



Elizabeth H. Jones

Spaces of Belonging

Home, Culture and Identity in
20th-Century French Autobiography

3

Spaces of Belonging

Spatial Practices

An Interdisciplinary Series in
Cultural History,
Geography and
Literature

3

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Elizabeth H. Jones



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The Spatial Practices Series

The series *Spatial Practices* belongs to the topographical turn in cultural studies and aims to publish new work in the study of spaces and places which have been appropriated for cultural meanings: symbolic landscapes and urban places which have specific cultural meanings that construct, maintain, and circulate myths of a unified national or regional culture and their histories, or whose visible ironies deconstruct those myths. Taking up the lessons of the new cultural geography, papers are invited which attempt to build bridges between the disciplines of cultural history, literary and cultural studies, and geography.

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Robert Burden
Stephan Kohl

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List of Abbreviated Names of Primary Texts*

Serge Doubrovsky

F	<i>Fils</i>
UAS	<i>Un amour de soi</i>
LLB	<i>Le Livre brisé</i>
AV	<i>L'Après-Vivre</i>
LPC	<i>Laissé pour conte</i>

Hervé Guibert

ALA	<i>A l'ami qui ne m'a pas sauvé la vie</i>
Le PC	<i>Le Protocole compassionnel</i>
HCR	<i>L'Homme au chapeau rouge</i>
C	<i>Cytomégalo virus</i>
Le P	<i>Le Paradis</i>

Régine Robin

Q	<i>La Québécoise</i>
IFP	<i>L'Immense Fatigue des pierres</i>
PP	<i>Papiers perdus</i>

* For full details of these texts please see bibliography

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Abstract: Questions of space, place and identity have become increasingly prominent throughout the arts and humanities in recent times. This study begins by investigating the reasons for this growth in interest and analyses the underlying assumptions on which interdisciplinary discussions about space are often based. After tracing back the history of contact between Geography and Literary Studies from both disciplinary perspectives, it goes on to discuss recent academic work in the field and seeks to forge a new conceptual framework through which contemporary discussions of space and literature can operate.

The book then moves on to a thorough application of the interdisciplinary model that it has established. Having argued that the experience of contemporary space has rendered questions of home and belonging particularly pressing, it undertakes detailed analysis of how these phenomena are articulated in a selection of recent French life writing texts. The close, text-led readings reveal that whilst not often highlighted for their relevance to the analysis of space, these works do in fact narrate the impact of some of the most significant cultural experiences of the twentieth century, including the Holocaust and the AIDS crisis, upon geo-cultural senses of identity. Home is shown to be a deeply problematic, yet strongly desired, element of the contemporary world.

The book concludes by addressing the underlying thesis that contemporary life writing might provide just the 'postmodern maps' that could help not only literary scholars, but also geographers, better understand the world today.

Key names and concepts: Serge Doubrovsky - Hervé Guibert - Fredric Jameson - Philippe Lejeune - Régine Robin; Autofiction - Cultural Geography - Interdisciplinarity - Place and Identity - Postmodernism - Space - Postmodern Space - Literary Studies - Twentieth-Century Life Writing.

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Introduction

In his 1989 monograph entitled *Maps of Meaning*, Peter Jackson (1989: 1) argues that ‘cultures are maps of meaning through which the world is made intelligible’. Whilst the reference to space in this assertion appears to be merely metaphorical, Jackson (1989:3) goes on to emphasise the crucial role that space plays in the constitution of cultures. In fact, in recent decades there has been growing recognition of the important role played by space not only within the formation of cultures but within all aspects of our experience of the world. Within academia, recognition of the potential contribution to be made by space in deepening our understanding of contemporary life has spawned a proliferation of studies. The common thread uniting these diffuse works is a general consensus that the resurgence of interest in space that has occurred since the 1960s can be attributed not merely to changes in critical understandings of space, but to changes in the very nature and experience of space itself. Developments in transport and telecommunications technologies, for example, have brought spaces ‘closer together’, facilitating movement and blurring the boundaries between spaces. The impact of the resultant cultural contact and cultural dislocation upon both individual identities and societies cannot be overstated. Moreover, in theoretical terms, whereas space used to be commonly understood to be a ‘dead’ or ‘passive’ arena in which events merely take place, its active, constitutive potential has increasingly been realised.¹ Spaces are not merely empty stages upon which people act out their lives, but are deeply imbued with cultural meanings as well as entwined in the power relations around which societies revolve. At the level of both lived experience and critical analysis, then, understanding space seems to be an increasingly urgent prerequisite for any attempt to understand the contemporary world.

¹ See Keith and Pile (1996: 2) for arguments against seeing space as a ‘passive, abstract arena on which things happen’ and the debt that this realisation owes to thinkers such as Jameson and Soja.

The field of life writing is one that is currently enjoying a similarly significant renaissance. In general terms, where it was once deemed immodest and unseemly to discuss the self, the individual has become a matter of current popular fascination. Perhaps more crucially, much contemporary theory has hailed a focus on individual lives as the best way to generate ‘situated’ or ‘embodied’ knowledge and therefore to avoid sweeping generalisations about whole societies. In more specifically literary terms, whilst life writing was long treated as a ‘factual’ and ‘referential’ art that had little contribution to make to the creative domain of literature, the field has garnered considerably more respect in recent decades. As my discussion in chapter 2 will reveal, life writing has begun to be recognised as a locus of literary innovation as contemporary writers experiment with all aspects of form and structure, and a wider definition of life writing allows those previously excluded from the genre, particularly women and those in the developing world, to be accepted into the mainstream (see Smith and Watson 1992). Not only has the production of autobiographical texts proliferated in recent times, then, but critical perceptions of the genre have also become more favourable.

The two realms in which this study is grounded – space and life writing- are linked by their particular relevance to the contemporary world. In fact, the sphere of French Studies provides a particularly appropriate domain in which to juxtapose these two fields. The reasons for this are threefold. Firstly, whilst the ‘New Cultural Geography’, a movement that has played a significant role in exploring the new nature and status of space in the contemporary world, is unmistakably Anglophone in provenance, it is important to note that some of the most rigorous scholarship in theorising the Geography-Literary Studies relationship has occurred within the French-speaking world.² Secondly, the Francophone world is one in which there has been particularly noteworthy scholarship in both the theorisation and the production of life writing texts. As my discussion in chapter 2 will reveal, Philippe Lejeune’s *Le Pacte autobiographique* (1975) and his subsequent studies have provided the international benchmark against which autobiographical literature and its criticism is judged. Thirdly, the debate about postmodernism with which I will argue understand-

² As I will discuss in more detail in chapter 1, the work of Marc Brousseau is exemplary in this field.

ings of contemporary space to be inextricably entwined, resonates particularly deeply across the Francophone world.³ As Max Silverman points out in *Facing Postmodernity: Contemporary French Thought on Culture and Society* (1999: 5-6), the already contentious debate engendered by postmodernism rages all the more furiously in France because of the threat that the notion poses to the cherished French ideals of the Enlightenment and the tradition of Modernity. It seems that the domain of French Cultural Study is a particularly appropriate arena in which to explore the rich, and topical, questions that arise from the juxtaposition of contemporary life writing and spatial analysis.

This study will, then, locate itself upon a distinctly interdisciplinary terrain. It will engage with a wide range of critical discourses, including the emerging body of theory within the 'New Cultural Geography'; the work of longer established theorists of the spatial such as Michel Foucault and Gaston Bachelard; and notions of contemporary life writing and postmodernism. Seeking to bring into dialogue current ideas about space and spatial belonging with a selected range of twentieth-century French life writing texts, my study will not tread a well-worn academic path. It is clear that undertaking spatial readings of particular literary texts is not an endeavour without precedent within Literary Studies, and nor is it unheard of for Geographers to seek recourse to literary texts in order to substantiate their hypotheses. However, in this study it is hoped to move some way towards establishing a more rigorous dialogue between the two domains of study. Rather than using literary examples in order to 'prove' a preconceived geographical hypothesis, or sticking to a few well-worn categories of spatial analysis such as 'the urban' in order to evaluate a literary text, in this monograph the channels of communication between the two fields will be opened up. It is hoped to demonstrate that, just as the particular analytic tools proffered by geographical theory will allow us to deepen our understanding of a literary text, so the close study of life writing texts may provide a unique insight

³ In this monograph I shall consciously use the term 'Francophone' to refer to all parts of the French-speaking world, including France itself. This slightly unusual practice is a response to recent debates that highlight the somewhat arbitrary nature of any attempt to suggest the coherence between such diverse countries as Belgium, Quebec and Francophone Africa, whilst maintaining France to be in some way distinct.

into ways of living in space. Moreover, this monograph will seek to move away from the view that spatial analysis should be confined to those writings that obviously engage with specifically spatial phenomena.⁴ All life experience, and hence all life writing, occurs within and is mediated by space. Similarly, life writing not only represents space but also plays a constitutive role in forming the spaces and cultures that it depicts.⁵

The structure of this monograph will be based around six distinct chapters. In chapter 1, the study will begin with a detailed interrogation of the contention that space has become more important in recent times. I will discuss the key theories that underpin both the critical reappraisal of contemporary space and the suggestion that the experience and nature of space have undergone a significant transformation in the contemporary world. Arguing these contentions to be fundamentally bound up with notions of postmodernism, I will seek to elaborate a model through which this complex and contentious notion can be usefully mobilised. Moreover, in order to forge a coherent critical framework for this study, my discussion of space will be rounded off with an examination of the history of contact between the disciplines of Geography and Literary Studies. That is to say that in order to delimit the precise position that this work will occupy, I will outline to what extent and in what ways interdisciplinary contact between spatial and literary studies has already occurred, and the theoretical stances and popular perceptions upon which such work has been grounded will be evaluated. Chapter 1 will conclude, then, with an elaboration of the precise scholarly niche that this study aspires to occupy.

Chapter 2 will furnish the second major theoretical input into this monograph. Focusing upon the field of life writing, I will seek in

⁴ Linden Peach, for example, in a paper entitled 'Nation, Internal Difference and the New Geography' suggests that the specific attributes of postmodern geography make it a particularly 'appropriate model with which to discuss [...] writing by members of ethnic minority groups'. See Peach (1997: 9-29).

⁵ As the editors of a special edition of the journal *Canadian Literature* dedicated to autobiography and life writing recently argued, 'we live in an auto/biographical age that uses the personal narrative as a lens onto history and the contemporary world. In every medium, cultures are permeated and increasingly transformed by auto/biographical narratives, productions and performances of identity' (Egan and Helms 2002: 5-6).

this chapter to adumbrate some of the most important elements of contemporary life writing. The underlying premises of conventional autobiography will be briefly outlined before the focus shifts onto the generic complexities of *autofiction*, a cultural phenomenon that will play a significant role in this study. The latter half of this chapter will be taken up by the introduction of the three writers upon whose work my discussion will focus: Hervé Guibert; Serge Doubrovsky and Régine Robin. I will sketch out their literary motivations and beliefs as well as introducing the particular works that will feature in this study.

In chapters 3, 4 and 5, I will offer a close reading of the life writing texts of each of these three authors in turn. Seeking to avoid merely 'proving' or 'disproving' those geographical hypotheses advanced in chapter 1, the content of each of these chapters will be dictated by my reading of the pieces of literature themselves. That is to say that my analysis will draw attention to those spatial features that I judge to be of greatest importance within each individual literary corpus. When elements of compatibility with the spatial theory advanced in chapter 1 are evident, then this will be highlighted. It is in chapter 6, entitled 'Life Writing and Postmodern Cartography', that the links between the different elements of this study will be made evident. Here, I will seek to examine the extent to which the life writings of Guibert, Doubrovsky and Robin can each be said to constitute a form of mapping of the postmodern world, a notion that will be introduced more rigorously in chapter 1.

Through the exploration of a selected range of life writing texts, then, my study seeks to establish the extent to which the realms of literature and spatial analysis can be brought into dialogue. It is hoped to shed light not only upon the ways in which space is represented in literature, but also upon some of the fundamental questions about identity and belonging that the contemporary experience of space have rendered so pressing.

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1.

Space and Literature

It has become commonplace in recent decades to begin any discussion of contemporary space with a citation from the work of Fredric Jameson. This Marxist professor of literature's contention that 'we live in spacious times' (see, for example, Jameson cited in Thacker 2003: 1) has become the over-worn emblem of a pervasive debate. The central tenet of Jameson's argument proclaims that there has been a paradigmatic shift in the character and status of space in the last few decades. The significance of Jameson's contribution to this field can be attributed more to his role in increasing awareness of the debate about space than to the unusual nature of his arguments. Several other eminent theorists have expressed similar views about the importance of space in the contemporary world.¹ The French philosopher Michel Foucault, for example, in a posthumously published piece entitled 'Des espaces autres', asserted that 'l'époque actuelle serait peut-être [...] l'époque de l'espace' (1984: 46). Later in the piece, he reiterated this with the words 'en tout cas, je crois que l'inquiétude d'aujourd'hui concerne fondamentalement l'espace, sans doute beaucoup plus que le temps' (1984: 47). Henri Lefebvre, a philosopher who has become particularly well known for his work on urban space, has gone so far as to argue that time is being ontologically and epis-

¹ It is not intended here to rehearse in depth the now established and detailed arguments about precise definitions of space and place. For the purposes of this discussion it is sufficient to note that 'space' is often seen to be a physical entity classifiable primarily by its dimensions or by what it contains, whereas 'place' is more often seen to be a fixed site within space and entails connotations of human attachment, emotional investment or human habitation. A seminal text on this topic is Yi-Fu Tuan's *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Tuan 1977). An excellent discussion of the concepts of space and place can also be found in chapter 1, 'Theorising Space and Place in Modernism' in Andrew Thacker's *Moving Through Modernity: Space and Geography in Modernism* (Thacker 2003: 13-45).

temologically killed off in favour of space in the contemporary world (Lefebvre cited in Shields 1997: 188). It seems, then, that there is significant support for the notion that space has become more important in recent times. Indeed, indicating the depth of his belief in the agency and importance of space, Lefebvre has also argued that 'to change life [...] we must first change space' (Lefebvre 1991: 190). And it is clearly necessary to pre-empt this assertion with the remark that before we can change either space or life, we must first understand space and understand why these claims about space are being made.

Awareness of space has been heightened in many areas of life in recent times. Within the academic world, whilst there has been a clear surge of interest in the last three decades in the academic discipline most bound up with space, that of geography,² it is also evident that the preoccupation with space has become increasingly interdisciplinary. Across the Arts and Humanities there has been growing recognition that spatial analysis may shed light on many of the most pressing foci of debate. For example, at the level of the individual, space is increasingly recognised to be implicated in identity formation (Benko and Ulf Strohmayer 1997: 115). At the level of society, space is argued to be inextricably interlinked with social power relations and hierarchies and therefore to underpin all social relationships.³ It is telling that two North American geographers assert that 'the language of social and cultural investigation is increasingly suffused with spatial concepts in a way that would have been unimaginable two decades ago' (Smith and Katz 1996: 67). Indeed, one of the most striking indications of growing awareness of the importance of space is to be found in the arena of language. Social and cultural geographers within the English-speaking world have been particularly quick to comment upon the greater frequency with which spatial terminology and spatial metaphors now occur in both academic and everyday language. As the

² For assertions of the growing status of geography in recent times, see Dennis Crow, *Geography and Identity: Living and Exploring the Geopolitics of Identity* (Crow 1996: 4) and Paul Claval, 'La géographie sociale et culturelle' (Claval 1998: 100).

³ On the importance of space within cultural studies and sociology see chapter 10 'Cultural Space and Urban Place' of Barker's *Cultural Studies: Theory and Practice* (Barker 2000). For the importance of space within literary studies see Norquay and Smyth (1997).

British cultural geographers Steve Pile and Nigel Thrift note, in social and cultural theory identity is 'mapped out' through the inherently spatial notions of mobility, transculturation and diaspora (Pile and Thrift 1995a: 10; see also Peach 1997: 20). Moreover, power relations are increasingly articulated in spatially-inspired terminology and metaphors, including not only 'position'; 'location'; and 'situation', but also 'centre-periphery'; 'global-local' and 'inside-outside'. The influence of geographical analogies clearly extends far beyond the scope of academic discourse, frequently being employed in everyday language in order to 'map out uncertainties', and to 'look for common ground' (Smith and Katz 1996: 67 and Keith and Pile 1996: 6-7).

The assertion by those such as Jameson, Foucault and Lefebvre, then, that space has become more important in recent times certainly seems to be endorsed by three developments: the growth in status of the spatial science of geography; the increasingly evident interdisciplinary preoccupation with space; and the ever more prevalent usage of geographical analogies in language. However, it is important to note that mounting awareness of the importance of space should not be confused with the growing familiarity of space. Nor should we assume that space has become more widely understood in recent times. It is perhaps unsurprising that the more prevalent space becomes within academic and everyday discourses, the greater the consternation amongst many geographers. Rob Shields asserts, for example, that the increasingly pervasive and often careless use of spatial notions and metaphors has eroded 'the geographical language of space'. He contends that 'we can no longer speak without confusion about "space" or even "social space"' (Shields 1997: 186). The fear that spatial analysis and geographical terminology may be rendered meaningless by frequent misuse is far from groundless.⁴ The problem is rendered particularly acute by the fact that many of those who adopt spatial terminology and spatial metaphors do so without any rigorous attempt to understand to what, precisely, they are referring. As Gillian Rose, a feminist geographer of considerable repute, asserts, common uses of spatial language frequently rely upon a general unthinking ac-

⁴ For discussions of the dangers of insufficiently rigorous uses of spatial metaphors and spatial notions see Smith and Katz (1996: 67-80) and Keith and Pile (1996: 35-36).

ceptance of the old, commonsense fixity and familiarity of space (Rose 1996: 57). It seems, then, that whilst space may have gained prominence within academic enquiry, the topic is not always sufficiently carefully interrogated. Marc Augé, a French ethnographer, asserts that 'nous vivons dans un monde que nous n'avons pas encore appris à regarder. Il nous faut réapprendre à penser l'espace' (Augé 1992: 49). It seems difficult to disagree with the need for greater, more rigorous analysis of space in the current period.

Furthermore, we must recognise not only that changes in contemporary space are difficult to understand, but also that the argument by Jameson with which I opened this discussion is considerably more ambitious than might at first be realised. Jameson does not merely propose that there has been a critical revaluation of space and that this formerly underestimated aspect of life has at last been elevated to the position it has always merited. On the contrary, he argues that the very nature of space has undergone a fundamental transformation in recent times. It is this change, according to Jameson, rather than a mere shift in our understanding of this elementary aspect of the world, that has thrust space into a more prominent role. What arguments, then, might we find to support this radical hypothesis?

The work of Marc Augé provides a particularly helpful starting place for a discussion of this question. In *Non-lieux: introduction à une anthropologie de la surmodernité* (1992), Augé advances the argument that the contemporary experience of space has been affected by recent technological developments. Amongst these Augé lists 'les spectaculaires accélérations des moyens de transport' (1992: 48). Indeed, the speed and ease with which it is possible for individuals to travel across the earth's surface is irrefutable. The inevitable result of this, we can infer from Augé's work, is the erosion, or at least modification, of perceptions of distance and separation that ordered space in the past. This is not to say that travel and movement are new features of individual and cultural experience,⁵ but rather that the scale and ease with which people move over large and small spaces is unprecedented. The growth in individual mobility has been accompanied, ac-

⁵ As James Clifford argues, 'everyone's on the move, and has been for centuries' (1997:2).

cording to Augé, by a revolution in telecommunications. Augé asserts that

dans l'intimité de nos demeures, enfin, des images de toutes sortes, relayées par les satellites, captées par les antennes qui hérissent les toits du plus reculé de nos villages, peuvent nous donner une vision instantanée et parfois simultanée d'un événement en train de se produire à l'autre bout de la planète. (Augé 1992: 44)

The impact of these communications technologies upon the experience of distance and space is, again, significant. Augé points out that the consequences of the shifts in our relationship with space that result from transport and telecommunications developments are paradoxical: the world becomes more knowable and more easily traversed, and yet we are bewildered by our awareness of the small and insignificant space we occupy in the overall scheme of things. Augé's work, then, provides a valuable discussion of the ways in which the contemporary era is marked by the impacts of 'space-adjusting technologies'.⁶ The prevalence of catchphrases such as the 'shrinking world' and the 'global village'⁷ in everyday discourse indicates the extent to which awareness of these changes in space has permeated all aspects of society.

Of course, in addition to the shifts in the experience of space that Augé attributes to technological change, it is of paramount importance to recognise the impact of recent transformations in the geopolitical ordering of space. The shift away from formal imperialism and colonialism in the twentieth century represented the end of a phase of clear organisation of the world into discrete, mappable spaces that were relatively unambiguously positioned within a global hierarchy.⁸

⁶ The term 'space-adjusting technologies' is used by Peter Dicken and Peter E. Lloyd in *Modern Western Society: A Geographical Perspective on Work, Home and Well-Being* (1981: 45). A related term, 'disembedding mechanisms', is used to refer to communications technologies by David Morley (2000: 149).

⁷ A discussion of the implications of the term 'global village', along with the notion's founder, Marshall McLuhan, is to be found in Brian Jarvis's *Post-modern Cartographies: The Geographical Imagination in Contemporary American Culture* (1998). See particularly Chapter 3 'How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Mediascape: Marshall McLuhan'.

⁸ David Morley correctly points out that this sense of the world being clearly organised during the colonial period may apply more to those in the West than

This system has been replaced in the late twentieth- and early twenty-first century by the more hidden forces of neo-colonialism, post-colonialism and multinational capital. The argument that a simply demarcated pattern of nation states with clear governance over particular spaces has been latterly replaced by deregulated, global flows of multinational capital that know no national boundaries is particularly evident in recent academic thought. Writing in a volume entitled *Questions of Travel: Postmodern Discourses of Displacement* (1996), Caren Kaplan highlights the impact of these changes upon individuals. She tells us that as a result of the increasingly pervasive nature of transnational capital 'the solid association between national spaces and identities becomes loosened' (Kaplan 1996: 9). In the present age, people and goods may be compelled to travel across national boundaries according to the logic of capital and irrespective of the implications for their identity or their political affiliations.⁹

Perhaps one of the most important results of the transformation of space in recent decades has been the proliferation, on global and local scales, of opportunities for everyday contact between different cultures. The significance of this for both individuals and societies cannot be overestimated. Augé asserts that the establishment of a united sense of place has traditionally been of paramount importance in the grounding of identities. Echoing the well-known work of Benedict Anderson on 'imagined communities', he defines sense of place as '[un] fantasme indigène, d'une société ancrée depuis des temps immémoriaux dans la pérennité d'un terroir inentamé au-delà duquel rien n'est plus véritablement pensable' (Augé 1992: 59).¹⁰ In view of this, the undermining of the simple ordering and separation of distinct cultures in different spaces must clearly call into question the traditional ways in which individuals and communities have rooted themselves into space. This argument is reinforced by the prevalence within current academic literature of theories of transcultural spaces and cultural

to those in countries that were colonised and which, subsequently, experienced considerable cultural dislocation (Morley 2000: 195).

⁹ Laura U. Marks, for example, tells us that 'the powers at work in global movements of people are increasingly less those of nations than of corporations, whose transnational power has begun to exceed that of governments' (Marks 2000: 9).

¹⁰ For Benedict Anderson on 'Imagined Communities' see Anderson (1983).

contact zones, as well as notions of composite cultural identities and double consciousnesses.¹¹ Any traditional sense of being rooted unproblematically in space has been undermined.

Perhaps, then, the contemporary experience of space is neatly summed up in James Clifford's assertion in *The Predicament of Culture* (1988: 6) that 'people and things are increasingly out of place'? The work of Fredric Jameson acquiesces with such a view. Alongside his argument that the contemporary world has undergone a 'mutation in built space' (Jameson 1984: 80), Jameson stresses the bewilderment that has resulted from this change. He argues that 'our now postmodern bodies are bereft of spatial coordinates and practically (let alone theoretically) incapable of distantiation' (1984: 87). And here, perhaps, we reach the kernel of Jameson's argument. Rather than relying upon vague assertions that changes in space have taken place in 'the contemporary period' or 'the current age', Jameson contends that intrinsic to transformations in contemporary space has been the emergence of the postmodern era. In his 1990 essay, *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Jameson asserts that 'space is the "supremely mediatory function" in the construction of a postmodern society' (Jameson 1991: 104). Similarly, many theorists have highlighted the link between spatial change and the emergence of the 'postmodern era'. In examinations of space and spatial analysis over the last three decades, the term 'postmodern' appears frequently (see Kaplan 1996: 8 and Peach 1997: 9). Far from clarifying the spatial debate, however, the contested and controversial nature of postmodernism throws further doubt into the equation. Since its conception, the term 'postmodern' has garnered considerable attention but little consensus. David Harvey, a leading Marxist academic and major player in the debate about postmodernism, is far from isolated in arguing that 'no one exactly agrees as to what is meant by the term [postmodern]' (Harvey 1989: 7).

¹¹ For a discussion of transcultural spaces see David Tomas, *Transcultural Space and Transcultural Beings* (1996: 9). For cultural contact zones see Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (1992: 4). On notions of composite or 'creolised' cultural identities see Edouard Glissant's (1996) *Introduction à une poétique du divers*. For a discussion of the notion of double consciousnesses see Paul Gilroy (1993), *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*.

The transformation of space and the concomitant upheaval in established ways of belonging to particular places and grounding identities clearly generates a wealth of interesting topics of study. It is clear, however, that the two fundamental axes underpinning this arena of enquiry cannot be taken for granted. Contemporary space, it seems, is much discussed but often insufficiently rigorously investigated, and the postmodern is a minefield of conflicting and shifting positions. In order to establish a theoretical basis for the literary articulations of home space and cultural belonging that I will undertake in this monograph, this chapter will anatomise, centrally, the changing nature of space in recent decades. In order to do so, it will seek first to establish what exactly is meant by the postmodern, and how this might be said to have impacted upon space in recent times. After establishing a basis upon which to discuss contemporary space in general, my discussion will pursue potential definitions of home space and cultural belonging as a preparation for a key thematic focus of the study. In the second half of this chapter I will investigate institutional responses to the changing nature of space, as well as the recent history, current state and future prognosis of inter-disciplinary exchanges between the disciplines of geography and literary studies, disciplines that inflect directly the research project pursued in this monograph.

1.0 Postmodernism and Space: A Critical Framework

The Postmodern: A Contested Field

The term 'postmodern', like its close relations 'postmodernism' and 'postmodernity', is deeply contested. Indeed, as Niall Lucy argues, it has become a cliché to comment on the unsatisfactory nature of efforts to define the 'postmodern' (Lucy 1997: 63). It is certainly true that there is little consensus within the academic community about any aspect of the phenomenon. In a particularly helpful discussion entitled *The Politics of Theory: Ideological Positions in the Postmodern Debate* (1984), Fredric Jameson systematically explicates the varying stances that key theorists have adopted in relation to the postmodern. Divergence exists not only in terms of the different positions particular individuals adopt in relation to the perceived positive or negative

attributes of the postmodern, but also, to a lesser extent, in relation to the ongoing interrogation of the very existence of the postmodern.¹² What, then, are the major sources of contention within debates about the postmodern?

A particularly heated aspect of the debate focuses upon whether the postmodern should be employed to describe the characteristics of the present historical moment, or whether it should be understood as a set of cultural trends and processes that potentially exist at any moment in history.¹³ Umberto Eco is a clear proponent of the latter argument, subscribing to the theory that the postmodern represents 'a *Kunstwollen*, a way of doing' that exists within every age.¹⁴ Fredric Jameson's arguments on the subject are often cited as supporting the opposite point of view (see Benko 1997: 12). That is to say that, perhaps because of Jameson's Marxist emphasis on the importance of history in characterising the various stages of development of the world, he is deemed to support the notion that the postmodern cannot be dissociated from the present historical period. It is certainly true that one of Jameson's most influential contributions to the debate has been to argue that the postmodern is fundamentally bound up with the

¹² In 'The Politics of Theory: Ideological Positions in the Postmodernism Debate', Jameson cites Tafuri as an example of someone who is highly sceptical of the existence of postmodernism. However, Jameson goes on to argue that 'the point is that we are *within* the culture of postmodernism to the point where its facile repudiation is as impossible as any equally facile celebration of it is complacent and corrupt' (Jameson 1988: 381). In this monograph the term 'postmodern' will continue to be used on the grounds that it is the most useful term available when discussing the changes in contemporary society and space in the late twentieth and early twenty-first-century. As the discussion in this chapter will show, however, the use of this contested term will be made with full reference to the many convincing arguments that have highlighted its imperfect nature.

¹³ In fact, the distinction is often occluded by the unthinking conflation of the term 'postmodern-ism' with 'postmodern-ity', and vice versa. As Terry Eagleton argues in his generally sceptical discussion of the postmodern, *The Illusions of Postmodernism* (1996), postmodern-ism refers to a form of contemporary culture, whereas postmodern-ity relates to a specific historical period. Whilst both notions share many characterising features, they are clearly not synonymous. See Eagleton 1996: vii.

¹⁴ See Benko (1997c: 12). This view is similarly held by Susan Buck-Morss, cited by Pred (1997: 121).

latest mutation of capitalism. In this, Jameson contends that the post-modern is interlinked with the postindustrial world, representing the cultural logic of late capitalism. This assertion clearly locates the postmodern within a particular period in time. Jameson's argument also proposes that the postmodern comprises more than an autonomous aesthetic or cultural trend that could exist alongside any dominant socio-economic regime at any period in time. This argument has gained considerable credence since Jameson set it out in detail in 1990.¹⁵ Jameson's already convincing position is further reinforced by the nuanced view of postmodernity that he advances. He does not, for example, assert sweepingly that the postmodern dominates every aspect of the present historical moment. On the contrary, he specifically asserts that 'I am very far from feeling that all cultural production today is "postmodern"' (Jameson 1984: 57). And he proposes a model in which the postmodern is a 'dominant force field' against which alternative cultural impulses must, and do fight (Jameson 1984: 57).¹⁶ Comparison of the fundamental characteristics of the postmodern with those of late capitalism certainly demonstrates many clearly visible correlations, a topic to which my discussion will return.

Deeply intertwined with the argument about the periodization of postmodernism is the debate about the extent to which the post-modern can be said to comprise a radical break from all that is classified as modern. The uses of slightly varying appellations such as 'late modernity'; 'post-modernity'; 'postmodernity'; and 'supermodernity' reflect the ongoing controversy surrounding this subject. Indeed, this area is one in which diverging viewpoints between Anglophone and Francophone academic communities are particularly evident. Whilst the French-speaking world has generally embraced the notion of the

¹⁵ In fact this is an area in which there has been divergence between Francophone and Anglophone academic communities. As Eleanore Kofman and Elizabeth Lebas argue, there 'is much less interest in France in periodizations of postmodernism as a cultural logic of late capitalism or space-time compression. For example, neither Jameson nor Harvey have been translated' (Kofman and Lebas 1996: 46).

¹⁶ Also, in the extended, monograph-length version of *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Jameson specifically comments that shreds of that which came before postmodernism, such as realism and modernism, are still in evidence (Jameson 1991: xii).

postmodern less readily than the Anglophone one, it has reserved particular scepticism for claims that the postmodern represents a complete break with the past.¹⁷ French theorists have often emphasised the development or exaggeration of pre-existing trends within a framework of overall continuity rather than understanding contemporary changes as indicating rupture with that which preceded. Marc Augé, for example, consistently uses the term 'supermodernity' rather than 'postmodernity', and contends that this is a state in which 'les composantes s'additionnent sans se détruire' (Augé 1992: 58).¹⁸ Augé favours the notion that supermodernity is characterised by the acceleration and exaggeration of past trends rather than their disruption or reversal. He asserts that arguments accepting this

permettent d'appréhender [la surmodernité] sans en ignorer les complexités et les contradictions, mais sans en faire non plus l'horizon indépassable d'une modernité perdue dont nous n'aurions plus qu'à relever les traces, répertorier les isolats ou inventorier les archives. (Augé 1992: 55)

Similarly, Baudrillard uses the term 'hyperreality' which also suggests the exaggeration of existing trends rather than something entirely new. The literary theorist Niall Lucy, however, in his enlightening work, *Postmodern Literary Theory: an Introduction* (1997), clearly articulates the opposite viewpoint. In his comparison of the intellectual classes of modernism and postmodernism, for example, he states overtly that the latter is characterised by radical discontinuity with the

¹⁷ Unsurprisingly a diverse range of attitudes towards the postmodern exist within the French-speaking world. For example, it seems that the notion of postmodernism has greater standing in Quebec than in France. For a discussion of this see Lucie-Marie Magnan and Christian Morin's *Lectures du postmodernisme dans le roman québécois* (1997: 10). Moreover, it would be simplistic to argue that all Anglophone theorists believe postmodernism to represent a complete break with the past. Clifford, for example, talks about 'an unfinished modernity', seeming to suggest that postmodernity is the latest stage within Modernity. See Clifford (1997: 2).

¹⁸ This view is supported by that of Baudrillard. Like Augé, he argues that rather than a complete loss of meaning, the postmodern is dominated by an excess of meaning. In this, it is perhaps the plurality and chaotic juxtaposition of belief systems, rather than their erosion altogether, which makes meaning impossible. See Rodaway (1995: 241).

former, and that the moment of rupture can be pinned down specifically to the 1960s (Lucy 1997: 20). What position, then, are we to adopt in relation to such unmistakeably contradictory arguments?

