be human is to have and to know *your* place.
(3)

Rather than constituting an alternative to Lefebvre's theory, the perspectives of Tuan and Relph help develop the experiential dimension of what Lefebvre terms lived space. Their emphasis on perception, fear, and everyday experience provides a more detailed vocabulary for examining how produced environments are encountered and felt by those occupying them. This contribution is particularly relevant to *The Third Man*, where the material conditions of occupied Vienna generate persistent experiences of uncertainty, estrangement, and disorientation. Tuan and Relph therefore refine the analysis of spatial experience without departing from the broader Lefebvrian framework that primarily structures this thesis.

1.4 Other Spaces: Michel Foucault's Heterotopia

If Lefebvre's theory provides a framework for understanding the social production of space, Michel Foucault's concept of heterotopia offers a useful way of thinking about spaces that exist in a distinctive relationship to the broader social order. In his lecture "Of Other Spaces" (1967), Foucault introduces heterotopias as real places that function as "other spaces," simultaneously connected to and separated from the ordinary environments that surround them. Unlike utopias, which are "sites with no real place," a heterotopia "does exist in reality" while operating according to different social, symbolic, or institutional parameters (Foucault 3, 4). Foucault identifies several forms of heterotopia, among them what he terms "heterotopias of deviation," which are spaces occupied by individuals whose behavior departs from prevailing social norms and therefore becomes subject to regulation or exclusion (5). More broadly, heterotopias frequently serve as sites where ordinary spatial relations are either suspended, reorganized, or inverted. They occupy an ambiguous position within society: neither entirely outside the social order nor fully integrated into it. One of his most significant examples is the cemetery. Historically situated at the margins of the city, the cemetery functions as a distinct spatial domain dedicated to the dead while remaining "connected with all the sites of the city, state or society or village" because of the familial and cultural ties anchored within it (5). It marks a boundary between different modes of existence and simultaneously embodies memory, absence, and continuity. Because of this dual function, the cemetery forms a "strange heterotopia... a place unlike ordinary cultural spaces" (5).

Foucault's concept is highly useful for understanding certain environments in *The Third Man*. The cemetery that frames both the opening and closing of the narrative may be understood as a heterotopic space in which questions of time, death, and return are concentrated. Similarly, the Viennese sewer network constitutes a unique realm that exists beneath and apart from the visible city while remaining physically connected to it. Operating

according to its own routes, rhythms, and forms of movement, the underground system functions as a hidden counterpart to the occupied city above. These spaces are neither entirely separate from Vienna nor fully integrated into its everyday life, occupying an intermediate position that reflects Foucault's notion of spatial otherness. Within the present study, Foucault's concept is used primarily to analyse specific spaces whose functions differ from those of the surrounding urban environment, particularly the cemetery and the sewer network. These sites eventually fracture the apparent coherence of the occupied city. By operating according to their distinct logics—social and symbolic—they reveal the contradictions lying underneath ordinary urban life. As such, the notion of heterotopia provides a useful supplement to the broader Lefebvrian framework, allowing for a more precise analysis of those spaces that exist at the margins of the urban order.

1.5 Psychoanalytic Space: Freud, the Uncanny, and Gothic Spatiality

Moving beyond the preceding frameworks' focus on the social production, organisation, and experience of space, psychoanalytic theory offers a means of understanding the feelings of estrangement and anxiety generated by spatial environments. Sigmund Freud's work is especially relevant in this regard because it explores the relationship between repression, memory, dreams, and the uncanny. This analysis draws upon these concepts not to replace a material understanding of space but to complement it; if Lefebvre explains how environments are socially and politically produced, Freud helps explain how those produced environments become psychologically destabilising. This destabilisation is fundamentally rooted in Freud's theories of dream formation, repression, and the unconscious. In *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), Freud argues that unconscious material continues to exert influence through indirect and symbolic forms, describing the unconscious as "the true psychic reality" (613). Experiences, memories, and desires excluded from conscious awareness do not disappear but

persist in disguised forms and re-emerge in the form of dreams and repetitions. Freud's later writings would develop this insight further through the notion of the return of the repressed, whereby elements believed to have been overcome unexpectedly resurface and disrupt the apparent stability of the present. Psychoanalytic literary criticism extends Freud's model of the unconscious to literary representation by arguing that repressed desires, fears, and memories often emerge through symbolic forms rather than direct expression. As Roland Pierloot argues, literary texts may be understood as structures in which unconscious material is displaced, condensed, and transformed into symbolic patterns that organise narrative meaning (16). Such a perspective is particularly valuable for this analysis because environments can function not merely as settings but as symbolic formations through which unresolved psychological tensions are articulated. When these symbolic returns become embedded within familiar environments, they produce what Freud terms the uncanny. In his 1919 essay *The Uncanny (Das Unheimliche)*, Freud demonstrates that what appears uncanny is not wholly unfamiliar; it emerges when something once intimate, and familiar (*heimlich*) returns to conscious awareness in an altered, disturbing, and secretive form (*unheimlich*). The uncanny arises "when the boundary between fantasy and reality is blurred, when we are faced with the reality of something that we have until now considered imaginary," activating recurring motifs such as the double—which destabilises the uniqueness and coherence of the self—and repetitive patterns that leave individuals trapped within inescapable behavioral cycles (150).

Nonetheless, this thesis does not treat the uncanny as an internal psychological condition. It is rather employed as a spatial phenomenon where environments function as material repositories of repression. Deserted landscapes and war-damaged architecture usually acquire uncanny qualities because they preserve the physical traces of historical traumas that resist complete erasure, allowing a buried past to coexist with the present. This

psychoanalytic framing provides a direct theoretical bridge to Gothic spatiality. Gothic environments—characterised by labyrinthine structures, burial sites, and the spectral return of figures presumed dead—are not always mere aesthetic choices but can be spatial expressions of unresolved histories and traumas. They derive their power from the exact mechanisms that structure the uncanny: doubling, repression, and the persistence of past violence within the present architecture. This integrated perspective is uniquely suited to *The Third Man*, where postwar Vienna operates as a highly uncanny and Gothicised space. The city's geography and unsafe interiors create conditions in which ordinary spatial experience becomes uncertain. By deploying Freud's psychoanalytic concepts and Gothic motifs, alongside Lefebvre's spatial framework, the present study examines how material environments generate uncanny experiences and how the physical traces of history continue to shape the characters' perception and narrative form in *The Third Man*.

1.6 Defining Space in This Thesis

Given the diversity of approaches gathered under the umbrella of spatial studies, it is important to clarify how the term *space* is employed throughout this thesis. Humanistic geographers have often distinguished between space and place, with the latter generally referring to locations invested with personal, cultural, or emotional significance. While such distinctions are useful in certain contexts, the present study does not adopt a rigid opposition between the two concepts. Instead, following Lefebvre, space is understood as a socially produced phenomenon that encompasses material, political, and experiential dimensions simultaneously. Consequently, the term *space* in this thesis refers not only to physical environments such as streets, buildings, ruins, and domestic interiors, but also to the social relations, systems of power, and forms of lived experience embedded within them. Space is

therefore neither a purely geographical reality nor a purely symbolic construct. It emerges through the interaction of material structures, political forces, and subjective perceptions. This understanding of space allows for an analysis of Vienna in *The Third Man* that moves beyond treating the city as a mere setting. Instead, Vienna is approached as an active spatial formation whose political divisions, architectural configurations, and affective qualities shape the movements, perceptions, and experiences of the characters. Across the analysis, the term *space* will therefore designate the dynamic interplay between physical environments, social organisation, and lived experience that structures both the narrative world and the characters' engagement with it.

Taken together, the theoretical perspectives discussed in this chapter illuminate different dimensions of the same spatial process. Lefebvre provides the principal framework through which Vienna can be understood as a socially produced environment shaped by division and urban destruction after the war. Building upon this foundation, Tuan and Relph help articulate how such environments are perceived, inhabited, and emotionally experienced in daily life. Foucault's notion of heterotopia further clarifies the function of exceptional sites that occupy an ambiguous position within the urban order, while Freud's theory of the uncanny reveals the psychological consequences of spatial fragmentation, repetition, and disorientation. Rather than constituting separate or competing approaches, these concepts are connected, and together, they make it possible to examine how material spatial conditions generate particular modes of experience and perception, and how these experiences subsequently manifest as uncanny, dream-like, and Gothic phenomena. The following chapters apply this framework to *The Third Man*, beginning with an analysis of how occupied Vienna in the novella is materially produced through political division and architectural ruin, before turning to the experiential and psychological effects that emerge from these spatial conditions. Finally, the thesis will examine the way Reed translates Greene's spatial

imagination into cinematic form, mediating the novella's spatial and psychological dynamics onto the screen.

2. Vienna as Material Agent

It is difficult to make sense of *The Third Man*, both novella and film, outside the parameters of its setting. The plot, chronology, mood, and atmosphere surrounding the story are deeply related to and anchored in the Austrian capital, Vienna. Ravaged by the war, the city is “a broken world in which instability, slippage and displacement are the only structuring principles” (Craig 202). In *The Third Man*, the violence of war persists through the material organisation of space itself. This first part of the analysis will explore the configuration and materiality of Viennese spaces, indoors and outdoors, with the aim to emphasise its agency in reorganising narrative structure as well as the characters’ movement and perception. It will first lay the groundwork by examining Vienna’s occupation and spatial fragmentation; second, it will explore material obstruction in the city, specifically through snow and ruins; third, it will analyse the setting of the cemetery as an example of a failed Foucauldian heterotopia; and finally, it will study spaces of non-belonging in *The Third Man* as controlled environments that produce disorientation and containment.

This analysis is less concerned with reading Vienna as a historical scenery than as a materially produced environment, in which political occupation and wartime destruction actively structure lived experience. The novella insists upon the necessity of spatial orientation from its very opening: “If you are to understand this strange, rather sad story you must have an impression at least of the background—the smashed dreary city of Vienna divided up in zones among the Four Powers” (TMN 6). From the outset, the city is presented as fragmented, partitioned into “Russian, [...] British, [...] American, [...] French zones,” marked not by natural boundaries but by administrative signs and military control (6). Occupation, therefore, is not simply a political condition but a spatial one: it reorganises the city into a network of divisions that dictate how the characters interact both with one another and with the spaces surrounding them. In the novel, space is not neutral but structured by

authority, making every movement through the city implicitly political. In this sense, the occupation of Vienna operates not only as an external imposition but as an organising force that shapes lived experience from within. This imposed spatial order is reinforced by the physical remnants of war. The novella repeatedly describes the city as “smashed” and “desolate,” its landscape marked by “undignified ruins” and “rusting iron of smashed tanks” (TMN 7). Buildings are only partially restored, often “repaired only to the first storey,” leaving the scars of destruction visible at eye level (7). Streets become obstructed—“they can’t get an ambulance into this street because of the ruins”—and movement is redirected or impeded by the material environment (51). The fractured landscape consequently acquires a form of material agency within the narrative. William F. Van Wert argues that “the ubiquitous debris of war-ravaged Vienna has as much ‘presence’ as any of the protagonists” (341). Greene repeatedly directs the reader’s attention toward damaged landmarks and architectural remnants; at the beginning of Chapter Nine, for instance, the narrator notes that “St. Stefanskirche shot its enormous wounded spire into the sky above the Inner City” (TMN 46). His use of the adjective “wounded” transfers the trauma of war directly onto the urban environment, framing structures traditionally associated with rigidity and permanence as physically injured. This damaged landscape ultimately reflects the profound extent to which the war shattered Vienna’s architectural, historical, and social continuity alike. In this sense, the city’s architecture becomes not merely the object of violence but one of its principal targets. Teresa Stoppani argues that architecture itself can undergo trauma, insisting that “[a]rchitecture can be subjected to trauma, and this remains recorded and expressed on its body,” not simply metaphorically, but as a material condition inscribed onto the built environment over time (16). The ruins in *The Third Man* therefore function simultaneously as traces of past destruction and an active material presence that continues to shape the lived experience of the city and those who inhabit it.

The contrast with the prewar city further underscores this transformation. Although the narrator never experienced interwar Vienna and was “too young to remember the old Vienna with its Strauss music and its bogus easy charm,” he juxtaposes it with the shattered city it has become (TMN 7). His descriptions of this “old Vienna” reveal a longing for the past that can only highlight how the current city has been materially and structurally altered. What remains is rupture: a city damaged by war and experienced mainly through its ruins. Within this war environment, spatial division both facilitates and obstructs the investigation. Addresses are consistently identified by their occupation zone: Cooler’s apartment, for instance, lies “over an ice-cream parlour in the American zone,” and Kurtz stays “in the Russian zone—in the second Bezirk to be exact, in a wide, empty, desolate street that runs down to the Prater Platz” (TMN 42, 73). To locate a person is to locate them within a specific political territory. At the same time, however, this fragmentation complicates movement and communication. Calloway admits himself that “police work in an occupied city is not like police work at home,” as “everything is unfamiliar,” from procedures to jurisdictions (78). The division of space thus generates a paradoxical condition in which it both organises and destabilises one’s search for truth.