In order to adopt a convincing position on this topic, it is necessary to focus briefly upon Modernism. In particular, it is important to note the complex and sometimes unstable nature of Modernism, something that theorists of the postmodern frequently ignore. Richard Murphy, in his 1999 study of the Modernist Avant-Garde, contends that Modernism was a far from united movement. He stresses the fact that not only was there a diverse range of movements within the Modern, but that the very character of Modernism relied upon continual innovation and change. The inadvisability of attempting to construct Modernism as a concrete and stable entity in opposition to which postmodernism can be defined, is clear. The middle ground in this argument seems the best place upon which to base a logical response: the postmodern is perhaps best characterised as a collage comprising some aspects of Modernism that have survived intact; some aspects of Modernism that have been exaggerated; and some Modernist traits that have been radically rejected and reversed. In addition, it is highly unusual, but important, to recognise that the postmodern also comprises features of some of the movements that preceded Modernism, including romanticism.¹⁹

Yet another significant aspect of postmodernism that admits ambiguity concerns the phenomenon's geographical scope. Whilst theories about the postmodern are frequently held to refer to the world in general, it is clear that their true spatial relevance is more specific.²⁰ As I shall argue presently, it is primarily the challenge to *Western* value-systems that is embedded in the emergence of postmodernism, and it is the condition of *Western* cities and cultures that most discussions of postmodernism treat. That is not to say that postmodernism has no relevance to the world in general: Wang Ning, a leading theorist of the postmodern in China, for example, highlights the promi-

¹⁹ For an interesting discussion of the relationship between romanticism and postmodernism, see Lucy (1997: 227-249).

²⁰ In fact, Fredric Jameson is unusual in overtly highlighting his belief that 'postmodern culture is a superstructural expression of *American* military and economic domination in the world'. See Peet (1998: 216).

nence of postmodern theory in contemporary Chinese academia (Ning 2000: 222). It remains important, however, to avoid the blind ethnocentricity that might result from making generalisations about postmodernism as if it applied equally to all areas of the highly diverse and complex surface of the earth.²¹ Indeed, whereas postmodern disruptions of value systems may be experienced as disorientating for those in the West, Wang Ning specifically highlights the fact that they are often seized upon by non-Western countries as welcome strategies for resisting Western domination. The decline of powerful Western thought-systems, then, clearly does not represent the same upheaval to formerly colonised countries and those countries resisting neo-colonialism that it does to the West.

How, then, is it possible to mobilise productively the complex, much-contested concept of the postmodern? Paul Rodaway, a British human geographer, argues that 'the value of the term lies in its provisional character and its continuous metamorphosis' (Rodaway 1995: 245). Wang Ning similarly argues that the term 'postmodernism' is so mobile that it should be redefined every five years (Ning 2000: 222). Such assertions, whilst supported by considerable evidence, seem to suggest that the postmodern is too slippery a phenomenon to characterise and therefore can be of little use in conventional analysis. I wish to contend, however, that despite its diverse, shifting and sometimes contradictory nature, it is possible to identify a relatively coherent set of characteristics with which the postmodern is consistently imbued. As Terry Eagleton argues, the postmodern's only unity lies in a set of 'family resemblances' (Eagleton 1996: 22). What, then, might be said to be those dominant characteristics or 'family resemblances' that characterise the postmodern?

The Postmodern: Key Characteristics

The French philosopher Jean-François Lyotard has made a particularly significant and enduring contribution to the attempt to characterise postmodernism. In *La Condition postmoderne: rapport sur le savoir*

²¹ It would also be highly ironic to construct an overarching, global metanarrative of postmodernism, as will become clear a little later in my discussion.

(1979), Lyotard's central hypothesis revolves around the notion that the emergence of the postmodern era is fundamentally interlinked with a change in the status of knowledge. He argues that in Modern times there was widespread belief in a number of dominant philosophical 'grands récits'. Amongst these, Lyotard lists 'la dialectique de l'Esprit', 'l'herméneutique du sens' and 'l'émancipation du sujet raisonnable ou travailleur' (Lyotard 1979: 7). He characterises each of these grand narratives as a 'dispositif métanarratif de légitimation', and argues that they provided society with clear meaning systems through which to organise its activities and establish its moral order. Lyotard suggests, however, that since the 1950s, the influence of these 'grands récits' has diminished to the extent that the postmodern world is dominated by 'l'incrédulité à l'égard des métarécits' (1979: 7). The implications of this shift are clearly far-reaching. For example, whereas notions such as scientific advancement, technological development and human progress used to constitute important collective goals for Western societies, they have been replaced in postmodernism by a widespread scepticism about the salvatory power of science, the inevitability of human progress, and the possibility of universal truths. Crucially, according to Lyotard, the old 'grand narratives' have been replaced in influence by multinational capitalism. That is to say that businesses and even nation-states seek to legitimise their activities through notions of efficiency and productivity rather than on idealistic or humanist grounds. Concomitantly, knowledge is valued less because of its potential contribution to 'la formation de l'Esprit' or the development of society, than because it may be sold and consumed. Power is, as a consequence, increasingly synonymous with capital.²²

Lyotard's hypothesis of the breakdown of the over-arching grand narratives that give meaning to society has become a cornerstone of postmodern theory.²³ Indeed, it is from this theory that many

²² See Peet (1998: 14 and 76). In this, Lyotard's argument can clearly be seen to concur with Jameson's controversial assertion that the postmodern is fundamentally bound up with changes in the economic nature of the world, namely the penetration of multinational capitalism. It is important to note, however, that Lyotard and Jameson speak from distinctly different political positions, Lyotard being highly sceptical of Marxism.

²³ It is cited, for example, by Benko (1997: 8); Lucy (1997: 58); Seidman (1994: 5). In fact, Fredric Jameson expresses some scepticism about Lyotard's theory of the breakdown of master narratives, particularly because the theory itself

of the other frequently cited characteristics of the postmodern can be teased out. For example, as postmodern societies are no longer unified either by collective projects or by coherent notions of 'ideal citizens', they are increasingly characterised by diversity. A return to the writings of Fredric Jameson highlights his subscription to this theory. He argues that 'the advanced capitalist countries today are now a field of stylistic and discursive heterogeneity without a norm' (Jameson 1984: 65). Another anglophone Marxist scholar and leading theorist of the postmodern, David Harvey, similarly argues that 'postmodernism swims, even wallows, in the fragmentation and the chaotic currents of change as if that is all there is' (Harvey 1989: 44). Whether such heterogeneity represents greater freedom and visibility for formerly marginalized peoples or a doomsday fragmentation of society into minority interest groups remains a focus of contention. Lyotard himself stresses that the dissolution of 'grands récits' does not necessarily imply a gloomy end-of-society scenario and the isolation of the individual. Instead he proposes a change in the nature of the individual's relationship to the world, arguing that '*le soi est peu, mais il n'est pas isolé, il est pris dans une texture de relations plus complexe et plus mobile que jamais*' (Lyotard 1979: 31).²⁴ The implication is that society is increasingly composed of complex networks of individuals with multiple affiliations rather than being organised into traditional social hierarchies.

In addition to multiplicity and plurality, a preoccupation with identity can be identified as another clear member of the postmodern collection of 'family resemblances', seeming to penetrate all aspects

must be articulated in narrative form. For a discussion of this see Jameson (1991: xi). However, Adam Roberts points out in his study of Jameson, Jameson's own viewpoint depends on the over-arching master narrative of Marxism in order to make sense (Roberts 2000: 116). It remains clear, however, that Lyotard's argument has constituted one of the most significant contributions to the debate so far.

²⁴ In fact, Terry Eagleton suggests that we should be more critical of postmodernism's claims to genuine social diversity and plurality. He tells us: 'for all its talk of difference, plurality, heterogeneity, postmodern theory often operates with quite rigid binary oppositions, with "difference", "plurality" and allied terms lined up bravely on one side of the theoretical fence as unequivocally positive, and whatever their antithesis might be (unity, identity, totality, universality) ranged balefully on the other' (Eagleton 1996: 25-26).

of postmodern societies. Just as singular, universal truths are discredited in favour of multiple points of view in postmodernism, the humanist notion of the unified, singular subject is also undermined. Constant features of attempts to explain postmodern identity suggest a shift away from the notion of identity as stable, fixed and singular. Instead, identity is increasingly argued to be a shifting and fragmentary phenomenon, best characterised as an always-incomplete process rather than a finished outcome. Moreover, whereas identity used to be seen as grounded in an irreducible essence, postmodern thought emphasises the significance of the social and historical context in which each identity is formed. In fact, some postmodern thought goes as far as to argue identity to be 'situationally enacted', engendering arguments about the extent to which identity can be seen as physically performed. These features of the postmodern debate all convey that identity is increasingly recognised to be a complex, plural composite rather than an essence.²⁵

It is certainly clear that at the level of the individual and at that of society in general, the erosion of unifying meta-narratives and their replacement by plurality and fragmentation has resulted in new ways of understanding identity. It is important to note that these changes in identity are not neutral for the individuals involved, but are continually associated with feelings of disorientation and confusion. In order to describe this state, schizophrenia is often evoked.²⁶ The cipher is particularly resonant due to its apparent status as the opposite of paranoia, the illness most associated with Modernism (Roberts 2000: 123). As Jameson argues, 'this shift in the dynamics of cultural pathology can be characterised as one in which the alienation of the subject is displaced by the fragmentation of the subject' (Jameson 1984: 63).

²⁵ For a discussion of identity as process see Keith and Pile (1996: 28). For a discussion of the move away from essentialist views of identity, see Keith and Pile (1996: 35). For a discussion of the situationally enacted nature of identity see Seidman (1994: 17-18). The notion of 'composite' identity, this is explained by Seidman to mean that whereas in the past someone might have been described as 'a man', the same person would now be called 'a twentieth-century, white, middle-class American male'. See Seidman (1994: 118).

²⁶ The use of the notion of schizophrenia to describe certain aspects of postmodernism is widespread, although not universally approved. For relevant criticisms see Parr and Philo (1995: 200).

Moreover, in response to the lack of collective projects and the loss of certainty in society, postmodern subjects are often argued to display a 'waning of affect'. So, whereas Modern societies were characterised by feelings of alienation, anomie and solitude, in postmodernism, the self may be too fragmented to feel deep emotions. In such a world, people are said to live unthinkingly without meaning, as play replaces meaningful actions. Similarly, surfaces are said to take precedence over depth, whilst images and appearances prevail over substance in postmodern societies.²⁷ The correlation between postmodern societies and the dominant features of contemporary capitalism is particularly evident here, as characteristics that are normally attributed to current industrial and economic trends seem also to apply to people and society. For example, instant obsolescence, the temporary contract in everything and general sensory overload are trends that characterise both contemporary human relationships and the current economic climate. In the words of Lash and Urry, in *Economies of Signs and Spaces* (1994: 3), 'postmodernism hyperbolically accentuates [...] the disposability of subjects and objects'.

The postmodern, then, is generally understood to represent far-reaching changes in the fundamental premises of both society and identity. It is unsurprising to learn that such an influential phenomenon is also frequently argued to have brought about considerable changes in academic and representational practices. For instance, postmodernism is often argued to undermine the binaries upon which previous ways of thinking relied, and to opt instead to blur boundaries between established categories (Lucy 1997: 40). This is evident in academic thought in terms of the rise of new hybrid knowledges such as cultural studies and queer theory that rely upon interdisciplinary study (Seidman 1994: 2). Niall Lucy argues that the boundaries between high and low culture are also increasingly blurred, with the result that academic study encompasses an ever more heterogeneous mix of knowledges (Lucy 1997: 20). In addition, features of the postmodern such as the undermining of the singular, unified subject, as well as scepticism about the possibility of objective knowledge, have

²⁷ For discussions of the 'waning of affect', see Jameson (1984: 61-63). In relation to arguments about the prevalence of surfaces and appearances rather than depth and meaning in the postmodern society, the work of Jean Baudrillard is helpful (Baudrillard 1978). See also Lucy (1997: 39).

interrogated the conventional representational practices upon which much academic work relies.

In sum, there seems to be a great deal of justification for the assertion that postmodernism has ignited a 'bonfire of the certainties' (Cosgrove and Domosh 1993: 28). Perhaps more condemningly, Lyotard himself has argued that 'le thème du postmodernisme se prête merveilleusement à l'activation de la bêtise' (Lyotard cited in Benko and Strohmayer 1997: 1). However, as the above discussion has established, whilst a great deal of confusion and contention remains, it is possible to identify a relatively stable body of 'family characteristics' through which to understand and mobilise the notion of the postmodern. Moreover, as I signalled at the beginning of this chapter, it is clear that discussions of contemporary space cannot be separated from discussions of the postmodern. The following investigation of space and spatial experience will locate itself within a discourse of postmodernism in order to indicate the view that despite the inevitable contention surrounding it, the notion does offer a useful purchase on some significant trends in the contemporary world. In this discussion, 'postmodernism' will be used advisedly and with full reference to the issues outlined above. What, then, can be said to be the relationship between postmodernism and space?

Postmodern Space

Perhaps one of the most significant impacts that postmodernism has had upon space has been the radical reappraisal of critical frameworks for thinking about space that it has spawned. In fact, the postmodern impulse to question all that is entrenched and naturalised within society has resulted in two major reassessments of space. First, the long-established, commonsense view of space as a geometrical, neutral and passive arena has been undermined. This view is ably summed-up by the British cultural geographer Rob Shields:

Failing to examine the nature of space as a cultural 'artifact', the realm of the spatial has often been assumed to be purely neutral and apolitical, conferring neither disadvantage, nor benefit to any group. This 'empirical space' is complacently understood to be fully defined by dimensional measurements (height, width and breadth) and by trigonometric description of the geometrical relationships between ob-

jects, which are thought to sit in a kind of vacuum. According to this empirico-physics model, 'space' exists (even though it is a 'nothingness') as a given. (Shields 1997: 187)

Whereas in the past space was conceptualised as an empty field in and upon which individuals and societies could act, postmodern geographers have seized upon the notion that spaces are always imbued with ideological and cultural meanings (see Keith and Pile 1996: 2-3 and Peach 1997: 14). As such, space can no longer be understood as entirely passive, but is increasingly seen to be constitutive as well as reflective of human actions.²⁸ Even Jameson's assertion that 'space may be the template from which the secrets of reality are to be read', has been criticised for demonstrating an overly passive view of the role of space as structure rather than agent (Keith and Pile 1996: 3). In addition, postmodern thought has foregrounded the realisation that the active role that space plays in constituting identities and societies is not uniform, but varies across the geography of the world. Space cannot, therefore, be understood as a neutral, 'level playing field'. Being located in some spaces may be considerably less empowering than being in others. The postmodern view argues space to be constitutive as well as reflective of human actions, and to be imbued with values that may privilege some locations to the detriment of others.

The second reappraisal of critical understandings of space relates to the entrenched binaries that have traditionally organised Western thought. Postmodern thinking has challenged most attempts to conceptualise the world in terms of dualisms. One such well-established dualism is that of space and time. Over the last few decades contemporary geographers such as Doreen Massey have begun to question this. In her 1996 essay, 'Politics and Space/Time', Massey argues that fitting space and time into the Western system of binary

²⁸ In fact, as Doreen Massey argues in her piece 'Politics and Space/Time' (1996), the view of space as constitutive of human actions as well as reflective of them is the culmination of a series of distinct shifts in our understanding of space that have occurred during the postmodern era. Perhaps most crucial amongst these shifts occurred in the 1980s with the realisation that not only do the activities of society shape space, but the social itself is spatially constructed too. Indeed, it was precisely this notion that spatial and social organisations are intrinsically interlinked that led Edward Soja to coin the term 'spatiality'. For a discussion of this see Massey (1996a: 141-159).

thinking is not only based on a false opposition, but also encourages one side of the equation to be valued more than the other. According to Massey, a common assumption is that time is more important than space. She argues that this stereotype can be articulated as 'time marches on but space is a kind of stasis where nothing really happens' (Massey 1996a: 145). Massey goes on to argue that in this unequal binary, time is associated with the mind, reason, masculinity and progressive politics, whereas space is seen as lacking and is associated with the body, emotion, femininity and deadness. Clearly, such a dichotomy denies the radical and constitutive role of space that, as I argued above, postmodern thought has foregrounded. In order to combat this reductive view of such a fundamental aspect of lived experience, the concept of four-dimensional space-time has gained ascendancy. Massey explains this concept by emphasising that rather than seeing space and time as inevitably opposed to each other, we should recognise their inextricable interdependency. She sums this up with the words 'space is not static, nor time spaceless' (Massey 1996a: 154).

Postmodern thinking has clearly wrought important transformations in critical understandings of space. It is difficult to overestimate the significance of this upon the field of spatial study, an area that was itself formerly tarred with the same impotent brush as space itself. Cartography and geopolitics, for example, were seen as passive tools, devoid of any capacity to resist the dominant forces of global capitalism and colonialism however unpalatable they might be.²⁹ There is clearly a more than coincidental relationship between the postmodern recognition that space has radical potential and the proliferation in recent times of radical, counter-hegemonic branches of spatial sciences such as Marxist, ecological and feminist geographical movements. It seems that the French geographer Yves Lacoste's notorious assertion that 'la géographie, ça sert d'abord à faire la guerre', can finally be laid to rest (Lacoste cited in Parker 1998: 52). Unsurprisingly some

²⁹ Edward Said, for example, highlights the importance of mapping and making-knowable spaces in order to dominate them. Dependent upon this notion is his definition of imperialism as 'an act of geographical violence through which virtually every space in the world is explored, charted and finally brought under control' (Karancheti 1994: 125). The original text from which this quotation is taken is Edward Said. 1990. 'Yeats and Decolonization', *Nationalism, Colonialism, and Literature*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press: 77.

geographers have gone as far as to assert that postmodernism has given human geography 'a renewed sense of mission, vindication, even [...] pride' (Benko and Strohmayer 1997: xiii).

If postmodern thinking has wielded significant impacts upon critical perceptions of space, and upon the status of spatial sciences, this phenomenon leads us to a more pressing topic of enquiry. To what extent has the radical shift in critical perceptions of space been mirrored by significant changes in the nature of postmodern space itself?

In fact, it is impossible to distinguish the change in critical perceptions of space from changes in the nature of postmodern space itself. The undermining of the notion of space as a neutral, coherent and easily-mappable entity is inextricably interlinked with those features illuminated at the beginning of this chapter that characterise contemporary space. These include the emergence of 'space-adjusting technologies' and shifts in the geopolitical ordering of the spaces of the world. Indeed, it seems that the notion of space as no longer a simply geometrical and trigonometrically measurable entity is more than a merely theoretical phenomenon. For Jameson, the spaces of postmodernism are characterised by depthlessness, flatness, pastiche and fragmentation (Dear 1997: 58). The everyday *experience* of contemporary space is increasingly understood to be both complex and slippery. As Rob Shields tells us, '[it] is not just a question of "space" but of overlaid "spaces" which are made up of multitudinous "places", good and bad [...] and are criss-crossed by directional "paths"' (1997: 190). Shield's description of multiply-coded and multi-layered contemporary space corresponds with some of the fundamental characteristics of postmodernism that I identified in section 1.0.2 such as plurality. He goes on to argue that 'all these genres of space have the effect of fragmenting any overall vision of the socio-cultural system of spaces in which we live' (Shields 1997: 190). If, in other words, postmodern societies are marked by the loss of over-arching meaning systems as discussed in section 1.0.2, then so postmodern space is characterised by a similar loss of any coherent, unified overall plan.

On a global scale, then, it is argued that postmodern space is characterised by the disruption of the 'Enlightenment legacy map of the world' (Peet 1998: 72). That is to say that whereas, for example, in colonial times the provision of infrastructure linking different spaces

of the world followed a clear-cut, overt and 'rational' political logic, in the present day this is no longer the case. In postmodernism, global space is organised by the more slippery forces of neo-colonialism, postcolonialism and multinational capital. One aspect of the highly complex geography that results is the proliferation and intensification of links between capital and primary cities. Paul Smethurst, in a study entitled 'There is No Place Like Home: Belonging and Placelessness in the Postmodern Novel' (1997), touches on some important aspects of this phenomenon. He argues that 'in this postmodern world, space is discontinuous and time is non-linear. The distance between all great cities seems very small, because they are constituted out of a homogeneous global space' (Smethurst 1997: 378). Postmodern global space, then, is traversed by strong physical and symbolic links between the most powerful sites of different countries, the major cities. The result is a disproportionate decrease in the distance between such important nodes. Smethurst goes on to argue that 'the lack of distance between places also suggests a lack of difference between places'. In this, Smethurst is referring to the homogenisation, or 'coca-culturalisation', of these places that close integration into global space brings. That is to say that there may be a growing resemblance between the world's major cities, but a mounting disparity between major cities and the less urbanised areas of the national space in which they are located.³⁰

The provision of highly sophisticated transport technologies between certain major world cities therefore effectively decreases distance, both physical and cultural, between certain parts of the world. This is paralleled, however, by the much more precarious infrastructural position of many peripheral spaces. As critics have pointed out, traces of colonial power relations remain in evidence in some places. Morley, drawing upon the work of Gerardo Mosquera, highlights the ironic fact that 'the best way to travel from one African country to another is usually via one of the capital cities of Europe' (Morley 2000: 241). The distribution of transport networks subtly continues to reinforce the 'control' of the former colonial powers. This is compounded

³⁰ For discussions of 'coca-culturalisation', see Smethurst (1997: 378). For a discussion of the complex phenomenon of simultaneous homogenisation and differentiation of particular places, see Augé (1992: 84). For a discussion about the highly uneven infrastructure between particular places in the world, see Dicken and Lloyd (1981: 46-47).

by the 'footloose' nature of multinational capital, which is often argued to be the dominant force in the postmodern organisation of space and which may entail the withdrawal of investment in peripheral places at very short notice. The complete lack of infrastructure in some highly peripheral places, as well its withdrawal at short notice from others, exacerbates the disjuncture between 'real' distance and experienced distance. Moreover, linkages into global space may be unreliable and chaotic.

In sum, on an international scale, postmodern global space comprises a multi-nodal network of closely linked major cities, accompanied by a plethora of more marginal places whose links to world space are unstable and shifting. It is not only the ordering of international space that has changed in postmodern times, however. As I indicated at the beginning of this chapter, the greater ability of large numbers of individuals to travel across space has resulted in an unprecedented degree of contact between different cultures, as well as increasingly complex senses of cultural affiliation. A significant result of this has comprised the reappraisal of the notion of nation states as distinct cultural and political entities located within discrete spaces. In *The Location of Culture* (1994), Homi K. Bhabha argues that 'the very concepts of homogenous national cultures, the consensual or contiguous transmission of historical traditions, or "organic" ethnic communities [...] are in a profound process of redefinition'. He contends that 'pure, "ethnically cleansed"' national identities necessarily invoke a process of forgetting the fragility of cultural borders and the complex struggles that took place in order to sustain them (Bhabha 1994: 5). As I have argued, it is precisely this process of forgetting that is undermined in postmodernism, as cultural mixing and dissonant voices are foregrounded. Indeed, rather than focusing upon what makes the space of a particular nation unique and unified, postmodern discussions of nationhood increasingly focus upon internal difference and borderland spaces of cultural contact. The multiplicity of meanings that a space may encompass at any time is, perhaps, related to growing awareness of intercultural spaces, in which heterogeneous peoples meet. Indeed, whereas in the past spatial identity was conceived of as something firmly grounded in a homogenous national or regional space, in postmodernism there is growing focus on travel and displacement.

Perhaps the most important theorist of the notion that postmodern spatial identity is dependent upon travel is James Clifford. In a

work entitled *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (1997), Clifford argues that postmodernity represents 'the new world order of mobility, of rootless histories' (Clifford 1997: 1 and Clifford 1988: 5). In an attempt to move away from alienating understandings of cultures as whole and pure, Clifford stresses the importance of travel and cultural contact. He asserts that 'routes' as well as the traditionally privileged 'roots' are important in identity formation and proposes the notion of 'dwelling-in-travel' to encapsulate this.³¹ Caren Kaplan's approach to the argument that travel and movement are of great importance to postmodern space is deeply practical. In *Questions of Travel: Postmodern Discourses of Displacement* (1996), she points out that the twentieth century has seen 'unprecedented numbers of refugees as people [...] fled their homes to avoid famine, genocide, or incarceration'. She goes on to argue that whilst tourism may be the world's largest growth industry, 'the numerical majority of people who move in this world do so to work or to survive life-threatening events' (Kaplan 1996: 5). The role of travel and displacement in contemporary identity and culture formation is clearly more significant than might at first be realised by those privileged members of the Western elite whose main experience of travel is recreational. Moreover, referring back to the argument that peripheral areas within global space may only be connected by unstable and unreliable links, we can agree with Kaplan's assertion that 'displacement is not universally available or desirable for many subjects, nor is it evenly experienced' (Kaplan 1996: 1). In the postmodern world, whilst travel may be playing a much more significant part in the formation of cultures and identities, the ability to traverse space is un-

³¹ Despite the important contribution that Clifford's ideas have made to the theorisation of contemporary cultures and intercultural contacts, his work has engendered some criticism. Neil Smith and Cindi Katz, for instance, argue that Clifford's treatment of space itself is less than enlightened (Smith and Katz 1996: 77). In fact, whilst Clifford's observation of the transformations wrought within both individual identities and cultures by travel is extremely useful, Smith and Katz argue that Clifford neglects to consider the way in which travel changes space itself. They go on to highlight the need to recognise that travel impacts upon space by eroding the brittleness and rigidity of spatial boundaries. Their argument comes, perhaps rather teleologically, to the same conclusion as Clifford himself, that 'the flow of travel not the putative fixity of space denotes identity' (Smith and Katz 1996: 77).

equal. Contrary to the Western stereotype of the 'broadening' and life enhancing nature of travel, movement and displacement are experienced by many as deeply painful and problematic.

Postmodern space, then, is characterised by the undermining of clearly demarcated nation states containing distinct peoples and 'authentic', 'pure' cultures. The blurring of spatial boundaries with which postmodernism is associated is further evident in relation to the division of space into public and private spheres. This division traditionally has been a highly pervasive organising feature of Western life and comprises one of the most visible examples of spatial patterns directly corresponding with social values. The public/private division is argued by some to be destabilized to such an extent that the current age could be described as experiencing a 'crisis of boundaries [...] in public spaces' (Kirby 1996: 52). Evidence supporting this contention seems plentiful. As many theorists have pointed out, new technological developments mean that the private space of the home is increasingly penetrated by the outside world. Telecommunications, for example, permit messages of all kinds to seep into the home at all times of day and night and to 'transgress the symbolic boundaries around [...] the private household' (Morley 2000: 3). Paul Virilio, the French architect, town planner and, more contentiously, theorist of globalisation, argues that televisions mean that 'une télérealité présente' is increasingly projected into people's private spaces, filling them with representations of 'other' places and 'other' peoples. Virilio goes on to suggest that 'l'image publique est en passe de remplacer l'espace publique' (Virilio 1994: 28). That is to say that as private space is increasingly suffused by public images, people have less and less desire to occupy genuine public space. The significance of this is stressed by Virilio in his argument that new technology not only blurs the distinction between private and public spheres, but results in the 'non-séparabilité physique du dehors et du dedans, du proche comme du lointain' (Virilio 1994: 16). Postmodern space seems at all levels to be characterised by the undermining of categories and the porosity of boundaries.

Many of the traits of postmodern space that I have outlined so far are particularly evident within the space of the city. Indeed, the Western city is often heralded as a privileged terrain upon which

postmodern struggles are played out.³² For example, contemporary cities are not only highly diverse in cultural terms, but comprise highly complex networks of spaces that may be multi-layered and multiply-coded. Infused with the most dynamic and innovatory forces of change, cities are often fragmented and shifting.³³ It is unsurprising, then, that as Jean-Xavier Ridon tells us, 'le sens de la ville dans sa globalité nous échappe de plus en plus' (Ridon 2000: 1). Moreover, in the space of the Western city, there is further evidence of the blurring of boundaries and the undermining of categories, particularly in relation to the division of public and private spheres. As several theorists have highlighted, genuinely public spaces are increasingly replaced by privately owned shopping malls. Whilst these spaces frequently bear some architectural resemblance to traditional town centres, containing their own simulations of 'public squares', they are motivated by the interests of capital rather than social inclusion, and hence strict policies of excluding those deemed 'undesirable' are enforced.³⁴ In post-modern cities, then, despite the growing heterogeneity of cultures, people increasingly live in privatised spaces where they are shielded from dissonant opinions and the extremes of society. Similarly, there is considerable evidence to suggest that in postmodern cities people adopt a variety of strategies in order to shield themselves from en-

³² Richard Lehan, for example, argues that urbanism was a product of the Enlightenment. Moreover, according to Lehan, the city is at the very heart of Western culture and has been the privileged terrain of the struggles of many important movements such as romanticism, modernism and postmodernism. Indeed, as the city is so closely associated with the Enlightenment thought that postmodernism challenges, it is perhaps inevitable that the city should be inextricably bound up in contemporary struggles for meaning and dominance (Lehan 1998).

³³ In a piece entitled 'Errance et initiation dans la ville post-moderne: de *la guerre* (1970) à *poisson d'or* (1997) de J.M.G. Le Clézio', Bruno Thibault argues that in the present age 'l'espace urbain [est] conduit à la limite de l'éclatement.[...] Autrement dit, la ville post-moderne a cessé de former un tout organique, dans lequel chaque partie s'intègre à l'ensemble. La ville post-moderne ne possède plus de centre fédérateur ni de schéma transcendant' (Thibault 2000: 96).

³⁴ In this it is proposed that the role of the public sector is shrinking and 'post-modern solutions rely on market-led initiatives' (Wilson 1992a: 151). For a discussion of the exclusion of 'undesirables' see Nancy Duncan's 'Renegotiating Gender and Sexuality in Public and Private Spaces' (1996b: 127-129).

countering the full diversity of society. According to several studies, including Mike Davis's ground breaking work on North American gated communities, contemporary Western cities are increasingly spatially segregated upon grounds of wealth and ethnicity.³⁵ Even when the privileged venture into the public space of the city, there is a tendency to take along the security of a cocoon of private space. As one urban theorist observes, 'increasingly when they go out, they [people] travel in their cars, small pieces of intimate space, hurtling along the single-minded highway' (Walzer 1986: 326). The overall result of such trends and the growing dominance of the private domain is that there are fewer 'open-minded' spaces in society and the opportunity for non-fearful encounters with diversity diminish. Directly interpellating arguments about the 'schizophrenic' nature of postmodernism, the term 'urban schizophrenia' has been coined to describe the state of postmodern cities. This refers to the 'contradictory coexistence [but not integration] of different social, cultural and economic logics within the same spatial structure' (Castells cited in Knox 1987: 323). It is ironic, then, that at a time when plurality and diversity are increasingly characteristic of space, there is a parallel increase in the importance of privately-owned space and a decrease in the frequency with which encounters with difference occur.

The final level at which postmodernism can be seen to affect the experience of space is that of what Foucault termed 'microphysics'. That is to say that at the level of individual bodies the experience of space has undergone significant transformations in recent times. The literary theorist, Terry Eagleton, for example, argues that

the postmodern subject, unlike its Cartesian ancestor, is one whose body is integral to its identity. Indeed from Bakhtin to the Body Shop,

³⁵ Marcuse, for example, argues that whereas the poor are more and more condemned to 'ghettos', the wealthy are concentrated in 'citadels'. See Marcuse (1997). Also, in his vision of the archetypally postmodern city, Mike Davis argues that not only are the private residences of the most privileged surrounded by high fences and warnings that 'trespassers will be shot', but ordinary members of the public are increasingly excluded from the vicinity of such residences. With the abolition of the public space of pavements, the free circulation of individuals around such areas of the city is greatly inhibited (Davis 1984).

Lyotard to Leotards, the body has become one of the most recurrent preoccupations of postmodern thought. (Eagleton 1996: 69)

Steve Pile and Nigel Thrift express a similar view, contending that 'what is clear is that the body, understood as a biological entity, has undergone significant spatial augmentation'. They dismiss claims that physicality is increasingly redundant in the current age of the virtual, and assert instead that the body-space relationship has actually become more important in recent times. The space-changing technologies that have been bound up in so many of the recent spatial transformations mean, for example, that bodies can surmount the friction of distance increasingly freely. In addition, the availability of telecommunications means that bodies can also command space and act at a distance (Pile and Thrift 1995: 6). It seems, then, that postmodernism has increased the importance of the body in practical terms. In fact, as with so much of postmodernism, there is a clear parallel between practical changes and theoretical changes. For example, the postmodern impulse to question all that is deeply entrenched within society has encouraged a reappraisal of the notion of bodies as always already 'given'. As a result, there is growing recognition that bodies and spaces are mutually constitutive. That is to say, that, just as the body is shaped by the spaces it inhabits, so it plays a formative role in the constitution of such spaces. Heidi J. Nast encapsulates this argument in her assertion that 'bodies and spaces are not discretely bounded, plump objects or plenitudes. Instead, corporeality and place partly produce the meaning and physicality of one another, making it difficult to ascertain where a body ends and a place begins' (Nast 1998a: 109). Bodies and places are argued to be caught up in an interdependent, mutually formative relationship. In Nast's work with Steve Pile, her argument becomes particularly interesting. She tells us:

It is not enough simply to treat the body-place relationship as if it was either universal (non-specific) or unique (too specific). Instead, the particular ways in which spatial relations come together to make bodies and places, through the body and through places, need to be exemplified, demonstrated and clarified, in places, though the body. (Nast 1998b: 5)

Displaying clear adherence to postmodern thinking, Nast's view of the complex body-place relationship does not rely upon some normalised vision of an ideal and normalised white, middle-class male body.

Rather, she implies that this relationship embraces a diverse network of contributory factors. The postmodern body, then, is increasingly understood in terms of interdependencies and networks rather than binary oppositions and separate realms.

In sum, postmodern space can be characterised as devoid of any over-arching plan or logical order. On the contrary, established categories are increasingly undermined and spatial boundaries eroded. The growing significance of travel and displacement is clear, resulting in cultural mixing, heterogeneity and the erosion of simple notions of nation and nationhood. It seems, then, that there is considerable justification for Paul Smethurst's assertion that 'postmodern place, real and fictional, must be more fluid, based on continuous redefinition, and open to multiple histories and traditions' (Smethurst 1997: 383).

What might be said to be the impact of these changes upon individuals? The eminent French geographer, Paul Claval, asserts that there is a direct link between changes in the nature of the postmodern world, and the increasingly urgent search for identity. In his 1995 monograph *La Géographie culturelle*, he argues that 'la préoccupation identitaire devient obsédante dans toutes les sociétés touchées par la révolution des médias: une sourde inquiétude les caractérise' (Claval 1995: 333).³⁶ In a world in which all dominant meaning systems are undermined and in which cultures and peoples are increasingly confronted by difference, it is little wonder that there is a growing quest for identity. Jonathan Rutherford, in his 1990 study, *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, argues that

Modern life ascribes to us a multiplicity of subject positions and potential identities which hold the prospects for historically unparalleled human development, but they also represent a predicament that threatens fragmentation and psychosis – terrifying in their lack of personal, collective and moral boundaries. In this postmodern, 'wide-open' world our bodies are bereft of those spatial and temporal co-ordinates essential for historicity, for a consciousness of our own collective and personal past. (Rutherford 1990: 24)

³⁶ Moreover, as Madan Sarup points out, the word 'identity' was not even included in Raymond Williams' (1976) *Keywords*, and yet is now an omnipresent concern. See Sarup (1994: 93-104).

As a result, Rutherford concludes, a feeling of 'not belonging' has become endemic. It is clear that the unstable and shifting nature of postmodern space undermines some of the ways in which identity was grounded in space in the past. However, does the increasingly pressing sense of 'not belonging' indicate that identities are less firmly grounded in space in the contemporary world?

It is certainly true that a substantial body of theorists equate the growing spatial disorientation of individuals with the growing irrelevance of space. Paul Virilio, for example, argues that the effect of postmodern space is that 'nous habiterons tous partout' (Virilio 1994: 50). Paul Gilroy, author of *The Black Atlantic* (1993) asserts that 'in a world of movement, "it ain't where you're from, it's where you're at"' (Gilroy cited in Pile and Thrift 1995a: 21). Iain Chambers expresses a similar sentiment, proposing that we should 'abandon the fixed geometry of sites and roots', because 'an increasing number of people are making a home in homelessness, there [sic] dwelling in diasporic identities and heterogeneous histories' (Chambers 1994: 246). In an age of increasing mobility, heterogeneous spaces and the undermining of simply demarcated cultural and national spaces, is it true that space is no longer significant in the formation of identities?

Amidst the brouhaha of voices proclaiming universal footlooseness or the replacement of space by virtual environments,³⁷ the call to recognise the continuing importance of place in identity formation is increasingly audible. Linda McDowell, for example, argues that it is important not to forget 'permanence, solidity, meaning and symbolism, what we might refer to as attachment to place' (McDowell 1996: 32). Madan Sarup endorses this argument, telling us that 'like so many others, I am pre-occupied by ideas of home, displacement, memory and loss'. He goes on to argue that 'millions of people in the world today are searching for "roots", they go back to the town, the country or the continent they came from long ago' (Sarup 1994: 93-95). So, despite the emphasis in much contemporary academic enquiry on travel and 'routes' rather than 'roots', notions of home and belonging remain highly relevant. People may increasingly speak from in-between cultures, nations and languages but the desire for a place of belonging

³⁷ Ken Hillis, for example, questions whether in an age of chat rooms and virtual environments the body still matters (Hillis 1998: 52).

remains strong. Clearly, as my discussion has already demonstrated, the foundations that traditionally underpinned senses of spatial belonging have been undermined by the destabilization of coherent national boundaries and culturally homogenous spaces. In addition, the division between private and public space is more and more porous. It seems that there is a great deal of justification for Pile and Thrift's call for a 'refiguring of notions of "home" and "nation"' (Pile and Thrift 1995a: 18) in the contemporary age.

Having examined in detail the arguments of those such as Jameson that space has changed in terms of both characteristics and critical perception, I have argued that the plural, shifting and multi-layered spaces of the contemporary world remain deeply significant in the formation of both individual identities and societies. In fact, it seems that one of the most significant results of transformations in the experience of contemporary space is the growing prevalence of an urgent search for home space and cultural belonging. This search will represent the focus of my investigation of the life writing texts of Guibert, Doubrovsky and Robin in chapters 3, 4, 5 and 6 of this work. In order to establish a rigorous theoretical framework for my discussions of these literary works, it is to an interrogation of how notions of 'home' and belonging can be understood in the shifting, fast-changing spaces of postmodernism that my discussion will now turn.

Home Space and Cultural Belonging in the Postmodern World

The importance of home has long been established. In his *Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud, for example, equated the house with the self.³⁸ Similarly, the close association of the house and the self plays an important role in Gaston Bachelard's *La Poétique de l'espace* (1974). In this, he proposes that 'l'image de la maison' represents "la topographie de notre être intime" and suggests that the house could function as 'un instrument d'analyse pour l'âme humaine' (Bachelard 1974: 18-19). He argues that it is through attachment to 'la maison' that we

³⁸ See Apter (1998: 119). See also Rosemary Marangoly George for discussion of other theorists who have developed similar arguments, particularly Carl Jung, and the pitfalls of associating the sophistication of a home with a person (Marangoly George 1999: 19).

root ourselves into a certain place in the world, and goes on to assert that 'la maison, dans la vie de l'homme, évince des contingences, elle multiplie ses conseils de continuité. Sans elle, l'homme serait un être dispersé' (Bachelard 1974: 26). From this we can infer Bachelard's belief in the strength of a person's symbolic or affective investment in 'la maison', and the importance of this in forging a stable and rooted identity. This conception of 'la maison', however, is not used by Bachelard to apply to every building that comprises somebody's primary residence. He comments disparagingly upon the 'boîtes superposées' that take the place of proper 'maisons' in big cities, and seems to discount them from any proper classification of home. In fact, Bachelard's notion of home relies upon a highly idealised vision of a house that is sizeable enough to contain 'une cave', 'un grenier' and 'un jardin'.³⁹

In the preface to an anthology of Irish writers' literary articulations of home, the president of an anti-homelessness organisation, Stanislaus Kennedy, expresses a similarly unequivocal view of the importance of home. He asserts that 'everyone has a right to a place called home' and goes on to argue that home is associated with safety, security, dignity and respect. The impacts of homelessness, according to Kennedy, are devastating because 'being without a home is being without that place in which to be oneself, at ease, secure and at rest. The need for a place like that is deep and urgent in all of us' (Kennedy 1996: vii-viii). Unlike Bachelard, however, Kennedy does not sketch out a clear definition of the home. On the contrary, he confesses that the concept of 'home' is highly elusive and difficult to define. Despite this, there is a clear convergence in the work of both Bachelard and Kennedy in terms of what they perceive to be essential characteristics of home. From the writings of both we can draw the sense that any notion of 'home' depends upon a complex mesh of material, social and emotional factors. Both Bachelard and Kennedy envisage home to be a physical place in which a person makes a considerable emotional investment. This view is supported by Witold Rybczynski in a work entitled *Home: A Short History of an Idea* (1986). Rybczynski proposes that throughout history, the notion of 'home' has brought together the

³⁹ For mentions of the 'cave' and the 'grenier' see Bachelard (1974: 35), and for the 'jardin' see Bachelard (1974: 95 and 98).

meanings of house and household, 'of dwelling and of refuge, of ownership and of affection'. He goes on to affirm that since its conception, the notion of "'home"' meant the house but also everything that was in it and around it, as well as the people and the sense of satisfaction and contentment that all these conveyed' (Rybczynski 1986: 62). From these diverse works, then, a common understanding of home can be inferred: home comprises an emotional investment in a particular material space.

In fact, Rybczynski's work adds greater depth to the discussion as he suggests that the notion of 'home' is both historically and culturally specific. He writes, for example, that whilst German, Danish, Swedish, Icelandic, Dutch and English all have similar sounding words for 'home', derived from the Old Norse 'heima', there is no equivalent word in Latin or Slavic European languages (Rybczynski 1986: 62). In practical terms, it is clear that the concept of 'home' is inextricably interlinked with cultural value systems and social power relations.⁴⁰ A return to the work of Bachelard, and the rather bourgeois definition of home that he proffers, neatly illustrates this argument. From Bachelard's work we might infer that the long-term inhabitation of a house that is large enough to contain a cellar, a loft and a garden is an almost universal experience. This assumption relies, however, upon the unsubstantiated and culturally specific myth that the world is full of affluent private homeowners. Moreover, Bachelard further denies the diversity of experiences of home in his unequivocal investment of the house with positive values. He talks of 'des espaces louangés' and 'l'espace heureux', and chooses 'le nom de topophilie' to characterise his overall project (Bachelard 1974: 17). This idealisation ignores the fact that whilst home space may be something that the majority of people search for and desire, it is also sometimes the site of conflict, abuse and struggle.⁴¹

⁴⁰ For further discussion of the culturally specific nature of home see Marangoly George (1999: 17).

⁴¹ Nancy Duncan argues, for example, that homes are often the site of invisible violence because they are firmly relegated to the private realm (Duncan 1996b: 132). A literary example that is cited by the literary theorist Andrew Thacker to support the argument that home spaces are not always characterised by intimacy and warmth is that of *The Yellow Wallpaper* (Thacker 2003: 16).

Perhaps most seriously of all, however, the clear cultural and historical specificity of Bachelard's work is highlighted by his assertion that women build the insides of homes whereas men build the outside (Bachelard 1974: 74). This view exemplifies the gender assumptions with which home space has traditionally been inflected. Chris Barker, author of *Cultural Studies: Theory and Practice* (2000), asserts that 'homes have been cast as the unpaid domain of mothers and children, connoting the secondary values of caring, love, tenderness and domesticity' (Barker 2000: 293). It is perhaps for this reason that the study of home has been relatively neglected: homes are on one hand connoted with 'secondary values', and on the other hand are often identified by feminists as the site of women's oppression. However unpalatable such connotations may be, it is clear that the study of home should not be abandoned (McElroy 1997: 285). Indeed, Bachelard's work seems the ideal example with which to shore up one theorist's pertinent observation that

Home and language tend to be taken for granted; like Mother or Woman, they are often naturalized and homogenized. The source becomes then an illusory, secure and fixed place, invoked as a natural state of things untainted by any process or outside influence [...], or else, as an indisputable point of reference on whose authority one can unfailingly rely. (Minh-ha 1994: 14)

In a postmodern age when migration, exile and travel as well as dislocation and displacement are widespread, such 'naturalized' notions of home are applicable only to a privileged minority.

Furthermore, in the contemporary world of movement and displacement the search for home is complicated by the speed at which the world is changing and at which traditional places of belonging are being eroded. As Caren Kaplan observes:

For many of us there is no possibility of staying at home in the conventional sense – that is, the world has changed to the point that those domestic, national or marked spaces no longer exist. [...] There is not necessarily a preoriginary space in which to stay after modern imperialist expansion. (Kaplan 1996: 7)

In fact, the problem of establishing home space in the postmodern world is perhaps more complex than may at first be realised. Inter-linked with this search for a personal space of emotional investment

that can be labelled 'home' is often a desire to establish a sense of belonging in cultural or national space. This is reflected in the fact that James Clifford extensively discusses the notion of 'homelands'. He defines these sites as 'safe spaces where the traffic across borders can be controlled' (Clifford 1997: 7). As I argued above, a characteristic feature of the postmodern world is the transgression of boundaries and the erosion of homogenous cultural spaces. It seems then, that the prevalence of movement and the extent of cultural mixing in the contemporary world mean that our traditional perceptions of how to root ourselves into a wider sense of community may need to be refigured alongside the notion of 'home'. In both cases, the assumption that a sense of belonging can be based upon the exclusion of difference is increasingly being called into question.⁴²

Another example of significant changes in the contemporary experience of home in recent times can be identified in terms of the practical transformations that many homes have undergone. For example, there is considerable evidence to suggest that in the West the typical home is becoming more self-sufficient. Chris Barker argues that we increasingly live in 'home-centred societies' (Barker 2000: 314-315). It is certainly highly evident that new technologies have significantly increased the number of activities that can be pursued from home, as well as the amount of information that can now be accessed from within this private space (Benko 1997a: 26). In addition, whereas the home has traditionally been associated with the family, social reproduction and recreation, Doreen Massey argues that telecommunications mean that the home is now often invaded by work (Massey 1996a: 120). On a more extreme note, Virilio goes as far as to argue that electronic tagging means that the home can, in effect, be used as a prison (Virilio 1994: 70). Homes are, then, becoming both more self-sufficient and more multi-functional.

It seems in sum that defining home in the postmodern world is highly problematic. The Bachelardian vision of a large, bourgeois house that is fixed in an apparently timeless space and a homogenous culture is clearly elitist and inadequate to describe the wide range of

⁴² In fact, many attempts to define 'home' focus on the processes of inclusion and exclusion that the concept sometimes entails. See, for example, Marangoly George (1999: 2).

homes that exist in the world. Moreover, the postmodern blurring of spatial categories means that contemporary home spaces can no longer be defined by the activities that take place in them, or by a simple opposition of domestic and public spaces. Whilst spaces of home and cultural belonging have traditionally drawn upon nostalgic notions of cultural homogeneity and fixity, they can no longer be so neatly opposed to movement and travel. As Marc Augé has observed, increased cultural contact and heterogeneity mean that 'dans le monde de la surmodernité on est toujours et on n'est plus jamais «chez soi»: les zones frontières [...] n'introduisent plus jamais à des mondes totalement étrangers' (Augé 1992: 136). Indeed, just as cultures can no longer be understood as 'pure' and 'endangered authenticities' (Clifford 1988: 5), so homes can no longer be seen as unpolluted sites of sameness that must be protected from all that is different. Perhaps, then, it is not possible to define spaces of home and cultural belonging in the contemporary world?

I wish to contend that we can in fact productively understand home through a 'loose' definition that emphasises the importance of affective investment in one or more particular spaces of habitation. Chris Barker's citation of Silverstone is particularly helpful in this, as he advances the theory that home is

a manifestation of an investment of meaning in space. It is a claim we make about a place. It is constructed through social relations which are both internal and external and constantly shifting in their power relations. (Chris Barker 2000: 293)

In addition to being both culturally and historically specific as I have suggested, then, we can add that such home spaces are highly individualised. Pile and Thrift, for example, suggest that home can increasingly be defined as a routine set of practices, the repetition of habitual interactions and a regularly used personal name (Pile and Thrift 1995b: 196). Although this argument does seem to neglect the importance of place in the establishment of home spaces, Pile and Thrift do touch upon some important points. In order to cope with the speed of change and the high rate of erosion of familiar landscapes, there is evidence to suggest that cultural belonging is increasingly established and places are made familiar and home-like through acts of repetition and ritual.

An interesting development which can be seen to result in some way from the erosion of unified and unproblematic 'home' spaces is that of the growing importance of the body as centre of the individual's world. Paul Virilio, for example, argues that the results of the erosion of 'home' include 'la désorientation spatiale et temporelle, la brutale déconstruction de l'environnement réel. Le «haut» et le «bas» devenaient comme le «futur» ou le «passé» équivalents, cette soudaine réversibilité redonne la première place au corps comme centre, centre du monde environnant' (Virilio 1994: 132). Virilio's argument about the new centrality of the body as a home within space is compelling, although as I argued in section 1.0.3, Virilio's perception of the decreasing importance of space in the contemporary world is difficult to sustain. With regard to the status of the body, rather than accepting the extremes of Virilio's argument, it is perhaps necessary to remember that there is much evidence that the body and space are mutually interdependent in the current age. Home and the body, may, then, be inextricably interlinked and mutually influential.⁴³

From this exploration of a diverse range of theoretical viewpoints it seems that notions of home and cultural belonging are deeply complex. Home can be understood as an emotional investment that a person makes in a particular place, which may be reinforced by repeated, ritualised ways of being. As I have argued, notions of 'home' are both deeply personal and are inextricably bound up in cultural and

⁴³ This is yet another area in which the distinction between lived experience and postmodern theory is blurred. That is to say that notions of home and the body are not only important in everyday life, but are significant focuses of postmodern theory. For many of the counter-hegemonic movements that postmodernism has given rise to, the body is seen as the ultimate site, even home, of authenticity and belonging. Adrienne Rich, the North-American poet and feminist theorist, asserts, for example, the importance of 'the geography closest in – the body'. Grounding analysis in the materiality of the body, she believes, is a way of avoiding theorising the world in such a way that white, middle-class and heterosexual bodies, and standpoints, are normalised. Clearly, then, for many postmodern theorists, the body represents the ultimate home, a site of belonging for their theoretical utterances and academic selves as well as their private lives. The self-awareness that such a view promotes clearly chimes with the postmodern rejection of the long-established 'master subject view'. For a discussion of Rich's work see Yorke (1997: 97). For a discussion of the importance of situated knowledge generally, see Seidman (1994: 7-14).

historical contexts. Moreover, it is clear that the speed of change in the postmodern world makes establishing a sense of belonging deeply problematic for many people. The definition of 'home' and 'cultural belonging' derived from this theoretical discussion must, clearly, remain provisional. It will be challenged and enriched later in this study when it is brought into dialogue with the senses of belonging articulated in the writings of Guibert, Doubrovsky and Robin in chapters 3, 4 and 5.

Representation and Space: Mapping the Postmodern

From the discussion above, it is clear that fundamental transformations have occurred in the nature of space in the last few decades. For example, deeply entrenched ways of belonging to space and understanding space have been undermined. Far from the growing redundancy of space, however, I have argued that many of the uprooted and culturally unsettled individuals of the postmodern world are expressing their search for identity in spatial terms. Indeed, Jameson goes as far as to argue that deepening our understanding of postmodern space is the only way in which to overcome the bewilderment and identity confusion that has become so endemic in the postmodern world. As Michael Dear explains, according to Jameson, 'one urgent task is to discover the co-ordinates of the new postmodern hyperspace, by exploring the spaces of the built environment, the mode of production, and culture' (Jameson cited in Dear 1997: 63). However, the task of understanding the spaces of the contemporary world may be more problematic than it first seems. As I argued in section 1.0.2, postmodernism has called into question many traditional ways of constituting knowledge and of understanding the world. More precisely, postmodernism has called into question many of the representational practices through which our knowledge of the world is made coherent and is communicated to others. It is to the matter of postmodern representational practices, and in particular, the representation of space, that my discussion will now turn, in order to establish a critical framework for the discussion of postmodern space that will comprise the central body of this monograph.

As I discussed in section 1.0.2, whereas Modernist or Enlightenment thought championed the ideals of objective science and ra-

tional knowledge, in the postmodern world notions of the partiality and subjectivity of all knowledge have gained considerable credence. Feminist thinkers have played an important role in this, arguing that notions of objectivity in fact conceal Enlightenment models of the ideal citizen, who was white, male and middle class (Seidman 1994: 10). Instead of such pretences to objectivity, then, there is an increasingly audible call for recognition of the subjective nature of all academic enquiry and all representation. In their 1993 edited collection entitled *Place, Culture, Representation*, James Duncan and David Ley argue that 'this revolt against objectivism, rationality and the meta-narratives which have guided enquiry has been one of the central themes in postmodern representation' (Duncan and Ley 1993: 7). Duncan and Ley go on to propose that so significant have these changes in postmodern representational practices been, that a 'crisis of representation' can be identified. This crisis is deemed to have emanated from the field of ethnography, its influence quickly extending across many Arts and Social Science disciplines. Duncan and Ley tell us that the 'crisis of representation'

is part of a broader attack within a number of fields upon mimesis and the 'natural attitude' which underlies it. This "natural attitude" stems from the philosophers of the Enlightenment, for whom language and imagery appeared to be perfect, transparent media through which reality could be represented. (Duncan and Ley 1993b: 4)

Not only has the notion of impartial, objective knowledge been undermined, then, but the means through which knowledge can be articulated has also been called into question. For example, as a result of post-structuralist thinking, language is no longer seen as a transparent medium through which the world can be represented unproblematically. On the contrary, language is now commonly recognised to be utterly problematic, capable of weaving unintentional meanings and subconscious references into any statement. Concomitant with this realisation of the fallibility of language has been the realisation of the imperfect nature of authorial power. That is to say that if language does not inevitably communicate the precise intentions of the author, then the author cannot be seen to wield total power over his or her enunciations. Simple notions of textual authority have been substantially destabilized in recent times. Altogether it is clear that the basic premises upon which knowledge formation and representation have

traditionally relied are no longer universally accepted.⁴⁴ What impact has this had upon the representation of space?

In fact, the 'crisis of representation' as well as other aspects of postmodern thought have had a significant impact upon the discipline that is most caught up in attempts to represent space, that of geography. For example, Duncan and Ley tell us that traditional geographical enquiry has been based upon a consensus belief 'that we should strive to produce as accurate a reflection of the world as possible' (Duncan and Ley 1993b: 2). However, as Duncan and Ley themselves point out, this view has been seriously destabilized within the discipline of geography in recent times. What then, are the traditional means of representing space, and what impact has postmodern thinking had upon them?

One of the longest established tools used to represent space is that of the map. As I indicated in section 1.0.3, by the second half of the twentieth century the status of cartography had already been diminished by its close association with the increasingly unpopular programme of colonial expansion (Blunt and Rose 1994: 8). As two British geographers, Alison Blunt and Gillian Rose, argue, cartography has received considerable criticism for the way in which this 'supposedly scientific "space discipline" [...] enhanced the possibilities for surveillance and facilitated imperial rule by helping to distance those exercising power from its consequences' (Blunt and Rose 1994: 10). Most pertinent here, however, is the suggestion by Blunt and Rose that the establishment of distance between those in power and those being surveyed was achieved precisely because conventional maps rely on the sort of knowledge-forming and representational practices that postmodernism and the 'crisis of representation' it has brought about have so thoroughly called into question. For example, Blunt and Rose assert that 'mapping operates in hegemonic discourses as a form of mimetic representation – it textually represents the gaze through transparent space' (Blunt and Rose 1994: 8). In this, they are suggesting that the practice of map-making is dependent upon pretensions to objective knowledge and transparent representation that are difficult to sustain in the post-crisis of representation academic climate. Moreover, they propose that mapping has traditionally relied upon the now

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For an excellent discussion of these issues see Cosgrove and Domosh (1993).

discredited notion that space is empty and neutral. They tell us, for example, that 'maps were [...] themselves colonizing spaces perceived as empty and uninscribed' (Blunt and Rose 1994: 9). Just as space used to be seen as neutral and apolitical, then, it seems that maps were falsely accepted to be free of the biases of the cartographer. The conclusion that conventional cartographic practices have been substantially destabilised by the crisis of representation seems unavoidable.

The competence of maps to represent space in the present age is further undermined by the nature of postmodern space and postmodern identities themselves. Blunt and Rose suggest that a 'more complex and shifting notion of both space and subject positionality undermine[s...] claims to mimetic representation' (Blunt and Rose 1994: 9). Clearly, if space is accepted to be multi-layered, multiply coded and subjectively-constructed as I argued in section 1.0.3, then singular, coherent and objective maps are inadequate. As Paul Rodaway tells us:

The map [...] offers a snapshot of the subject, an essentially dead artefact of the subject as it might have appeared to an observer at some point in time. It suggests a stability and coherence of the "subject" which is not evident in the postmodern condition [...] How can mapping the subject, in this context, be anything more than imagining, nostalgia and irrelevance? (Rodaway 1995: 241)

It seems then, that using conventional maps to represent postmodern space risks neglecting the highly complex, shifting and subjective nature of the contemporary world.

It is not only cartographic practices that have been called into question in recent times. Writing, another highly significant tool for representing space, has been the subject of considerable discussion within the discipline of geography as a result of the 'crisis of representation'. The work of Duncan and Ley is again helpful here. They observe that

Some ethnographers have argued that cultures are composed of fragmented and contested codes of meaning and that ethnographers should acknowledge and participate in this by experimenting with writing. Such experimentation would further challenge the Enlightenment project by adopting a fragmentary writing style that is purposefully ambiguous, incomplete and open-ended. (Duncan and Ley 1993b: 7)

Whilst experimentation with writing has not become highly evident within the discipline of geography, some examples do exist. Allan Pred's essay 'Re-presenting the Extended Present Moment of Danger: a meditation on hypermodernity, identity and the montage form' (Pred 1997: 117-138), is one such example. As the title suggests, this essay is entirely written in the montage form, taking on almost poetic qualities that are highly unusual in such a 'serious' geographical text. This piece does seem to be successful in translating some of the ideas it discusses into its textual space, as for instance, the voice of the writer seems more visible and less authoritative than in a more conventionally written piece. The frequent references to other people's words are less closely woven into Pred's own analysis, standing alone without the introductory phrases and analytical remarks which would conventionally frame them. However, it is easy to understand why this form of experimental writing has not been hailed by all geographers as the utopian tool with which to represent postmodern space. In fact, we could argue that Pred's authorial control is strengthened rather than eliminated: whilst he does not overtly comment upon citations, he has selected and positioned them in order to convey his own message. This text is not as open to 'other' voices and heterogeneity as might be thought. Moreover, such a format might not be appropriate for readers not already familiar with the topic under discussion, thus failing to embrace the democratic and egalitarian spread of knowledge that postmodernism champions.

Postmodern critiques of traditional representational practices seem, in sum, to have played a significant role in destabilising accepted attitudes towards cartography and writing. Perhaps of even greater relevance to this discussion, however, has been the emergence of a new movement within the discipline of geography since the 1980s entitled the 'New Cultural Geography'.⁴⁵ Led by Anglophone geogra-

⁴⁵ The 'New Cultural Geography' is seen as a departure from 'traditional' cultural geography's acceptance of the possibility of mimetic, realist forms of representation in favour of hermeneutic approaches. In this, it is accepted that the observer cannot be separate from the experiment and Duncan and Ley argue 'attention to theory which problematizes description, and to interpretation which queries pattern, is then an important element of what some have called a new cultural geography' (Duncan and Ley 1993b: 11). Clearly, then, this approach rejects postmodernism's attempts to develop ethnocentricity-free analysis in favour of recognising 'the collision between the data and the inter-

phers such as Dennis Cosgrove and James Duncan, this movement is defined and underpinned by the critical stance it takes towards traditional methods of investigating and representing space. Whilst not adopting particularly experimental writing practices themselves, Duncan and Ley's work is radical in its overt foregrounding of the inherently subjective nature of all representation. They tell us, for example, that 'writing about worlds reveals as much about ourselves as it does about the worlds represented' (Barnes and Duncan 1992: 3). Moreover, the 'New Cultural Geography' is clearly more open to alternative ways of knowing the world. For instance, rather than focusing exclusively on scientific, quantitative methodologies, it increasingly embraces the subjective and the qualitative. Such 'qualitative' research methods regularly incorporate personal experiences and subjective interviews with individuals, as well as the study of fictional cultural forms like drama.⁴⁶

Overall, it is clear that postmodern thought has substantially destabilized extant representational practices within the field of geography and considerable debate has been generated. Despite various efforts, no ideal substitute for conventional representational practices has been established. In fact, in a highly interesting volume entitled *Postmodern Cartographies: The Geographical Imagination in Contemporary American Culture* (1998), Brian Jarvis highlights a further difficulty in the representation of space. He tells us that

In postindustrial cartographies certain aspects of landscape and ways of seeing are foregrounded repeatedly. There is a remorseless standardisation of space as a consequence of the focus on totalised macro-geographical process (the postindustrial society, the global village, the political economy of the sign). (Jarvis 1998: 42)

preter' (Duncan and Ley 1993b: 8) and the subsequent realisation that all research is ideologically, politically and geographically situated. The influence of the 'New Cultural Geography' has extended outside of the Anglophone academic community where it was conceived. Paul Claval, a leading French Geographer, writes that 'un mouvement parallèle se développe en France dès le début de cette même décennie [les années 80]'. Claval goes on to specify that the parallel movement in France was led by 'A. Berque, J. Bonnemaison, P. Claval, J.-R. Pitte, J.-R. Trochet' and that it was consolidated by the establishment of the journal, 'Géographie et Cultures' in France in 1992 (Claval 1998: 99-109).

The point that Jarvis is making is pertinent: in its attempt to get to grips with the complexities of the contemporary world, geographical enquiry may have become overly focused on a few key theories to the neglect of the vast array of diverse individual experiences. This is ironic for two main reasons. First, a focus on a few key theories bears a striking resemblance to the very metanarratives and grand theories that postmodernism is supposed to undermine and reject. Second, there is clear neglect of the individual who is supposed to be at the centre of all contemporary analysis in order to avoid blind totalising master-subject views. How then is it possible to investigate postmodern space without recourse to anachronistic representational techniques and without neglecting the highly individualised stories of which the world is made up?

A return to Jameson's (1991) seminal text, *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*,⁴⁷ reminds us that fundamental to his argument is the call for greater understanding of postmodern space. He suggests that in order to gain some degree of control over the fragmented and shifting postmodern landscape that we live in, it is necessary cognitively to map the external world. In order to do this, he tells us, we need new maps. This argument is developed by Brian Jarvis in a way that is particularly relevant to our discussion. Apparently concurring with postmodern suspicions of conventional maps, Jarvis suggests that new maps alone would not suffice. What we require, in fact, in order to make sense of postmodern space is an entirely new definition of maps. Jarvis justifies this argument by adding his own criticisms of conventional cartographic representation to those that I have already outlined. Most relevant to this discussion is his suggestion that the notion of mapping which has become normalised within society and which postmodernism is now attacking, is in fact historically specific. That is to say that rather than being a universally relevant, independently evolved best practice for representing space, the dominant socio-economic regime has played a significant role in the current definition of cartography. Jarvis stipulates that

maps were not a capitalist invention, but the ones designed since the Renaissance were of a markedly different order: stripped of all ele-

⁴⁷ A very useful discussion of this seminal text is to be found in Michael Dear's 'Postmodern Bloodlines' (1997: 49-66).

ments of fantasy and religious significance (previously their primary function), devoid of any sense of the experiences involved in their production. (Jarvis 1998: 52)

It seems, then, that the requirement for maps to incorporate only factual, visible elements of the world rather than, for example, elements of cultural mythology, is a relatively recent phenomenon. Nast and Pile offer further evidence of the former importance of 'non-rational' maps. They argue that Canadian first nations used maps that were not constructed on the rational spatial grids of the colonizers, but were evocative of the stories and dreams underlying collective perceptions of place (Nast and Pile 1998b: 13).

The salient points that can be drawn from this argument are twofold. First, as with so many of the characteristics of postmodernism, it seems that the current move away from a belief in representing the world in rational, logical ways is not an entirely new phenomenon. Second, if we accept that the values that have become normalized in relation to mapping are, in fact, historically and socio-economically specific, then the emergence of the new cultural regime of postmodernism indicates the need for a radical overhaul of all aspects of mapping. In particular, the division of the world into fiction and fact, just like the separation of space into public and private spheres, may no longer be tenable.

A return to the work of Brian Jarvis establishes that he believes that the type of maps necessary to make sense of the postmodern world already exist. He tells us that

The dilemma facing the critic of late capitalism may not be an absence of maps [as Jameson argues], so much as an inadequacy in our own cartographic skills. I would suggest that the maps are already there, if we are prepared to look for them. In fact, they can be uncovered in precisely those postmodern art works Jameson spends much of his essay denouncing. (Jarvis 1998: 51)

Jarvis is suggesting that the type of personalised, subjective maps that individuals need in order to make sense of the world exist in the form of contemporary art. It is a central hypothesis of this study that the life writing texts examined in the subsequent five chapters comprise precisely the sort of postmodern maps through which individuals represent and make sense of their experiences of postmodern space.