Beyond fragmentation, the city also produces a continuous sense of surveillance and exposure. Throughout the story, Martins never ceases to feel that he is being watched. This is particularly apparent when he is on his way to visit Kurtz:

It was extraordinarily quiet over here on the other side of the canal, and a melodramatic journalist had painted a picture of silent terror, but the truth was simply the wider streets, the greater shell damage, the fewer people—and Sunday afternoon. There was nothing to fear, but all the same, in this huge empty street where all the time you heard your own feet moving, it was difficult not to look behind. (82)

The emptiness and silence of this urban landscape produce in Martins an almost involuntary suspicion. Visibility is so pervasive that even interior spaces fail to provide privacy or protection. While Martins and Anna speak in her apartment, their moment of intimacy

becomes exposed, as she suddenly warns him: “Come away from the window. There are no curtains” (70). The city operates through a paradoxical spatial logic in which both openness and enclosure generate entrapment. On the one hand, the ruined buildings and exposed interiors render the characters vulnerable to surveillance; on the other, this atmosphere is reinforced by censorship and bureaucratic control: “What with censorship and the zones, cables can take anything up to five days” (26). In this manner, the sense of visibility is not always the result of institutional authority since the city itself generates continuously the feeling of exposure. Vienna’s spatial organisation produces a persistent anxiety in which characters experience themselves as perpetually visible. Occupation transforms everyday urban life into a condition of continual exposure in which even the private moments between Anna and Martins remain vulnerable to intrusion by the police or other networks of surveillance that permeate the city. Increasingly, Vienna actively assumes a form of spatial hostility, functioning as a true “character of latent evil” (Reshetova 13).

Movement within the occupied city is also controlled through physical obstruction. Snow, in particular, plays a significant role in both the film and the novella as an obstacle that continually hinders the characters’ movement and disorients them. Snow imagery recurs indeed over the course of *The Third Man*—“The tramcars flashed like icicles at the end of the street” (TMN 52), and Vienna “turned that February into great glaciers of snow and ice” (7). Although Greene’s use of snow invites symbolic readings of concealment and what lies beneath the surface, its function in this analysis is primarily agentive. Like many elements of Vienna’s spatial environment, snow actively impedes the narrative’s progression. While literary traditions often associate snow with purity or moral cleansing, Greene relates it instead to brutality, obstruction, and harshness within the postwar landscape. Eva Horn starts her article entitled “Graham Greene’s *Heart of Darkness*” by emphasising the prevalent presence of snow in the city:

Vienna, February 1947. Snow, huge amounts of snow, is falling on the partially cleared remains of bombed-out buildings, hampering clean-up operations and making the streets impassable - a scene recorded in the historical notes of Vienna's City Hall. The historical setting of Graham Greene's story and screenplay [...] is a frosty Vienna in ruins immediately after the end of the World War II. (1)

Horn's view of the snow is interesting, as she finds it embedded in the very historical reality of Greene's Vienna, and I agree that it constitutes a central component, no less important than its monumental buildings, squares or palaces, themselves reduced to ruins after the war. For much of the story, whenever outside, the characters dabble in the snow. James Brown too explains that "[t]he ice and snow, which Greene had seen in February 1948, became intrinsic to his vision of Vienna" (26). From the onset, the novella presents the reader with a dense and varied language of ice. Terms such as "frozen" (TMN 6), "glaciers," (7) "ice" (7), "snowbound" (12), "snow slopes" (40), "whiteness" (49), "snowman" (51), and "icicles" (52) accumulate across the text, culminating in later transformations into "thaw," "stalactites," and "slush" (98). The word "snow" itself appears thirty-eight times, indicating not incidental or aesthetic description but a sustained lexical pattern. The novella starts with the first funeral of Harry Lime: "It was February, and the gravediggers had been forced to use electric drills to open the frozen ground in Vienna's central cemetery. It was as if even nature were doing its best to reject Harry, but we got him in at last and laid the earth back on him like bricks" (6). Spatially, the scene carries an undercurrent of violence with the phrases "forced" and "electric drills". The suggestion that "even nature" attempts to "reject Lime" transforms the landscape into an antagonistic force that resists easy containment. Van Wert observes that the second line "subjectifies the first" that offers a materially grounded description (342). Greene thus presents the frozen ground, first, as a concrete material obstacle and, second, as part of a broader symbolic structure surrounding Harry's ambiguous status in the novel.

In its various forms, snow is repeatedly represented as something that must forcibly be cleared away. At the cemetery, "the snow had been shovelled aside" to create a small

opening for the mourners, and characters are seen moving carefully through the city “for fear of sliding” on the ice (TMN 12, 51). Not only physically—indeed everyone tries hard to go about “as fast as the snow would let [them]” (51)—but the snow impedes the action in the novel, and specifically the investigation taking place throughout the narrative. For instance, the snow makes perception difficult, for certainly the little child Hansel, who claimed to have seen “some blood on the coke,” could not have been telling the truth for “[t]he snow leaks everywhere” (51). Moreover, it holds Martins back from discovering the truth about Harry’s death. When Martins visits Anna again to tell her about Mr. Koch’s claim about a third man being present on the crime scene, and Koch’s refusal to give evidence, they decide to question Koch again who, as they arrive, they are informed he has been murdered. On their way to Koch’s place, “the snow clogged on their shoes and made them move slowly like convicts weighed down by irons” (49). When Anna strangely backs away not wanting to go anymore, “[Martins] walked slowly on alone, the snow caking on his heels” (50). Snow here is a resisting force, and this resistance is not just physical but narrative and structural because it slows down the narrative itself, resisting resolution and closure. In this way, it can be said that the setting hinders the progression of the narrative by creating resistance and blurs perception, preventing knowledge.

The obstructive force of snow extends beyond movement to structure the temporality of the novella. Snow does not merely constitute part of the setting; it also materialises the passing of time, both within the characters’ lived experience and within the chronology of the narrative. The novella pays particular attention to the changing weather, repeatedly marking when snow begins to fall, when it stops, and how it accumulates or disperses over time. Even when the wind “brought no snow,” it “came icily off the Danube ... and whipped up the snow like the surf on top of a wave” (92). The progression of the story becomes closely tied to the changing winter landscape, so that shifts in weather and snowfall begin to dictate the rhythm

and development of the narrative. *The Third Man* begins in a landscape dominated by ice, snow, and frozen earth, and ends with the arrival of the thaw. Harry—or at least the illusion and suspended idea of him produced by the false burial—remains metaphorically frozen in both time and space. Neither fully dead nor fully present, Harry exists in a state of suspension that prevents narrative closure. As Martins and the narrator attempt to uncover the truth behind Harry's "murder," their investigation is rather an effort to break through a frozen surface. The eventual thaw coincides with the progressive revelation of Harry's reality and culminates in his actual burial, now materially facilitated by the softened ground. Indeed, the process of thawing appears almost necessary for Harry's death in the end of the novel, physically enabling the burial that the frozen earth had initially resisted, "as if sacrificing him turned the seasons" (Brown 26).

The preserving effect of snow and its role in delaying revelation extend to the architecture of Vienna. From the beginning, Greene constructs snow as inseparable from the architecture of the city and permanent part of its buildings. Martins observes that "the great drifts among the ruined buildings had an air of permanence, as though they were not the result of this meagre fall, but lay, forever, above the line of perpetual snow" (TMN 9). It is in this manner that snow acts as a preservative agent. By literally freezing the buildings in time, it suspends the architecture outside ordinary historical progression and interrupts the linear temporality of war and reconstruction. The city appears immobilised within a condition of suspended permanence, as though the ruins had been removed from historical time altogether. Under this frozen landscape, Vienna's damaged architecture begins to resemble a geological formation rather than a transient urban environment.

Snow also obstructs Martins' movement toward the cemetery. From the beginning, he notices that Vienna is "snowbound" (12). Even before heading to the cemetery, it is clear that "[t]hey'll have a time [burying him] in this frost" (11). During Martins' taxi ride to the

Central Cemetery (the *Zentralfriedhof*), the description of the journey gives the reader a clear view of the spaces around him and of his precise progression through the city:

He drove straight out of town into the suburb (British zone) where the Central Cemetery lay. One passed through the Russian zone to reach it, and a short cut through the American zone, which you couldn't mistake because of the ice-cream parlours in every street. The trams ran along the high wall of the Central Cemetery ... they drove for a half-mile towards the west, and then turned and drove a half mile north, turned south (12).

Greene's use of specific zones—British, Russian, and American— and cardinal directions, such as “west,” “north” and “south,” creates the impression of spatial precision and orientation. The cemetery appears firmly anchored within a recognisable geographical reality shaped by the occupation and territorial division of Vienna. Nonetheless, this apparent clarity quickly collapses once Martins arrives. He soon notices the immense scale of the cemetery itself, whose “apparently endless chain of gravestones” and “avenues of graves” stretching “like the spokes of an enormous wheel” render orientation increasingly difficult (12). Despite the detailed mapping that precedes it, the cemetery ultimately functions as a labyrinthine space in which physical movement is completely disoriented.

This spatial instability further reinforces the cemetery's heterotopic character. Tijana Parezanović offers a reading of the cemetery in *The Third Man* as a Foucauldian heterotopia. The setting indeed strongly corresponds to Foucault's definition of heterotopic spaces, which are simultaneously embedded within lived social reality and radically separated from it. Foucault's definition highlights a dual characteristic of heterotopias: on the one hand, heterotopias are anchored in “real places—places that do exist and that are formed in the very founding of society,” (3) thereby inscribing them within lived space; on the other hand, they are defined by their radical alterity, since they are “absolutely different from all the sites that they reflect and speak about” (4) and function as “counter-sites” (3). Cemeteries occupy a particularly important position within Foucault's theory because they are spaces specifically

designated for the dead, physically separated from everyday life while remaining deeply connected to the organisation of society. It is particularly striking that *The Third Man* presents more than one space that fits into this definition. Within the realistic war narrative that Greene constructs, it is not utopian spaces that emerge, but rather heterotopic ones, most notably the cemetery and the sewers, as Parezanović also observes. She notes that Greene's description of the cemetery explicitly follows the structure of Vienna itself (145). "Even this cemetery was zoned between the powers," the narrator remarks, reproducing within the space of burial the political fragmentation of occupied Vienna (TMN 12). Certainly, it reproduces the logic of the city—division, organisation, and zoning—within a space ostensibly isolated from it. It becomes "a miniature (or inverted) reflection of the city," reconfiguring Vienna's larger urban order (Parezanović 150). While this reading is persuasive, the cemetery can be further understood as a failed heterotopia; its icy condition complicates this heterotopic function. If the cemetery is meant to separate the dead from the living, Greene repeatedly undermines this function through the frozen ground that resists this separation—to use Brown's phrasing, "[a]t the heart of the story is the refusal of the dead to lie easy" (20). Burial becomes materially difficult, and what is interred is not securely confined but suspended within a frozen environment. The heterotopia thus fails to fully perform its role. Rather than ensuring the finality of death, it introduces a delay, a resistance that unsettles the boundary between presence and absence. In this sense, the cemetery ceases to function as a site of closure and signals the point where the novella's central ambiguity begins. This uncertainty persists until Harry's body eventually returns to the cemetery and his burial is finalised.

The failure of the cemetery to contain death is symptomatic of a broader spatial instability that extends to Vienna's interiors. Across the narrative, spaces repeatedly fail to perform the functions traditionally associated with them. Just as the cemetery does not secure

closure, so too do hotels and domestic interiors refuse to provide rest or permanence, functioning as unstable homes for the characters. Continuously moving through transient, regulated, and interchangeable environments, they hardly seem to belong anywhere. This spatial logic becomes especially visible in places such as hotel rooms and requisitioned apartments, where habitation can only be provisional. The hotel setting occupies a particularly important position within *The Third Man* as a space of non-belonging. Hotels recur throughout Greene's detective fiction and entertainments, often functioning as central sites of encounter, or of concealment and deception. Similar spaces reappear across the broader trajectory of Greene's works: the Cosmopolitan in *Brighton Rock*, the Regal Court Hotel in *The Ministry of Fear*, the Continental Hotel in *The Quiet American*, the Hotel Oloffson in *The Comedians*, and the Bedford Hotel in *The Heart of the Matter*. These spaces are rarely associated with comfort or domestic stability; they continuously operate as transient environments structured by anonymity, impermanence, and psychological unease.