It is relevant here to draw again upon the arguments of Steve Pile and Nigel Thrift. Early in the introduction to their edited collection *Mapping the Subject: Geographies of Cultural Transformation* (1995), Pile and Thrift highlight the many difficulties implicated in mapping the human subject. They go on to discuss the possibility of replacing conventional maps with a notion of 'wayfinding'. To explain this, they cite Mathy's definition of wayfinding as 'visiting in turn all, or most, of the positions one takes to constitute the field [and ... covering] descriptively as much of the terrain as possible, exploring it on foot rather than looking down at it from an airplane' (Mathy cited in Pile and Thrift, 1995: 1). The attractions of 'wayfinding' as opposed to conventional mapping are clear. 'Wayfinding' rejects totalising, static representations of the world, in favour of foregrounding the individually negotiated and always-changing nature of space. In addition, the notion of 'wayfinding' seems to foreground a way of knowing space that is mediated through the body and demonstrates the importance of affective, non-physical traits such as historical legacy in the construction of place. 'Wayfinding', then, certainly seems a better way of recognising that places consist of many elements that cannot be appreciated through static representations of space such as maps or bird's eye photos. What Pile and Thrift perhaps neglect to consider in their discussion is the fact that 'wayfinding' is not a representational practice but an act. Therefore, whilst it is a highly appropriate way of experiencing and understanding contemporary space, it cannot constitute the replacement for conventional mapping that they claim it to be. In *L'invention du quotidien: 1. Arts de faire* (1990), Michel de Certeau takes this argument one step further. Demonstrating clear convergence with Pile and Thrift's arguments about wayfinding, de Certeau argues that 'ordinary practitioners' of space do not have the Godlike, bird's eye perspective evident in a map, but experience space by moving through it. He tells us that 'l'acte de marcher est au système urbain ce que l'énonciation (le *speech act*) est à la langue ou aux énoncés proférés' (de Certeau 1990:148). In this, he is indicating his belief that the spaces of the city are brought to life by individuals moving through them. However, de Certeau makes one particularly crucial observation. He draws a parallel between movements around a city and stories. That is to say that just as public transport facilities link places in the city, so

chaque jour [les récits...] traversent et [...] organisent des lieux; ils les sélectionnent et les relient ensemble; ils en font des phrases et des itinéraires. Ce sont des parcours d'espaces. [...] Tout récit est un récit de voyage – une pratique de l'espace. (de Certeau 1990: 170-171)⁴⁸

Whilst the term 'récit', and its common translation into English as 'tale' or 'story', admit some ambiguity and space for interpretation, the relevance of de Certeau's argument to the discussion of life-writing maps elaborated in what follows is paramount. Reflecting Jarvis's belief that postmodern maps exist in the form of contemporary artworks, Pile and Thrift's notion of 'wayfinding' as a down on the ground, personal experience of space, and de Certeau's suggestion of a link between spatial experience and story telling, I will contend that contemporary life writing of the kind to be anatomised in this monograph provides some of the most interesting and rigorous articulations of postmodern space to be found. This mode of autobiographical writing is inherently concerned with individual experience and therefore avoids any attempt at generating over-arching, totalising theories or proclamations. Moreover, life writing is also fundamentally concerned with identity, which, as I argued at the beginning of this chapter, is increasingly recognised to be inextricably interlinked with space.

The contention that life writing could comprise a valuable form of postmodern cartography is key to this study and will be addressed in more detail in section 1.2 of this chapter, as well as in chapters 2 and 6. Further, in order to establish the precise niche into which this monograph will fit, I will now briefly examine the nature of extant interdisciplinary contacts between geography and literary studies. Having unpicked the theoretical premises upon which such contacts relied, I will then establish the methodological basis upon which my examination of literary constructions of space in the main body of this study will rest.

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De Certeau's use of 'récit' is often translated into English as 'story'. Thus, one translation reads: '[stories] traverse and organise places; they select and link them together; they make sentences and itineraries out of them. They are spatial trajectories. [...] Every story is a travel story.' (de Certeau 1988: 115)

1.1 Interdisciplinarity: The Space Between Geography and Literature

As the British Cultural Geographers Trevor J. Barnes and James Duncan point out in their groundbreaking volume entitled *Writing Worlds: Discourse, Text and Metaphor in the Representation of Landscape* (1992), the meaning of geography is literally 'earth writing' (Barnes and Duncan 1992: 1). However, prior to the advent of the New Cultural Geography, writing, and more specifically literature, have not traditionally numbered amongst the discipline of geography's key concerns. Why, then, has literature historically played such a small part in geographical enquiry?

Marc Brosseau's (1996) monograph entitled *Des romans-géographes* represents a particularly rigorous and enlightening recent study of the relationship between geography and literary studies. Here, Brosseau argues that some of the earliest calls for geographers to pay greater attention to literature occurred as far back as the beginning of the twentieth century (Brosseau 1996: 25). These calls did not, however, spark off any substantial movement, largely due to the dominance of the belief in scientific rigour and objectivity in geographical enquiry. The ironic lack of emphasis on writing in the very discipline known as 'earth writing' can, then, be traced back to a traditional opposition between literature and reality. In this, literature was slotted cleanly into the compartment of the imaginary and the arts, and was therefore credited with having little contribution to make to the study of 'reality'. As Marc Brosseau goes on to argue, the belief in science and objectivity became more deeply entrenched in the discipline of geography after the Second World War. At this time, geography was suffering from its close association with the increasingly politically unpalatable movements of colonialism and nationalism. In its search for a new direction through which to regain its status, the discipline turned towards the redemptive powers of science, aligning itself with the rational and 'objective' disciplines of biology, geology and environmental planning. Whilst the human geography that might have been more interested in studying literature did not wither away completely, its focus, too, became predominantly preoccupied with the 'objective', the 'rational' and what has rather harshly been termed 'the mindless statistic' (Dicken and Lloyd 1981: 1).

Brosseau goes on to point out that it was not until currents of thinking rippling out from post-structuralist debate began to infuse

Geographical concerns in the late 1960s and early 1970s that the potential contributions of literature and other non-statistical investigations of the world began to be recognised. In 1972, the International Geographical Union recognised the potential importance of 'des romans régionaux pour l'enseignement de la discipline'. In 1974 the Association of American Geographers began an investigation into depictions of landscape in literature (Brosseau 1996: 27). In fact, whilst both of these ventures spearheaded a school of literary study that would become relatively well-established within geography, neither demonstrated any attempt to redefine radically the ways of knowing the world employed by geographers. Instead, their preoccupations with descriptions of landscape and 'regional' novels indicated a desire to draw upon literary writers' superior capacities to convey 'senses of place'. Adding these descriptions to the geographer's factual analysis of 'reality', it was felt, might capture the 'real essence' of place. In fact, Brosseau argues that a more significant development occurred five years later. He tells us that 'enfin en 1979, l'Institut des géographes britanniques consacrait une de ses rencontres annuelles aux rapports généraux entre la géographie et la littérature. Le mouvement était désormais bien lancé' (Brosseau 1996: 27). As I argued above, the emergence of the 'New Cultural Geography' certainly demonstrated a growing openness to literary study within the discipline of geography. However, what concrete examples of the work of geographers focusing on literature can be identified?

In fact, in addition to the comprehensive discussion of literary study within geography that it includes, Brosseau's own *Des romans-géographes* constitutes one of the most sophisticated examples of literary analysis from within the discipline of geography. Brosseau's work is exceptional in the depth of understanding of both disciplines that it demonstrates. Arguing that most Geographical analyses of literature have focused on the nineteenth-century realist novel, and in particular on those works judged to be particularly successful in conveying verifiable facts and realistic senses of place, Brosseau instead turns to the less widely studied field of twentieth-century literature. He examines a range of texts, and touches upon such unusual geographical phenomena as 'smellscape'. Moreover, rather than simply translating ideas from one discipline to the other, Brosseau calls for the creation of dialogue between geography and literature. He argues that 'l'intérêt d'une relation dialogique réside dans sa volonté de re-

connaître l'autre en tant qu'autre, c'est-à-dire le refus de le transformer en objet, de l'homologuer' (Brosseau 1996: 56). The creation of the genuine dialogue that Brosseau calls for aims, in short, to avoid superficial, self-validating interdisciplinary contacts. Such contacts might transpire when, for instance, a geographer seeks a literary example with which to 'prove' a geographical argument whilst ignoring any aspects of the work that do not fit with the hypothesis in question. Brosseau argues that the simple translation of ideas from one discipline to another is impossible because 'ce qu'exprime une oeuvre ne peut pas être paraphrasé. Sinon, cela reviendrait à dire que le roman, ou la littérature en général, ne fait qu'exprimer autrement la même chose que les sciences humaines' (Brosseau 1996: 56). Brosseau himself recognises that literature has 'sa propre façon de "faire" de la géographie, ou du moins, d'écrire l'espace et les lieux des hommes' (Brosseau 1996: 20). In this, the constitutive rather than passively mimetic role that literature may play in the world is recognised. Indeed, the notion that literature can provide more than mere endorsement of 'real' geographical hypotheses is indicated by Brosseau's assertion that studying contemporary literature could act as 'le détonateur d'une nouvelle façon de penser l'espace' (Brosseau 1996: 51). The example of Marc Brosseau's *Des roman-géographes* can, then, be clearly seen to demonstrate a very admirable and innovative example of dialogue between literature and geography. It is necessary to note, however, that less well-informed studies persist, indicating the deep-seated entrenchment of traditional prejudices about the roles of literature and geography. It is to one such example that my discussion will now turn.

William E. Mallory and Paul Simpson-Housley's (1987) *Geography and Literature: A Meeting of the Disciplines* is, I wish to contend, a key example of an interdisciplinary work that has not succeeded in shaking off some of the most obvious disciplinary stereotypes. Whilst the very title of this edited collection of essays overtly indicates its intention to forge new interdisciplinary links and to further recognition of cross-subject complementarity, it becomes clear that the content of the book is in many ways reductive. In the introduction, the editors inform us that 'ultimately, it is hoped, such a collection can bridge the gap between the geographer's factual descriptions and the writer's flights of imagination, hence giving the world – both in geographical and literary terms – a more unified shape' (Mal-

lory and Simpson-Housley 1987b: xii). It is evident from this citation that Mallory and Simpson-Housley's project depends not only upon a rather reductive view of both geography and literature, but also upon one of the very binary oppositions that postmodern thought has so thoroughly destabilized: reality versus fiction. The suggestion that literature comprises nothing more than 'flights of imagination' is no easier to sustain than the argument that geography comprises 'factual descriptions of the world'. The stereotypes evident in the views of the editors are also identifiable in the work of other contributors. For example, Cesar Caviedes writes that

As professionals of the science of places, [geographers] must often recognise (with envy) the sensitivity and innate intuition with which literary writers extract the purest reality of a region [...]. It is perhaps for this reason that we geographers search for those literary texts that, in our opinion, best convey the sense of landscape reality that we are trying to isolate. (Caviedes 1987: 58)

Analysis of such an ideologically loaded citation could continue almost indefinitely. It is of paramount importance, however, to note two main points. First, Caviedes explicitly articulates the view that it is acceptable to draw upon literature merely when it neatly illustrates an already extant geographical hypothesis. In this way, no real dialogue is established and the potential influence of literature is severely reduced. Second, the opposition set up between professional geographers and innately intuitive literary writers is reminiscent of male/female, mind/body, reason/irrationality dichotomies. The effect in this situation is to naturalise the speaker's own position whilst subordinating the 'other'. A similarly stereotyped view of literature is evident in Kenneth Mitchell's contribution to the volume. He tells us that 'it is my conviction that literature, like all art, is ultimately a reflection and illustration of the landscape that produced it' (Mitchell 1987: 23). This critic clearly fails to understand the constitutive role that literature may play in the world. Finally, it is also important to recognise the inherently problematic nature of Mallory and Simpson-Housley's self-professed aim for this volume to give the world 'a more unified shape'. Nowhere in the volume is there a justification of on whose terms the world is to be unified, nor the implications for the repression of diversity that such unification might entail. *Geography and Literature: A Meeting of the Disciplines* certainly indicates the enduring na-

ture of some of the stereotypes that have traditionally dogged interdisciplinary contact between geography and literary studies. The work of Brosseau is, then, all the more admirable. In this study it is Brosseau's aim of bringing the two disciplines into an egalitarian dialogue that I shall adopt as my own methodological model.

From the perspective of literary studies, a synthesised view of the historical development of the relationship between literary studies and geography is considerably more difficult to establish. It seems that the incorporation of space into literary analyses has followed a considerably less unified and more compartmentalised plan of development. Pierre Jourde, a literary critic, argues that none of the major literary movements of the twentieth-century were deeply and systematically interested in 'l'existence spatiale du livre' (Jourde 1991: 324). In direct contradiction, however, Anne Chevalier asserts that 'la littérature française du vingtième siècle confère à l'espace un rôle prédominant' (Chevalier 1997: 9). In view of such directly contradictory statements, I wish to contend that whilst some highly sophisticated analysis of space has been undertaken within literary studies, it has been mainly concentrated within a limited range of subject areas. These subject areas may be the legacy of a great thinker whose work continues to generate a healthy amount of interest, or they may focus upon areas of literature that are inherently and obviously concerned with space. Some key areas of literary studies in which space has represented a significant topic of investigation are summarised in what follows. Clearly this discussion cannot be comprehensive, but it is hoped that it will be a useful outline of the overall situation.

It would, of course, be difficult to undertake any examination of the relationship between literature and space without considering the work of Walter Benjamin. During the first half of the twentieth century, Benjamin wrote widely on a range of cities, including Moscow, Naples, Weimar and, most famously, Paris. According to the author of a study of Benjamin's relationship with the city, Graeme Gilloch, Benjamin's work was ground breaking on a theoretical level due to the strength with which he championed the notion of not only 'city-as-text' but also 'text-as-city' (Gilloch 1997: 2-5). In doing this, he suggested that similar intellectual tools could be used to analyse both the city and literature. This proposition has made a significant and enduring contribution to the analysis of space and literature. As recently as 1998, for example, Richard Lehan, in *The City in Literature: An Intel-*

lectual and Cultural History, wrote that ‘as we move through the major writers who constitute this study, we see that the city and its literature share textuality – that the ways of reading literary texts are analogous to the ways urban historians read the city’ (Lehan 1998: 8). The influence of Benjamin’s work in this formulation is evident. Moreover, Benjamin’s interest in nineteenth-century Parisian arcades has also been of enduring significance. In this, Benjamin’s focus on the literary articulations of city spaces, particularly in the work of Baudelaire, sowed rich seeds that have continued to be nurtured by scholars in a range of disciplines.⁴⁹ The notion of the ‘flâneur’, for example, has been the subject of considerable interdisciplinary interest, as demonstrated by Keith Tester’s edited collection entitled *The Flâneur* (1994). Also drawing deeply upon both the notion of the *flâneur* and upon the interdependency of the city and text is Deborah Parsons’s recent monograph entitled *Streetwalking the Metropolis: Women, the City and Modernity* (2000). In this, Parsons discusses Benjamin’s work and identifies the space of her own enquiry through analogy with his. That is to say that whereas the *flâneur* who plays such a prominent role in Benjamin’s reading of the city is indisputably male, Parsons’ project interrogates the possibility of a female *flâneuse*. Moreover, adding a productive slant to Benjamin’s argument about the interdependency of city and text, Parsons focuses upon the ways in which literature has a formative role to play in the construction of the city. Rather than merely highlighting the ways in which the city and literature might mirror each other, she contends that writing not only exists within the city, but produces the city in a form that is distinct from the urban fabric. In this, she tells us that ‘the writer adds other maps to the city atlas; those of social interaction but also of myth, memory, fantasy and desire’ (Parsons 2000: 1).

Evidently, Benjamin’s work on the city has made a contribution of enduring significance to the study of space within the field of literary studies. It is also clear that some of the most significant analyses of space undertaken by literary theorists, as well as some of the most genuinely interdisciplinary studies, are evident in relation to the city.

⁴⁹ In fact, the analysis of space was fundamentally bound up with Benjamin’s own identity. As Susan Sontag argues in her introduction to Benjamin’s *One Way Street*, ‘his goal is to be a competent street-map reader who knows how to stray. And to locate himself with imaginary maps.’ (Sontag 1979: 7-28)

The city of Paris has been a particularly significant focus of literary articulations of the city, a topic that will be of great relevance to the present study. Marcy E. Schwartz, for example, in a monograph entitled *Writing Paris: Urban Topographies of Desire in Contemporary Latin American Fiction* (1999), demonstrates the international significance of literary Paris. In this sophisticated example of literary analysis of space, Schwartz argues that Paris has been important not only in practical terms as the physical home of flourishing literary communities, but as an imaginary site that has inspired writers all round the world. Schwartz's work on Paris is, again, directly inspired by Benjamin, as is evident in her analysis of Julio Cortazar's fiction.⁵⁰ Moreover, the work of Pierre-Marc de Biasi suggests that Paris is not only a site of international literary importance as Schwartz argues, but is a city whose identity has been bound up with literature for many centuries. In an article entitled 'La Ville comme roman' (2000), Biasi undertakes an extensive discussion of the long history of literary representations of Paris (Biasi 2000). Perhaps one of the most important facets of this discussion is the description of the city as 'Paris – palimpseste, toujours déjà littéraire' (Biasi 2000). In this, Biasi is referring to the density of textual and intertextual links that surround Paris. This argument chimes with Parsons' assertion that literature adds a further dimension to the identity of any place. The identity of Paris, then, described by Schwartz as 'a transcultural literary capital' (Schwartz 1999: 18), has been partly formed by literature.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the city of Paris has also been the focus of some of the most sophisticated interdisciplinary literary examinations of space. Michael Sheringham's (1996) edited collection *Pari-sian Fields* is interesting not only because of the interdisciplinary range of contributors, but also because of the sophisticated view of space that it conveys. Sheringham defines Paris as a 'semantic network [...] whose co-ordinates are determined by the movement of agents or agencies to which it plays host' (Sheringham 1996: 3). In this, he clearly demonstrates understanding of the complex mesh of physical, cultural and individual factors that make up a city. More-

⁵⁰ Schwartz's analysis is clearly inspired by Benjamin. For example, in Chapter 2, 'The Interstices of Desire: Paris as Passageway in Julio Cortazar's Short Fiction', she dialogues overtly with Benjamin's arcades project (Schwartz 1999: 27-61).

over, Sheringham asserts that 'the role of the encounter with, and imaginative response to, urban space is ultimately to provide insights into the individual as much as to the city' (Sheringham 1996: 89). This demonstrates awareness of the potential agency of space, as well as its formative role in constituting individual identities. As I argued in section 1.0.3, such topics have only become common currency within the discipline of geography in very recent times. The city, and in particular the city of Paris, does, then, occupy a very important position on the literary map.

Another significant figure whose work in literary studies has made a lasting contribution to awareness of the importance of space is, of course, Gaston Bachelard. Bachelard's *La Poétique de l'espace*, first published in 1957, has clearly played a major role in laying out some important foundations upon which the analysis of space within Literary Studies could be built. As Margaret Higonnet writes, 'since Gaston Bachelard's almost mystical reverie on the *Poétique de l'espace* (1957), with his suggestive meditations on the "feminine" spaces of the round tower, the closet, and the nest, the literary representation of space has received widespread critical attention' (Higonnet 1994: 194). Whilst Higonnet does perhaps over-stress the extent to which space has become a focus of literary study, her assertion of the influence of Bachelard's work would be difficult to contest. Focusing particularly on 'les espaces heureux' of poetry, Bachelard constructs a complex critical framework of horizontal and vertical spatial axes around which to analyse the spaces of literature. The enduring relevance of this is evident from the frequency with which both Literary scholars and geographers cite this vertical-horizontal axes scheme fifty years after it was first developed.⁵¹ Moreover, Bachelard's work is particularly noteworthy because of its emphasis upon the inadequacy of understanding space in solely geometrical terms. As I discussed in section 1.0.3, this is one of the most urgent claims of contemporary Geography.

In fact, just like that of Benjamin, Bachelard's work seems to be of ongoing importance in relation to literary studies of space. There is, for example, evidence of enduring interest in the interactions of space

⁵¹ See, for example, Brosseau (1996: 80-83); Gascoigne (1997b: 11); Gaffney (1997: 90-91).

and poetry. This is demonstrated by Michael Sheringham's meditation in *Parisian Fields* on 'City Space, Mental Space, Poetic Space: Paris in Breton, Benjamin and Réda'. Perhaps of more wide-reaching significance, however, is the 'géopoétique' movement that has grown up around Kenneth White. The term 'géopoétique' was coined in 1978, and has been followed by the regular publication of the 'Cahiers de Géopoétique' as well as the organisation of several colloquia. Kenneth White himself, in the opening speech at the 1991 Géopoétique Colloquium in Nîmes, placed great emphasis upon the importance of breaking down the traditional divorce between nature and culture, and recognising the interdependency of the environment with *la poétique* (White 1991). Further stressing the importance of both space and literature, Bertrand Lévy, another contributor, describes the movement in terms of the happy convergence of like-minded geographers and 'hommes de lettres'.⁵² Indeed, the 1991 *Cahier's* impressive collection of contributions from literary specialists and geographers alike is worth noting. The enduring nature of this movement as well as its admirable overall aim to 'renouveler complètement la carte mentale' (White 1991: 7) mean that it is a significant area of spatial analysis within the discipline of literary studies.

Manifestly, the figures of Benjamin and Bachelard continue to inspire work in literary studies on various topics including the space of the city and the relationship between poetry and natural space. In addition, two particularly rich and interrelated thematic areas in which literary theorists have engaged with space are those of postcolonialism and travel writing. In an essay entitled 'The Geographics of Marginality: Place and Textuality in Simone Schwarz-Bart and Anita Desai' (1994), Indira Karancheti highlights the important role that space has played in the very construction of the notion of 'postcolonialism'. Whereas colonialism involved the physical domination of many of the world's spaces, Karamcheti tells us that postcolonialism involves 'an imaginative recovery of a "local place"' (Karancheti 1994: 125). Moreover, as Karamcheti's own essay demonstrates, much postcolonial work has knitted together spatial and literary analysis. Indeed,

⁵² Lévy tells us that 'des hommes de lettres faisaient route vers le continent géographique, alors qu'au même moment, des habitants de ce continent pointaient leur longue-vue vers un éther poétique et métaphysique' (Lévy 1991: 27-35).

perhaps unsurprisingly in an academic field that is inherently hybrid and interdisciplinary, postcolonial theorists often move coherently between a diverse range of topics and focuses. The *Postcolonial Studies Reader* (1994), edited by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, contains a broad selection of some of the most significant essays written in this field. Many of the pieces within the *Postcolonial Studies Reader* move cohesively between such diverse topics as representation, geopolitics, cartography, literature and education. A substantial degree of interplay between disciplines is evident, with literary critics addressing geographical issues and geographers turning frequently to literature as a key resource. Perhaps not insignificantly, three consecutive chapters are entitled 'writing in colonial space'; 'naming place' and 'decolonizing the map',⁵³ demonstrating an awareness of the interdependency and inter-relatedness of spatial analysis and literature. The critical stance evident in many of the essays within the *Postcolonial Studies Reader* is typical in many areas of postcolonial studies.⁵⁴

Not entirely separate from postcolonial studies is the topic of travel writing, another area of literary studies in which sophisticated spatial analysis is evident. In *Travellers' Tales: Narratives of Home and Displacement* (1994), the editors tell us that 'the travelling narrative is always a narrative of space and difference' (Ashcroft et al. 1994: 2). Indeed, it would be difficult to deny the fact that travel writing is inherently spatial. In recent times, travel writing has moved far beyond the stereotypical narratives of heroic male explorers penetrating the spaces of the unknown. Sara Mills' *Discourses of Difference* (1991), for example, focuses upon women's travel writing in the colonial period. Mills' work is particularly interesting in relation to her analysis of the power discourses underlying travel narratives, and incorporated into her argument is a discussion of the particular spaces

⁵³ Lee (1999: 397-401); Carter (1987: 402-406); and Huggan (1995: 407-411).

⁵⁴ Margaret R. Higonnet and Joan Templeton's *Reconfigured Spheres: Feminist Explorations of Literary Space* (1994), for example, is interesting in the complex blend of postcolonialism and feminist analysis that it advances. Higonnet demonstrates sophisticated awareness of the importance of space, arguing for example, that 'the spatialization of our critical categories can be productive or destructive. [...] space does not just record gender-based assumptions and roles but also reinforces them' (Higonnet 1994: 16).

that are focused on in travel writing (Mills 1991: 78-84). Adrien Pasquali's monograph entitled *Le Tour des horizons* (1994) comprises a helpful discussion of recent developments in travel writing. One of the most interesting elements of this discussion is the assertion that the scope of travel writing has widened considerably in recent times. That is to say that as the notion of exoticism has become increasingly discredited, anthropologists have turned more and more to the 'known' world. Pasquali asserts that 'les nouveaux voyageurs explorent les égouts de Paris, certaines banlieues, et J.-D. Urbain les désigne par l'expression de «voyageurs de l'interstice»' (Pasquali 1994: 67). This turn to the investigation of spaces that are closer to home indicates a cutting edge awareness of the postmodern blurring of the spaces of home and away, as well as the recent realisation by ethnographers that familiar spaces should not be assumed to be irrelevant to academic study. Moreover, even when entering the potential minefield of relations with formerly colonized countries, many theorists of travel writing demonstrate highly nuanced understandings of space. In fact, the field of travel writing has proved particularly adept at investigating the spaces of cultural contact that are so prevalent in the contemporary world. Mary Louise Pratt's *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (1992) is particularly noteworthy as it provides the forum within which the notion of cultural 'contact zone' is forged. This term, which is clearly of use to those within the field of geography as well as that of travel writing, is used to refer 'to the space of colonial encounters, the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations' (Pratt 1992: 6). It seems then, that this is an example of a literary theorist who has fully realised Brosseau's desire for a genuine dialogue between literature and critical discourses of space.

Interestingly, the collaborative work, *Travellers' Tales: Narratives of Home and Displacement* (Robertson 1994) clearly draws the travel writing debate into the contemporary moment. Demonstrating beliefs similar to those of theorist Paul Gilroy about the increasingly transient nature of home, the work evokes a series of writers whose experiences of exile, migration and travel have sometimes led them to locate their sense of home and self in writing itself and it demonstrates a sophisticated awareness of the constitutive roles that both writing and space play in identity formation:

Travellers' tales do not only bring the over-there home, and the over-here abroad. They not only bring the far away within reach, but also contribute [...] to challenging the home and abroad/dwelling and travelling dichotomy within specific actualities. At best, they speak to the problem of the impossibility of packaging a culture, or of defining an authentic cultural identity. (Minh-ha 1994: 22)

Blending feminist analysis, postcolonialism, and great sensitivity to both geography and literary studies, this collection of edited essays effects a very positive contribution to the field of travel writing, and to the study of space within literary studies and to the evolution of an interdisciplinary sphere where a dialogue between literature and geography can flourish.

Literary analyses of space are particularly evident, in sum, in the fields of postcolonial studies and travel writing, as well as topics such as the city that were spawned by the work of Benjamin and Bachelard. In addition, an area of literary studies concerned with space that I wish finally to mention takes its inspiration from conventional maps. Work here is generally characterised by an attempt to assess the spaces mentioned in a text in a rational manner in order to analyse the role they play in constructing the text's meaning.⁵⁵ Yves Baudelle, for example, in an essay entitled 'Cartographie réelle et géographie romanesque: poétique de la transposition' (Baudelle 1997), undertakes an analysis of place names. He investigates the extent to which novels employ real or fictional place names and the impacts of doing so. Baudelle highlights the relative frequency with which writers locate their text within a known region, but invent the specific town or village in which the action occurs in order to leave scope for the imagination. His conclusion, perhaps unsurprisingly, is that novels in general employ a mixture of real, invented and almost-real place names. A similarly 'rational' analysis of literary space is to be found in Franco Moretti's (1998) *Atlas of the European Novel: 1800-1900*. This work begins with the pertinent assertion that 'geography is not an inert container, is not a box where cultural history "happens", but an active force that pervades the literary field and

⁵⁵ To a certain extent this could be seen as fundamentally opposed to Benjamin's project because, as Tom Conley points out, the notion of the flâneur is based upon the belief that cities are not mappable wholes, but can be understood in flashes and glimpses by the mobile flâneur. See Conley (1996: 72).

shapes it in depth' (Moretti 1998: 3). Moretti's recognition of the importance of space within literature is commendable, and his monograph is a rigorous contribution to the field. One factor which makes this work slightly less well equipped for the study of the contemporary world, however, is his somewhat traditional analysis of conventional maps. In fact, he asserts that 'a good map is worth a thousand words' (Moretti 1998: 3) and does not interrogate the problematic, power-imbued mechanics of cartography. The works of both Baudelle and Moretti do, then, blend spatial and literary analysis together and make some useful observations. They could, however, be criticised for their relatively unquestioning approach to the space-literature relationship. Both recognise the formative role that space can play in literature, but do not recognise the fact that literature could be constitutive of space. In fact, Brosseau himself specifically comments on this type of academic enquiry. He observes that whilst producing maps of the spaces represented in literary works might help us get to grips with the complex works of those such as Balzac and Proust, 'il faut se méfier de l'excès de mise en ordre, voire de mise en boîte' (Brosseau 1996: 10). This assertion is one with which it is difficult to disagree.

In addition to the sophisticated spatial analysis that exists within a limited range of relatively discrete areas of literary studies, a number of more general interdisciplinary initiatives have been undertaken in recent times. One such example is a collection of essays edited by David Gascoigne entitled *Le Moi et ses espaces: quelques repères identitaires dans la littérature française contemporaine* (1997). Comprising essays by academics from French, Scottish and Irish Universities, this book demonstrates awareness of key theorists such as Bachelard and Foucault as well as close textual analysis. However, rather than focusing upon the 'real', physical spaces that will be the subject of this study, considerable attention is paid within this volume to the space of the literary work. That is to say that Genette's identification of 'l'espace de la représentation' (Gifford 1997), rather than 'l'espace topographique représenté' is scrutinised. This work involves some valuable analysis, although its focus is clearly more abstract than that of this monograph. A further example of an interdisciplinary exploration of space and literature is Glenda Norquay and Gerry Smyth's edited collection entitled *Space and Place: The Geographies of Literature* (1997). Beginning with an extensive discussion of contemporary geography by Linden Peach, this volume goes on to incorporate a di-

verse range of literary analyses. Sophisticated awareness of major spatial theorists such as Henri Lefebvre is evident in many of the book's essays and an original range of topics is addressed. However, it is justified to single out one area of this work for criticism. In the conclusion to the opening discussion that establishes the basis for this volume, Linden Peach argues that 'postmodern geography [...] offers an appropriate model with which to discuss how writing by members of ethnic minority groups disrupts, problematises and displaces traditional notions of Englishness' (Peach 1997: 27). Peach's assertion is indicative of an unfortunate preconception that, arguably, limits the success of many attempts by literary theorists to analyse space. That is to say that Peach is implying that ethnic minority writers' works should be approached with a different body of critical theory, and in particular a different set of spatial theories, to those works written by ethnic majorities. Not only does this perpetuate notions of centre and periphery in a system whose complexity has clearly exceeded such simplistic binaries, but it also fails to recognise the fact that postmodern space is marked by mobility between spaces and cultural exchange. It is clearly not appropriate to suggest a correlation between any one ethnic group and any one way of inhabiting space.

In sum, it seems that spatial analysis is far from alien to many working within French Literary Studies, just as the study of literature by geographers is hardly without precedent. From the discussion above, however, it is clear that some works that seek to bring together the disciplines of geography and literary studies remain hindered by long-established stereotypes and preconceptions and insufficiently rigorous critical frameworks. What, then, will be the specific space of this monograph, located as it is at the crossing point between geography and literature?

1.2 Geography and Literature: The Theoretical Space of This Project

This chapter has sought to establish that the present moment in time offers particularly rich opportunities for an interdisciplinary study of space and literature. As I argued at the beginning of this chapter, across the Arts and Social Sciences there has been a realisation in the last few decades that space is an extremely important component of everyday life, and that the reappraisal of our assumptions about space

could engender new understandings of the world. In literary studies, this realisation, combined with the well established, albeit limited, history of interest in space spawned by those such as Benjamin and Bachelard, means that the potential for productive contact between literary and spatial analysis is great. Moreover, within the discipline of geography, as I argued above, there is considerable evidence of growing respect within the discipline of geography for qualitative and subjective representations of the world, and increasing belief in the inadequacy of 'rational', 'scientific' methods for understanding human beings and human identity. Sited upon an ontological backdrop of particularly favourable conditions, what, then, will be the methodological approach of this study?

In this monograph, the belief that it is necessary to move beyond simplistic stereotypes and understandings of the nature of both geography and literary studies will underpin my analyses. In particular, the traditional assumption that I discussed in section 1.1, that literature comprises imaginative 'flights of fancy' whereas geography is 'factual' will be refuted. Instead, then, of using 'imaginative' literary examples to prove pre-existing 'factual' geographical hypotheses, I will seek to respond to Marc Brosseau's call for a genuine dialogue between geography and literary studies. Artistic, subjective representations of the world not only have much to contribute to our attempts to understand space, but as I argued in section 1.1, they play a role in constituting the world's geography.

In this work, then, I will seek to bring the theories of space that I have surveyed in this chapter into dialogue with a selected range of life writing texts. My investigation will focus particularly upon the questions of home space and cultural belonging that are such pressing topics of concern within the postmodern world. However, this study will be underpinned by the belief that spatial analysis within literary studies should not be restricted to works that are inherently and obviously spatial. On the contrary, it will suggest that it must be recognised that space is an important condition of all lived experience, all identity formation and hence all literature. As postmodern theory has demonstrated, the multi-layered and complex spaces of the contemporary world can no longer be accepted as apolitical and empty. All space is imbued with power relations and pre-existing meanings, and therefore no inhabitation of space can be taken to be given and 'natural'. Merely focusing on those writers who articulate experiences such

as migration that are obviously spatial risks normalising certain experiences of space and creating 'special cases' of others. In this volume, then, the literary works that comprise the focus of my study are linked by their shared generic status rather than their specific relevance to home space, or any other geographical theme. Moreover, the particular spatial tropes analysed in relation to each author will be inspired by the literature itself, rather than by a pre-existing body of theory. In this way it is hoped to avoid merely presenting works of literature as 'case studies' that are used to support a pre-selected hypothesis. In the same vein, it will be the works of literature themselves that determine the order of the following chapters, a factor which I will explain in more detail in section 2.5 of chapter 2.

Choosing to study life writing, it is hoped, may prove a particularly rich method of deepening our understanding of postmodern space. The value of these personal tales of living in the spaces of the world is clearly not bound up in any attempt to produce over-arching explanations of the present age. On the contrary, it is the individual, personal nature of life writing that makes it particularly relevant to postmodern academic enquiry. If it is accepted that a single, unified 'reality' does not exist, and if the attempt to understand the lives of others through 'objective' studies is increasingly seen to be problematic, then the best way to explore the world may be through the understanding generated by writing one's own experience of the earth, or studying those who do. As I shall discuss in chapter 2, the literature studied makes no claim to objectivity, or to the harsh distinction of fiction and fact that has long beleaguered geographical enquiry. To what extent, then, can contemporary life writing be argued to comprise a form of postmodern cartography? Perhaps more importantly, what evidence is there to justify Brosseau's (1996: 219) claim that '*le dialogue géographie-littérature peut devenir source de renouvellement pour la pensée*'?

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2. Contemporary Life Writing

In an essay entitled 'Imaginary Homelands', Salman Rushdie argues that the greatest literary achievements occur when writing takes place at the limits of the possible. Rushdie elucidates this argument by explaining that in his view books are most valuable 'when they endanger the artist by reason of what he has, or has not, *artistically* dared' (1991: 15). As a wide range of literary theorists have discussed, autobiographical writing, by its very nature, is a risky pursuit. As Rousseau's *Confessions* testify, the *récit de vie* has long been grounded in the notion that each individual is not only unique in character and form, but is the sole owner of the truth of his or her own selfhood. The degree of personal investment involved in an attempt to encapsulate this truth in literary form should not be underestimated. As literary critics have pointed out, autobiographical writing is often undertaken as a result of a desire to 'cheat' death by definitively appropriating a self and a life story, and leaving a posthumously authoritative version of it (Robin 1993b: 79-80). Often already struggling, then, with an impossible desire to convince others of its exclusive veracity, the autobiographical endeavour is further problematised by the shared nature of the life story: as Philippe Lejeune, one of the key life writing theorists of the twentieth century, points out 'presque toujours la vie privée est une copropriété. [...] Raconter sa vie privée, familiale ou amoureuse, sous son propre nom, c'est fatalement porter atteinte à la vie privée de ses proches' (Lejeune 1986: 55).

Life writing is a risky literary pursuit, in sum, because it frequently involves an attempt to establish an authentic 'truth' of selfhood, and because it may bring the author into conflict with those people in whom he or she has made the greatest personal investment. In addition, in a move impelled by Freud's narratives of the unconscious, it has become increasingly common for the autobiographical impulse to represent an attempt not merely to reveal a pre-established truth of self, through writing, but to actively achieve greater self-knowledge

through the construction of a self-referential text. Such a search may involve the autobiographer in an uncomfortable confrontation with those parts of the self that are deeply buried, even repressed by the unconscious, thus endangering every aspect of the self as it may have been previously known. It seems, then, that life writing is an inherently perilous pursuit, and therefore, following Rushdie's criteria, it is particularly strongly imbued with the potential to be great literature.

The three authors whose life writing will constitute the focus of this study can be said to be located at the limits of the possible, and thus are particularly interesting subjects of study, in two main ways. First, the literary *oeuvres* of Serge Doubrovsky, Hervé Guibert and Régine Robin not only belong to the inherently 'risky' genre of life writing, but display a parallel desire to raise the stakes of risk by experimenting with the conventions underpinning life writing. In particular, the life writing of each author displays a consistent and recurring desire to challenge the boundaries between fact and fiction, thus questioning the very foundation stone of the autobiographical enterprise. Featuring amongst some of the most innovative and groundbreaking examples of life writing in contemporary literature, then, the works of these three authors could be said to be located at the cutting edge of literature and at the frontiers of literary possibility. In addition, the autobiographical writings of each of these authors can be said to be deeply inscribed with, and perhaps even inspired by, a moment of profound cultural crisis. For both Serge Doubrovsky and Régine Robin, the life writing project is fundamentally bound up with the Holocaust. In Doubrovsky's case, his extratextual experiences as a French Jew who lived in hiding during the Occupation can be linked with the troubling questions of ethnic and cultural identity that resonate throughout his work. For Régine Robin, the knowledge of the mass slaughter of her family and ancestors in Poland during the Second World War supersedes concerns over her own French-Jewish identity. The task of life writing seems to stem for Robin, in short, from the ineluctable void presented by the decimation of her entire ethnic community and linguistic heritage. For Hervé Guibert, a first generation AIDS writer, his work not only confronts the rampant prejudices generated by this crisis, but, at the time of writing, was bound up with an intratextually professed belief that writing might prolong his survival. Indeed, the late twentieth-century cultural crisis

presented by AIDS seems to have become inseparably associated with his work.

For each of these three writers, then, the autobiographical impulse clearly turns upon something more fundamental, more personally risky, than the everyday desire of the human subject to record the events of his or her life. The writing of each is bound up with some of the deepest anxieties of society, and some of the most problematic questions of selfhood. Little, it seems, could comply more closely with Rushdie's demand for literature that pushes the limits of the possible. Moreover, moments of cultural crisis, as Max Silverman argues in *Facing Postmodernity: Contemporary French Thought on Culture and Society* (1999), are significant because they do not merely place individuals in perilous positions. On the contrary, in the upheaval and disruption of established cultural orders that moments of cultural crisis provoke, new freedom may be created in which new cultural meanings and new identities may be forged. These writings, then, works that inscribe some of the most significant events of the twentieth century, are particularly rich resources in this study that seeks to bring literature into dialogue with the spatial expressions and structures of culture. In the inscriptions of moments of cultural upheaval and cultural re-formation that these narratives of personal experience proffer, new understandings of space can perhaps be formulated.

The life writings of Doubrovsky, Guibert and Robin that will comprise the focus of this monograph clearly offer up intriguing avenues for scholarly exploration. Whilst in many ways diverse in nature and content, they are unified by a number of key factors. Each writer, whilst producing literature that clearly participates in the general category of the autobiographical, displays a desire to experiment with the boundaries of fact and fiction, and hence to undermine any traditional generic classification. Each writer seems to struggle not only with the complexities of narrating a personal life story, but is also engaged in a wider moment of cultural crisis that pushes literature to the limits of personal identity and social meaning. In addition, these three writers are united by the relatively homogenous timeframe of their literary production: each began publishing in the 1970s, and has continued until the end of the twentieth century or the beginning of the twenty-

first.¹ And, crucially to this monograph, despite juggling a complex range of cultural and ethnic affiliations, each of these writers was born in France, professes French to be their mother tongue and their primary writing language, and retains some sense of affiliation with this country in their literary works.

In this chapter, I will first seek to discuss life writing, briefly setting it in its historical context and establishing its contemporary status. I will examine in detail the precise generic meaning of the term 'autobiography', as well as that of a more recently coined term that will play a significant role in this study: *autofiction*. I will then move on to introduce in turn each of the three writers upon whose work my study will focus, sketching out their personal beliefs and backgrounds before establishing the precise generic status of the life writing texts upon which I will draw.

2.1 Autobiography and Autofiction

As I have briefly argued, the literary terrain of life writing provides compelling matter for study. It would be erroneous, however, to suggest that autobiographical writing has enjoyed a history of widespread critical approval. On the contrary, in the earliest days of autobiography's conception,² writing about the self was popularly deemed to be unseemly and 'impudique'. More recently, autobiography's close links to the referential have meant that it has been widely judged by literary critics to lack the necessary subjective qualities to attain the heights of literary glory. Within the academic world, the personal, subjective nature of autobiography was often assumed to prevent life

¹ This time frame clearly coincides with the period sometimes argued to be 'postmodern', as I discussed in chapter 1.

² In fact debate exists about whether autobiography has always existed or whether it is a historically specific phenomenon. Lejeune argues that in his view 'l'autobiographie n'a pas toujours existé [...] L'histoire de l'autobiographie, telle que je l'envisageais, commençait en Europe seulement dans la seconde moitié du XVIII^e siècle, et j'ai pris Rousseau comme figure de père fondateur.' Lejeune acknowledges that this view is fundamentally opposed to that of, for example, Georges Gusdorf who argues autobiography to be traceable back to Biblical times. See Lejeune in interview with Delon (2002: 20-21).

writing texts from playing anything more than a supporting role within 'rational' disciplines such as history.³ It was not until the twentieth century, according to Philippe Lejeune, that autobiography ceased to be 'méprisée par les gens' (Lejeune in interview with Delon 2002: 22). Indeed, Serge Doubrovsky, a literary theorist of some repute as well as a leading proponent of life writing, supports this view, describing autobiography as '[un] genre longtemps sous-estimé et qui, ces dernières années, n'a cessé d'affirmer son importance croissante, sur la scène internationale, tant par l'ampleur de la production littéraire que par la qualité des travaux critiques qu'il inspire' (Doubrovsky 1988: 5). It is certainly clear that there has been a substantial shift in the fortunes of life writing in recent times. Perhaps this could be interpreted as unsurprising when set against the contemporary Western cultural backdrop of thriving interest in the individual, as represented by proliferating reality television and a voyeuristic cult of the celebrity. It seems, however, that the recent reappraisal of life writing has not occurred solely within the arena of popular culture. On the contrary, as Doubrovsky's comment above indicates, the recent renaissance of autobiographical writing in the Western world has been driven by a critical reappraisal of the genre. In particular, the traditional assumption that referential writing necessarily excludes aesthetic beauty and literary merit has been challenged. Equally crucially, there has been a realisation that the field of life writing is one in which there is great scope for new discoveries and experimentation with form. In fact, Claude Burgelin, a French literary critic of some standing, has gone as far as to argue that 'le territoire de l'autobiographie et de l'écriture de soi me paraît aujourd'hui le chantier le plus novateur, un des domaines les plus passionnants de l'écriture contemporaine' (Burgelin 1997: 103). It seems, then, that little can be taken for granted within the field of life writing. How are we to characterise traditional notions of autobiography, and what is the current state of play in this changing field?

Perhaps the most important contribution in recent times to the life writing debate has been that made by Philippe Lejeune. This French literary theorist's extensive publications on the subject of life

³ For a discussion of the failure of autobiography to be taken seriously by either literature or history, see Gilmore's 'The Mark of Autobiography: Postmodernism, Autobiography, and Genre' (Gilmore 1994b: 6).

writing have included studies of the memoir and the *journal intime*, as well as, more recently, a study of internet-based forms of life writing.⁴ Most significant, however, was Lejeune's publication of *Le Pacte autobiographique* in 1975, a work that is underpinned by the question: 'est-il possible de définir l'autobiographie?' (Lejeune 1975: 13). Lejeune answers this question affirmatively, and proceeds to define autobiography as a

Récit rétrospectif en prose qu'une personne réelle fait de sa propre existence, lorsqu'elle met l'accent sur sa vie individuelle, en particulier sur l'histoire de sa personnalité. (Lejeune 1975: 14)⁵

As delineated by Lejeune, then, conventional autobiography is characterised by the attempt of a real person to tell the story of his or her life and personality in a prose style. This basic definition is complemented in *Le Pacte autobiographique* by the elaboration of a detailed critical framework through which it is possible to distinguish autobiography from the other genres with which it is often confused. Lejeune explains, for example, that internal analysis of a text is insufficient to distinguish between an autobiography and an autobiographical novel. The defining feature of an autobiography is the existence of a 'pacte autobiographique' in which nominal identity is established between the author, narrator and protagonist of the work. The autobiographical pact can be sealed only by an intratextual indication that the narrator and protagonist of the piece bear the same name as the extratextual author (Lejeune 1975: 26). According to Lejeune, this autobiographical pact operates as a kind of contract between author and reader, the underlying, if often unarticulated, premise of which is that the writer commits him or herself to attempt to tell the truth as sincerely as possible. Autobiography depends, then, upon an implicit agreement be-

⁴ For Lejeune's work on computerised and internet-based forms of life writing, see Lejeune (2000). For work on 'le journal personnel', see Lejeune (1989).

⁵ As Hélène Jaccomard points out, Lejeune's basic definition places surprisingly little emphasis upon the role of truth in autobiography, stressing instead the importance of a focus upon the evolution of the writer's own personality through the events of the life story (Jaccomard 1993: 29).

tween writer and reader, a fact that Lejeune claims increases the personal investment of both parties.⁶

Lejeune's groundbreaking work clearly establishes autobiography as a well-defined literary genre that is circumscribed by strict generic laws and conventions, and a well-established relationship between reader and writer. How, then, is it possible to reconcile these characteristics with the knowledge that autobiography has been the basis of considerable disciplinary experimentation and innovation in recent times?⁷

As Alex Hughes argues in *Heterographies* (1999), it is clear that even those autobiographies normally classified as conventional, and which therefore could be assumed to conform to Lejeune's strict categorisation, often contain indications of the impossibility of the enterprise they are undertaking. Indeed, the notion of producing a 'copie conforme' of real life reckons without the vagaries of both ego and memory, a fact that has not gone unremarked by critics.⁸ Hughes argues that

The impossibility that inheres in autobiography helps us to see why individual authors, seduced by the life-writing enterprise, elect to step outside the bounds of the autobiographical model 'proper', and to pursue practices of self-representation that self-consciously problematize the factuality/ sincerity of the self-reflexive narrative a(rte)f(ac)t, play with the fiction: autobiography divide, and thereby point up what Serge Doubrovsky conceives as the 'folly' intrinsic in the writerly attempt to sustain an autobiographical discourse of self- or existential truth. (Hughes 1999: 3)

⁶ In fact, in his later works and comments on *Le Pacte autobiographique*, Lejeune has further stressed the importance of the relationship between writer and reader in relation to autobiography. He argues that, to a much greater degree than in works of fiction, in autobiography the writer is asking the reader to believe what he/she is saying, and therefore to become complicit in his literary enterprise. In a recent interview, for example, he tells us that 'l'homme qui écrit sa vie, et qui vous la livre, vous demande une reconnaissance, un quitus, une approbation qui ne concerne pas seulement son texte, mais sa personne et sa vie. Le lecteur est l'objet d'un demande d'amour, ou placé dans la situation d'un juré d'assises.' Lejeune in interview with Delon (2002: 22).

⁷ Leigh Gilmore argues that disciplinary experimentation is one of the most striking features of contemporary autobiographical writing (Gilmore 1994b: 4).

⁸ See, for example, Pibarot (2001: 20-21).

Whilst some autobiographers may have recognised the difficulties inherent in the autobiographical enterprise but continued anyway, Hughes suggests that others have made these problems the trigger for innovation within their life writing. She goes on to argue that innovative life writing techniques 'are commonly associated with postmodern autobiographers [...] and with women autobiographers: however they are certainly not exclusive to them, or exclusive to the autoreferential literature of the contemporary period' (Hughes 1999: 3). Recognition of the fundamentally flawed nature of classic autobiography may not, then, be exclusive to the postmodern period, but it is certainly not unrelated either, as several critics have pointed out.⁹ Indeed, a reconsideration of the characterising features of postmodernism that I discussed in chapter 1, indicates clear compatibility between postmodern thinking and more experimental forms of life writing. Taking into account the nature of postmodernism, it is perhaps unsurprising that the notion of a single, lucid subject producing a 'copie conforme' of his or her life story in transparent language has become highly problematic in recent decades. As Leigh Gilmore points out in an essay entitled 'The Mark of Autobiography' (1994), postmodernism has led to the questioning of traditionally stable elements of the life story such as history and subjectivity (Gilmore 1994b: 4-5). Moreover, Gilmore goes on to argue that postmodern thought has contributed to the denaturalisation of the white, heterosexual male 'ideal' subject of autobiography in recent times, a hypothesis that finds great support in the work of postcolonial scholars such as Caren Kaplan. In 'Resisting Autobiography: Out-Law Genres and Transnational Feminist Subjects' (1992), Kaplan elaborates upon the greater openness within the contemporary life writing arena to the stories of people previously excluded from autobiographical writing, such as those in formerly colonised countries, as well as the greater acceptance of the diverse forms that life writing may take.¹⁰ In fact, so pervasive a trend within con-

⁹ As Doubrovsky argued as far back as 1970, 'toute mise en question de l'homme met en question la littérature, et inversement' (Doubrovsky 1970: 53). This argument has been supported more recently by Leigh Gilmore who argues that 'the rumblings of postmodernist debate have also shaken the constructed foundations of autobiography studies' (Gilmore 1994b: 5).

¹⁰ Kaplan discusses, for example, 'crossover' or 'outlaw' life writing genres that are often favoured by those in former colonial countries. In many cases these reject the traditional, Western notion of a unique individual narrating a heroic

temporary literature has autobiographical innovation proved to be in recent times, that the term 'nouvelle autobiographie' has passed into critical discourse.¹¹ According to Mounir Laouyen, the editor of a special edition of *L'Esprit créateur* dedicated to this very topic, new autobiography is marked by experimentation with 'pacte, récit et mode d'énonciation' (Laouyen 2002: 3). He goes on to argue that 'le nouvel autobiographe cherche à maintenir le sens d'une vie en suspens, dans un état fragmentaire, à l'abri de toute postulation totalisante, car toute tentative de récapitulation est vaine' (Laouyen 2002: 6). Again, the link is clear between what Laouyen identifies as typical within the 'new autobiography', in this case a rejection of totalisation, and the fundamental tenets of postmodernism.

One of the most interesting and coherently theorised developments within the field of autobiography studies has been that of the notion of *autofiction*. This is a generic concept that is particularly relevant to this study, the term having been coined by Serge Doubrovsky, one of the writers to be studied, and the notion encapsulating precisely the type of playful experimentation with the boundaries of fact and fiction that is undertaken, at least some of the time, by each of my three writers. What, then, is meant by the term *autofiction*?

The formulation *autofiction*, which has now passed into common usage and is present in the Larousse and Robert French dictionaries, was coined in 1977 by Serge Doubrovsky upon the realisation that the book he was currently writing defied Lejeune's taxonomy of literary genres, offered in *Le Pacte*.¹² Whilst retaining an identitarian rela-

life story, in order to place the emphasis on narrating collective histories instead, or may rely upon a collaborative process of inscription and authorship (Kaplan 1992: 115 - 138).

¹¹ Robbe-Grillet coined the term 'nouvelle autobiographie' by analogy with the term 'nouveau roman'. Taking this as the theme for a special edition of *L'Esprit créateur* of which he was the editor, Mounir Laouyen argued that 'les trente dernières années furent sans conteste marquées par une grande vague de renouvellement du discours autobiographique' (Laouyen 2002: 3).

¹² As Doubrovsky himself stresses, 'je n'ai pas du tout inventé l'autofiction. J'ai inventé le nom, le mot' (see Hughes's interview with Doubrovsky). In fact, the significance of this form of life writing is evident from the number of important works of French literature that can be classified as autofiction, some of which were written considerably earlier than Doubrovsky's own efforts. In the interview cited above, Doubrovsky himself mentions works by Colette and

tionship between author, narrator and protagonist as is necessary in classic autobiography, autofictional texts are often labelled 'roman', or bear some other mark of their partially fictitious content. The autofictional pact varies significantly, then, from its autobiographical counterpart. Rather than professing to tell the truth as sincerely as possible, an *autofiction* acknowledges the fallibility of memory and the impossibility of truthfully recounting a life story. According to Doubrovsky, autofictional writing seeks to create a fictional framework through which to narrate biographically verifiable events. In an interview with Jean-François Louette, for example, he stated that 'l'auto-fiction c'est une mise en scène. [...] On se raconte comme on raconte un personnage de fiction, pour communiquer sa propre vie' (Doubrovsky in interview with Louette 2000-2001: 217). The will to blur generic boundaries and to blend fact and fiction is, then, overtly signalled in *autofiction*. It should not be assumed, however, that this mix of the referential and the imaginary is entirely free flowing and unrestrained. In fact, Doubrovsky imposes stringent rules upon what exactly can be fictionalised in *autofiction*. He tells us: 'je suis tout à fait opposé à la thèse de Vincent Colonna: l'autofiction consisterait à donner son nom à un personnage, et à lui inventer une vie imaginaire... Non' (Doubrovsky in interview with Louette 2000-2001: 217). For Doubrovsky, the fictional is a resource to be drawn upon primarily to compensate for the failings of memory, to provide a 'mise en scène' for the narration of a real life story. It is certainly not a means through which a writer can invent an imaginary life for him or herself. According to Doubrovsky, it is frequently the time frame that must be fictionalised in *autofiction* in order to avoid creating a false impression of whole, unflawed memory. Unlike in classic autobiography, then, where the life story is typically narrated chronologically in the past tense, in *autofiction* the reader is more likely to be presented with a discontinuous series of present moments.¹³ *Autofiction* is summed up by Doubrovsky as '[une] fausse fiction, qui est histoire d'une vraie vie' (Doubrovsky 1980: 87-97).

Genet that dated from 1928 and 1949 respectively and which could be considered to be works of autofiction.

¹³ For a discussion of the role of the time of narration in autofiction see Serge Doubrovsky in interview with Contat (2001: 126) and in interview with Hughes.

It is clear, then, that there are considerable differences between classic autobiography and *autofiction*. In fact, so significant have some critics deemed these differences to be, that Doubrovsky has been accused of being a pioneer of 'anti-autobiography'.¹⁴ He himself refuted this assertion in an interview in 1999, arguing that 'je ne suis pas du tout anti-autobiographique. Ce que j'ai essayé de faire, c'est un type différent d'autobiographie. [...] Je me range parmi les sous-catégories de l'autobiographie' (Doubrovsky in interview with Hughes). *Autofiction*, at least as Doubrovsky defines it, should not be conceptualised as directly opposed to autobiography, but rather as one of autobiography's many variations. Doubrovsky goes on to tell us that 'à la fin du vingtième siècle, on n'en fait plus comme on pouvait faire à la fin du dix-huitième' (Doubrovsky in interview with Hughes 1999). *Autofiction*, then, is seen by Doubrovsky as a late twentieth-century form of autobiographical writing. Moreover, as Doubrovsky himself indicated in an interview with Michel Contat, too much stress should not be placed on the role of fiction in *autofiction*. In fact, Doubrovsky says 'même les autobiographes classiques savaient qu'ils écrivaient de la fiction. Chez Rousseau c'est très évident: il a très bien vu le rôle de l'imagination, qui se substitue à la mémoire' (Doubrovsky in interview with Louette 2000-2001: 217). What is significant about *autofiction* is not the presence of fictional elements, but rather the overt signalling and acceptance of these elements. Unlike in classic autobiography, then, in *autofiction* the explicit will to fictionalise means that there is a definite space between the author and his or her intratextual self-representation. The life that is narrated in such a text is one that the author has consciously chosen and manipulated, and therefore no simple correlation can be seen between writer and main character in *autofiction*.¹⁵

¹⁴ Paul John Eakin, for example, accuses Doubrovsky of having written an 'anti-autobiography' in *Fils*, that tests the boundaries of generic definition (Eakin 1992: 26).

¹⁵ It is because of this space between author and textual self-representation that in this study I will overly distinguish between the two. In the case of Doubrovsky, I shall use Doubrovsky to refer to the author and 'Doubrovsky' to refer to his intratextual self-representation. Similarly, Guibert will signal discussion of the author, and 'Guibert' that of author's intratextual avatar. For Robin, confusion between author and characters is less likely as will become evident. For a discussion of the overt intention to blend referential 'fact' with fiction, see Chiantaretto (1993: 165).

What, then, might be said to be the implications of sealing a life writing text with an autofictional rather than an autobiographical pact? Some highly eminent literary critics have clearly conceived of *autofiction* as a literary endeavour that is tainted with overwhelmingly negative attributes.¹⁶ Gérard Genette, for example, has argued that *autofiction*'s main appeal for a writer is the ease with which it allows him or her to prevent taking responsibility, either morally or legally, for the impact of the text. Doubrovsky himself directly addresses this criticism in an interview with Jean-François Louette in *Les Temps modernes*:

A-t-on le droit, puisqu'on n'existe pas seul, de dévoiler la vie d'autrui, en racontant la sienne? Certains critiques malintentionnés ou naïfs ont été jusqu'à dire que l'appellation de «roman» était une ruse pour éviter les poursuites judiciaires! Supposition absurde, car, roman ou pas, toute atteinte à la vie privée peut être sanctionnée. [...]. En ce qui me concerne, je me suis justifié à mes propres yeux en ne m'épargnant pas plus que je n'ai épargné les autres. Et sans doute moins. (Doubrovsky in interview with Louette 2000-2001: 218)

Setting aside the controversy over the moral and legal implications of *autofiction*, then, further disagreement is evident with regard to the literary implications of this form of life writing. Annie Jouan Westlund's work is helpful in clarifying this. As she explains, the effect of establishing an autofictional pact in which the fallibility of memory is overtly acknowledged might be to produce an 'uneasy reader'. That is to say that the effect of reading an open acknowledgement that some elements of the narrative have been fictionalised might be to make the reader more defensive and critical in their treatment of the text. In reality, as Westlund goes on to argue in relation specifically to one of Doubrovsky's own *autofictions*, 'it is more than likely [...] that the reader will forget about the fictitious aspect of the novel as he is gradually led into the life of the Doubrovskys' (Jouan-Westlund 1997: 424). In what has been termed the 'lure' of *autofiction*, then, overt intratextual acknowledgments of flawed referentiality may lull the reader into a false sense of security, deferring critical judgement about the sincerity of the text to the author him or herself (Ireland 1993: 8).

¹⁶ In fact, Doubrovsky's autofictions have also received personal criticism from his nephew, Marc Weitzmann. For a discussion of this see Montremy (2002: 62).

Criticisms aside, the autobiographical sub-genre of *autofiction* remains a force to be reckoned with on the contemporary life-writing scene, and is one which is of key significance to the project of this monograph, a project that seeks to bring precisely this type of autobiographical writing into dialogue with contemporary spatial paradigms. Having established the generic basis of terms such as ‘autobiography’ and ‘autofiction’, it is to the three writers upon whom my study will focus that I will now turn. As the definition of *autofiction* has inevitably involved considerable reference to Serge Doubrovsky, it is to him that my discussion will turn first.

2.2 Serge Doubrovsky

Serge Doubrovsky was born in May 1928 in Paris to a French Jewish mother and a father of East European origin. As will already have become evident, in addition to writing autofictional literature, Serge Doubrovsky has made a significant contribution to contemporary literary theory. After gaining his *agrégation* in English from *L'École normale supérieure* in Paris, it has been as a professor of French literature, most notably at the University of New York, that he has earned his living. Particular areas of interest for Doubrovsky have included the works of Corneille, Racine, Proust and Sartre, upon whom he has continued to publish critical studies. Certainly within the French speaking world, however, it is for the seven volumes of literary writing that he has published since 1969 that Doubrovsky is best known: *La Dispersion* (1969); *Fils* (1977); *Un amour de soi* (1982); *La Vie l'instant* (1985); *Le Livre brisé* (1989); *L'Après-vivre* (1994) and *Laissé pour conte* (1999).¹⁷ The reaction generated by these works amongst members of the public and members of the literary elite alike has been striking in its diversity. The most controversial of Doubrovsky's literary writings, *Le Livre brisé* (1989), for example, caused some critics to accuse Doubrovsky of being responsible for the death of his wife due to the brutal nature of his textual revelations

¹⁷ For a list of the abbreviated titles of these works, and those of my other authors, that will be used throughout this monograph, please see ‘List of Abbreviated Names of Primary Texts’.

about her alcoholism.¹⁸ The same work, however, received extensive literary plaudits and was awarded the *prix Médicis* in 1989. The impact of Doubrovsky's work on the French literary scene should not, then, be underestimated.

Doubrovsky's Literary Motivations and Beliefs

As a French Jew who experienced the brutal realities of persecution and occupation at first hand, it is perhaps unsurprising that Doubrovsky's literary *oeuvre* should be irrefutably marked by the Second World War. Doubrovsky makes frequent reference both intra- and extratextually to the enduring impact that the war had upon him, and agrees that he could be classified as 'un écrivain de la survie'.¹⁹ In a recent interview, Doubrovsky suggested that the war had been a determining literary motivation for him. He asserted that 'je n'aurais pas écrit si je n'avais pas été l'enfant des années quarante. C'est ce qui m'a propulsé dans l'écriture' (Doubrovsky in interview with Contat 2001: 125). Whilst this assertion does not probe too deeply into the precise reasons why the war should have had such an impact upon his literary production, Régine Robin suggests that two main, interrelated reasons can be identified. She argues that Doubrovsky is pushed to write both because of a sense of the miraculousness of his survival and because of the sense of guilt he feels at having survived in the place of others (Robin 1997b: 123). Robin's analysis is supported by Doubrovsky's own admission of shame at not having played a more active role in the war. In a recent interview he comments: 'ce fut toujours un des grands manques de ma vie de n'avoir pu participer à la Seconde Guerre mondiale... d'avoir subi. Les mots sont une arme parfois'

¹⁸ In fact, excerpts of critical reviews of *Le Livre brisé* were incorporated into Doubrovsky's subsequent book, *L'Après-vivre* (see particularly AV: 259-265). A little later, Doubrovsky incorporated into *L'Après-vivre*, an account of his appearance on 'Apostrophes', which was underpinned by the presenter Bernard Pivot's interrogation of whether Doubrovsky's brutal textual revelations had driven his wife to death (see AV: 300-304).

¹⁹ He tells us, for example: 'je n'en suis jamais sorti, des années quarante'. See interview with Louette (2000-2001: 213). In a different interview, Doubrovsky agrees with Michel Contat's suggestion that he could be categorised as 'un écrivain de la survie'. See Doubrovsky in interview with Contat (2001: 126).

(Doubrovsky in interview with Louette 2000-2001: 214). Doubrovsky's literary pursuits are, then, at least partially motivated by the desire to achieve something with which to justify his survival. Why though should Doubrovsky have deviated from his original career path as an academic to invest so much in life writing?

In *Un amour de soi* (1982), one of the earlier works in Doubrovsky's life writing corpus, the intratextual voice seems to explain the writer's decision to undertake his own autobiographical project rather than to work solely as a literary critic. We are told that 'comme, à travers les autres, on ne parle jamais que de soi, il est temps de le faire à visage découvert' (UAS: 13). The decision to write autobiographical literature seems to be for Doubrovsky the logical result of an ontological belief that all scholarly endeavour is inevitably coloured and shaped by the author's own concerns. If this is accepted to be the case, then it is clearly better to embrace the self overtly and to foreground its presence in literature, than to hide behind a pretence of focusing upon something else. Despite its author's clear belief in the impossibility of producing anything other than the self-referential, Doubrovsky's work incorporates numerous references to his sense of being excluded from the most obviously self-referential genre, that of autobiography 'proper'. For example, in *Le Livre brisé* (1989), he tells us that 'l'autobiographie n'est pas un genre démocratique: une chasse gardée, un club fermé, un privilège jaloux. Réservé aux importants de ce monde, grands écrivains, capitaines d'armée, d'industrie' (LLB: 256). A little later in the same piece, the intratextual Doubrovsky – the narrator of his autofictional realm – concludes that 'grand-homme-au-soir-de-sa-vie-et-dans-un-beau-style. Peux pas prendre la pose. [...]. J'Y AI PAS LE DROIT. Pas membre du club, on me refuse l'entrée. MA VIE N'INTÉRESSE PERSONNE' (LLB: 256; see also UAS: 90). The feeling of being unworthy of the genre of autobiography causes Doubrovsky to assert that 'l'autobiographie, ce panthéon des pompes funèbres, l'accès m'en est interdit. D'accord. Mais je puis m'y introduire en fraude. Resquiller, à la faveur de la fiction, sous le couvert du roman' (LLB: 256). The sub-genre of *autofiction*, then, is formulated by Doubrovsky as a way in which to write the story of his life

without tackling the formidable ramparts of the edifice of conventional autobiography.²⁰

The blend of factual and fictional inputs into Doubrovsky's autofictional writing is highly complex. Unlike many classic autobiographers the extratextual writer claims never to have kept a diary upon whose record of daily events and thoughts he might have drawn. He does, however, make great use of old letters, citing real excerpts from a correspondence in *Un amour de soi* (1982) and using his own letters to his mother to stimulate his memory in *Laissé pour conte* (1999). Perhaps unexpectedly, one element of Doubrovsky's autofictional *oeuvre* that significantly modifies the balance of truth and fiction in his books is his relationship with language. He tells us:

Je sens que lorsque j'écris, je louche, parce que mon oeil d'un côté regarde vers le référent – l'histoire qui m'est arrivée – et l'autre oeil, en même temps, regarde le jeu des mots, la manière dont ils s'accouplent, s'assemblent etc. Et c'est à l'intérieur de ce jeu de mots que je glisse le référent. (Doubrovsky in interview with Hughes 1999)

In a later interview he reinforces the argument that the referential is modified by the play with language, telling us that in his books real life experiences are 'modul[és] par une musique de l'écriture' in order to create 'd'émotions immédiates' rather than 'un récit ordonné'.²¹ Doubrovsky's writing style, then, bespeaks a highly playful impulse to experiment with words and puns. In doing so, it firmly rejects the traditional division that equated factual writing with the biographical and literary language with the fictional. Moreover, so important does Doubrovsky rate this relationship with language that he tells us that 'l'aventure de langage définit l'autofiction' (Doubrovsky in interview with Contat 2001: 119).