In *The Third Man*, however, the significance of the hotel lies less in its interior architecture than in its status as a transitional and temporary space within occupied Vienna. In fact, two hotels are featured in the narrative: the Hotel Astoria, where Martins initially expects to meet Harry upon arriving in Vienna, and Sacher Hotel, where he eventually stays. Greene himself stayed at the Sacher Hotel after producer Alexander Korda arranged a room for him during his 1948 visit to Vienna while gathering material for the story (R. Greene 179). When Martins first arrives at the Astoria, "There was no Lime to meet him," only "a cryptic [message] for Mr Dexter from someone he had never heard of" (TMN 9). This initial absence sets a precedent for Sacher Hotel, which the narrator explicitly reduces to a site of passage rather than true habitation, admitting his inability to "picture it as it had once been, any more than [he] can picture Sacher Hotel as other than a transit hotel for English officers" (7). The hotel is therefore stripped of its original identity and transformed into an extension of

military occupation, reflecting the broader spatial condition of postwar Vienna itself. This spatial instability is closely tied to Martins' own condition of homelessness and displacement within the city. Significantly, as he enters this transient space, Martins is immediately misidentified as the famous author Benjamin Dexter—a mistake facilitated by his own habit of writing cheap Westerns under the pseudonym "Buck Dexter." Overall, the hotel landscape accommodates this interchangeability precisely because its corporate, military structure is organised around systemic anonymity, turning the physical building into a catalyst for the novella's fluid identities. Martins himself associates hotel spaces with unpredictability and chance encounters: "'Hotel room booked,' but Rollo Martins wasn't the kind of man who stayed around. If you stayed around in a hotel lounge, sooner or later incidents occurred; one mixed one's drinks" (10). The hotel is thus not presented as a place of refuge but as a site where events are set in motion. In fact, the novel's central revelation occurs in relation to the hotel space, as Martins returns toward Sacher's only to encounter the supposedly dead Harry in the street. The hotel therefore repeatedly functions as a spatial trigger for narrative movement and revelation.

Horn argues that, given the themes of "economy of scarcity, occupation, displaced persons, greed and corruption," *The Third Man* "could have been set nowhere else but in the ruins of the most glamorous of all the defeated cities of the Second World War" (1). Within this landscape, I would argue that the hotel emerges as one of the spaces through which these themes become most materially visible. Critics of crime fiction and noir cinema have long emphasised the role of hotels as spaces of alienation and moral ambiguity. Roger Luckhurst, for instance, describes the hotel lobby as a space where "individuals [gather] together but alone, atomised and alienated from each other" (130). Such environments, structured by impersonality and fluid boundaries, facilitate concealment, surveillance, and even criminality. Vienna in *The Third Man* strongly resembles the noir city Andrew Spicer describes as a

fragmented urban environment populated by subjects who are “symbolically homeless,” moving through impersonal spaces devoid of stable attachment (qtd. in Luckhurst 129). Greene’s Vienna is similarly composed of transit zones, bars, streets, military hotels, and temporary interiors rather than secure domestic spaces, making the city itself appear incapable of sustaining rootedness or permanence. Even within the apparent privacy of Martins’ hotel room, this instability persists. Exhausted, he falls asleep fully dressed on the bed, only to dream that “he had left Vienna far behind him and was walking through a dense wood, ankle-deep in snow” (TMN 23). In the dream, he searches for Harry beneath “a particular tree” but cannot distinguish it “from the rest,” before finally approaching a figure that turns out not to be Harry at all “but just a stranger” (23). The dream reproduces the same logic of disorientation that structures Martins’ experience of Vienna. The hotel room therefore does not provide solace from the city but extends its uncertainty inward. Interior and exterior spaces begin to resemble one another, both generating loneliness and spatial estrangement.

If the hotel represents transience and non-belonging through anonymity and circulation, Dr. Winkler’s apartment produces a different form of spatial unease, one rooted in excess and ambiguity. Greene offers a minute description of his waiting-room when Martins visits him:

Dr. Winkler’s waiting-room reminded Martins of an antique shop—an antique shop that specialises in religious *objets d’art*. There were more crucifixes than he could count, none of later date probably than the seventeenth century. There were statues in wood and ivory. There were a number of reliquaries: little bits of bone marked with saints’ names and set in oval frames on a background of tinfoil. If they were genuine, what an odd fate it was, Martins thought, for a portion of Saint Susanna’s knuckle to come to rest in Dr Winkler’s waiting-room. Even the high-backed hideous chairs looked as if they had once been sat in by cardinals. The room was stuffy, and one expected the smell of incense. In a small gold casket was a splinter of the True Cross. (33)

Winkler's interior initially appears dense with meaning and historical depth with the presence of crucifixes, reliquaries, statues, and fragments of saints' bones, yet it ultimately destabilises any sense of familiarity or trust. While this accumulation of sacred objects is meant to evoke spiritual authority and historical continuity, their arrangement within a private medical apartment generates a profound incongruity for Martins. The room oscillates between clinic, chapel, museum, and antique shop, collapsing distinctions between scientific rationality and religious ritual, as if he is prepared "to switch from doctor to priest at a moment's notice" (Brown 31). Instead of grounding meaning, the excessive symbolism of the room produces unease. The objects appear displaced from their original contexts and reorganised into a strange assemblage of random signs. Martins' reflection on "Saint Susanna's knuckle" in the room emphasises the dislocation of sacred relics from spaces of worship to an uncanny semi-private interior. Yet the exaggerated artificiality of the room is mirrored by Winkler himself, who, as Van Wert observes, "has his idiosyncracies (*objets d'art*, obsession for cleanliness)" (342), making him appear almost as carefully arranged and stylised as the objects surrounding him. This artificiality is reinforced by his vanity and sensitivity regarding his identity, particularly when Martins repeatedly mispronounces his name, calling him "winkle" like the sea snail. Winkler consequently appears not as a stable authoritative figure but as another constructed and performative element within the room itself. Martins accordingly describes him as "that clean controlled man creaking among his crucifixes," whose characterisation makes him inseparable from the unstable environment he inhabits (TMN 38).

Winkler directly undermines the credibility that his space aims to project when, for instance, he casually refers to the saints' remains as "[t]he bones of chickens and rabbits" (34). Brown describes this moment as "another case of post-mortem mistaken identity in Lime's Vienna," referring to the underlying collapse of stable correspondence between bodies, objects, names and identities in the occupied city (31). This possibility reinforces one of the

novella's central patterns: the unreliability of perception. Objects repeatedly fail to correspond securely to what they claim to represent, just as Harry's burial fails to confirm his death. Winkler's apartment therefore functions as a deeply unstable interior, where signs of permanence and historical depth are emptied of certainty and reorganised into an uncanny spatial environment. The room appears simultaneously familiar and strange, saturated with symbols that, instead of grounding the subject, produce unease, replacing domestic security with ambiguity.

If Winkler's apartment overwhelms through excessive symbolism, Harry's flat produces the opposite effect: a space from which traces of life have been systematically erased. The apartment is initially introduced as "a large apartment on the edge of Vienna that had been requisitioned from a Nazi owner," immediately situating it within the cycles of displacement and forced occupation that characterise postwar Vienna (TMN 10). Ownership within the city appears provisional rather than permanent, as spaces circulate between successive occupants under military and political control. Harry's flat therefore already carries the traces of previous histories of removal and substitution even before Martins enters it. What strikes Martins most upon entering the apartment, however, is not its history but its emptiness. The interior appears unnaturally ordered and stripped of evidence of human habitation. "The living-room was completely bare," with "the chairs [...] pushed up against the walls," while the blank parquet floor "reflected the light like a mirror" (39). The bedroom contains "the bed neatly made with clean sheets," and in the bathroom "not even a used razor blade indicated that a few days ago a living man had occupied it" (39). Greene repeatedly emphasises the excessive cleanliness of the apartment, transforming order into something rather unsettling. The space loses all sense of inhabitability, appearing staged and sanitised. Martins himself senses the artificiality of this erasure, reflecting that "after a death there should have been more litter left than this" (39). The room therefore fails to correspond to the

reality it supposedly represents. Instead of confirming Harry's death, the apartment produces suspicion precisely because it appears too carefully arranged.

Yet the attempt to erase any signs of occupation remains incomplete. In the "little dark hall," Martins notices "the smell of cigarette smoke—the Turkish cigarettes that Harry always smoked" (39). This lingering smell functions as a residual trace of Harry's presence, disrupting the apartment's deceptive neutrality. On the one hand, the apartment appears prepared "for a newcomer" (39), interchangeable and ready for another occupant; on the other, such lingering traces preserve something ghostly and unresolved within the space, fueling Martins's suspicions. Like Harry himself, the apartment exists in a suspended condition between disappearance and return. The flat therefore participates directly in the investigative logic of the novella. His space becomes implicated in the process of investigation, changing Martins' perception and directing the movement of the narrative. More fundamentally, however, Harry's flat exemplifies the broader spatial condition of Vienna throughout *The Third Man*, where interiors do not function as stable sites of intimacy or dwelling. Instead, they become temporary, regulated, and easily interchangeable environments facilitating any erasure of identity. Thus, subjects, objects, and spaces alike exist in a continual state of displacement and suspension.

Ultimately, Vienna cannot be reduced to a passive background against which the narrative unfolds in *The Third Man*. The city operates instead as a material and spatial agent that actively reorganises perception, movement, temporality, and social relations. Snow slows down burials, the cemetery fails to contain death, hotels transform permanence into transience, and domestic interiors no longer provide the protection or intimacy associated with home. Consistently, these spaces fail to perform their traditional domestic or civic functions. As a result, Vienna produces a hostile environment where any form of belonging and stability is increasingly impossible. What emerges from Greene's postwar landscape is a

spatial order fundamentally transformed by war and occupation, where fragmentation ceases to be exclusively political or architectural and becomes profoundly experiential. The narrative's uncertainty surrounding identity and perception cannot be separated from the spaces through which the characters move. Through its obstructed streets, transient interiors, labyrinthine cemeteries, and surveilled zones, Vienna continuously generates uncertainty, interfering with any attempt at coherence and meaning. In this sense, *The Third Man* presents postwar space not as a passive container for trauma, but as an active matrix that materially reproduces it. Greene's Vienna functions as a spatial manifestation of a Europe suspended between war and reconstruction. By foregrounding the agency of this material environment, the novella consequently reveals how postwar urban space does not simply reflect historical crisis but actively structures the psychological and social terms of living through it.

3. The Uncanny and Dream logic of the City

If the first chapter demonstrated how Vienna functions as a materially fragmented environment structured by occupation, destruction, and physical obstruction, this second chapter examines the psychological and atmospheric effects of that landscape. I argue that, in *The Third Man*, Vienna's ruined architecture and transient interiors explored above generate a distinctly dream-like and uncanny spatial logic in which perception turns unstable. These conflict-driven environments produce far more than physical disorientation as they inflict upon the characters a crisis of existential orientation at the level of experience itself. Sigmund Freud's concept of the *unheimlich* provides a particularly productive lens through which to approach this transformation. In his 1919 essay "The Uncanny," Freud examines the concept of the *unheimlich*, literally meaning the "unhomely." He defines the "uncanny" as "that class of the terrifying which leads back to something long known to us, once very familiar" (2). The "uncanny" consequently emerges when what should remain hidden within the sphere of the familiar or domestic unexpectedly returns in altered form, producing unease and estrangement. It is important to note that this study does not aim to reduce *The Third Man* to a psychoanalytic case study. Rather, Freud's concepts will be used heuristically in order to illuminate the spatial and perceptual logic through which the novella, and later the film, operate. The destruction and occupation of Vienna destabilise precisely the spaces traditionally associated with security and orientation. The moment domestic interiors transform from sites of refuge to permeable, temporary, surveilled, or deceptive environments, intimacy and trust repeatedly shatter. The "uncanny" in *The Third Man* thus emerges not solely as a psychological theme but as a spatial effect produced by postwar urban conditions. Anthony Vidler's observations in *The Architectural Uncanny* are especially relevant in this regard. As he argues, after modern warfare "the site of the uncanny was now no longer confined to the house or the city, but more properly extended to the no man's land

between the trenches, or the fields of ruins left after bombardment” (7). *The Third Man* constructs Vienna precisely through this logic, whereby in the aftermath of war, uncanniness escapes the private domestic sphere and becomes embedded within the urban environment itself. The first section of this chapter examines how the destruction and occupation of Vienna transform the *heimlich* into the *unheimlich*, producing interiors and domestic spaces that no longer offer intimacy or refuge. The second section explores the dream-like logic of *The Third Man*, analysing how displacement, condensation, and distorted perception structure the experience of the city. Finally, the third section investigates the role of doubling and repetition in the novella, particularly through split identities, shadows, mistaken recognition, and the unsettling figure of Harry Lime.

Anna Schmidt’s relationship to space embodies most clearly the collapse of inhabitable domesticity in postwar Vienna. As a displaced foreigner living under constant threat of expulsion, Anna occupies the city in an inherently precarious manner. The porter describes her to Martins as “claim[ing] to be Austrian,” surviving thanks to forged papers provided by Harry (TMN 23). Her existence is consequently defined less through belonging than through temporary occupation and vulnerability to deportation. Having lost Harry, her lover, Anna exists in a condition of profound isolation in which her vulnerability becomes spatialised, making her susceptible to being acted upon by the space around her. Indeed, Anna’s presence in Vienna is entirely conditional and reversible, dependent upon the unstable political organisation of the occupied city. The threat of deportation continuously structures her relationship to the space she occupies, transforming Vienna into a place that can never fully become home. Harry’s death leaves her “completely indifferent as to her own fate,” suggesting not only emotional exhaustion but also a profound detachment from futurity itself. Her condition throughout the novella is therefore one of suspension (TMS 7).