²⁰ This notion of conventional or 'classic' autobiography refers back, of course to that style of life writing interrogated a little earlier in my discussion and defined by Lejeune as 'récit rétrospectif en prose qu'une personne réelle fait de sa propre existence, lorsqu'elle met l'accent sur sa vie individuelle, en particulier sur l'histoire de sa personnalité' (Lejeune 1975: 14).

²¹ See Doubrovsky in interview with Contat (2001: 120). For further discussions of the relationship between the referential and language, particularly in his later works, see Doubrovsky in interview with Hughes (1999).

In fact, any preconception that this play with language might distance the text from the 'truth' would be highly misleading. The playful writing style that is particularly striking in Doubrovsky's earlier *autofictions* can be linked to another formative preoccupation of his: that of psychoanalysis. Having undergone an extensive course of analysis following the death of his mother, Doubrovsky chooses not merely to inscribe this experience as a theme within his writing, but to weave it into the very structure of his books. As Annie Jouan-Westlund has argued, there are many examples within Doubrovsky's work in which he seems to be attempting to find a language that is as close as possible to his unconscious (Jouan-Westlund 1997: 426). Indeed, Doubrovsky's remarks in recent interviews seem to support this hypothesis. He argues, for example, that 'mon écriture est semi-automatique, c'est-à-dire que le flux verbal domine tout' (Doubrovsky in interview with Contat 2001: 122). Similarly, in a different interview he asserted that 'je n'écris pas mes livres, mes livres s'écrivent à travers moi' (Doubrovsky in interview with Hughes 1999). The free-flowing writing style that Doubrovsky argues to be of paramount importance to his *autofictions*, then, seems to be closely linked with the author's own psychoanalytic experiences and his interest in his own unconscious. Doubrovsky's textual relationship with psychoanalysis is in fact a particularly interesting feature of his work. As Philippe Lejeune points out in *Moi aussi* (1986), whereas many life writers seek merely to tell the story of their analysis in their texts, through his writing Doubrovsky 'veut la prolonger'.²² Indeed, it is feasible to believe that Doubrovsky's autofictional writing could be seen to be the locus of his 'real' or 'authentic' analysis, because whereas his sessions with the psychoanalyst Robert Akeret took place in English, writing allows Doubrovsky to continue the work of turning his neuroses into words within the medium of his *langue maternelle*.²³ The word play and punning accorded such an important role within Doubrovsky's *autofictions* cannot, then, be seen as a distraction from the referential truth.

²² In his discussion of this matter, Lejeune cites Marie Cardinal as an example of a writer who seeks to tell the story of her analysis through writing (Lejeune 1986: 62).

²³ In his recent interview with Michel Contat, Doubrovsky argued: 'pourquoi cette écriture de la consonance? Une hypothèse: comme j'ai fait ma psychanalyse en anglais, j'ai refait une expérience quasi analytique en laissant l'initiative aux mots' (Doubrovsky in interview with Contat 2001: 135).

On the contrary, Doubrovsky suggests that by engaging with his unconscious and incorporating his psychoanalytic experiences into his literature he will produce life writing that is not truer, but richer 'au sens où l'on dit que l'uranium a été par *traitement*, lui aussi, *enrichi*' (Doubrovsky 1988: 78).

Perhaps, then, in addition to the motivations for writing that Robin identifies in relation to Doubrovsky, particularly the desire to achieve something to justify surviving his wartime experiences, we can identify another motivation here. For Doubrovsky, autofictional writing seems to constitute a way of prolonging his psychoanalysis, and of transferring it into his first language. He tells us: 'l'autobiographie n'est pas un genre littéraire, c'est un remède métaphysique' (LLB: 255). Just like psychoanalysis, *autofiction* provides a forum in which a 'fiction' of personal history and selfhood is constructed with which the individual can live. As Doubrovsky himself has commented, 'le sens d'une vie n'existe nulle part, n'existe pas. Il n'est pas à découvrir, mais à inventer, non de toutes pièces, mais de toutes traces: il est à *construire*' (Doubrovsky 1988: 77). Whereas much conventional autobiographical writing is undertaken merely in order to record the stories of individuals who society judges to have led particularly interesting lives, this is not apparently the case for Doubrovsky. His intratextual persona, 'Serge Doubrovsky', tells us: 'depuis que je transforme ma vie en phrases, je me trouve intéressant. À mesure que je deviens le personnage de mon roman, je me passionne pour moi' (UAS: 91). Rather than the events of an interesting life adding together to make a great autobiography, then, it seems that for Doubrovsky this formula is reversed: it is the process of literary inscription that makes him and his life interesting, perhaps even bearable. This argument is supported by John Ireland, who tells us that for Doubrovsky the function of writing is not to represent his life but to redeem it (Ireland 1993: 4-5). Indeed, in *Le Livre brisé* the intratextual, autofictional Doubrovsky does overtly claim that 'mes écrits plaident ma cause' (LLB: 66). As Jean-Luc Pagès points out, on the back cover of the original version of *Fils* Doubrovsky is credited with the words 'ma vie ratée sera une réussite littéraire' (Pagès 2000: 186). From this it can be inferred that, in addition to providing an arena in which Doubrovsky can construct a meaning for his life, this writer believes that literature also wields the capacity to compensate for the failures of life.

Despite the fictional elements of his *autofictions*, then, it is abundantly clear that in the literary world of Doubrovsky's life writing, life and text are caught up in a complex and mutually influential relationship. Indeed, so closely interwoven are Doubrovsky's life and texts that the consequences of what Doubrovsky writes are particularly severe. Both Doubrovsky himself and those around him pay a high price for being transformed into literature. John Ireland's arguments are again helpful here, as he suggests that

Autofiction, for all the ludic dimension of its inter-generic play, is a very high stakes game. Doubrovsky's stated goal to make the word flesh hides the extent to which this ambition constitutes a reversible proposition in which ultimately the inverse metamorphosis must prevail. Autofiction feeds on flesh. (Ireland 1993: 10)

In seeking to push literature to the limits of the possible, Doubrovsky in fact pushes his life to the limit too, a fact with which he battles most obviously in *Le Livre brisé*. This work begins with the intratextual Doubrovsky's wife Ilse throwing down the gauntlet and challenging him to write the story of their relationship and marriage. The book is, however, 'broken' by Ilse's death after she reads the manuscript. In fact, it is the specific modalities of Doubrovsky's autofictional endeavour that greatly increase the risks involved: whereas in classic autobiography the events of life are typically separated from their narration by a time lapse, *autofiction* overtly and wilfully seeks to narrate everything in the present. As Annie Jouan-Westlund signals:

By telling his life as it is lived, Doubrovsky pushes the temporal limits of the genre. He manages to synchronize the time of the story with the time of the narration. What constitutes his greatest achievement in *Le Livre brisé* also constitutes his greatest mistake because the time conjunction between the two instances raises an insoluble problem that constitutes the most important transgression in the text: can the text be held responsible for Ilse's death, or is it the purely coincidental retelling of her death? (Jouan-Westlund 1997: 428)

Whatever judgement is made on this matter, it is clear that the death of Ilse plunges Doubrovsky's autofictional enterprise into crisis. Intratextually, this is signalled with the question: 'comment vouloir faire de la mort de sa femme, littérature'? (LLB: 316). The conclusion, perhaps fortunately, is that whilst Ilse may have been silenced, 'l'écrivain n'a pas le droit de se taire. [...] L'écrivain est la part inhumaine de

l'homme' (LLB: 311). In sum, it is clear that when life and literature are so immediately and closely interlinked, the price paid is high. As the intratextual Doubrovsky himself tells us: 'si on joue le jeu de la vérité, vraiment: ça devient un jeu de massacre' (LLB: 281).

Doubrovsky's Autofictional Corpus

Doubrovsky's *oeuvre* is in many ways highly coherent. In fact, in his extratextual discussions of his books he himself suggests that they very definitely belong to one overall literary project. He tells us that each book is situated in a different period of his life and correspondingly has a different style.²⁴ Moreover, in recent times, Doubrovsky has stressed his perception of these works as different components of a single whole, telling us:

maintenant [...] j'ai le sentiment que l'oeuvre se referme sur elle-même. Ce qui avait été mon projet, écrire à chaque fois un livre, de la sorte que la somme forme une oeuvre, j'ai l'impression maintenant que par rapport à ces livres — il y en a sept si je compte bien — je me trouve maintenant à l'extérieur, hors texte... même s'il m'arrive d'écrire encore. (Doubrovsky in interview with Louette 2000-2001: 210)

The coherence of Doubrovsky's *oeuvre* is reinforced by the strength of the intertextual connections between individual works. For example, in *Un amour de soi*, there is a reference to 'mon premier roman, *La Dispersion*' (UAS: 49). In *Laissé pour conte* there are references to *Fils* and *Un amour de soi* (LPC: 263).²⁵ It would, however, be highly naive not to distinguish between the individual components of Doubrovsky's *oeuvre*. In fact, closer examination reveals that not all of Doubrovsky's literary publications can be considered to be *autofictions*, and therefore will not be focused on in this work. The two vol-

²⁴ See Doubrovsky in interview with Contat (2001: 120). As Jaccomard has commented: 'l'organisation n'est pas chronologique, mais procède par association d'idées au sein d'une époque déterminée ce qui occasionne des oscillations dans le temps, des rappels, des répétitions intra-textuelles (au sein d'un même volume) et extra-textuelles (au sein de l'oeuvre)' (Jaccomard 1993: 82).

²⁵ For a discussion of the intertext between the different volumes of Doubrovsky's *oeuvre* see Doubrovsky in interview with Hughes (1999).

umes published by Doubrovsky that seem most incongruous with the rest of his *oeuvre* are *Le Jour S* (1963) and *La Vie L'Instant* (1985). The first of these, *Le Jour S* (1963), which was also Doubrovsky's very first literary publication, is rarely referred to by the author himself, and is certainly not counted as belonging to his autofictional *oeuvre*. He tells us that *Le Jour S* (1963) 'est un peu à part. [...] Ça ne fait pas vraiment partie de mon œuvre' (Doubrovsky in interview with Louette 2000-2001: 211). *La Vie L'Instant* (1985) is also a work that is rarely referred to by either author or critics. Moreover, its composition as a collection of short stories, albeit ones in which the subject matter bears a striking resemblance with Doubrovsky's life, means that it does not comply with Doubrovsky's own strict definition of *autofiction*.

La Dispersion, published in 1969, has provoked considerable debate amongst critics. This volume is far from the most well known of Doubrovsky's works and its generic status is somewhat ambiguous. It is clearly labelled 'roman', despite being written in the first person singular and is similar in both style and content to Doubrovsky's future works. Despite these 'trademark' characteristics of Doubrovsky's later *autofictions*, there is no proof of intratextual nominal identity between the author, narrator and protagonist and therefore no autofictional pact is established in *La Dispersion*. Patrick Saveau, a critic who studied under Doubrovsky's direction, argues that despite this, the work is generally accepted to be an *autofiction* because it 'contains in gestation the following six volumes' (1999: 27). This judgement is however somewhat difficult to accept. Whilst *La Dispersion* may contain the kernel out of which Doubrovsky's future autofictional project grew, it cannot be said that this work contains an autofictional pact, and therefore will not constitute part of the corpus of Doubrovsky's works upon which my analysis will focus.

The first of Doubrovsky's books to be clearly identifiable as autofiction was published in 1977, entitled '*Fils*'. In fact, it is this work that Doubrovsky claims to have been writing when he read *Le Pacte autobiographique* and realised that his own work defied Lejeune's generic classifications. Despite being labelled 'roman', then, a nominal relationship is established between the author, narrator and protagonist, as there are intratextual references to the author's first names (Julien-Serge: 59 and 201), as well as his surname (Doubrovsky: 68 and 201), and his mother's name (Weitzmann: 230 and

312). Moreover, despite the apparently confusing structure of this multi-layered and fragmented book, as Hélène Jaccomard has pointed out, it is in fact organised ‘de manière on-ne-peut-plus classique, selon l’unité de temps d’une tragédie, une journée dans la vie de Serge’ (Jacomard 1993: 82). That is to say that, in true autofictional style, an imagined time frame is constructed through which some of the intratextual Doubrovsky’s most pressing concerns can be explored. As I argued above, this is, according to Doubrovsky, one of the classic traits of *autofiction*.²⁶

The second of Doubrovsky’s works to be classed as an *autofiction* is *Un amour de soi*, which was published in 1982. This book, which Doubrovsky claims to have been structured around a musical metaphor,²⁷ contains a similarly complex blend of themes. Moreover, like *Fils*, *Un amour de soi* is labelled ‘roman’ and is written in the first person singular. It contains fewer intratextual references to the author’s name, however (merely ‘S.D.’: 254; ‘Julien’: 147; and the signature ‘S.D.’ on the back cover), and hence the autofictional pact is potentially weak. The generic status of this work is signalled and ‘sealed’, however, by a metanarrative passage in which the intratextual Doubrovsky seeks to explain the autofictional project. He tells us that his writing

[n’est] pas une autobiographie, vraiment, c’est là une chasse gardée, un club exclusif pour des gens célèbres. Pour y avoir droit, il faut être quelqu’un. [...] Moi, je ne suis, dans mon petit deux-pièces d’emprunt, personne. J’existe à peine, je suis un être fictif. J’écris mon autofiction. (UAS: 90-91)

The inclusion of this metanarrative passage suggests strongly to the reader that *Un amour de soi*, its narrative container, can be classified precisely as an autofictional construct.

²⁶ As Doubrovsky himself commented in an extratextual discussion of a particular passage of *Fils*, ‘il n’y a pas un détail dans ce passage qui ne soit vérifiable, mais il n’y a pas un seul détail qui soit historiquement vrai’. Serge Doubrovsky, ‘Autofiction et écriture de soi’, Colloque sur Serge Doubrovsky à Dijon, November 2000, CD.

²⁷ Doubrovsky lists this musical structure as ‘prélude, fugue, in coda, et des spirales’. See Doubrovsky in interview with Contat (2001: 127).

Both *Le Livre brisé* and *L'Après-vivre* use nominal identification and metanarrative commentary to compel the reader to effect an autofictional pact in the texts s/he is reading. *Le Livre brisé*, rendered notorious by virtue of the death during production of one of its main characters, was published in 1989. In this work, there are not only frequent intratextual references to the author's name (Julien-Serge: 154; Julien, Serge and Doubrovsky: 270; 'Weitzmann': 271) but also a brief pseudo-autobiography in which many verifiable, key details about Doubrovsky's life are given (259-260). Despite its being labelled 'roman', then, it is clear that it makes overt references to the extratextual Serge Doubrovsky's life. Moreover, in this work, metanarrative intratextual commentaries upon the frontier between fact and fiction at which *autofiction* is located seem to proliferate. For example, we read: 'UN ROMAN VRAI. [...] On chatouille l'imagination. On certifie que l'imaginaire est véridique. Jouissance double: le rêve et la réalité' (LLB: 65). A little later we read: 'même en voulant dire vrai, on écrit faux. On lit faux. Folie. Une vie réelle passée se présente comme une vie fictive future. Raconter sa vie, c'est toujours le monde à l'envers' (LLB: 76). Indeed, intratextually inscribing his wife Ilse's reproaches for 'inexactitudes', the intratextual Doubrovsky seems to justify the autofictional project. He tells us: 'une fiction, ça déforme, ça reforme, ça synthétise. De la vérité, ça extrait la quintessence, ça ne fournit pas tous les détails' (LLB: 279). *Le Livre brisé*, like *Fils* and *Un amour de soi* before it, is, then, firmly located with the remit of the sub-genre of *autofiction*.

L'Après-vivre, published in 1994, is an equally moving work, which focuses primarily on the experience of the intratextual Doubrovsky's depression after Ilse's death, as well as a new relationship with 'Elle'. In this work, again narrated in the first person singular, nominal identity is clearly established between author, narrator and protagonist (Doubrovsky: 31; Julien-Serge: 121). Moreover, once again, an overt metanarrative explanation of *autofiction* encourages the reader to receive the text as an instance of that which its narrator describes:

J'ai pris l'habitude, depuis des années, de mettre ma vie en récits. D'en faire, par tranche, des sortes de romans. J'ai appelé ça, faute de mieux, mon «autofiction». De l'autobiographie toute chaude, à vif, qui saigne, mais recomposée selon les normes propres de l'écriture. Ma

vie, mais pour aboutir à des livres. Qui se lisent comme une œuvre romanesque. (AV: 20)

Laissé pour conte, published in 1999 and proposed by Doubrovsky himself both intra- and extratextually to be the last volume of his *oeuvre*, is perhaps the most generically complex of his later books. This work, which was published with the subtitle 'roman', is narrated in the first person singular, and contains extensive intratextual references to the author's name as befits an *autofiction* (S.D.: 52; Julien Serge: 118 and 242; Julien: 192; Serge Doubrovsky: 242; Doubrovsky: 410). In addition, there are overt references to the autofictional writing process: 'Serge Doubrovsky, j'en suis l'auteur, c'est mon personnage, mon double, mon moi en mots' (237). Moreover, on the back cover, in a passage signed 'S.D.', we are told that the books that this writer has produced over the last thirty years can be classified as *autofiction*. He goes on to tell us that

À l'inverse de l'autobiographie, explicative et unifiante, qui veut res-saisir et dérouler les fils d'un destin, l'autofiction ne perçoit pas la vie comme un tout. Elle n'a affaire qu'à des fragments disjoints, des morceaux d'existence brisés, un sujet morcelé qui ne coïncide pas avec lui-même.' (LPC, back cover)

Despite the clarity of the author's own views, however, the classification of this work as an *autofiction* has been challenged by some critics. In an interview published in 1999, for example, Alex Hughes asked Doubrovsky if *Laissé pour conte* should not in fact be considered to be more like a classic autobiography than an *autofiction* because of the more totalising view of life that it seems to adopt when compared with his earlier works. This suggestion was refuted by Doubrovsky on the grounds that the structure of *Laissé pour conte* is at odds with the chronological *récit* that classic autobiography requires. He went on to argue that despite being underpinned by the apparently 'totalising' question 'ma vie a-t-elle un sens?', the view of his life offered by this work is of 'une totalité détotalisée' (Doubrovsky in interview with Hughes 1999). Although *Laissé pour conte* may seem to be a more totalising work than Doubrovsky's previous books, the strength of the author's articulation of its autofictional status means that it will be retained here as a focus of study.

In this study, I shall examine those five volumes of Doubrovsky's literary writing that can be said to comprise the main body of his work, being linked by their sharing of the same, or very similar generic status, and also by the strong intertext between them that indicates continuity in the identity of the narrator. Having briefly established the general characteristics of and underlying motivations for Doubrovsky's writing, as well as the generic status of those works that I will study in this monograph, it is to the next of my three authors that my discussion will now turn.

2.3 Hervé Guibert

Hervé Guibert was born in 1955 in Paris and died on 27th December 1991. After growing up in Paris and La Rochelle, he worked for many years as a journalist in Paris, first at *Le Monde* and subsequently at *L'Autre Journal*. Whilst Guibert was employed primarily as a photography critic, he also wrote about fashion, cinema and theatre.²⁸ In fact, his flexibility as a journalist was paralleled by the diversity of his artistic interests, which included painting and photography as well as writing novels, plays, film scenarios and short stories. Between 1977 and his death in 1991, Guibert published around twenty books, to be followed by a further seven posthumous publications. It was indisputably the publication of *A l'ami qui ne m'a pas sauvé la vie* in 1990, however, that earned Guibert his recognition in France. This work, which is often classified as a first generation AIDS text, tells the tale of the intratextual Hervé Guibert's diagnosis as HIV positive and his subsequent experience of deteriorating health. At the time of its publication *A l'ami* was the focus of much publicity not only because it confronted the greatly feared and little understood entity of AIDS, but also because it contained thinly veiled textual revelations about high profile French cultural figures such as Michel Foucault and Isabelle Adjani. Guibert's status as 'France's premier *sida* novelist' (Apter 1993: 83) was consolidated by the publication of *Le Protocole compassionnel* in 1991 and, posthumously, *L'Homme au chapeau rouge*

²⁸ In an article in *Le Monde*, Frederic Gaussen argues that according to Yvonne Baby, the former head of cultural affairs who recruited Guibert for *Le Monde*, Guibert was 'un journaliste inépuisable' capable of writing about a large range of subjects (Gaussen 2000: 10).

(1992a) and *Cytomégalo*virus (1992b). Like *A l'ami*, these texts also focused upon an HIV positive narrator named 'Hervé Guibert'. In addition, Guibert's autobiographical video diary, *La Pudeur ou l'impudeur*, which was closely linked to *A l'ami*, was screened posthumously on 30th January 1992 on TF1, mainstream French television. The impact of Guibert's work, then, which made him the focus of many newspaper articles, as well as getting him invited onto television programmes such as 'Apostrophes' (16th March 1990) and 'Ex-Libris' (7th March 1991), was considerable.²⁹ Whilst in recent times there has been renewed interest in Guibert's *oeuvre* as a whole, it was indisputably the books that he wrote in the last three years of his life, those in which AIDS plays at least some part, which reached the greatest number of people and had the greatest cultural resonance.³⁰ It is upon these life writing texts, works that are deeply bound up with some of the most interesting questions of self and literature, self and culture, that I will focus in this study.

Guibert's Literary Motivations and Beliefs

Unlike Doubrovsky, Guibert seems to have been relatively shy of indulging in extratextual discussions of his own literary production. Apart from those comments and explanations resulting from the media attention generated by the publication of *A l'ami*, which occurred towards the end of Guibert's writing career and which frequently focused on the scandalous aspects of his later works, there exist few records of Guibert's early writerly motivations and philosophies. Pulling together evidence from a range of sources, however, some conclusions can be drawn. Analysis of Guibert's work as a journalist, for example, shows that his great passions in life were the literary and creative arts.³¹ Moreover, within his intratextual narrations of selfhood, there

²⁹ An extensive selection of newspaper articles about Guibert can be found at IMEC in Paris. For detailed analysis of Guibert's two television appearances, see Boulé (1995b: 112-120).

³⁰ As Jean-Pierre Boulé has documented, *A l'ami qui ne m'a pas sauvé la vie* became a bestseller, having sold over 350,000 copies by September 1994 (Boulé 1995a: 2).

³¹ Analysis of the 'dossiers de presse' held at the IMEC, for example, show numerous examples of articles written by Guibert about all areas of the arts, in-

are hints that Guibert's aim in life was to become a great writer.³² In *Le Protocole compassionnel* (1991), for example, the intratextual Guibert tells us that 'j'ai toujours su que je ferais un jour un grand succès d'un de mes livres' (Le PC: 148). More specifically, there is some evidence to suggest that Guibert's later works at least were motivated by some of the classic desires of conventional autobiographers. For example, in a diary entry written shortly before his death, Guibert wrote that 'un des rôles de la littérature est l'apprentissage de la mort' (Guibert 1993: 23). In this, he seems to indicate a belief that through literature he can explore the ultimate unknown element of human experience: that of death. A little later in the same diary entry Guibert appears to suggest that he also feels a desire to leave a lasting inscription of his identity that will remain after his death. He writes that 'tant de gens pensent à moi que je n'ai presque plus besoin d'exister maintenant' (Guibert 1993: 23). It seems, then, that Guibert's writing is motivated at least partially by some of the classic motors of life writing. Once AIDS makes its presence felt within Guibert's work, it seems that writing fulfils another function that is far from unusual. Extratextually Guibert suggests, for example, that he uses writing as a coping strategy that helps him to deal with his deteriorating health and the debasing medical treatments that he is increasingly obliged to undergo. On 'Apostrophes', for example, he asserts that 'quand j'écris, tout ce que j'écris, une fois que c'est écrit, c'est oublié'.³³ This sentiment is echoed around a year later when Guibert appeared on 'Ex-Libris', telling us that 'à partir du moment où je l'ai écrit, je m'en fiche'.

However, what is perhaps less conventional in Guibert's writing is the intensity of the relationship between text and self, particularly as his health deteriorates. The intratextual Guibert tells us in *A l'ami*, for example, that 'je tiens à mon livre plus qu'à ma vie' (ALA: 274). At certain key moments in the deterioration of his health, the intratextual

cluding Vincent Van Gogh (*Le Monde*, 11th February 1982); Man Ray (*Le Monde*, 5th February, 1981); the Cannes Festival (*Le Monde*, 23rd May 1982).

³² Information gleaned from within Guibert's literary works must, of course, be treated with caution. As will become clear from the discussion in section 2.3.2 even when the intratextual narrator is named as 'Hervé Guibert', no simple assumptions can be made about the veracity or the referentiality of the text.

³³ Hervé Guibert speaking on 'Apostrophes', 16th March 1990.

Guibert overtly signals that he must choose between writing a new book and committing suicide (ALA: 60). This desperate choice was pertinent to the extratextual Guibert as well as his constructed literary self, as an extract of his diary published in *Libération* confirms. Here he writes ‘trois livres en chantier, c’est un peu trop. Mais tant qu’ils resteront en chantier, ils seront un prétexte pour ne pas me tuer’ (Guibert 1993: 23). Ironically, then, the illness that threatens his ability to write, making him battle against ‘monstrous’ tiredness, also serves to spur him on. As critics have pointed out, Guibert’s literary production proliferated in the last years of his life (Sarkonak 1997b: 10). This is referred to by the intratextual Guibert in *A l’ami*, who explains that ‘soudain, à cause de l’annonce de ma mort, m’avait saisi l’envie d’écrire tous les livres possibles, tous ceux que je n’avais pas encore écrits’ (ALA: 73). The illness that will kill Guibert, then, is also what makes him fulfil what he seems to have believed to be his destiny, by playing a significant role in generating the recognition that he craves.³⁴ In fact, the extreme interdependency of body and text is indicated when the intratextual Guibert, demonstrating a curious faith in the powers of literature, tells us: ‘j’attends avec impatience le vaccin littéraire qui me délivrera’ (ALA: 233). As Christopher Robinson notes in *Scandal in the Ink* (1995), ‘in both *A L’ami* and *Le Protocole compassionnel*, the body of the writer becomes identified with the body of the text [...] the writing of the text is a dual writing of the writer and of that which is destroying him. Guibert’s perception of the future of his condition and of his book are parallel’ (Robinson 1995: 135).

Guibert is motivated initially, then, by a desire to achieve literary greatness. With the advent of his illness, it seems that writing becomes a more urgent preoccupation, and he seeks not only to ‘beat’ death by writing all that he has left in him to write as quickly as possible, but also to prolong his life by giving it purpose through writing. How, though, are we to characterise his *oeuvre*?

It is perhaps unsurprising that a textual production that ranges from ‘un roman policier de série B’³⁵ to a ‘journal d’hospitalisation’,

³⁴ He tells us ‘j’étais mon propre personnage [...] et le sida a fait de moi un héros’ (Hervé Guibert speaking on ‘Ex-Libris’, 7th March 1991).

³⁵ This is Alan Buisine’s description of *L’Homme au chapeau rouge* (1992). See Buisine (1997: 102).

via a tale accused by some of being pornographic, should frequently be deemed by critics to be unclassifiable.³⁶ Moreover, despite the clear influence of a number of different writers upon his work, as Jean-Pierre Boulé points out, Guibert overtly signalled his desire not to belong to any literary school.³⁷ Despite these factors, some features can be identified as remaining constant throughout Guibert's corpus. For example, unlike that of Doubrovsky, Guibert's writing is characterised by a clear, direct style that has been described by some critics as 'journalistic'. Frédéric Martel argues that some of the most striking features of Guibert's work are 'sa grande lisibilité', 'son accessibilité' and 'son style journalistique' (Martel 1994: 168). Rather than producing an intricately constructed, complex body of text that is full of word play, then, Guibert's writing seems to attempt to convey his ideas simply to his readers. This desire to communicate seems, perhaps unsurprisingly, to become increasingly urgent in his AIDS texts. In *Le Protocole compassionnel*, for example, Guibert's previously published *A l'ami* is described as 'une lettre qui a été téléfaxée dans le cœur de cent mille personnes'. The book that the intratextual Guibert claims to be currently writing for his readers is described with the words 'je suis en train de leur écrire une nouvelle lettre. Je vous écris' (Le PC: 141). It seems, then, that Guibert's writing can be characterised by the relative simplicity of the language that he uses.

A helpful contribution to the attempt to characterise Guibert's diverse literary and textual output is made by Ralph Sarkonak in *Le Corps textuel de Hervé Guibert* (1997). Sarkonak argues that 'l'oeuvre de Guibert, hautement éclectique, est cependant unifiée par sa dimension autobiographique' (Sarkonak 1997a: 6). This formulation is supported by Jean-Pierre Boulé who asserts that a constant feature of Guibert's *oeuvre* is that 'il est lui-même la matière de son livre' (Boulé 2001: 527). There is certainly much within Guibert's work that draws upon elements of his own life. *Des Aveugles* (1985), for example, could be said to be linked to the long period of voluntary work

³⁶ For a discussion of the difficulty of classifying Guibert's work, see Darrieussecq (1997b: 115-116) and also Boulé (2001: 529). For a discussion of the controversy surrounding, for example, *Les Chiens*, a work deemed so pornographic by Marguerite Duras that she attempted to prevent its publication, see Buot (1999: 116).

³⁷ See Boulé (2001: 528). For a discussion of the influence of other writers on Guibert see Bianciotti (1991).

that Guibert undertook in an institute for blind people. In addition, the 'Académie espagnole' that features in *L'Incognito* (1989) bears clear resemblance to the 'Villa Médicis' in Rome where Guibert lived for some years (Buot 1999: 216). Moreover, Guibert's Great Aunts, or at least some version of them, seem to feature in a number of his works, including *Suzanne et Louise* (1980); *Les Gangsters* (1988) and *Mes Parents* (1986). The autobiographical dimension of Guibert's work seems moreover to be reinforced by his apparent desire, at least on a superficial level, authorially to tell the truth. In his appearance on 'Apostrophes', for example, when asked to justify his textual revelations about other people, Guibert argued simply that 'la vérité a une vertu'.³⁸ In *A l'ami* there are frequent references to unveiling and revelation. We are told, for example, 'j'ai senti mon sang [...] découvert, mis à nu'. At the same point in the narrative there are references to 'ce sang dénudé et exposé' and 'mon sang démasqué' (ALA: 14). Moreover, Guibert's professed authorial desire to 'tout dire' is often cited by critics (Pratt 1998: 158). In fact, even some literary critics seem to believe that Guibert's work is marked by a desire to tell a total truth: as Martel argues 'il dit tout. Sans faire de tri' (Martel 1994: 168). The self-referential impulse underpinning Guibert's *oeuvre* seems, in sum, to echo the precepts underlying classic autobiography, as defined above.

It would, however, be unwise to assume that Guibert's writing can be characterised as motivated by a desire to articulate referential, externally verifiable material in clear, transparent language. Looking beneath the facade of sincerity it is clear that Guibert's relationship with truth-telling is highly complex. Even those works that I have identified above as clearly drawing upon 'real' elements of Guibert's life also contain overtly fantastical elements.³⁹ Moreover, in an article entitled 'La notion de leurre chez Hervé Guibert: Décryptage d'un roman-leurre, *L'Incognito*', Marie Darrieussecq argues that Guibert's work is underpinned by 'ce constant jeu de vrai-faux' that she terms 'le leurre'. She asserts that 'le leurre se retrouve comme thème récur-

³⁸ Hervé Guibert speaking on 'Apostrophes', 16th March 1990.

³⁹ *Mes Parents* (1986), for example, despite sometimes being hailed by critics as the most conventionally autobiographical of Guibert's works is underpinned by a fantastic tale of blackmail, deception and intrigue. For a discussion of this work see Darrieussecq (1997b: 115-132).

rent dans cette œuvre qui formille de déguisements, de tromperies, de promesses non tenues, de placebos dissimulés parmi de vrais médicaments' (Darrieussecq 1995: 82). Whilst Darrieussecq's discussion focuses primarily upon *L'Incognito* (1989), she argues that this play with truth and falsehood/fiction is evident throughout Guibert's writing, and even goes as far as to attempt to forge a new term to describe it. She tells us: 'ce que je propose d'appeler le «guibertinage» serait ce jeu de masques entre vérité et fiction' (Darrieussecq 1995: 88). Reinforcing this, Guibert's intratextual self refers to the ambiguous nature of his work in *Le Protocole compassionnel* telling us that 'je sens bien qu'ils [mes livres] sont traversés, entre autres choses, par la vérité et le mensonge, la trahison, par ce thème de la méchanceté' (Le PC: 132). The phenomenon of trickery and of a mixing of truth and lies, then, seems to be fundamental to Guibert's work. In the AIDS texts upon which this monograph focuses, this theme is present not only in the construction of the texts, but at every level of the narrative. The intratextual Guibert himself, for example, is tricked into believing in *A l'ami* that 'Bill' might provide him with 'un vaccin curatif' to save his life, a trick that leaves him feeling deeply betrayed (ALA: 265). In an incident entitled 'la trahison de Marine', a character who is often claimed to have been based upon the famous French actress, Isabelle Adjani, reneges upon her promise to make a film with the intratextual Guibert, leaving him in a precarious financial position (ALA: 89). In addition to the intratextual deceptions and betrayals, the text of *A l'ami* itself participates in the game of revelation, unmasking Michel Foucault as not only a homosexual who engaged in sado-masochistic sexual practices, but as having died from an AIDS-related illness.⁴⁰ If Hélène Jaccomard's argument is to be accepted that 'le sida est un déshabillage' as it reveals true behaviour (Jacomard 1995: 290), then Guibert seems to be indicating that this is primarily because the world is full of trickery and deception.