The first space associated with Anna is not a home but the backstage of a theatre. Having learned of her relationship with Harry from Kurtz, Martins seeks out Anna at the Josefstadt Theatre, speaking with her in her dressing room after her play has concluded. Greene's choice of setting is significant. Anna is introduced not through a domestic space but through a transitional theatrical environment structured around performance and disguise. The room itself resists intimacy or stable inhabitation. Greene describes it as "almost bare," containing "no wardrobe packed with clothes, no clutter of cosmetics and grease paints" (TMN 30). The absence of personal objects produces the impression that nobody genuinely lives there. Despite being identified as her room, the space bears almost no trace of ownership or rootedness, as if successively occupied by theatrical roles. Martins notices "one sweater he recognised from Act II on the only easy chair" in the room, highlighting the transient nature of the room, used solely for its functionality (30). Her profession as an actress intensifies this instability. She becomes associated with the transient and replaceable identities she embodies, unable to maintain a fixed self outside of performance. Instead of displaying the familiarity traditionally associated with domestic interiors, it produces a distinctly uncanny effect in which the supposedly personal space appears strangely impersonal and uninhabited. Her domestic residence is equally unstable. In both the novella and screenplay, she lives in a private room, referred to as "Anna's room" (68). When Martins visits her, it is implied she is living in a shared house or boarding situation, as she tells him, "you don't want to wake the house" (68). The screenplay later confirms that the apartment does not even belong to her. After Calloway and the police search the room, the elderly woman living in the building angrily complains about the intrusion, and Anna translates: "Only complaining about the way they behave—it's her house" (TMS 48). Anna therefore occupies a domestic interior over which she possesses no authority or permanence. Furthermore, the spaces she occupies are highly permeable, an effect structurally produced by

the occupied city itself the moment she finds the police searching her room. The arbitrary and unpredictable nature of Vienna's wartime environment heightens her fear, constantly reinforcing her lack of agency. The geopolitical fragmentation of the city reaches the domestic sphere, reorganising private life through surveillance and institutional intrusion. Her room consequently ceases to function as a protected interior and instead becomes fully exposed to the violence of administrative occupation.

In *The Poetics of Space*, Gaston Bachelard introduces "topoanalysis" as the systematic study of intimate interior spaces, such as houses, rooms, and corners (xxxvi), and demonstrates how these micro-geographies actively shape human memory, security, and identity (xxxvii). For him, the idealised interior functions as a protective container that anchors the subconscious and fosters a stable sense of self (3). In *The Third Man*, however, Anna's room emerges as a radical subversion of this topoanalytical ideal, being stripped of all but the essential utilities. The interior consequently appears partially dismantled, exposing the impossibility of permanence under postwar conditions. By presenting her space as one that is re-engineered by postwar trauma, depriving it of any capacity for intimacy, Greene constructs a distorted domestic space that stands in stark, *unheimlich* contrast to Bachelard's spaces of maternal protection, leaving Anna legally and therefore psychologically uprooted. In the postwar spatial reality of *The Third Man*, the outside increasingly penetrates and reorganises the interior, rendering what Bachelard conceptualises as protected spaces of intimacy, memory, and psychic shelter very difficult to sustain. The split between physical occupation and psychological inhabitation becomes explicit in the novella when Martins reflects on Anna in her domestic space:

He hadn't, of course, known that she would be in, that her play was not on that night in the Josefstadt ... In at any rate she was, if you could really call it being in, sitting alone in an unheated room, with the bed disguised as divan, and the typewritten part lying open at the first page on the inadequate too fancy toppy table because her thoughts were so far from being "in." (TMN 46)

Although Anna is physically present in the room, the narrative immediately destabilises this presence by questioning whether she can truly be said to be “in” it at all. The sentence produces a separation between the presence of the body and that of the mind, suggesting that her hostile environment prevents her consciousness from fully anchoring itself within space. Her room only reinforces this estrangement. It is “unheated” and sparsely furnished. The “bed disguised as divan” and the “too fancy topply table” render the place theatrical almost to the point of ridicule. The room thus functions as a mere stage for domesticity rather than an authentic refuge, meaning that while Anna physically occupies the space, she is structurally barred from truly inhabiting it. The novella develops this displacement further when Martins visits Anna in her flat. Upon hearing his arrival, Anna admits: “He used to look in, and when I heard your ring, just for a moment, I thought...” (47). This unfinished sentence reveals the extent to which her consciousness remains oriented inward; even the ordinary sensory experience of hearing the bell is filtered through her memory, causing her past to intrude upon her present. During their conversation, Anna repeatedly redirects attention back to Harry—“And what did Harry do that time?”—which demonstrates her inability to detach herself from the lost figure who continues to structure her emotional world (48). The room consequently becomes a space governed less by immediate reality than by memory and nostalgia. Instead of anchoring the subject in the present, this domestic interior intensifies her estrangement, demonstrating how the postwar environment actively separates psychological inhabitation from physical presence. The space fails to shelter her, and functions instead as an uncanny medium that alienates her from both her immediate surroundings and herself.

Harry’s flat also emerges as a space where uncanniness is materialised. The lingering smell of Harry’s Turkish cigarettes that Martins notices when he visits his flat immediately produces a disturbing tension between Harry’s absence and presence, rendering the flat simultaneously inhabited and abandoned. By allowing the trace of Harry to acquire a material

presence that anticipates his later physical return, the domestic space becomes haunted by what should remain buried, generating an uncanny collapse between the living and the dead. Yet, the profound isolation Martins experiences throughout the narrative stems from an alienation broader than Harry's absence. Loneliness is the hallmark of his experience in Vienna, and it is not simply emotional but spatially produced. From the moment of his arrival, Martins is confronted with the absence of Harry who was supposed to meet him, forcing him into a position of estrangement the moment he steps foot in a city so unfamiliar to him. Vienna acts upon this vulnerability, amplifying his sense of unbelonging. Repeatedly, Martins is described as "oppressed by a sense of loneliness," while at one point "loneliness moved along the crowded pavement at his side" (TMN 46, 67). The city consequently seems less like a place of habitation than like an environment that actively frustrates attachment and familiarity.

Evidently, otherness is a concept that heavily overlaps with the formation of the feeling of the uncanny in the city. Parezanović argues that Vienna becomes "a place of heterotopian otherness," in many ways different from the prewar city (149). This difference from its prewar identity presents a kind of alterity that lies at the root of the looming sense of non-belonging. "Old Vienna" survives only as a nostalgic memory for those who have seen it (TMN 7), suggesting a homesickness directed not merely toward a lost place but toward a lost time once experienced as inhabitable. Time itself becomes spatialised, imagined as something one could once dwell within before being expelled from it by war and occupation. Nostalgia in *The Third Man* is therefore a longing for a vanished mode of inhabiting the world in which notions of home, familiarity and stability used to be possible. The coexistence of this idealised temporal space with the ruined present is precisely what renders Vienna heterotopian, and it is this temporal and spatial disjunction that intensifies the city's uncanniness. The city's spatial configuration reinforces disorientation and results in the

destruction of its homeliness. Vienna functions as a “complex” space with a “labyrinthine” web of obstructed pathways that actively acts upon its inhabitants, leaving Martins, for example, “frequently frustrated by [its] environment” (Gomez 335). The characters’ psychological unease stems from a deep sense of unbelonging to the city, which consequently renders Martins a permanent stranger. The city’s architecture leverages the characters’ emotional vulnerability to act upon them, making it impossible to perceive Vienna as a home. Ultimately, the city that entraps Martins will also entrap Harry, suggesting that no character can fully master or escape its spatial logic.

The destruction of the *heim* thus produces not only material displacement but also a profound psychological unease, laying the groundwork for the dream-like repetitions that structure the text. The uncanny atmosphere of Vienna and the looming impossibility of belonging produce a distinctly distorted narrative structure. One of the primary sources of this effect lies the novel’s first person perspective. The narrator is not the protagonist but Major Calloway, who reconstructs the events through his police files conversations with Martins. Given that the narrative is restricted to his limited point of view, his frequent lapses into omniscience constitute a striking paradox. Eva Horn notes that Calloway frequently recounts scenes, thoughts, and emotional states he “could not have known or experienced himself,” including Martins’ “complex chains of thought and emotional dispositions,” creating a “deeply ‘fuzzy’ narrative” (3). Narrative authority consequently becomes unstable, oscillating uncertainly between Calloway’s retrospective narration and Martins’ subjective experience. The latter contributes drastically to the narrative destabilisation, especially that he is repeatedly characterised as a naive protagonist, particularly by Seymour Chatman’s “Who Is the Best Narrator?” who explicitly terms this ambiguity as “problems” in the narration (190). Together, the “confusion” highlighted by Horn and the narratological “problems” emphasised by Chatman produce what may be described as a dreamscape effect in which perception loses

coherence. Importantly, this dream-like distortion emerges not merely as a stylistic device, but as a spatial effect of a city marked by war, occupation, and psychological dislocation.

Apart from the shifting, unclear perspective, or perhaps partly because of it, chronology loses coherence, repeatedly going back and forth from files to real conversations with Martins. This dream logic also structures the novella grammatically through recurring conditional constructions centered on alternative possibilities and unrealised pasts. Characters repeatedly imagine what might have happened “if” events had unfolded differently: exemplified when Cooler laments: “If I hadn’t started across the road, he’d have stayed where he was” (TMN 43). Similar conditional constructions recur throughout the novella: “If only he had come to tell me then, what a lot of trouble would have been saved” (6). Such third conditional structures reveal a nostalgia, but also a consciousness trapped in traumatic recursion, continually revisiting the past and attempting to reorganise catastrophe into hypothetical alternatives. Crucially, this stylistic choice is explicitly meta-narrative; Calloway himself reflects on this habit of mind, observing: “but there are too many ‘ifs’ in my style of writing, for it is my profession to balance possibilities, human possibilities, and the drive of destiny can never find a place in my files” (42). By filtering the text through a narrator whose very style is paralyzed by alternative “ifs” and speculative branches, the narrative trajectory is consistently pulled backward rather than progressing forward. Martins himself announces that he is “going to start working back from his death,” transforming the investigation from a linear search for truth into an excavation of buried traces (27).

This structural suspension maps directly onto what Lara Feigel identifies as a profound temporal and psychological crisis shared by mid-century writers like Graham Greene and Elisabeth Bowen. Feigel characterises the postwar era as a “futureless present” (3)—a stagnation born from the sudden halt of wartime intensity, which effectively foreclosed the possibility of moving forward into a meaningful future. Trapped within this

flat, postwar continuum, the subject is forced into a cycle of melancholic repetition, compulsively looking backward because a linear trajectory has been rendered impossible. This recursive structure mirrors the movement of dreams, where chronology collapses and the mind compulsively repeats unresolved events. In this respect, Vienna functions as a traumatic dreamscape governed by spectral returns and unstable perception. Greene's postwar landscape operates through what Anthony Vidler describes as the uncanny as an "aesthetic response to the real shock of the modern" (9). The ruined city no longer obeys rational spatial order but instead functions according to the logic of trauma and the unconscious. The profound spatial entrapment that characterises occupied Vienna inevitably forces its inhabitants into a regressive temporal loop, condemning them to drift through silence, darkness, and echoes, unable to separate memory from fantasy, or reality from hallucination.

Crucially, it is not merely Martins' narrative naivety that destabilises the text's coherence, but his persistent state of fractured semi-consciousness. Within the novel, space functions experientially rather than logically; Martins navigates the ruins of Vienna in a condition of perpetual drunkenness, exhaustion, and emotional disorientation that resembles a traumatic fog. He moves through the city "dazed with the death" and "haunted by an experience he couldn't understand," a psychological paralysis that strips him of the ability to distinguish between external illusion and internal reality (TMN 54, 72). Though seated directly beside Anna, the narrative notes that Martins "had pictured himself comforting her" (69). Across the narrative, the protagonist repeatedly operates from a position of cognitive detachment, inhabiting a state of abstraction where the scenarios he imagines displace his direct material experience. This sensory impairment ultimately transforms the ruined cityscape into a subjective dreamscape, proving that the trauma of the postwar environment breaks down not only municipal borders, but also the mind of the subject attempting to move

through them. Because of this cognitive blurring, Martins repeatedly perceives the urban landscape through irrational imagery and sudden psychic associations. This internal distortion reaches a climax during a moment of waking hallucination: “Martins suddenly saw in that odd chamber of the mind that constructs such pictures, instantaneously, irrationally, a desert place, a body on the ground, a group of birds gathered. Perhaps it was a scene from one of his own books, not yet written, forming at the gate of consciousness” (31). Greene’s use of architectural metaphors—specifically the “odd chamber of the mind” and the “gate of consciousness”—is highly significant for a spatial reading of the text. By rendering human consciousness in tangible, topological terms, the text suggests that the psyche itself has been structurally infected by the labyrinthine city outside it. Consciousness in the novella ceases to be an abstract, internal vacuum to become a topographical consciousness, unable to escape the spatial logic of the occupied city that ultimately remaps the mind itself.