The fundamental characteristics of Guibert's writing clearly make it particularly challenging for the reader. As I have argued, despite being written in a clear, direct style, and professing to tell the

⁴⁰ Moreover, as Boulé has argued, 'is not the biggest betrayal of all the one that the narrator perpetuates on himself? For by announcing that he is HIV positive, he is exposing himself to the world and risking being rejected' (Boulé 1995a: 33).

truth, Guibert's books play with truth and fiction. Indeed, as many critics have commented, Guibert's works are fundamentally transgressive: of social norms and codes, and of literary genres.⁴¹ As with Doubrovsky, Guibert's intratextual recognition of this trickery may encourage a false sense of security in the reader, and a deferral of critical judgement in the assumption that the author will signal when fiction enters the text. As Boulé argues, 'the reader has the illusion of being taken into the narrator's confidence' (Boulé 1995a: 10). Moreover, Schehr points out that the 'lure' of Guibert's texts is particularly difficult to resist in his later works because of the emotive nature of AIDS. As Schehr argues, narrating the experience of living with AIDS risks engendering sympathy in the reader to the extent of blinding his or her critical faculties (Schehr 1996: 162).

Guibert's Life Writing: Corpus and Generic Status

Guibert's literary writing, then, is both diverse in nature and particularly difficult to read because of its deceptive and transgressive character. It is therefore of paramount importance to establish the precise generic status of each of Guibert's texts studied. It is to a discussion of this that I will now turn.

In this work, I will focus on those texts written in the latter stages of Hervé Guibert's life, often classified as his AIDS texts. There exists no consensus amongst critics as to which of his twenty-seven texts should be included in a Guibertian AIDS corpus. The circumscription of his AIDS writing that I shall deploy here will be rather larger than most. I will focus on those texts normally deemed to belong to the AIDS trilogy: *A l'ami qui ne m'a pas sauvé la vie* (1990); *Le Protocole compassionnel* (1991); and *L'Homme au chapeau rouge* (1992). In addition, I will look at the hospital diary, *Cytomégalo virus* (1992), and *Le Paradis* (1992), a work written contiguously with *Cytomégalo virus*. What, then, can be said to be the generic status of each of these works?

⁴¹ Ralph Sarkonak argues, for example, that 'si l'oeuvre est fondamentalement transgressive, elle l'est avant tout par la façon dont elle met en question toute taxonomie générique, et qui plus est, toute distinction du vrai et du faux' (Sarkonak 1997b: 7).

One of the major characteristics of Guibert's writing is its autobiographical dimension. However, this characteristic is made more complex by the essentially transgressive nature of Guibert's work, notably his persistent challenging of the boundaries between truth and fiction. Indeed, it is clear that despite agreeing on the significant role that his own life plays in Guibert's writing, critical opinion remains divided about the precise generic status of Guibert's work. Ralph Sarkonak argues, for example, that 'almost all of his [Guibert's] writing could be considered autofictional' (Sarkonak 1996: 179), a claim that is supported by Edmund Smyth in an article entitled '*Des Aveugles: Modes d'articulation*' (Smyth 1995: 8). Jean-Pierre Boulé, however, refutes this argument, and suggests instead that Guibert's writing is located 'mi-chemin entre l'autobiographie et l'autofiction' at a site that he himself terms 'le roman faux' (Boulé 2001: 531). In fact, Boulé's main reason for categorising Guibert's work as 'roman faux' rather than 'autofiction' is that rather than scrupulously verifying dates and details like Doubrovsky, Guibert seems to seek to modify and transform the facts of his life. What Boulé does not discuss, however, is the fact that, unlike Doubrovsky, much of Guibert's writing was inspired by the detailed 'journal intime' that he kept. Doubrovsky did not keep such a diary and therefore was obliged to check facts.⁴² Within the wider field of critical analysis, perhaps the most logical cause of confusion about the generic status of Guibert's writing stems from the desire of many critics to slot Guibert's whole *oeuvre* into one simple generic category. As is clear, Guibert's *oeuvre* is diverse. Here, concentrating upon a limited number of texts, I need now to examine in detail the generic status of each.

A l'ami qui ne m'a pas sauvé la vie (1990), as indicated above, was the book that projected Guibert to the status of best selling writer. It was also the first of his texts that could easily be categorised as an *autofiction*. This work is written in the first person singular and an identitarian relationship is established about a quarter of a way into the book, when the narrator tells us that his sister's child has been named 'Hervé Guibert', after him (ALA: 72-73). Moreover, the positioning of a photographic self-portrait of Guibert on the front cover

⁴² Boulé does acknowledge the importance of Guibert's 'journal intime' as a resource for his writing, but does not compare this with Doubrovsky. See for example Boulé (1997a: 37).

strengthens the sense that this work is autobiographical. In true autofictional style, however, despite the clear indications of a referential link between the extratextual Guibert and his intratextual self, there remains a certain amount of textual space between the two. One obvious example of this is to be found in the fact that the protagonist of *A l'ami* is also writing a book which may at first sight seem synonymous with *A l'ami* itself, but which is completed some forty pages before the end of *A l'ami*. In an extratextual comment made by Hervé Guibert when he appeared on 'Apostrophes', he seems neatly to sum up the autofictional status of his book. He tells us that

Pour moi tout est vrai dans ce livre, rien ne pouvait être faux dans ce livre- là, mais en même temps je trouve que c'est un roman car il y a une construction, il y a une suspense qui est mis en place dès la première page et qui est mené jusqu'au bout.⁴³

The parallel, here, with Doubrovsky's insistence that *autofiction* is characterised by the use of a fictional framework through which verifiably real events are narrated, is clear. Patently, then, we can classify *A l'ami* as an *autofiction* with relative ease.

Le Protocole compassionnel (1991) and *L'Homme au chapeau rouge* (1992) exhibit a similar generic status to that of *A l'ami*. In *Le Protocole compassionnel*, for example, the narrative is again written in the first person singular, and on two occasions the intratextual 'je' is identified as 'Hervé' (Le PC: 141 and 148). The indications that this is an autobiographical text are reinforced by the narrator's assertion that the incredible story that he is telling is strictly true (Le PC: 188). The illusion of straightforward referentiality is unsettled, however, when the intratextual Guibertian narrator informs us that 'c'est quand ce que j'écris prend la forme d'un journal que j'ai la plus grande impression de fiction' (Le PC: 103), a comment that causes us to question the referentiality of the text we are reading. This is reinforced a little later with the words 'je sens bien qu'ils [mes livres] sont traversés [...] par la vérité et le mensonge' (Le PC: 132). This work, then, like *A l'ami* before it, bears the hallmarks of an *autofiction*. Moreover, the strength of this generic classification is reinforced by the fact that continuity is directly implied between the narrator of *Le Protocole compassionnel* and that of *A l'ami*. On the back cover of *Le Protocole*

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Hervé Guibert speaking on 'Apostrophes', 16th March 1990.

compassionnel, for example, the book is introduced as 'la suite de *A l'ami qui ne m'a pas sauvé la vie*' and we are told that it contains the same characters, including one 'Hervé Guibert, écrivain malade du sida'. In addition, within the book there are references to aspects of the extratextual Guibert's life that would, by the time this was published, have been well known.⁴⁴ *Le Protocole compassionnel* seems, then, not only to be firmly sited within the bounds of *autofiction*, but to represent a continuation of the autofictional life story that began in *A l'ami*.

L'Homme au chapeau rouge (1992) is again narrated in the first person singular, and an identitarian relationship between the author, narrator and protagonist is overtly established when we are told that a little boy 'm'appelle monsieur Guibert' (HCR: 55). Moreover, there are references to elements of the extratextual Guibert's life that would not only have been easily verifiable, but relatively well known at the time of publication.⁴⁵ The back cover again overtly signals this book's close relationship with the previous two, telling us that it is 'le troisième volet de cette histoire personnelle du sida amorcée par *A l'ami qui ne m'a pas sauvé la vie*, et poursuivie dans *Le Protocole compassionnel*'. The referential ambiguity that is at the heart of the *autofictional* enterprise is less overly flagged in this work than in its two predecessors. It is, however, riddled with references to notions of truth and deception, particularly as a result of its foregrounding of the shadowy world of art dealing. In fact, on the back cover, we are told that 'dès qu'on commence à vouloir parler [...] de peinture, on est inévitablement confronté à ce problème du vrai et du faux, qui est peut-être au cœur de tous les livres d'Hervé Guibert'. There is considerable evidence to suggest, then, that this work is not only autofictional in status, but is narrated by the same intratextual 'Hervé Guibert' as the two previous volumes.

Most critics take *A l'ami*, *Le Protocole compassionnel* and *L'Homme au chapeau rouge* to constitute Guibert's AIDS trilogy. Boulé, however, argues that *Cytomégalo virus* (1992), the 'journal

⁴⁴ For example, an appearance on *Apostrophes* is referred to (Le PC: 44) and there are several references to the success of Guibert's last book (Le PC: 141; 148; 195).

⁴⁵ For example, his occupation as a journalist at *Le Monde* (HCR: 89), and a previously published book entitled *Les Chiens* (HCR: 57).

d'hospitalisation' that Guibert published towards the end of his life, could be seen to be the true third volume of Guibert's AIDS trilogy, and not *L'Homme au chapeau rouge* (Boulé 1995a: 7). Boulé's argument for this is primarily based on the subject matter of these works. He suggests that whereas *A l'ami* and *Le Protocole compassionnel* are clearly focused upon the narrator's experience of living with AIDS, *L'Homme au chapeau rouge* takes the art world as its primary focus. *Cytomégalo-virus*, Boulé goes on to argue, displays a preoccupation with the intratextual Guibert's health and medical experiences that links it strongly with the first two works of the trilogy. What Boulé does not discuss, however, is the generic status of these two works. As I established above, *L'Homme au chapeau rouge* is linked to the other volumes of the trilogy by its shared status as an *autofiction*. If its subject matter is somewhat different from the first two works, then that is not to say that the narrator does not remain constant. *Cytomégalo-virus*, on the contrary, is labelled 'journal' on the front cover and is a much shorter work made up of brief passages that correspond strongly with the character of a diary rather than a novel. I wish to contend that whilst *Cytomégalo-virus* cannot be said to constitute an *autofiction*, and therefore is probably best not classified as belonging to Guibert's AIDS trilogy, it does remain a pertinent object of enquiry. This work exhibits clear thematic correspondence with Guibert's AIDS trilogy, including the reappearance of similar characters. What is missing is any overt reference to an intention to fictionalise or to contest the boundaries of truth and fiction, present in *A l'ami*, *Le Protocole compassionnel* and *L'Homme au chapeau rouge*.

It is pertinent to note that whilst *A l'ami*, *Le Protocole compassionnel* and *L'Homme au chapeau rouge* all contain a sophisticated blend of fact and fiction, it seems that at the time of publication of *Cytomégalo-virus*, these two factors were separated out in Guibert's work. That is to say that whereas *Cytomégalo-virus* appears to be referential and factual, Guibert simultaneously wrote a work that was considerably more fictional, entitled *Le Paradis* (1992). In terms of its generic status, *Le Paradis* is one of Guibert's most interesting works. Like the other works addressed in this study, it is narrated in the first person singular. The identity of the narrator is surrounded by confusion however. Late in the book it is hinted that there could be an identitarian relationship between the author, narrator and protagonist as there is a reference to 'Monsieur Hervé Guibert, né le 14/12/55' (Le P:

120). However, it seems that there is a deliberate attempt to generate confusion in this work and a complex blend of contradictory features simultaneously point towards both narratorial continuity with Guibert's AIDS texts and the creation of an entirely fictional narrator and main character. For example, familiar characters such as 'ma grande tante Suzanne qui avait été mon amie la plus intime pendant plus de vingt ans' (Le P: 109) recur in this work, alongside familiar themes such as an unknown illness and an apparent search for its source. However, the protagonist is clearly heterosexual in this work, having a relationship with 'Jayne', as well as originating from Zurich rather than Paris. It seems then that this work transgresses generic boundaries to an even greater extent than Guibert's other works, even as it plays, as Guibert's writing reiteratively plays, with and between fact and fiction. Indicating the complexity of the generic status of this work, Michel Braudeau commented in an article in *Le Monde*, 'même si Guibert fait mine quelque temps d'adopter la forme du roman, la part de l'autobiographie fait régulièrement surface' (Braudeau 1993: 26).

Why, then, should Guibert have deviated from or taken to its very limits the autofictional model established in his AIDS trilogy at the very end of his life, and should *Le Paradis*, the work where he does so, be included in a study of his AIDS texts? Perhaps part of the answer to this can be found in the study of Guibert's original, unpublished manuscript of *Le Paradis*.⁴⁶ In this, it can be seen that the protagonist's lover is not a woman called Jayne, but rather a man called Vincent. As Guibertian scholars will know, this is the name of one of Guibert's real life lovers who is the focus of several books, including *Fou de Vincent* (1989). It seems that this name was changed to Jayne, and the degree of fictionality of *Le Paradis* increased, at some point in the writing process. An embrace of fictional possibilities is signalled too within the text in references to the protagonist's desire to shrug off the straight jacket of singular, unified selfhood. We read, for example that 'je suis un être double, écrivain parfois, rien d'autre les autres fois, je voudrais être un être triple, quadruple, un danseur, un gangster, un funambule, un peintre, un skieur [...]' (Le P: 115). A little later, the narrator refers to how he has made himself schizophrenic 'en me dédoublant en deux personnages, avec deux adresses différentes, une

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Guibert's manuscripts can be found at the IMEC in Paris.

vraie qui est un prétendu bureau et une fictive d'où l'on me fait suivre mon courrier' (Le P: 115). *Le Paradis*, in the light of all this, cannot simply be dismissed as 'un roman'. Written at the same time as *Cytomégalo-virus*, when Guibert was extremely ill and subject to the harsh constraints of the medical establishment, *Le Paradis* is rather a fantastic tale in which Guibert seeks to dissolve and explode all boundaries between the lived 'I' and the imagined 'I'.

Whilst the narrator of this work clearly cannot be treated as a stable continuation of the narrator of Guibert's previous AIDS-related *autofictions*, there is evidence to suggest that Guibert himself wished this work to be read alongside his AIDS texts. In a diary entry shortly before his death, he referred to it as 'la suite de *L'Homme au chapeau rouge*' (Guibert 1993: 23). *Le Paradis* will, then, constitute a minor focus of my study, on the grounds that it is clearly pertinent to Guibert's AIDS texts and could, in fact, be classified as a 'fantastic autofiction'.

2.4 Régine Robin

Régine Robin is a less well-known writer than Serge Doubrovsky and Hervé Guibert, however her work contains significant parallels with theirs. Here, I will discuss the salient points of Régine Robin's career and *oeuvre* as well as characterising her key preoccupations and motivations. I will look at her theoretical and academic interests, before going on to establish the generic status of those of her literary works that will constitute the focus of my study.

Régine Robin's Personal and Intellectual Background

Régine Robin's *oeuvre* is striking in its eclecticism. Born in France in December 1939 to recently immigrated Polish Jewish parents, Robin began her career as a historian. She completed a thesis on the history of the French revolution and taught for some time at a *lycée* in Lyon before moving to the *Université de Paris X*. After her emigration to Quebec in 1977, she worked at various Quebec Universities before securing the position of Professor in the Sociology department at the *Université de Québec à Montréal* in 1982.

A striking feature of Robin's work is the preoccupation it displays with two of the major ideological discourses of the twentieth century: Communism and Nazism. Both of these movements touched Robin personally. Brought up by a Polish Jewish father who renounced his faith and religious tradition in order to campaign actively for the communist social order that he believed would finally resolve the Jewish question, Robin's deep and enduring interest in both the communist project and the fallout of its collapse is comprehensible. Perhaps even more formative for Robin, however, was the experience of the danger and stigma of the Nazi occupation of Paris that she experienced at first hand, and the loss of over fifty relatives in Poland during the Holocaust. In a special edition of the journal *Études françaises* that focused on 'Écriture et Judéité au Québec', Robin tells us: 'toute mon oeuvre est sortie de la guerre, du fait d'avoir été marquée comme juive par le nazisme et le régime de Vichy' (Robin 2001c: 117). Throughout her *oeuvre*, in works that treat such diverse topics as history, the Yiddish language, the city of Berlin, and the Internet, it is perhaps unsurprising that the Second World War and questions of Jewish identity constitute omnipresent preoccupations.

Robin's work is underpinned on a theoretical level by her early awareness of the problematic nature of objective, institutionalised historical knowledge that relies upon myths of transparent language and representation. Indeed, it seems to have been this awareness that prompted Robin to develop a deep interest in interdisciplinarity, and to seek new ways of writing History from within the disciplines of Literature and Sociology. In particular, Robin's work manifests a deep commitment to the displacement of institutionalised, state-level historical discourse in favour of 'une histoire autre' in which the everyday, grassroots level experience of History can be heard (Robin 1989: 102). The diversity of Robin's *oeuvre* is unified by an enduring interest in the recurring themes of history and memory, language, literature and cultural identity.

Frustrated with the conservatism of classical History, Robin's works display a tendency to undermine the rational conventions of the objective scholar by overtly including the personal within even her theoretical works. In a recent programme broadcast by *TéléQuébec* on the subject of Régine Robin, the presenter argued that

D'ailleurs dans ses fictions comme dans ses études plus «traditionnelles», elle se met en scène. Elle ne se fait pas l'apôtre de la «distance nécessaire» [...] propre aux disciplines dites scientifiques. Certes, on voit des spécialistes personnaliser leurs études en avant-propos mais peu d'entre eux impliquent autant leur personne dans leurs écrits comme le fait Régine Robin.⁴⁷

There is certainly evidence to suggest that this incorporation of the personal into the theoretical and scientific is for Robin the result of a deeply held, scholarly belief. Rather like Doubrovsky, she argues that 'l'oeuvre théorique est en fait une autobiographie déguisée, ou une autofiction par procuration, un parcours intellectuel qui déplace les affects ou qui joue le rôle d'une pseudo-auto-analyse' (Robin 1995b: 98). Her own theoretical works, then, can often be seen to tackle a topic that is personally important to her – the Yiddish language or the Holocaust, for example – and her theoretical investigations are supported by a great number of examples and stories drawn from her personal life.

Concomitantly, and consistent with her awareness of the problematic nature of language and representation, Robin possesses a highly sophisticated view of autobiography. Extending her theoretical repertoire to incorporate literary criticism and experimental autobiography in particular, she has argued that in her own writings 'Je m'amuse à ne pas prendre l'autobiographie au sérieux, à ne pas me laisser piéger par la mémoire collective, celle-là même que je me ré-approprie' (Robin 1995b: 101). This view of autobiography may seem surprising in view of the strongly personal, autobiographical style of all of Robin's own literary writings. Her first novel, *La Québécoise* (1983), for example, tells the tale of a Parisian woman who is both Jewish and an academic, who emigrates to Quebec in order to begin a new life there, all of which could be said to apply to Robin herself. However, Robin's critical view of autobiography, grounded in the impossibility of representation and the fallibility of memory, does remain evident in her literary writings, despite the pre-eminence of the personal and biographical within them. Indeed, rather than following the model of classical autobiography, her literary writings may be said to constitute a series of particularly playful, experimental forms of life

⁴⁷ http://www.telequebec.qc.ca/idees/chasseurs_idées_1999/archives/20001203/-theme.html.

writing, the precise generic status of which I will discuss in more detail below.

As a scholar with a wide range of interests, Robin seems to be motivated by a will to transgress long-established disciplinary boundaries in favour of pursuing her own, personal 'itinéraire intellectuel'. Despite her concern with the personal, and the particularly extreme events that affected her own life, Robin does not subscribe to a classic, factual attempt to write her own life story or that of those around her. This can be attributed, at least partially, to the particular difficulties posed by the Holocaust in relation to representation and life writing, and it is to this that my discussion will now turn.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, grappling with the complexities of Jewish ethnicity in the aftermath of the Holocaust as well as with her own personal struggle to come to terms as a Historian with her decimated family and cultural heritage, Robin's writing project seems to have been further complicated by the impact of World War Two and the Holocaust on representation itself. In David Carroll's illuminating piece, 'The Limits of Representation and the Right to Fiction: Shame, Literature and the Memory of the Shoah' (1999), the quandary in which many holocaust survivors found themselves after the war is highlighted. Carroll's essay argues that, often feeling an overwhelming obligation to bear witness for what had happened, many of those who escaped the Holocaust simultaneously felt themselves to be 'unworthy witnesses' due to the shame of having survived in the place of another. Indeed, the only complete Holocaust witnesses being dead, Carroll argues that survivors' only option was to bear witness by proxy. Drawing on the work of well known holocaust survivors, Carroll asserts that whilst Primo Levi associated overwhelming shame with only being able to testify by proxy for the dead, writer Jorge Semprun, on the contrary, defined his very writing project by what he termed 'PROXY NARRATIVES' and 'a shameless reliance on fiction' (Carroll 1999: 69). Robin seems to display a similar attitude towards the role of fiction in Holocaust remembrance. Directly refuting Adorno's contentious indictment of post-Holocaust fiction, Robin argues instead that 'désormais, après Auschwitz, seule la fiction pouvait nous parler et nous faire sentir ce passé impensable' (Robin 1989: 25). Overtly disagreeing with the notion that any impulse to fictionalise History must necessarily assist those with a bent towards Revisionism, Robin instead argues in *Le Naufrage du siècle*, that, on the contrary,

'seule la fiction permet de dire du vrai' (Robin 1995a: 66).⁴⁸ Fiction, then, is seen as the only medium through which to communicate the true horror of the unimaginable atrocities of the Holocaust. Furthermore, 'proxy narratives' can be seen to constitute the only means by which Robin can attempt any form of personal life writing due to the fifty-one gaping holes in her family tree and the consequent loss of family and cultural history that is crucial to her own sense of self and her 'roman familial'.⁴⁹

Commenting on one of her first pieces of literary rather than scholarly or theoretical writing, *Le Cheval blanc de Lénine* (1979), Robin tells us:

C'était une première esquisse où la part de la fiction devait nécessairement prendre une place démesurée tout en faisant émerger, par cette fiction même, quelque chose de la vérité de cette famille disparue, et quelque chose de ma propre vérité. Reconquête identitaire, certes, mais dans le déplacement fictionnel, dans la parodie et la distance. Il s'agit d'une généalogie imaginaire qui prend de traverse les grands mythes de la culture juive. (Robin 1995b: 100-101)

Embracing the fictional as well as the personal in her writing project can clearly be seen to constitute a strategy employed by Robin to overcome the impossibility of writing a life, the story of which has been cut adrift from all that usually anchors identity; homeland, culture and family memories.

However, far from simplistically plugging up the gaps of this fragmented and imperfect history with some kind of *ersatz* narrative, Robin overtly signals her desire to avoid a false sense of coherence and continuity. She tells us that 'même dans l'écriture romanesque de

⁴⁸ The assertion that fiction might aid the efforts of revisionists relies of course upon the old association of the factual and referential with the 'truth', and the fictional, literary and poetic with 'lies'. As has become evident from my discussion in this chapter, particularly section 2.1, this is no longer a valid association.

⁴⁹ Robin makes frequent reference to the notion of 'le roman familial'. She explains this as '[l'] expression créée par Freud pour désigner les fantasmes par lesquels le sujet modifie imaginativement ses liens avec ses parents'. She goes on to argue that in her own 'roman familial', she remains understandably pre-occupied by the war and by the stories of those members of her family whose tragedy is not accounted for in traditional History. See Robin (1995a: 175-176).

type réaliste, [...] pour respecter le fragmentaire, la bribe, il faut une écriture de fragments, de dé-liaison, quelque chose qui imite l'onirisme et l'irréalité' (Robin 1995b: 103). Indeed, in a particularly revealing passage, in which the writer displays a high degree of lucidity about her own project, Robin argues that the war has left her with a specific 'problème formel, de mise en forme'. She goes on to elucidate that for her, the Holocaust has resulted in

L'impossibilité de la totalisation comme dans le roman, tel qu'on pouvait écrire au XIXe siècle. Il m'est impossible de raconter une histoire qui ait un début, un milieu et une fin. Ce réalisme, cher à G. Lukács, signifie que le réel a une consistance, qu'il peut être scientifiquement saisi, artistiquement figuré ou figuralisé. Pour moi, il n'y a que la cassure, la brisure, la béance qui ne peut être comblée. (Robin 2001c: 120)

Fiction, then, is not employed by Robin in order to paper over the cracks of her incomplete personal and cultural history and to produce a complete, rounded narrative. On the contrary, rejecting any possibility of a 'totalising' narrative, of a story with a coherent beginning, middle and end, Robin tells us that she aims to experiment with 'le passé probable, le passé possible' (Robin 1995b: 97). It is on this experimentation with the probable and the possible that Robin's writing project seems to hang and she often writes several versions of the same story within one text. Perhaps if life itself seems to be explicable by nothing more than the arbitrary nature of chance survival, then it is equally valid to explore what might have happened as what did happen, and particularly necessary to inscribe doubt and fragility into the narrative.

Robin's literary project can then be said to be relatively clearly defined; she is at once motivated by a personal desire to tell the story of her own family and culture and yet is sceptical of the ability of traditional autobiography and representation to accomplish this. Asserting the primary role played by the fictional and the imaginary in any attempt to represent the Holocaust, she proposes to explore possible and probable versions of the past and seeks to undermine any coherent, totalising narrative that might attempt to rationalise away that which is fundamentally irrational and unsayable. It is of considerable interest, however, that despite this clearly defined literary project, her writings cannot be said to inhabit one stable genre or literary form. As

I have argued, Serge Doubrovsky's *oeuvre*, battling with similar concerns over the impossibility of classical autobiography and the impossibility of separating memory from the imaginary, can be said to settle within the relatively stable generic formulation of *autofiction*. Robin's *oeuvre*, however, already eclectic in the diversity of her theoretical and academic concerns, seems restlessly to explore a diverse range of literary genres and textual forms. Relating this to her belief in the importance of the fragmentary, of not filling in and making coherent the gaps in history, she tells us:

Je préfère, en conséquence, des formes courtes plutôt que des formes longues : le fragment, la nouvelle, le récit, l'aphorisme, la note, la chronique, de façon à témoigner de l'impossibilité de faire lien.
(Robin 2001c: 120)

Encompassing a novel, a book of short stories and an autobiographical Internet project, the precise generic positions occupied by each unit of Robin's literary corpus studied here will next be established. Whilst there is evidence of considerable overlap and continuity between the different elements of Robin's *oeuvre*, for the purposes of this work, I will distinguish between those writings which may be said to be primarily theoretical or scientific in content and style, and those which may be judged to be literary and to constitute some form of experimental life writing project.

Robin's Literary Corpus and Generic Status

The first of what may be termed Robin's literary writings was published in 1983 and was entitled *La Québécoise*. Bearing the subtitle 'roman', this work has been unproblematically treated as a novel by critics such as Rosemary Chapman (2000: 236-269). The book is indeed written in a primarily fictional style. It slips away from establishing an autobiographical pact and the narrator's identity is left ambiguous throughout the text. Indeed, the fragmented style of the opening pages postpones the introduction of a 'stable' narrator, favouring instead the citation of fragments of speech by different characters, undistinguished from the rest of the text by speech marks or other textual markings, and undifferentiated from each other. Such a heterogeneous writing style suggests an authorial effort to establish a plurivocal, de-

centred text and, as Ralph Sarkonak observes, over the course of the book three main narrators emerge; Mortre, an old academic preparing his classes on Jewish History, 'elle', and 'the authorial *je* of the framing story' (Sarkonak 1987: 101). None of these narrators, nor any protagonist in the book, bears the same name as the author and thus following Lejeune's criteria, no autobiographical pact is set up.

Within the content of the text, textual invention and fictional creation are actively highlighted. On several occasions, the narrator's voice overtly comments on the creative process, at one point calling into question the veracity of exactly that which he or she has just narrated with the words 'tout cela n'est pas crédible' (Q: 148). The narrator seems to have to battle to control the text, asserting, for example, that 'le texte m'échappe. Je le sens glisser' (Q: 187). Later on, this loss of control is twice blamed on the fictional characters, with the narrator, speaking metanarratively as author, telling us 'ce personnage fantôme m'échappe' (Q: 158) and similarly: 'je me sens totalement pignée par elle' (Q: 187). Such remarks, then, suggest a text in which the strength of the creative process threatens the authorial control: a text whose fictional characters, at least apparently, take on a relatively autonomous status and direct the story. Clearly, this is the antithesis of a rational, chronological autobiography.

La Québécoise is a text, then, which is labelled 'roman'; in which no identitarian relationship is established between the author, narrator and protagonist, and in which attention is overtly drawn to the creative process that fuelled it and which it replays. I wish to argue, however, that the classification of *La Québécoise* as a novel is far from unproblematic, and that in fact, most easily classifiable as an autobiographical novel, it constitutes a particularly innovative form of experimental life writing.

Hinting at potential generic ambiguities, Ralph Sarkonak begins his review of this work with the words 'Régine Robin's *La Québécoise* is labelled a novel, that most flexible and loose of genres' (Sarkonak 1987: 100). However, even on a very simple level, it must be acknowledged that, to the informed reader, the overwhelming balance of the story points towards correspondence with Robin's extratextual life. *La Québécoise* tells the story of a French Jew who emigrates to Quebec, sets up home in Montréal and earns her living by University teaching. This Jewish French woman, we are told, grew up in Paris, in

Belleville (Q: 57), is of Polish origin, and is preoccupied by Central Europe, the Second World War and Auschwitz, as well as by the cities of Budapest, Prague and Berlin. The 'je' of the text speaks five languages (Q: 42) and is interested in Communism (Q: 132). All these specific details chime strikingly with Robin's extratextual biography and so the generic status of this work might be judged to be that of an autobiographical novel.

I wish to contend, however, that a fuller understanding of the generic status of *La Québécoise* is to be gained only when the reader is familiar with the rest of Robin's *oeuvre*. In a 'postface', added to the French version of the text when it was republished in 1993, Robin tells us:

L'écrivain est voleur de mythes, de mots, d'images, un passeur de mémoire fictionnalisée. L'écrivain est un être qui dérange, il est une conscience qui problématise l'Histoire. (Q: 221)

As I argued above, one of the key preoccupations of Robin's *oeuvre* is to undermine institutionalised History and to experiment with the possible and the probable. The predominance of the conditional tense within this novel seems to suggest that this is what the author is seeking to do, and indeed, the storyline centres around three possible versions of the same story. Faced with the erasure of the author's family and cultural heritage that would anchor her into a society and a tradition, perhaps this work could be seen as an innovative form of life writing that swims in the possible and the fragmented rather than the stable and the rational. In addition to her rejection of rational, institutional History, it seems that Robin also refutes the notion of the singularity of selfhood and identity that normally underpins life writing. Robin seems to suggest that no conventional form of life writing would be adequate in order to inscribe the plurality that she feels is at the basis of selfhood. She tells us that 'le roman, je l'ai toujours soutenu, est le seul type de discours permettant non seulement la polyphonie [...] ; [mais c'est] le seul encore qui permette de dire une chose et son contraire' (Robin 1989: 86). Embracing the plural, as well as the fictional and the imaginary in her literary writing, then, may in fact represent a search for textual forms in which the heterogeneity and plurality of identity – her own identity included – can be heard rather than representing a move away from her autobiographical concerns.

So, drawing together these arguments, I would contend that despite the absence of an autobiographical pact in *La Québécoise* and the inclusion within the text of overt indicators of the presence of invention and fictionalisation, it is inadvisable to see this text as a simple novel. Rather, it may be seen to be a logical outcome of Robin's desire to weave plurality into her writing, as well as to unsettle that classical History that would produce a coherent, complete narrative out of even the most exceptional events. Demonstrating considerable parallels with Robin's extratextual life, perhaps this work might be seen to be a corollary of Robin's desire to experiment with the possible and probable past, with uncertainty inscribed at every level. Particularly helpful, then, is Dawn Thompson's review of the English language version of this work, entitled *The Wanderer*, in which Thompson tells us that 'according to Robin's afterword, the novel is autobiographical, but on an intellectual or spiritual, rather than factual, level' (Thompson 2001: 168).