This ontological distortion culminates in one of the text’s motifs: the fundamental unreality of Harry Lime. As the investigation fractures, Martins increasingly loses confidence in the very existence of Harry, confessing: “I feel as though he had never really existed, that we dreamed him” (69). This can be explained by the fact that Harry does not operate as a stable character but as a spectral trace that repeatedly moves throughout the novella between absence and presence. Anna explicitly identifies and rejects Martins’s dreamlike reconstruction when she insists: “For God’s sake stop making people in your image. Harry was real” (69). Yet despite her insistence on his materiality, there is no denying Harry recurring manifestations through ghostly, hallucinatory imagery; he is described as a featureless void, as when the narrator declares that “the third man had no face,” or Martins describes him as “a blank face without features, a grey plasticine egg” (52, 57). The city seems only to facilitate these apparitions. Harry “simply vanished,” (TMN 72) disappearing into Vienna’s dark spaces like “a demonic presence” (Gomez 335). Following his initial,

impossible encounter with his supposedly deceased friend, Martins abandons rational skepticism entirely, asking Calloway: “Do you believe in ghosts? ... I do now” (72). Within this framework, postwar Vienna mutates into an uncanny landscape that forcibly dismantles the characters’ certainties. It becomes an environment that acts upon sensory perception to the point where reality can no longer be trusted.

The sewers constitute the final materialisation of the dream logic structuring *The Third Man*, operating as the ultimate spatial representation of repression, buried memory, and the unconscious. The novella alike describe the sewers minutely:

What a strange world unknown to most of us lies under our feet: we live above a cavernous land of waterfalls and rushing rivers, where tides ebb and flow as in the world above ... The main sewer, half as wide as the Thames, rushes by under a huge arch, fed by tributary streams: these streams have fallen in waterfalls from higher levels and have been purified in their fall, so that only in these side channels is the air foul. The main stream smells sweet and fresh with a faint tang of ozone, and everywhere in the darkness is the sound of falling and rushing water. It was just past high tide when Martins and the policeman reached the river: first the curving iron staircase, then a short passage so low they had to stoop, and then the shallow edge of the water lapped at their feet. (93)

Greene describes them as “a strange world unknown to most of us” lying beneath Vienna, “a cavernous land of waterfalls and rushing rivers.” Hidden beneath the visible city exists another submerged Vienna governed by darkness, echoes, and subterranean momentum. The novella consequently constructs the city as vertically divided, organised between an overground world of official order and an underground network through which hidden violence, criminality, and repressed histories continue to circulate secretly. It can be argued that the sewers represent the city’s subterranean double, an uncanny architectural underside beneath the surface of postwar Vienna. This underground geography structurally aligns with Freud’s topographical model of the mind. In *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1899), he conceptualises the unconscious as a buried and repressed psychic topology beneath ordinary consciousness from which disturbing elements unexpectedly return (Freud 539). Harry

literally disappears into this subterranean world and repeatedly emerges from it like a revenant. His movement through the underground further presents him as a figure oscillating between light and shadow. The chase sequence through the sewers therefore operates not merely as a thriller scene but as a descent into the hidden psychic underworld of the city itself. Gomez similarly argues that the sewers symbolically represent “the unconscious level of Holly’s mind,” a reading intensified by the collapse of sensory and spatial orientation underground (337). Acoustic distortion repeatedly destabilises perception, as when Martins notes: “I called his name and it was lost in a confusion of echoes” (Greene 96). Spatial orientation collapses almost entirely as characters move blindly through darkness and tunnels: “I haven’t a torch, old man. I can’t see a thing” (95). In this total absence of sight, the remaining sensory perceptions, rather than orienting the characters, achieve the exact opposite effect by actively accelerating their disorientation and psychological vulnerability. This sensory dissolution is compounded by the visceral, haptic environment of the subterranean water system, where the subjects’ remaining senses are dimmed at times and heightened at others. While the side channels remain foul, the main stream “smells sweet and fresh with a faint tang of ozone,” creating a deceptive, unmappable atmosphere of vitality amidst decay (93). Everywhere in the darkness, the rational boundaries of the city are drowned out by “the sound of falling and rushing water” flowing from higher levels (93). The physical descent into this space demands a literal degradation of human posture: upon reaching the river past high tide, the characters are forced down a “curving iron staircase, then a short passage so low they had to stoop,” until the “shallow edge of the water lapped at their feet” (98). Through this overwhelming convergence of blindness, shifting olfactory currents, and a suffocating acoustic labyrinth, the subterranean landscape becomes an uncanny space *par excellence*. It functions as an environment in which non-visual stimuli

serve only to destabilise the characters, dissolving their rational perception into an inescapable loop of echoes and confusion.

Anthony Vidler's discussion of the modern city as a psychic landscape is useful in dissecting this subterranean Vienna. He argues that modern urbanism increasingly becomes preoccupied with "traces and residues—the material of the dreamwork," uncovering the hidden reverberations beneath the visible city (Vidler xiii). The sewers embody precisely this buried spatial logic. Beneath the reconstructed surface of postwar Vienna survives another hidden city structured by uncertainty, displacement, and unresolved violence. Territoriality becomes unstable underground, while ordinary spatial distinctions dissolve into what Vidler describes as "vagabond environments that refuse the commonplaces of hearth and home" (xiii). The sewers are sites where the impossibility of dwelling crystallises, presenting the reader or viewer with yet another space in contrast with Bachelard's intimate interiors that shelter memory and identity; this underground world excludes all forms of rootedness, intimacy, or domestic belonging. Significantly, however, Harry has inhabited this space since his disappearance. In other words, the sewers are not only his temporary hiding place but also his true environment. Once again, *The Third Man* associates its characters with transitional or anti-domestic spaces incapable of functioning as homes. If Anna occupies unstable interiors that fail to become habitable, Harry inhabits an even more radical anti-home beneath the city itself.

The heterotopian logic already established in the previous chapter is preserved in the sewers. Parezanović describes them as a "heterotopia of deviation" because they become the hidden domain of criminals such as Harry, spatially separated from the regulated organisation of everyday urban life (149). Existing beneath the visible city yet structurally connected to it, the underground network functions as a counter-space through which Harry moves invisibly across occupied Vienna. The uncanniness of the sewers lies in the fact that they are not only

uninhabited but uninhabitable. The uncanny is the result of human perception entering a space designed to exclude it. Unlike the cemetery, the asylum and other foucauldian spaces, the sewers are not intended to be occupied by humans. Harry's presence—the presence of human perception—transforms the function of the sewers from a non-human, utilitarian space into a lived, though profoundly inhospitable one, producing their disquieting effect. Harry passes “effortlessly” between aboveground and underground worlds, “appropriating the unrecognized space beneath the streets” (Craig 203). His knowledge of this hidden geography allows him to survive within the fragmented city: “[i]f you know your way about you can emerge again almost anywhere in the city through a manhole or a kiosk like this one” (TMN 79). The distinction between surface and depth consequently becomes unstable, as the hidden underside of the city continuously interrupts and penetrates the visible urban order above it. At the same time, the underground intensifies the thriller dimension of *The Third Man*. The generic transformation of the narrative becomes inseparable from the spatial transformation of Vienna itself. The claustrophobic and labyrinthine setting of the sewers generates suspense precisely because ordinary urban structure dissolves underground. Streets, buildings, and visible landmarks disappear, replaced by darkness, tunnels, blindness, and disorientation. The underground therefore functions simultaneously as Gothic labyrinth, dreamscape, and thriller environment. Thrillers conventionally rely upon isolating spaces that produce urgency and entrapment, and the sewers radicalise these conditions to an extreme degree. Beneath the city, the characters lose their orientation entirely, moving through an environment governed by confusion and a prevailing sense of menace. The underground world consequently crystallises the spatial configuration that has structured Vienna across the entirety of the novella: a postwar city in which war survives through hidden circulation networks, unstable spatial boundaries, and the continual return of buried violence.

Kristeva defines the abject as that “which does not respect borders, positions, rules,” destabilising systems of order and distinction (4). Vienna’s underground world functions precisely through this logic; the underground river flowing beneath Vienna’s ruined surface finally becomes a material enactment of traumatic return itself. As Horn observes, water functions ambiguously throughout the narrative as both purification and contamination (7); Harry transforms water into an instrument of corruption by diluting penicillin, turning what should preserve life into a mechanism of death. The sewer system consequently acquires an abject quality in Kristevan terms, exposing the hidden waste, contamination, and decomposition upon which the reconstructed postwar city precariously rests. Hidden beneath the visible order of Vienna flows what Horn describes as a network of “hidden garbage and excrement,” a subterranean world through which Harry moves almost naturally (7). The sewers, Harry’s hiding place, materialises the repressed underside of postwar society itself. Harry increasingly appears as the embodiment of contamination circulating beneath postwar Europe, “a disease, an infection that contaminates a society in need” (8). The boundaries separating civilisation from decay consequently become unstable, as the hidden filth beneath the city continuously threatens to resurface. In Kristevan terms, the abject is precisely that which society attempts to expel yet can never fully eliminate; in the world of *The Third Man*, buried violence repeatedly returns beneath the illusion of postwar reconstruction, most visibly through Harry himself, who emerges from the underground world like the resurfacing of a repressed historical trauma. The city’s water system ultimately turns against him. The sewer network that had enabled his survival becomes the space of his destruction. The abject can never be fully expelled, remaining both outside the social order and threatening it from within (Kristeva 11). Hidden beneath the visible city, these flowing subterranean waters preserve the traces of war, disease, and moral collapse that continue to circulate beneath postwar reconstruction. Vienna’s underground world thus externalises the repressed underside of

modernity itself: a buried landscape of contamination and unresolved historical violence from which neither the city nor its inhabitants can fully escape.

The logic of doubling and repetition constitutes one of the most significant uncanny mechanisms in *The Third Man*. Freud famously identifies the double as a central feature of the uncanny, since it destabilises the unity of identity and blurs distinctions between self and other, reality and projection. In Greene's novella, doubling permeates not only characters but also narration, memory, language, and space itself. Harry exists simultaneously as dead and alive, absent and omnipresent, criminal and beloved friend, while Martins appears divided between incompatible identities. The result is a persistent instability that produces unease and undermines the possibility of coherent truth. As Gomez notes, Greene's work evokes "the motif of the double" (335). This divided identity is most explicitly evident through the split between "Rollo" and "Martins." Calloway repeatedly distinguishes between the two as though they were separate personalities: "Rollo wanted to hit out: but Martins was steady, careful" (TMN 17). Later, he remarks that "he was calm now, Martins not Rollo was in the ascendant," suggesting an oscillation between conflicting selves (29). Even his name becomes unstable: "There was always a conflict in Rollo Martins—between the absurd Christian name and the sturdy Dutch surname." The narrative repeatedly separates his impulse from his restraint, Rollo as reckless, childish, and emotional, while Martins appears calculating and detached. This split identity is intensified by Martins' adoption of the alias "Mr Dexter," a moment in which identity becomes openly performative and interchangeable. "It was a change to be himself and not Dexter," the narration remarks, implying that "selfhood" itself has become fluid and temporary. Such repetitions and substitutions destabilise any fixed sense of personal identity, reinforcing the novella's dreamlike atmosphere in which characters continually shift roles and names. Significantly, this fragmentation mirrors the occupied geography of postwar Vienna itself, where borders,

zones, and hidden spatial divisions render coherent identity increasingly impossible to sustain. Gomez also argues that Harry increasingly functions as “Martins’ alter ego,” representing “something that he has never been—a success” (334). Martins himself admits this imbalance: “I like playing the silly fool, but Harry had real wit.” Through this comparison, Harry emerges as a projection of Martins’ desires, failures, and insecurities.

The instability of identity extends from Martins to Harry, who also appears doubled and fragmented. The narrator distinguishes between “Harry” and “Lime” through an insightful observation: “it was not, I suppose, Lime, the penicillin racketeer who was escaping down the street; it was Harry” (TMN 93). Anna persistently refuses such separation, admitting that similarly insists on separating the criminal from the intimate figure she once knew: “Harry was real. He wasn’t just your hero and my lover. He was Harry” (69). Indeed, Harry simultaneously assumes several identities throughout the narrative. The novella famously opens with Martins attending “the burial of the wrong man,” establishing from the outset a structure of mistaken identity and repetition (Carpenter 59). The uncanny effect here derives not simply from Harry’s return, but from the impossibility of determining which version of him is real. Martins first recognises him as “a thick stocky figure” that is “pressed against a wall to escape notice,” a figure so “motionless” that it appears “an illusion caused by shadow” (TMN 70). Motifs of shadows, silhouettes, spectral figures, and hallucination consequently recur throughout the novella, where figures are repeatedly glimpsed, mistaken, shadowed, or partially obscured, creating an atmosphere in which identity can never fully stabilise. The narrative structure only reproduces this logic of doubling and repetition, as a layered reconstruction built from multiple voices, memories, and partial perspectives. This creates what can be understood through Freud’s concept of “secondary revision”: the attempt to reorganise fragmented dream material into coherent narrative after waking (495). Yet coherence continually fails. Martins’ confusion between “Calloway” and “Callaghan,” the

unstable shifts between first-person narration and omniscient description, and the repeated retelling of events from different perspectives all contribute to a narrative structure governed by repetition and displacement rather than linear certainty. Characters repeatedly “work back” through the past, revisit the same spaces, reconstruct the same memories, and replay the same encounters. The war consequently suspends not only narrative progression but the city’s very capacity for futurity. Vienna appears trapped between destruction and reconstruction, its ruined architecture preserving the conflict as an unfinished spatial condition instead of a completed historical event. Just as Anna becomes detached from her own future, the occupied metropolis itself remains unable fully to imagine or inhabit a stable postwar future. This structure of doubling also shapes the novella’s treatment of friendship and betrayal. Martins’ loyalty to Harry becomes inseparable from their rivalry and his identification with him. Harry’s betrayal of Anna and his criminal activities are mirrored by Martins’ own betrayal of Harry, particularly through his growing love for Anna and his eventual role in Harry’s death. Martins betrays Harry, who in turn betrays both Anna and himself. Betrayal here emerges as a symptom of the characters’ unstable identities and their divided loyalty. Unable to fully separate themselves from one another, they appear as doubles, merging and overlapping as opposed to existing independently. When Martins learns about Harry’s crime, he feels “a world ... had certainly come to an end, a world of easy friendship, hero-worship, confidence that had begun twenty years before” (TMN 65). The collapse of friendship therefore mirrors the collapse of coherent selfhood, as memory itself becomes contaminated and unstable.

4. Cinematic Construction of Reed's Vienna

The preceding chapters have demonstrated that space in *The Third Man* exceeds its function as a setting. Through its ruined architecture, divided geography, and uncanny interiors, postwar Vienna actively shapes mobility, perception, and agency, generating the disorientation that characterises both the city's inhabitants and the narrative itself. Yet these spatial dynamics are not confined to the novella. They also find expression in Carol Reed's 1949 film, a work that emerged alongside Greene's text from the same creative project and offers a distinct means of representing postwar space. The novella develops postwar Vienna through narrative description and characterisation, but the film makes possible a different mode of spatial representation. Reed's use of visual composition, sound, lighting, and camera movement allows the city to be experienced as an immediate sensory environment, conveying visible and audible elements that can only be suggested in prose. While the previous chapters have examined the material and psychological dimensions of space in Greene's novella, this chapter turns to the film in order to explore how cinematic form visualises and intensifies these spatial concerns. I argue that the film does not merely reproduce occupied Vienna but transforms it into a distinctly cinematic environment through image, sound, and visual composition. Reed preserves the verticality of Greene's Vienna, constructing the city as a vertically organised city suspended between surface and underground worlds, visibility and concealment, surveillance and escape. Through the visual representation of ruins, the expressionistic use of light and shadow, and the acoustic landscape of echoes, footsteps, and subterranean noises, the film renders postwar space perceptible in ways unavailable to the written text. Particular attention will be paid to three interconnected dimensions of cinematic space: the visualisation of occupied and fragmented Vienna through its ruined architecture; the vertical organisation of the city through elevated and subterranean spaces such as the Ferris wheel and the sewers; and the expressionistic and

Gothic techniques through which the film transforms the urban environment into a landscape of uncertainty, haunting, and spectral return.

Although this chapter continues the thesis's Lefebvrian understanding of space as socially produced, the transition from novella to film necessarily entails a corresponding shift in method. Literary space is constructed through language, narration, and description, requiring readers to imagine the environments that organise the narrative. Cinematic space, by contrast, is produced audiovisually. Rather than describing architecture, the film presents it directly through framing, camera movement, lighting, editing, sound, and performance. Consequently, the analysis moves from examining how Greene narratively represents Vienna to investigating how Reed materially renders that same city perceptible on screen. The theoretical questions therefore remain consistent, but the analytical tools necessarily change. Instead of focusing primarily on narrative description and characterisation, this chapter considers the formal resources unique to cinema through which spatial relations become visible, audible, and experientially immediate.

The film visually teaches the viewer how to read Vienna well before introducing the narrative. From its opening moments, *The Third Man* foregrounds space as one of its central concerns. Prior to introducing Holly Martins,² Harry Lime, or Anna Schmidt, the film first introduces Vienna itself. The Faber & Faber edition of *The Third Man* screenplay describes the opening shots of Vienna as “so important” and “necessary to explain to the public the setting of the story” (TMS 12), emphasising the centrality of urban space from the very beginning. Urban space therefore precedes character and plot; the viewer must first learn how to read Vienna before the story can begin. The first spoken lines immediately establish the city as a politically fragmented environment. The narrator warns the audience: “Remember, Vienna is an occupied city. You must be extremely careful to observe all official regulations”

² Rollo Martins is named Holly Martins in Reed's film

(TMS 15). Occupation is thus presented not as historical background but as a governing principle of everyday life. The visual representation of the city as a “crazy patchwork” of zones, marked by “heavy black lines,” further materialises this disunity (19, 16). Political division becomes spatially visible. Vienna no longer appears as a coherent urban whole but as a city fractured into competing jurisdictions whose borders structure movement, authority, and belonging. At the very outset of the mystery, the viewer is already confronted with a geography of fragmentation. The opening montage reinforces this instability through a striking tension between narration and image. The narrator casually remarks that Vienna “doesn’t really look any worse than a lot of other European cities, bombed about a bit,” yet the images accompanying this statement suggest the opposite. As Reshetova observes, the visual sequence repeatedly undermines the narrator’s minimisation of wartime destruction (12). Damaged buildings, rubble, and scenes of urban decay dominate the screen, while one particularly disturbing image—a corpse floating along the Danube—introduces death into the cityscape almost immediately. As she notes, “we are not viewing the glamour and easy charm of old Vienna” (13). The opening therefore establishes a discrepancy between official narration and visual evidence. Language attempts to normalise postwar Vienna, while the camera continually exposes the violence that remains inscribed upon its streets and buildings. The sequence also destabilises narrative authority itself. As Eva Horn points out, it remains unclear who is speaking during the opening narration (4). Depending on the version of the film, the voice belongs either to Joseph Cotten, who plays Martins, or to Reed himself. Yet neither figure fully explains the perspective from which the city is being described. Horn notes that the phrase “we’d run anything” more logically belongs to Harry, whose black-market activities define much of the narrative. James Brown similarly argues that the anonymous voice is “unmistakably a racketeer’s” and already condones criminality (36). The result is a peculiar uncertainty of perspective. The city is introduced through a voice whose

identity cannot be securely located, producing disorientation before the narrative proper has even begun. Just as Vienna itself is divided and unstable, so too is the viewpoint through which it is presented. Consequently, the opening montage establishes the fundamental spatial logic that will govern the remainder of the film.

The opening sequence establishes Vienna as a fragmented and occupied city, but Reed's adaptation further intensifies this effect through its commitment to visual realism. Unlike many contemporary productions that reconstructed urban environments within studio settings, *The Third Man* repeatedly situates its narrative within the actual spaces of postwar Vienna. The result is a film that occupies an ambiguous position between fiction and historical document, transforming the city into both a narrative setting and a visible record of a specific historical moment. This documentary quality becomes apparent from the film's earliest images. Several shots linger on streets, buildings, and public spaces with little immediate narrative function beyond establishing the physical environment itself. Two minutes into the film, the camera presents a series of relatively static views of Vienna that momentarily suspend narrative progression in favour of observation. These shots resemble documentary footage, inviting viewers to examine the city's condition rather than merely follow the plot. This documentary force is deeply tethered to the text's investigative origins. Because Greene "had worked as something of an agent for the British during the war," he "brought a certain amount of first hand knowledge to the project," an experiential authority reinforced by his extensive "on-site research in Vienna" (Sinowitz 405). The film pairs this firsthand textual authority with an equally rigorous visual indexicality. Contemporary reviewers frequently described the film, especially, as an unusually accurate representation of postwar Vienna precisely because of its incorporation of ruins into the visual environment of the narrative. Carpenter observes that shooting "on location" provided a distinct advantage, allowing Reed to "appropriate the piles of rubble and the bombed-out houses, the narrow

streets and mazelike sewers, and the overall dreariness and drabness of a city struggling to sustain life” (58). Vienna, thus, acquires a deeply realist, almost documentary force. Brown goes further still, arguing that “the reality of war-ravaged Vienna has overwhelmed the paradoxical framework of Greene’s Catholicism,” suggesting the extent to which the city’s physical destruction dominates the narrative itself (37). What is interesting is that *The Third Man* is not a story whose main focus is the war, yet it pervades the narrative visibly until the end. Instead of witnessing the military conflict itself, the viewer encounters the material consequences of war through the spaces the camera records. The film consequently derives much of its power not from the mystery surrounding Harry but the city itself whose physical condition exceeds narrative invention. Documentary realism thus becomes one of the film’s principal strategies for rendering postwar space visible, allowing viewers to experience Vienna as a material reality.

The reality of war survives through the built environment of everyday life. Rather than isolating destruction as an exceptional spectacle, Reed presents it as an ordinary feature of the urban landscape. Throughout the film, characters walk, converse, and conduct their daily routines amid visibly damaged streets and buildings, rendering Vienna’s ruins part of the city’s normal spatial condition. The film repeatedly emphasises movement through these damaged environments, making walking a means of encountering the material traces of war embedded within the city. This normalisation of destruction is one of the film’s most striking visual features. As characters move through Vienna, bomb-damaged walls, broken facades, and partially reconstructed buildings repeatedly occupy the frame. Significantly, these encounters with the ruined city occur through movement. Reed repeatedly shows Martins traversing Vienna on foot, transforming walking into a means of engaging with the city’s material traces. One of the clearest examples occurs when Martins returns to the site of Harry’s supposed accident (TMF 42:24). Far from relying on official reports or police

testimony, he reconstructs the event spatially, pacing the distances between the doorway, the location of Harry's body, and the window from which the porter claimed to have seen the mysterious third man. For a foreigner unfamiliar with Vienna and frequently portrayed as intoxicated or disoriented, Martins navigates the city with surprising confidence. He repeatedly revisits locations, retraces routes, and follows clues embedded within the urban landscape itself. The way Harry knows the underground so well, Martins easily navigates the city above. It can be argued, therefore, that knowledge is produced spatially; streets, buildings, and distances become clues to be interpreted, transforming Vienna into an archive of traces through which truth must be sought. The same dynamic appears in Martins' walks with Anna. As they move through the city together, ruins remain a constant visual presence. During their first walk to Anna's flat (26:13), visible rubble lines both sides of the pavement as Anna absentmindedly avoids a pile of debris in her path and reaches for the key to her apartment. Behind them, pedestrians continue walking and cars move normally through the streets. The scene is striking precisely because of its ordinariness. The ruins are no longer an exceptional spectacle. They have become part of the city's everyday geography, incorporated into habitual patterns of movement and perception. Walking through Vienna consequently becomes a continual encounter with the material traces of war, revealing how thoroughly destruction has been absorbed into everyday life. These mundane actions—the routine of walking and the triviality of searching for keys—gain gravity within this damaged setting, again revealing a sense of normalcy amid the war-ravaged city. The viewer is continually reminded that the city remains physically marked by war. Yet the characters themselves rarely acknowledge these surroundings directly. The persistence of destruction within ordinary routines suggests that war has ceased to be a singular event and has instead become embedded within the material fabric of everyday life. The moment Anna is told that the police are searching her room, she looks up to the window, and a shot from below shows the

damaged exterior of the building where she resides (26:34). The walls of the building visibly bear the scars of physical damage, with shattered sections and lighter patches interrupting the darker surface of the facade. The war penetrates Anna's flat inside too.

While the previous scenes demonstrate how war has reshaped the city at large, Anna's residence reveals the extent to which this destruction penetrates domestic space itself. The boundary between public devastation and private refuge becomes visible in the film much more than in the novella. The screenplay describes Anna's residence as "an ancient bombed house where Anna has a room" (TMS 44). Upon entering the building, its damaged condition is immediately apparent. The original entrance has been destroyed and replaced by "a makeshift door" constructed from planks "nailed roughly together" (44). Inside stands "a once grand house, badly bombed, and with half the walls out" (44). What remains is a building that continues to bear the visible scars of wartime violence. Significantly, these architectural details do not appear with the same visual force in the novella. Their prominence in the screenplay and film reflects a deliberate emphasis on the visibility of destruction. Working collaboratively on the adaptation, Greene and Reed transform war from a narrated background condition into a material reality that can be seen on screen. The scene occurs shortly before Anna's forged papers are discovered and her position in Vienna becomes increasingly precarious, allowing the damaged architecture surrounding her to reinforce the atmosphere of instability that shapes the sequence. The screenplay further notes that "Anna's bedroom had once been a reception room" (44), drawing attention to the adaptive reuse of damaged interiors in postwar Vienna. Brown similarly observes that Anna's apartment combines "the broken down and the theatrical," approached through a bomb-damaged staircase before opening onto an unexpectedly grand interior filled with marble and statues (35). The contrast between former elegance and visible deterioration highlights the lasting impact of war upon domestic architecture. The building remains inhabited, yet it continues to

display evidence of its destruction. The *mise-en-scène* reinforces this impression. The room appears crowded and spatially compressed, occupied simultaneously by policemen, visitors, furniture, hanging clothes, and household objects. At moments it becomes difficult to identify clear boundaries between different domestic functions. A kitchen area appears only partially separated from the main room by an open curtain, while clothes dry within the same confined space. The resulting composition blurs distinctions between rooms and purposes, emphasising adaptation over order. Domestic space appears improvised instead of carefully organised. The damaged interior suggests that war continues to inhabit domestic space long after military conflict has ended. Although the building remains occupied, its shattered walls, improvised repairs, and visible traces of destruction prevent it from fully returning to ordinary domesticity. Far from disappearing with reconstruction, the traces of war remain embedded in the building itself, transforming it into a repository of collective memory. In this sense, the architecture functions as a witness to history, carrying the marks of destruction into the postwar present and rendering the past continually visible within everyday life.

The prominence of damaged architecture throughout the film ultimately reveals a broader spatial dynamic. Architecture dominates inhabitants rather than serving them. Reed repeatedly frames individuals against structures that appear overwhelmingly large, emphasising the disproportion between human figures and the urban environment they inhabit. Several shots position characters at a considerable distance from the camera, allowing bridges, facades, and public buildings to dominate the frame. The monumental statues dwarfing Martins at the entrance to Harry's apartment building (TMF 15:50), the large bridge spanning the canal (42:14), and, most strikingly, the Ferris wheel overwhelming the characters beneath it (1:15:06), etc., occupy substantial visual space. The city continually exceeds human scale, resisting complete mastery or comprehension. Characters move through spaces that appear larger, older, and more powerful than themselves. Such images

prepare for a broader spatial logic that becomes increasingly important later in the film. Reed consistently emphasises differences in scale, elevation, and perspective, presenting Vienna as a city in which position determines what can be known and therefore controlled. Architecture therefore functions not simply as scenery but as an active force that shapes relationships between subjects and the spaces they inhabit. This technique is connected with Reed's aforementioned vertical organisation of Vienna in the film. Rather than presenting a flat, linear cityscape, the film continuously layers the urban environment through extreme low-angle perspectives and shots taken from below (3:55), resulting in emphasising the oppressive vertical dimension of Vienna. This vertical stratification manifests acutely through different structural motifs, moving from the transitional zones of stairs and windows to spatial extremes like the Ferris wheel and the sewers.

Characters within the film continually move between disparate spatial levels, a kinetic instability visualised primarily through the constant presence of staircases. They appear in both domestic and public spaces, from Anna's bomb-damaged building to the city's streets and public institutions, repeatedly directing movement between different spatial levels. Reed employs staircases to interrupt linear movement and force characters into complex navigations of the urban environment. The film relies on these indoor and outdoor staircases to disrupt the characters' equilibrium and orchestrate its spatial dynamics, deploying pursuit sequences as a primary mechanism to reveal and map the urban space. Following the murder of the porter (48:23), an outdoor staircase becomes the staging ground for a frantic escape. As Anna and Holly flee down the stone steps, pursued by a crowd that mistakenly implicates them in the crime, the vertical architecture of the street creates a highly volatile space of exposure and danger. The outdoor stairs force the characters into a rapid downward descent, literalising a sudden loss of control as they drop through the vertical layers of the neighborhood to evade the gazes from above. This pattern of vertical flight repeats during

Martins' subsequent escape after his disastrous literary lecture (53:40). Here, Reed deploys a tightly wound indoor spiral staircase (53:48). The circular, winding geometry of the spiral steps structurally traps Martins within the frame, forcing a dizzying, enclosed descent that temporarily strips him of geographical orientation. Upon breaking out of the stairwell, Martins is cast directly into the shattered exterior topography of Vienna, moving through mounds of loose rubble before hiding inside the hollowed-out carcass of an abandoned car. By staging these sequences across alternating indoor and outdoor levels, the chase scenes function as kinetic mapping tools that systematically expose the structural layers of the city. Winding staircases initially function as concrete architectural obstacles that physically hinder and shape pedestrian movement, but their repetition in the film serves a broader design. As Gomez observes, when Harry discovers the police trap later in the narrative, the film uses a striking spatial repetition: Harry flees down the exact same war-damaged stairway that Holly and Anna used to escape their pursuers earlier (31). Rather than introducing an abstract thematic parallel, this repetition demonstrates how Reed deliberately reuses particular architectural spaces to structure movement through Vienna, linking separate narrative moments through the exact same vertical route. Windows are another architectural feature that enforces a strict vertical hierarchy between those who look down from a position of relative concealment and those exposed on the street below. This verticality is prominently displayed when Martins looks down through a window into the Viennese night (TMF 24:42). Reed employs an extreme high-angle framing that transforms the flat layout of the pavement into a deeply shadowed, unstable grid. The window here serves as a framing device that separates the observer from the observed, establishing the city as a space subject to constant, multi-level visual interrogation.

This architectural dynamic directly orchestrates the logistics of the investigation, establishing the window as a site from which hidden truths are either protected or

aggressively disclosed. When Martins attempts to reconstruct the timeline of Harry's death, the physical architecture of the window dictates his access to information. At 42:00, the porter communicates with Martins by shouting down from a high window. This positioning literalises the uneven distribution of knowledge within Vienna: the local witness occupies a dominant, elevated vantage point, looking down upon the displaced foreign investigator who remains vulnerable on the pavement. The window functions as an institutional barrier, allowing the porter to ration his testimony while maintaining a protective distance from the dangers of the street. The most pivotal intersection of windows, lighting, and surveillance occurs during Harry's celebrated initial appearance (1:04:50). Initially concealed within a dark doorway, Harry's sudden exposure is not triggered by Martins' investigative acumen, but is instead an accidental byproduct of domestic observation from above. An irritated neighborhood resident, hearing Martins shouting from the street, opens her window to investigate the disturbance. The simple act of looking out from her elevated window serves to abruptly reveal Harry's presence. This sequence demonstrates that revelation in Vienna is systematically driven by vertical architecture; the gaze from the window slices through the surface darkness, forcing the hidden variables of the postwar underworld into absolute visibility. Ascending from the architectural framing of the city's windows, the vertical organisation of *The Third Man* reaches its ultimate elevation at the *Riesenrad*—the Great Ferris Wheel (1:15:00). This structure functions not as a tourist attraction—for indeed, “the wheel on this cold autumn day is not popular (TMS 95)—but as a mechanism that translates absolute height into an ideological and ethical position. The vertical axis is more associated with Harry than with any other character in the film (Brown 134). By ascending to the apex of the wheel, Harry detaches himself from the material reality of the postwar ruins, using the extreme altitude to construct a worldview completely divorced from human empathy. The perspective from the Ferris wheel systematically alters the scale of human life, transforming

moral choices into a simple calculation of distance and geometry. From a top shot looking down from the Great Wheel, the inhabitants of Vienna are stripped of their individuality, appearing as microscopic entities moving across an unidentifiable grid. Cinematographically, Reed repeatedly alternates between the enclosed, claustrophobic space of the cabin and the expansive aerial view beneath it. This deliberate contrast between the cramped interior and the vast urban panorama reinforces the scene's central tension, showing how the vertical distance allows Harry to imagine himself entirely detached from the consequences of events unfolding below. This extreme elevation allows Harry to intellectually rationalise the horrific consequences of his diluted penicillin racket. Looking down from the absolute top of the wheel's cabin, the people who suffer and die because of his black-market enterprise are no longer victims; instead, as Reshetova observes, they are reduced to "nameless, faceless dots to him" (Reshetova 45). When Martins confronts him about the human cost of his actions, Harry points out of the cabin window toward the ground below, asking if Martins would truly feel pity if one of those "dots" stopped moving forever in exchange for a massive fortune. The verticality of the Ferris wheel thus serves as the ultimate spatial expression of Harry's ethical indifference. Height provides him with an ideological shielding; by maintaining a vast physical distance between himself and the surface of the earth, he successfully erases the human dimensions of his crimes, converting people's agony into an abstract, distant "dot" on the landscape.

If the Ferris wheel represents the highest point of Vienna's vertical organisation, the sewers constitute its lowest. The film's movement from the elevated perspective of the Riesenrad to the underground canal system completes a spatial trajectory that has structured the narrative from the beginning. Beneath the streets, monuments, and occupied sectors lies an alternative city whose existence remains largely invisible to those above. The importance of this subterranean world is reflected in the film's spatial emphasis upon it. The final pursuit

occupies a substantial portion of the closing sequence, transforming the sewers from a secondary location into the narrative's definitive spatial setting. When the camera first enters this underground environment, it reveals a vast network of tunnels, canals, arches, and intersecting passageways extending beneath the visible city. The contrast with the panoramic openness of the Ferris wheel is striking. Whereas the elevated viewpoint transforms Vienna into a legible map, the sewers fragment perception with its repetitive labyrinth of corridors and junctions. Orientation becomes increasingly difficult as one tunnel resembles the next, denying even the film audience a clear overview of the space. This hidden geography functions as a spatial double of the city above. Like the occupied Vienna on the surface, the sewer system consists of routes, intersections, and networks of circulation, but it simultaneously operates according to a different logic. The political divisions imposed upon the surface city lose much of their significance underground. Boundaries between the Allied sectors that regulate movement above ground become porous within the sewer system, creating an alternative geography that cuts beneath the administrative order established by the occupying powers. It is for this reason that the sewers recall Foucault's heterotopia: a real and navigable "other space" existing alongside ordinary social space while remaining partially detached from its organising structures (3). The underground city also maps out Harry's mobility. In the film, Harry's survival depends upon his intimate knowledge of this hidden environment, and it is this knowledge, according to Parezanović, that allows him to "survive in this urban jungle" (147). Unlike Martins, whose investigation unfolds primarily across the visible city, Harry moves through an alternative network of passages inaccessible to most inhabitants. The sewers allow him to evade surveillance, cross sector boundaries, and remain perpetually one step ahead of the authorities pursuing him. Yet the film ultimately transforms this spatial advantage into a source of vulnerability. The underground system that has enabled Harry's freedom gradually becomes a closed environment from which escape is impossible.

The sewers initially appear to offer limitless mobility, but the climax reveals the limits of this freedom. Forced ever deeper into the labyrinth he knows so well, Harry finds himself trapped within the only place that once guaranteed his survival. The city therefore defeats him not on its visible surface but within its hidden underside, exposing the impossibility of absolute control. The subterranean city that has sustained Harry throughout the narrative finally becomes the mechanism of his entrapment, bringing the film's vertical spatial logic to its conclusion.

While the physical geometry of Vienna is mapped through vertical structures, Reed simultaneously constructs an intangible architecture of spatial uncertainty through the strategic use of sound, light and shadow. By relying primarily on sensory perception, the film transforms the postwar city into an uncanny environment where space is experienced as fluid and deceptive. Rather than treating sound as a passive accompaniment to the frame, Reed uses auditory markers to extend Vienna's urban landscape past the limits of the image. This transition from tangible architecture to a predominantly sensory geography forces the characters—and the viewer—to navigate Vienna not through stable physical paths, but through the volatile limits of visibility and acoustic orientation. Within this sensory framework, Harry is established as a figure who repeatedly exists acoustically before he ever appears on screen. The film tightly binds Harry's identity to specific auditory markers, ensuring that he haunts the architecture of Vienna even during his physical absence from the frame. This pattern of acoustic precedence is initiated early in the film during Martins' interview with the porter. When the porter looks back after cryptically telling Martins to return later to discuss the "third man," his face registers a sudden flash of horror. For a first-time viewer, the cause of this terror is hidden; however, the narrative structure relies on a retrospective logic. Harry is physically present in front of the porter, yet Reed deliberately hides him from the audience, choosing instead to signal his presence through what the

screenplay describes as the distinct “sound of squeaking shoes.” Long before he is granted a visual identity, Harry exists as a disembodied acoustic disruption. This strategy of auditory reveal culminates during Harry’s famous first appearance in the dark doorway (TMF 1:04:50). Before a spotlight illuminates his face, his hidden presence is given away by the localised sound of a cat meowing at his feet. When the light from the upper window abruptly snaps on, catching Harry out in the open, his visual manifestation is framed as an inherently theatrical event. Brown notes that Harry behaves “like a performer [who] seems to enjoy being seen” (135). Expanding on this theatricality, Rob White, author of the British Film Institute’s monograph on *The Third Man*, argues that the window light functions less like domestic illumination and more as “a spotlight from the theatrical gods picking out a performer,” noting that Harry looks as though he “might begin to sing or to tap dance,” highlighting the enigma of his expressions (White 42). Immediately following this brief exposure, Harry vanishes back into the shadows of the cityscape, reverting instantly to an acoustic phenomenon. As Martins gives chase, Harry remains visually absent; Martins is forced to pursue him by tracking the disembodied sound of his retreating footsteps and the distorted outline of his shadow thrown against the street walls. This persistent auditory haunting is sustained across the broader text by the omnipresent zither theme, which fills the urban void whenever Harry is absent from the screen. This acoustic construction of space reaches its structural climax within the subterranean network. While Greene’s novella repeatedly refers to echoes, footsteps, and the sounds of running water, the film renders these auditory elements materially present through the resources of cinema. Sound no longer remains a narrated detail but becomes an immediate component of the viewer’s spatial experience. Brown highlights the “self-conscious use of echo” orchestrated by sound editor John Drake, whose enhancement of the tunnel acoustics creates a hall of mirrors made of sound (Brown 136). The echoes contrived by Drake systematically scramble directionality,

making it difficult for Harry to determine where his pursuers are positioned within the sewer grid. Taken together, footsteps, cascading water, and unintelligible voices coalesce to demonstrate that Reed does not use these sounds in *The Third Man* as a mere accompaniment to the image. They constitute part of the city's spatial force that reshapes perception and dictates the terms of movement and entrapment within the underground setting.

While the acoustic texture of the film builds a layer of sensory confusion, Reed simultaneously employs a highly expressionistic visual style to transform Vienna into a physically unstable environment. The film's visual decisions, apart from documenting a damaged postwar landscape, project a deeper structural disorientation, drawing direct influence from the geometric distortions of German Expressionism and the expressionistic aesthetics associated with directors such as Fritz Lang. By abandoning conventional, stable framing, the cinematography reconfigures the city's streets, buildings, and ruins into a landscape where physical space itself appears to warp, preventing the viewer from establishing a stable visual relationship with the environment. This visual transformation is driven primarily by radical camera placement and lens choices that destabilise the viewer's spatial perspective. Reed systematically relies on lopsided canted angles where the horizon line is aggressively tilted to disrupt the equilibrium of the frame. The same low-angle compositions that emphasise Vienna's oppressive verticality earlier in the film (for example, at 3:55) contribute here to an expressionistic distortion that elongates structures while compressing the human subjects within a skewed structural grid. As Gomez observes, *The Third Man* stands as "the foremost example of diagonalist rhetoric," characterised by a deliberate composition of "emphatic close-ups, bold but simple compositions, strong cuttings, [and] steep angles" (334). These compositional strategies cause the everyday architecture of Vienna to lose its linear predictability; walls lean precariously into the frame and streets skew at unnatural angles, rendering ordinary urban space visually uncertain and unfamiliar.

Beyond these steep angles, the film's expressionistic design relies heavily on a graphic use of lines and a specific manipulation of light and shade to generate a special subterranean mood. This high-contrast chiaroscuro lighting cuts across the fractured cityscape, mirroring the dark, ominous atmosphere of Greene's original novella. This stylistic integration of location shooting and studio-level expressionism highlights a productive tension: although the film remains grounded in the raw, material reality of postwar ruins, its visual distortions systematically overwrite that material fact. The physical city is transformed into a landscape of steep diagonals and fractured shadows that continually destabilises spatial perception. Consequently, these distorted compositions serve a primary spatial function: they destabilise the viewer's ability to orient themselves within the urban environment, ensuring that visibility and movement remain as fractured as the city's own ruined architecture.

By stripping away the transparency of the urban environment through sensory disruption and expressionistic distortion, *The Third Man* ultimately refashions Vienna into a Gothic landscape defined by burial, haunting, and the cyclical return of the dead. This aesthetic style emerges here as a spatial condition where the material trauma of war and ruin produces a city of "revenants." The shattered metropolis operates as a site of suspension, where the distinction between the buried and the living is repeatedly destabilised. This eerie atmosphere is anchored by the structural placement of the cemetery, which establishes burial as the narrative's founding spatial image—a point reinforced by the fact that the film both opens and closes within the graveyard's perimeter. This Gothic quality is most acutely realised through the figure of Harry, whose reappearance transforms him into a modern urban revenant. As Gomez notes, the project's origins lay in a solitary introductory paragraph by Greene centered on a funeral and the impossible subsequent sighting of the deceased (Gomez 332). Greene's foundational opening line—reflecting on the "incredulity" of seeing a man pass by a week after his coffin was lowered into the "frozen February ground"—sets the tone

for a city haunted by its own casualties (TNN 3). Officially dead and publicly mourned, Harry returns to circulate through the ruins as a figure suspended between life and death. His mysterious appearances and disappearances suggest that the city's architecture is not just a site of habitation, but a landscape of haunting where the dead refuse to remain interred. Within these silent, heavily policed streets, familiar urban spaces become uncanny; the historic city of "Strauss music and bogus easy charm" is replaced by a fractured geography where the past—in the form of Harry—continually erupts into the present (TMN 7). The film's spatial logic reaches its formal resolution by returning directly to the site of its initiation, reinforcing a circularity that defines the Gothic experience of the city. The final cemetery sequence (TMF 1:42:00) stages a profound series of geometric and narrative reversals. While the seasonal shift from the frozen opening to the leaf-strewn autumn suggests the passage of time, the physical blocking of the scene locks the characters into an inescapable structural repetition. Reed meticulously mirrors the spatial coordinates of the film's beginning: Anna walks away from the grave while Martins and Calloway watch her from a stationary vehicle. However, the final sequence is distinguished by Reed's refusal to animate the frame. As Anna walks along the tree-lined avenue, the camera remains entirely static, allowing the duration of her movement to unfold in real time. Without cutting between characters or tracking her progress, Reed maintains a single composition in which Anna gradually crosses the space separating her from Martins. Anna passes Martins without acknowledging him, and the camera continues to observe her movement with the same detachment that has characterised the sequence from the beginning. The return to the graveyard reinforces the sense that Vienna remains haunted by its own history, a city in which the past persists rather than disappears and where burial never fully guarantees absence.

Examining the film alongside the novella reveals the extent to which space functions as the organising principle of *The Third Man*. Many of the spatial dynamics identified in the previous chapters—fragmentation, disorientation, concealment, surveillance, and haunting—remain present in Reed’s film, yet they operate through fundamentally different means. Far from being mediated primarily through narration, they are experienced directly through visual and acoustic form. The viewers circulate the divided city together with the characters as they are made to navigate its ruins, confront its vertical hierarchies, and experience its uncertainties through image, movement, light, and sound. The film therefore demonstrates that postwar Vienna is not merely a setting shared by the novella and screenplay but the central condition through which both works generate meaning. Reed’s cinematic techniques transform the city into an experiential environment, making visible the material consequences of occupation and rendering spatial instability perceptible to the audience itself. In doing so, the film confirms that the significance of Vienna lies not only in what it represents but also in how it shapes the experience of those who observe and inhabit it.

5. Conclusions

5.1 Synthesis of Findings and the Spatial Reversal

This thesis began with a fundamental question: how do the material and architectural configurations of postwar Vienna construct the city not as a passive backdrop, but as an active agent that reorganises narrative structure, character movement, and human perception? By tracking the narrative trajectory of *The Third Man*, this study indicates that the traditional high modernist dynamic between the interior psyche and the exterior environment is fundamentally inverted within Graham Greene's mid-century landscape. Where high modernism treated the city as a canvas or projection of an individual's stream of consciousness, Greene's text presents a world where space actively acts upon the subject. Through a sustained close reading of the novella, this research suggests that Vienna's four-power division, ruined architecture, and labyrinthine interiors physically condition visibility and movement before those spaces can be processed psychologically. The material fractures of the occupied city do not mirror an existing internal malaise but actively produce and impose disorientation, estrangement, and vulnerability upon its inhabitants. As demonstrated in the final chapter, this spatial logic is not confined to the literary text. Carol Reed's cinematic adaptation amplifies it both visually and acoustically. Reed's celebrated use of canted angles, deep expressionistic shadows, and the cavernous Viennese sewer network translates Greene's narrative structures into a striking, tangible visual language of displacement. Ultimately, this thesis argues that in the mid-century landscape of *The Third Man*, space systematically reorganises the characters' consciousness.

5.2 Theoretical Integration and Answering the Research Questions

The core analytical strength of this project relies on a critical dialogue between materialist spatial theory and psychoanalysis. By deploying Henri Lefebvre's concept of the social

production of space alongside Sigmund Freud's theories of dream logic and the uncanny, this study moves beyond the traditional critical divide between external materialism and internal psychology. Lefebvre's framework provides the tools to analyse postwar Vienna as an oppressive, produced environment structured by political demarcation, borders, and architectural decay. Crucially, the analysis suggests that this produced space serves as the direct material trigger for Freudian psychological destabilisation. The city's ruined urban fabric and subterranean spaces act as physical repositories of repression, where the material traces of wartime trauma resist complete erasure and allow a buried past to violently intrude upon the present.

The findings of this study therefore provide clear answers to the research questions posed in the introduction. First, Vienna's material and architectural configuration constructs the city as an active agent through its political division, ruined urban fabric, and systems of spatial control. Second, these conditions reorganise narrative structure by regulating movement, restricting visibility, and producing recurrent patterns of pursuit, delay, and disorientation. Finally, the fragmentation of the built environment generates the dream-like and uncanny effects that permeate both the novella and the film, demonstrating that psychological instability emerges from, rather than merely reflects, the material organisation of space. The dream-like atmosphere, doubling, and repetitive spatial loops that permeate both versions are arguably not simple atmospheric choices but direct symptoms of navigating a structurally fractured landscape. Furthermore, by integrating Michel Foucault's notion of heterotopia, this study clarifies its exploration of exceptional thresholds like the Vienna Central Cemetery and the sewer network. These sites function as physical boundaries between life and death, order and chaos, demonstrating how the material organisation of the city forces characters into inescapable behavioral and spatial cycles that dismantle ordinary relations of time, space, and causality.

5.3 Original Contribution to Knowledge

The principal contribution of this thesis to twentieth-century literary and cinematic scholarship lies in shifting the critical gaze from what Vienna *symbolises* to what Vienna *does*. By demonstrating how Vienna's four-power division, ruined architecture, and subterranean networks operate as material mechanisms that generate navigational uncertainty, this thesis reconceptualises space as a causal force within the narrative rather than a symbolic reflection of psychological or political conditions. As established in the literature review, previous scholarship on *The Third Man* has routinely treated the city as a passive mirror reflecting a psychological state, a collective moral ambiguity, or a Cold War ideological conflict. Even contemporary readings that note a heterotopic mode of narration still relegate space to a conceptual or narrative device.

This study contributes to addressing this critical gap by providing a materialist-spatial reading that positions the physical environment as a primary precondition for psychological trauma. By demonstrating that spatial disorientation is a material cause far more than a narrative consequence, this research offers a fresh framework for evaluating Greene's broader corpus. It challenges his traditional categorisation as a purely psychological or theological writer, establishing instead that his mid-century text foregrounds the formative role of spatial organisation in shaping perception, movement, and experience within a fractured, postwar Europe.

Beyond its contribution to readings of *The Third Man*, this thesis also contributes to the growing field of literary spatial studies. By combining Lefebvre's theory of spatial production with psychoanalytic approaches to the uncanny, the study demonstrates the value of integrating material and experiential approaches to space, resisting their traditional treatment as competing methodologies. In doing so, it offers a model for examining how built environments operate simultaneously as political structures, lived realities, and sites of

psychological disturbance. The findings therefore have implications not only for Greene scholarship but also for broader discussions of postwar literature, urban representation, and the relationship between space and trauma.

5.4 Avenues for Further Research

While this thesis has concluded its primary investigation into the active agency of space in *The Third Man*, its findings open up several productive avenues for future academic inquiry. First, the theoretical framework constructed here—the synthesis of Lefebvre’s spatial production and Freud’s material uncanny—could be fruitfully applied to Greene’s other “entertainment” novels and postwar texts, such as *The Heart of the Matter* (1948), or *The End of the Affair* (1951). Investigating whether a similar spatial reversal occurs in his representations of wartime West Africa or blitzed London would determine if this materialist dynamic is unique to the partitioned geography of Vienna or if it represents a systemic shift in Greene’s mid-century aesthetic.

Second, further research could expand the cinematic scope of this project by comparing Carol Reed’s visual translation of space in *The Third Man* with other concurrent European cinematic movements, such as Italian Neorealism or German *Trümmerfilme* (rubble films). Such a comparative study would illuminate how different national cinemas leveraged the physical ruins of World War II to express psychological displacement. Finally, future researchers could draw upon the insights established here regarding the cemetery and the sewer network to conduct a broader cultural-geographical study of subterranean and marginal spaces in postwar British fiction, mapping how the hidden infrastructures of the modern city became the primary sites for processing collective historical trauma.

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