The next of Robin's works that could be said to be literary rather than theoretical in its scope was published in 1996 and was entitled *L'Immense Fatigue des pierres*. This work, rather than being subtitled 'roman', displays the appellation 'biofictions'. The *quatrième de couverture*, after initially labelling the work 'un roman', goes on to explain the underlying premises of the text and of the notion of 'biofictions'. We are told:

L'Immense Fatigue des pierres. Des biofictions, des vies inventées, des itinéraires recomposés qui nous entraînent dans un univers à la limite du rêve. Une écriture éclatée qui ne dédaigne pas Internet et Compuserve et qui dit, dans un langage postmoderne, le drame d'un génocide, l'anéantissement d'une famille, et ses conséquences sur une lignée brisée qui n'arrive plus à se reconstituer. (IFP, back cover)

So, this exegetic paratextual passage indicates that the book it describes seeks to construct a number of fictional biographies of invented lives that will tell the story of genocide and a destroyed family. The complex blend of fiction and fact contained in this work is indicated in an article published by Robin in the volume entitled *Écriture de soi et trauma* (1998) edited by Jean-François Chiantaretto. In this, in a footnote to her main argument, Robin tells us: 'voici un exemple qui bien que figurant dans mon dernier recueil de fiction *L'Immense Fatigue des pierres* [...] est un exemple réel' (Robin 1998: 128). So,

whilst the paratextual passage on the back cover of *L'Immense Fatigue des pierres* contains no indication that the lives to be recounted are anything other than fictional, it is clear that the reader must look deeper. Indeed, the reader familiar with Robin's *oeuvre* will be aware of the importance of the destruction of her family during the Holocaust and it is around the missing fifty-one members of Robin's own family that this work is structured. In an extratextual discussion of *L'Immense Fatigue des pierres* Robin explains:

Savoir exactement ce qu'on ne doit pas faire. Une écriture liée, suscitant l'émotion, jouant sur l'identification, la complaisance. Ne refaire ni Schwartz-Bart, ni Elie Wiesel, ni Marek Halter. Ce serait pire. Tout le monde n'est pas Celan. Nous nous contenterons de peu. Méditer sur l'arbre généalogique, trouver le moyen de redonner une place à ces cinquante et une ombres qu'elle n'a pas connues. (Robin 1995b: 103)

Beginning with the intention of in some way bearing witness for the fifty-one members of her family who disappeared during the war, Robin affirms that her project is very definitely not to produce an emotive, coherent and complete text. Rather, highlighting the impossibility of remembering her family, she voices the rhetorical question – who can even remember the names of those members of her family who were only babies when they were killed (IFP: 170)? Seeking recourse, then, to the only appropriation of her past that is available to her – that of the literary, the imaginary and the fictional, *L'Immense Fatigue des pierres* again constitutes for Robin a meditation on what might have happened, this 'passé probable, passé possible'. Clearly concerned as it is with elements related to Robin's own life, what might be said to be the precise generic status of this work labelled 'biofictions'?

Divided into seven independent short stories, *L'Immense Fatigue des pierres* is a book in which the plural and the shifting are certainly given pride of place. Each story has a different generic status, the stories becoming gradually more overtly autobiographical as the book progresses. The opening story, bearing the same name as the book itself, comprises a dialogue between a mother and daughter. Their voices are not clearly distinguished but rather blur into plurivocality, the narrative voice being passed between them. No autobiographical pact is established, since neither bears the name Régine Robin. The text playfully juxtaposes easily identifiable autobiographi-

cal elements, including concern with the war and Jewishness, Montreal and Paris, with an overt denial that the main character is a representation of authorial selfhood. The narrator tells us: 'j'ai vieilli la mère. Par rapport à moi, évidemment. Elle a plus de soixante ans. Cela écartera les malentendus avec vous lecteur et les tentations de projections chez moi' (IFP: 42).

In a similarly playful manner, the second story, 'le Dibbouk inconnu', is immediately distanced from Robin by the positioning of the narrator as 'il'. We do, however, learn that the narrator's little sister was called Rivka and thus we can infer that on some level this text might constitute an imaginary (auto)biography written by Robin's brother and grounded in the fantasy that she was deported to a concentration camp at a very young age.

The third, fourth and fifth stories seem to move towards the sphere of autobiography, with varying degrees of thematic linkage with the extratextual life of Robin. The characters of these stories are not identified with Robin through any nominal relationship, but rather through their key preoccupations with that which we know to apply to Robin herself. Story three, for example, entitled 'L'Agenda' and written in the third person singular, posits a protagonist who has spent considerable time working on Kafka, has lived in Paris, and has kept detailed diaries of her activities, all of which mirrors details that Robin has provided about herself in other works. The narrator of 'Gratok. Langue de vie et langue de mort', which is again written in the third person singular, tells the tale of a small Jewish girl from Belleville, Paris, who is forced to hide in a garage during the Occupation, a story which Robin implies to have been her own experience in one of her pre-existing theoretical works (Robin 1995a: 119). Similarly, the intratextual little girl is posited as having a father who spent the war as a prisoner in Germany under a false name and a mother who worked in a sewing workshop, escapes the 'vel d'hiv' raid by a hair's breadth, and who searches for her family in Poland after the war.

The sixth short story of this collection is one in which identity confusion is overtly, if playfully, highlighted. The narrative of 'Journal de déglingue entre le Sélect et le Compuserve', which is written in the first person singular, is primarily concerned with mistaken identity. A woman with a strong American accent, who turns out to be called Emilia Morgan, accosts the protagonist in a bistro, asking her if

she is Pamela Wilkinson. The key character playfully says yes and masquerades as this unknown artist for the duration of their business meeting (IFP: 138). This story is one in which Régine Robin is intratextually present for the first time. The key character is at one stage asked if she is Régine Robin, for example, a possibility that she denies, replying ‘non, vous faites erreur. Je m’appelle Martha Himmelfarb mais je connais Régine Robin. Elle était ici il y a très peu de temps. Elle est partie pour aller chez Tschann...’ (IFP: 151). Indeed, it seems that the Régine Robin of this story owns a shop that provides a false-biography writing service! Towards the end of the story, the narrator further confuses the identitarian issue, telling us:

Moi, je suis Pamela Wilkinson, ou Emilia Morgan, ou Nancy Nibor, ou Martha Himmelfarb, ou les alias du personnage quand elle prend part à des forums de discussion sur Compuserve ou sur Internet; Je suis peut-être la fille de la narratrice, ou même Régine Robin, si vous voulez. Mais laissez moi, vous m’embêtez à la fin, vous voyez bien qu’il est tard. Il faut absolument que je m’achète un paquet de Saint Moritz Menthol. (IFP: 157-158)

It is clear, then, that the author’s desire in this story is to question identity, to leave the narrator’s identity open and ambiguous, and to continually unsettle the reader with a farcical, shifting narrative.

The final story, ‘Manhattan Bistro’, which is again narrated in the first person singular, is the most clearly referential of the six. In this, the narrator is imagining and planning the book that she wishes to write as a sequel to *Le Cheval blanc de Lénine*, one of Robin’s own works. The narrator tells us that this would be a genealogical novel, ‘un texte autour de la famille, son légendaire et surtout ces cinquante et une cases, noms, places qui me manquent’ (IFP: 175). This would seem, then, to be a metanarrative commentary upon the very book in which it occurs. The narrator imagines the first chapter to take place in the conditional tense, something which is partially true of the first chapter of *L’Immense Fatigue des pierres*, and says that it would aim to constitute ‘une mémoire probable, plausible. Une autre vie possible’ (IFP: 177). There is detailed speculation within the narrative about what would have happened to the narrator’s maternal and paternal families if they had emigrated to the US rather than either remaining in Poland or emigrating to France. There is a relatively clear autobiographical pact established in this chapter, as the two sides of the

narrator's family are named 'Ajzerstejn' and 'Segalik' (IFP: 177), the names of Robin's own family. Moreover, speculating on the fate of all the family members who would have led full lives rather than being killed in the Holocaust, the narrator comments 'et Rivka, là-dedans. Rivka/moi. Rien ne change. Je suis née le 10 décembre 1939 à New York' (IFP: 180). Furthermore, reducing confusion about her own complicated nominal status, we are told: 'rien ne change et tout change. Le nom d'abord. Rivka Ajzerstejn n'est pas devenue Régine Robin, mais Rebecca Ajerstein (prononcer Ajerstin). Une Américaine' (IFP: 180).

It is clear, then, that the generic status of *L'Immense Fatigue des pierres* is highly intricate. It becomes progressively more referential, although it is only in the last story that a clear autobiographical pact is established. Throughout the other stories, there are numerous themes that seem to hint at an autobiographical link with the author, but this is cloaked in varying degrees of ambiguity and playful denial. As with much of Robin's work, there is a high degree of intertextual self-referentiality between the individual units that constitute her *oeuvre*. As we see this, the clues to the enduringly autobiographical nature of even that which appears to be fictional proliferate. Combining her desire for plural, plurivocal writing and a non-totalising inscription of the past, the nature of this work is perhaps illuminated most effectively in Robin's assertion that

le passé n'existe tout simplement pas, pas même la mémoire distordue. Le passé est vraiment une reconstruction de représentations, imaginaires non pas à partir de traces, mais à partir de fantasmes et d'actualisation de ces fantasmes. (Robin 1997b: 142)

Feeling that the only possible appropriation of her past is in the imaginary, the literary, and the fictional, Robin develops the genre of 'biofictions' in an attempt to decentre the text away from herself whilst still writing about that topic that is most important to her own identity, 'le roman familial'.

The final piece of writing that will constitute a focus of my readings is *Papiers perdus*, Robin's autobiographical Internet project. The homepage that Robin authors is divided into two principal sections, the first of which is entitled 'la branche universitaire', and which consists of her CV, lists of publications and research interests.

We are introduced to the second branch with the following words: 'une seconde avenue, Rivka A, vous donnera accès à une expérimentation autobiographique éclatée sur le web'. It is on the latter branch that my analysis will focus.

Key to understanding the generic status of this Internet project is its division, apparently mirroring that of the author, into two sections. Indeed, it is important to note that whilst the branch dealing with Robin's university and research career is attributed to 'Régine Robin', the autobiographical section is associated with her other name, 'Rivka A'. The autobiographical part is itself divided into sections. We are told that in the latter, this 'construction autobiographique par fragments', 'Rivka', 'mon double' is at the keyboard. If Régine Robin, then, is a name to which can be ascribed a detailed CV including a lengthy list of publications, then 'Rivka' is a personal, publicly less known figure. Indeed, it seems that the purpose of this Internet site is to explore this lesser known side of Robin's personality: 'cette Rivka qu'il me faut apprendre à mieux connaître'. Within one of the fragments of these texts, the author clarifies that at school she was known as Régine, and at home Rivkale. She tells us 'cette Rivkale, c'est toi petite et puis c'est toi dans la fiction'.

How, then, are we to approach this fragmented collection of texts, in which the subject alternates between a 'je', an 'elle' a 'tu', and a 'nous'? This fragmentation can be more accurately seen as a reflection of Robin's complex and divided sense of self, and of her desire to inscribe plurality into everything she does, rather than as a symptom of a move away from autobiography. Indeed, in one particular text entitled 'Mail de soi', she tells us:

L'autobiographie ou le geste autobiographique ne pourrait se penser aujourd'hui que dans le fragmentaire, le disparate, l'hétérogène, confronté à la mort des grands récits, en particulier du récit de soi. Le soi ne serait plus pensable en dehors de sa division de son ou de ses clivages. (Mail de soi)

The most generically unproblematic of her literary writings, then, is constituted by Robin's Internet site. Here, Robin seems to provide us with the greatest clarifications of her names and her writing projects. Illuminating the link between Régine and Rivka, a connection that lingers unresolved in her other writings, she furthermore provides us with what seemingly constitutes an explanation of the enduring pres-

ence of autobiographical themes within her work, coupled with her repeated avoidance of an autobiographical pact. She tells us, that in order to avoid the confusion of autobiography she prefers to adopt the notion of 'biographèmes' in the Barthesian sense.⁵⁰ Understanding this as the themes that sum up a life, a little later in the same text she tells us 'mes biographèmes sont récurrents: le drapeau rouge, le rapport à mon nom propre et à mes papiers d'identité, les bistrots'.

It is of paramount importance to note that what is Robin's most generically stable and clearly autobiographical text by far is the one which she has chosen to formulate as an Internet project. Arguably, because the Internet is already such a provisional and unstable locus of inscription, one that is utterly fragmented and decentred, it complies with Robin's writing project much more closely than the power-ridden and established logocentric medium of the book. Indeed, on the Internet, Robin gives us precise information not only on how to read her online texts, but also on her other works, thus enabling her site to perform a paratextual and metanarrative exegetic function. In view of her provision of all this information, it is necessary to ask to what extent my reading of Robin's work will comply with the framework that she established for us with her own authorial reading model.

Reflecting the notion that particular 'biographèmes' are present and recurrent across Robin's *oeuvre*, my reading of these texts will rely on the premise that some continuity may be detected across the three texts I shall study. Indeed, for all that they are labelled 'roman', 'biofictions' and 'expérimentation autobiographique' respectively, I will go so far as to resist Robin's attempt to encourage us to see these works as separate units, each with an entirely separate individual generic status. I will, instead, argue that the concern of these three texts is primarily the same; that all inscribe Robin's identity as that of a French Jewish academic whose subjectivity has been unsettled by the major ideological context of the twentieth century. And I will argue that in all of them, she wishes to produce a textual inscription of those members of her family whom she has outlived, thus recreating her

⁵⁰ Robin herself quotes Barthes at length in order to define the notion of 'biographèmes'. She cites Barthes as asserting that 'j'aimerais que ma vie se réduisît, par les soins d'un biographe amical et désinvolte, à quelques détails, à quelques goûts, à quelques inflexions, disons des « biographèmes »'. See Régine Robin, *Papiers perdus*, fragment entitled 'mes biographèmes'.

'roman familial'. The significant degree of recycling and repetition of themes and stories across these individual units decreases the degree of problematisation implicated in conceiving of them as a single corpus.

2.5 Life Writing: The Space of This Project

In this monograph, then, a selected range of contemporary life writing texts written by Serge Doubrovsky, Hervé Guibert and Régine Robin will be addressed. As my readings proceed, 'French autobiography' per se will not be my focus. Rather, the terrain of enquiry can be circumscribed as that of a range of experimental life writing texts that are united by a desire to play with the conventions of autobiography, and by a persistent, if often problematic, affiliation with France and the French language.⁵¹ Within that terrain, aspects of the life writings discussed will be brought into dialogue with the conceptual issues addressed in chapter 1. This study will proceed, in other words, to discuss the articulations of home space and cultural belonging in the selected works of each of these three writers individually, before moving on in chapter 6 to a comparative discussion of the extent to which these works could be considered to represent forms of 'postmodern cartography'. Attesting to the intention of this monograph to bring literature into dialogue with theory, the structure – and order – of these chapters has been determined by the literature itself. That is to say that the vision of home space offered by each set of texts will become progressively more complex through the chapters. Chapter 3 will com-

⁵¹ The term 'experimental' is argued by some critics to be problematic as it may represent a conservative way of excluding unusual literature from the mainstream. Alfred Hornung, taking these arguments on board, suggests that for greater clarity terms such as 'avant-garde' should be used. Whilst Hornung's argument is certainly not without truth, his easy association of the 'avant-garde' and the 'postmodern' is more difficult to accept. This monograph will not adopt the term 'avant-garde' due to the complexity of this notion's relationship with the postmodern. In fact, the relation between the historical avant-garde and the postmodern is one which is highly contested and discussion of which is impossible in this study due to space restrictions. For a discussion of Hornung's reservations about the term 'experimental', however, see Hornung (1992). For a more extensive discussion of postmodernism and the avant-garde, see Murphy (1999).

prise a discussion of the autofictional writings of Hervé Guibert, works that display a preoccupation primarily with a single, French home space, albeit one that is compared and contrasted with a few 'exotic' spaces. The order of the two subsequent chapters, treating the writings of Serge Doubrovsky and Régine Robin in turn, will be dictated by the proliferation and increasing complexity of the conception of home spaces that these works display. For Doubrovsky, considered in chapter 4, home space is articulated as ineluctably and painfully divided between the US and France. For Régine Robin, in chapter 5, home space is apparently articulated as divided between France and the US, but is further complicated by the spectre of a lost East European ghetto, the inhabitants and cultural heritage of which have been erased without trace. After a detailed analysis of the articulations of home space and cultural belonging in the works of each of these three writers, chapter 6 will bring the discussion back to a more overt dialogue with the notions of postmodern space that were elaborated in chapter 1. Here, I will investigate the extent to which the life writings of Guibert, Doubrovsky and Robin can be said to constitute maps through which the postmodern world can be better negotiated and understood. That is to say, chapter 6 will seek to establish to what extent life writing can be said to represent a form of 'postmodern cartography'.

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3.

Medico-Cultural Spaces in Hervé Guibert's AIDS Texts

3.0 Introduction: Cultural Production; Cultural Turmoil; Spatial Myths

The publication of the first of Hervé Guibert's AIDS texts, the focus of this chapter, marked a definitive moment in Guibert's career. They were the sources of the literary recognition, albeit accompanied by controversy and scandal, that he had long sought. Moreover, in addition to their impact upon the French literary arena, these works also had a major effect upon French national perceptions of AIDS, familiarising large sections of the French population with the day-to-day minutiae of living with the syndrome, as well as challenging the manifold myths and stereotypes that dogged people with AIDS at this time.

In wider terms, the critical role of culture and cultural production in both constituting and understanding the AIDS crisis is increasingly clear. There is growing recognition, for example, that rather than designating a singular, concrete reality, which has been transparently labelled by objective biomedical discourse, the meaning of 'AIDS', or 'le sida', is culturally negotiated. In this, both the signified and the signifier are seen to be constructed within existing social and cultural ideologies. As critic Paula Treichler argues, even supposedly impartial scientific research into AIDS 'exists within a heavily populated social, cultural and ideological territory' (Treichler 1988: 56). Drawing upon pre-existing cultural stereotypes and assumptions in order to understand the unknown, the threatening and the urgent, then, it is clear that even 'objective' medico-scientific discourses must be acknowledged as constructed within the realm of 'culture': the same circuit of exchange in which popular opinion and artistic representations of AIDS have been formulated.

Far from being subsumed and controlled by culture, however, AIDS has challenged the very underlying premises on which culture functions. Highlighting the impossibility of representation, for exam-

ple, AIDS is accused by critics of swamping texts by becoming subject, object and even language of representation, and in this way generating an 'epidemic of signification' and a plague of discourse.¹ As Douglas Crimp argues, 'AIDS intersects with and requires a critical rethinking of all of culture: of language and representation, of science and medicine, of health and illness, of sex and death, of the public and the private realms' (Crimp 1988: 15). AIDS is, then, both culturally constructed and culturally disruptive, presenting particular challenges to the pre-existing premises and underlying structures on which culture functions.

It is imperative to recognise that cultural responses to the syndrome have been heavily dependent upon particular understandings of space. Especially striking in early cultural responses to AIDS, contemporaneous with Guibert's writing, were the geopolitically and geoculturally dependent founding myths which sought to explain the syndrome's origins. The most widely disseminated of the manifold myths about the origins of AIDS, for instance, variously implicated US biological warfare scientists seeking to control African population growth; USSR scientists trying to fell their Cold War enemy, the US; African people and green monkeys, sometimes accused of undertaking 'primitive' rituals or bestiality and thus infecting the West; the (homo)sexual practices of Haitians infecting US tourists; and those in the 'degenerate' West inflicting the syndrome on Asia. Accompanied by many less well-known but similarly spatially-infused myths of blame,² these narratives were often not merely reinforced but actively sanctioned by state-instigated measures to control and restrict the movement of peoples from outside their own borders. Similarly, there are many examples of disproportionately extensive measures to conduct HIV tests on immigrants rather than native citizens.

In short, as Susan Sontag notably argues in her seminal essay *AIDS and its Metaphors* (1988), dominant reactions to the advent of AIDS have drawn upon age-old cultural understandings of plague as

¹ For a discussion of this see Poirier (1993: 1-7). For discussion of the term 'epidemic of signification' see Treichler (1988). For a discussion of 'plague of discourse' see Edelman (1988).

² For example, Kenya has made accusations towards Uganda; Zambia has blamed the Indian doctors who replaced colonial ones for being less competent (Sabatier 1988: 103-105).

that which comes from elsewhere and is transmitted by foreigners. Conceiving of the national space as a 'body' whose existence is threatened by the invasion of its individual constituent bodies, early cultural responses to AIDS demonstrated an almost universal impulse to re-establish the threatened borders between healthy inside and diseased outside at a national level. These attempts to explain the inexplicable and control the uncontrollable demonstrated a cultural response heavily dependent on notions of cultural belonging and space, which sought to blame the foreigner. Renée Sabatier's argument that 'for centuries, the reflex response to plague and pestilence has been to bar strangers from the city gates' (Sabatier 1988: 103) seems strikingly pertinent. Indeed, harnessed particularly by right wing interest groups, the AIDS crisis not only elicited culturally protectionist responses with regard to immigration and those perceived as foreign, but was also directly employed in order to question the very nature of nation, home, and the contemporary pluralities and diverse behaviours that have become increasingly visible in Western cultural spaces.

Bearing in mind the clearly spatial terrain upon which all cultural responses to AIDS are played out, then, and the fundamental questions that the crisis has generated about sense of belonging and national identity, I will now turn to an in-depth examination of the role of space within Guibert's AIDS texts.³ This topic has been the focus of no sustained study and has remained under-explored by critics. Analysis of the minimal critical commentary that exists on this topic

³ As I argued in chapter 2, in this study my definition of Guibert's AIDS texts will be larger than most. I will discuss *A l'ami qui ne m'a pas sauvé la vie* (1990); *Le Protocole compassionnel* (1991); *L'Homme au chapeau rouge* (1992); *Cytomégalo-virus* (1992) and *Le Paradis* (1992). As I also discussed in chapter 2, the nature of autofictional writing means that no simple correspondence can be assumed between the author and the 'Hervé Guibert' found within the texts. In order to avoid occluding the gap between author and narrator-protagonist, the former will be referred to simply by name – Hervé Guibert – whereas the latter will be signalled by the use of inverted commas – 'Hervé Guibert' – or referred to as 'the autofictionally rendered Hervé Guibert'. Moreover, as discussed in chapter 2, whilst the 'Hervé Guibert' to be found in the first three of the AIDS texts listed above could be judged to be a relatively stable construction of selfhood across all three volumes, being united by the same generic status as well as a strong intertext, this cannot be said to be true for the latter two works. When the 'Hervé Guibert' of *Cytomégalo-virus* or *Le Paradis* is referred to, then, this will be prefaced by an indication that this narrator is distinct to this work, i.e. 'Cytomégalo-virus's 'Hervé Guibert''.

demonstrates the existence of intriguing contradictions. Jean-Pierre Boulé, an academic who has dedicated a significant amount of his work to studying Guibert's *oeuvre*, for example, argues that 'space in the novels is open. The narrator travels to Italy, including Elba and Rome; Tunisia; Japan; America. By taxi, tube and aeroplane' (Boulé 1995a: 45). Literary critic Brad Epps, however, suggests quite the opposite, arguing that 'chez Guibert l'espace lui-même est souvent contraint et contraignant' (Epps 1997: 61). In order to address rigorously the topic of space in Guibert's autofictional AIDS writing, I will firstly seek to establish what could be characterised as spaces of home and cultural belonging within Guibert's work. I will then move on to investigate the wider topic of how Guibert's autofictionally rendered double is placed within cultural space through examining the major spatial leitmotifs that may be detected within the AIDS texts. Finally, I will examine the way 'Hervé Guibert's' understanding of and interaction with international space is portrayed as altered by his diagnosis with AIDS.

3.1 Spaces of Cultural Belonging and Home: Paris, Rome and Elba

The site most clearly associated with the intratextual, and indeed the extratextual, Guibert is clearly that of Paris. Early in *A l'ami*,⁴ Guibert posits his autofictionally rendered self as living at '203 rue du Bac' (ALA: 29). Even a cursory glance at Guibert's AIDS texts reveals that the precise location of this home within the space of Paris is far from arbitrary. On the contrary, situated as it is in the 7th arrondissement, it seems to interpellate some key aspects of 'Hervé Guibert's' identity. For example, it is situated firmly on the Parisian Left Bank, a space heavily imbued with connotations of the French intellectual and cultural elite.⁵ This association is reinforced by the revelation that 'Hervé

⁴ The following abbreviations for the titles of primary texts will be adhered to in this chapter: *ALA* (Hervé Guibert, *A l'ami qui ne m'a pas sauvé la vie* [Paris: Gallimard, 1990]); *Le PC* (Hervé Guibert, *Le Protocole compassionnel* [Paris: Gallimard, 1991]); *HCR* (Hervé Guibert, *L'Homme au chapeau rouge* [Paris: Gallimard, 1992]); *C* (Hervé Guibert, *Cytomégalo virus* [Paris: Seuil, 1992]); *Le P* (Hervé Guibert, *Le Paradis* [Paris: Gallimard, 1992]).

⁵ A cursory glance at a guidebook insists upon the Bohemian, dissident, intellectual nature of the Left Bank and its history as the locale in which great

Guibert's neighbour and close friend is none other than Muzil, a character bearing strong resemblance to the renowned French intellectual, Michel Foucault.⁶ The areas of Paris that Guibert's autofictional double inhabits are certainly those of the culturally privileged in which chance meetings with important people occur. In *L'Homme au chapeau rouge*, for example, 'Hervé Guibert' twice bumps into Francis Bacon. Firstly, we are told, 'un beau matin froid, je le croisai rue Saint-Antoine' (HCR: 57) and later, 'un soir au Flore, je tombai par hasard sur lui' (HCR: 57). As Derek Duncan argues, 'Hervé Guibert' demonstrates loyalty to and affinity with 'une coterie d'élite parisienne, artistique et intellectuelle' (Duncan 1995: 101), an observation which is clearly supported by analysis of the spaces in which he is cast as moving.

The location of Guibert's autofictional double within the heart of French cultural space is reinforced by his frequent narrative references to well-known, value-laden spaces of French gastronomy. The restaurant 'La Coupole',⁷ for example, located on the Boulevard du Montparnasse, frequently recurs in Guibert's narrative (Le PC: 63; 131; 140; HCR: 18-19; 42). Similarly, there are references to eating at 'Le Sélect' (Le PC: 13; 27), known to be a particularly traditional and authentic example of the literary cafés located on the 'boulevard du Montparnasse' (Baillie and Salmon 1997:132 and 260). An additional dimension to the autofictionally rendered Guibert's relationship with space can be identified in terms of his occupation of spaces closely associated with male homosexuality. As Heathcote, Hughes and Williams assert, since the Second World War, gay culture in France has been primarily associated with Paris, the privileged home city of 'Hervé Guibert'. Within this, the Marais area has been the centre of

thinkers, painters and writers were traditionally to be found. Indeed, the *Rough Guide* tells us that 'it is here, still, that the city's mythmakers principally gather: the writers, painters, philosophers, politicians, journalists, designers – the people who tell Paris what it is' (Baillie and Salmon 1997: 109).

⁶ Indeed, Emily Apter asserts that it is in this elite sector of Parisian life that both the extratextual Guibert and his intratextual self lived, arguing that Guibert came of age in 'the Paris of Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault' (Apter 1993: 84).

⁷ To cite a tourist guide to Paris, 'La Coupole' is labelled 'the largest and perhaps the most famous and enduring arty-chic Parisian hang-out for dining, dancing and debate' (Baillie and Salmon 1997: 260).

gay activity since the 1970s (Heathcote, Hughes and Williams 1998b: 9-10), and this is a space that 'Hervé Guibert' frequents (ALA: 189).

In fact, a pertinent link can be drawn here between the ways in which 'Hervé Guibert' is presented as establishing a sense of belonging in particular spaces that correspond with his identity, and Bourdieu's theory of culture. Central to his arguments about 'habitus' and cultural capital is the hypothesis that rather than being decided by innate qualities, cultural privilege is actively asserted by individuals through the position taking that they choose to undertake. In 'Hervé Guibert's' case, this 'position-taking' is evident in his spatial preferences. That is to say that his cultural identity as a writer and journalist is cast as reflected in his apparent sense of belonging in the well-known spaces of the artistic and literary *crème de la crème*. Moreover, through his occupation of these spaces, it could be said that 'Hervé Guibert's' 'cultural capital' is reinforced as it is here that he is flagged as mixing with some of the most highly respected figures of the contemporary cultural scene, thereby acquiring the necessary 'marks of distinction' to separate him from the crowd.⁸ In his naming of many spaces of gastronomy, references, all, to an ultra-French cultural tradition, the narrator is established as moving not merely within culturally elite spaces, but within *French* cultural spaces, and is thus linked with the long tradition of famous French intellectuals and great thinkers. The space of cultural belonging of 'Hervé Guibert', can, then, be clearly identified to be geographically that of the Parisian Left Bank, intersecting with the established cultural spaces of the Parisian, gay and artistic elites.

This privileged location within the heart of the French artistic establishment can also be seen to be constructed by Guibert as permitting his autofictional avatar to move unproblematically into a similarly advantageous Italian space.⁹ That is to say that 'Hervé Guibert' is pre-

⁸ As Derek Robbins explains in *Bourdieu and Culture* (2000), Bourdieu sees culture as something that must be continually enacted by individuals, and in which individuals seek 'marks of distinction' through which to establish their status. Bourdieu used the notion of 'cultural capital' in order to reinforce the view that culture is a currency that people use rather than an innate quality (Robbins 2000).

⁹ Other works written by Guibert that do not fall within the remit of my current study shed a considerably less favourable light on the space of Rome, notably *L'Incognito*.

sented as spending considerable time at both the 'Villa espagnole' in Rome, a place specifically designated for talented French writers and artists, and at a friend's home on the 'Ile d'Elbe'. Indeed, the significance of Italy for 'Hervé Guibert' as a space of belonging, albeit one that is of lesser importance than that of Paris, is clear: references both to Elba (ALA: 121; 147; Le PC: 137) and Rome (ALA: 175; 179; 180; Le PC: 25; 139; 140; HCR: 32) particularly dominate the first two of Guibert's AIDS texts. These Italian spaces are presented as sites in which 'Hervé Guibert' unproblematically establishes a sense of belonging and homeliness. The city of Rome, for example, is frequently referred to as a place where the narrator lived for two years, and in which he acquired homely possessions and collected art objects (Le PC: 137-9). Perhaps most importantly, however, is the fact that 'Hervé Guibert's sense of belonging here is presented as in part due to the positive impact of these spaces upon his artistic and writerly pursuits. Rome, for instance, is not only a place in which he again meets many similarly talented people, but is mentioned as early as the second page of *A l'ami* and is clearly associated with the conception of the book itself: 'ce jour où j'entreprends ce livre, le 26 décembre 1988, à Rome...' (ALA: 10). Similarly, Elba is highlighted by Guibert's autofictional narrator as a place of literary creativity as well as of belonging and happiness. He describes it as 'cet endroit miraculeux où je me sens si bien, où tout est beauté, où l'arrivée est plus heureuse que le soulagement de départ, et où j'ai écrit la plupart de mes livres' (Le PC: 142). In both of these Italian spaces, Guibert's autofictional narrator is cast as surrounded by friends and as living in an artistically stimulating environment.

An initial foray into the world that Guibert creates for his intratextual construction of selfhood, then, indicates that the spaces of Paris, Rome and Elba are of considerable importance. In chapter 1, I established that home could be defined as a place in which an individual makes an emotional investment and in which a person could ideally 'be oneself, at ease, secure and at rest' (Kennedy 1996: viii). In the case of 'Hervé Guibert', in addition to the importance of homely possessions and the presence of friends in spaces of home and belonging, Guibert emphasises the essential nature of artistic and writerly stimulation. For 'Hervé Guibert', then, any notion of home must take into account his desire to site himself in a particular cultural location, one that is dependent upon literary and artistic cultural capital. It is to

the impact of the HIV virus upon 'Hervé Guibert's' relationship with cultural space that my discussion will now turn.

3.2 The Spaces of AIDS: Body and Space

The presence of the HIV virus within Guibert's narratives is presented as considerably altering the spaces within which Guibert's intratextual avatar moves and lives. As several critics have remarked (Hughes 1999: 105-136), evident across Guibert's AIDS corpus are the medical spaces into which his autofictional double is drawn once his HIV positive status is suspected. 'Hervé Guibert' is cast as attending firstly *l'hôpital Claude-Bernard* (ALA: 51; 53; 55; 238) and later *l'hôpital Rothschild* (ALA: 238; 239; Le PC: 27; 46; 66), as well as *la Pitié-Salpêtrière* where Muzil dies (ALA: 104), and references to these locations litter the narratives.¹⁰ The act of visiting these new spaces is narratively presented as disrupting the normal rhythms that organise 'Hervé Guibert's' experience of both time and space and he complains, for example, of being required to travel long-distances to peripheral *banlieues* of Paris for early morning medical appointments. In *A l'ami*, in relation to his first appointment at *l'hôpital Claude-Bernard*, 'Hervé Guibert' tells us: 'j'ai dû me rendre à jeun et de bonne heure, ne dormant pratiquement pas de la nuit par peur de manquer ce rendez-vous'. Inconvenienced not only by the early hour of his appointment, he also has to 'traverser de bout en bout Paris' (ALA: 51). The peripheral location of this hospital is reinforced a little later in the text with the words 'je traversai une seconde bretelle du périphérique pour parvenir au portail de l'hôpital Claude-Bernard' (ALA: 56).¹¹ Attending hospitals such as the *Claude-Bernard*, located in this case in the furthest reaches of the 18^e, casts 'Hervé Guibert' out of the range

¹⁰ The medical spaces into which 'Hervé Guibert' is drawn can be seen to conform with what Martel terms an 'unité de lieu (la Pitié, Rothschild, Broussais, Claude-Bernard)' common to many French AIDS writers. Clearly, then, Guibert's autofictionally constructed account of being drawn into new, peripheral Parisian spaces by the HIV virus is not atypical of other cultural representations of the illness. See Martel (1994: 167).

¹¹ The hospital in which Guibert constructs his narrator as writing *Cytomégalo-virus* at the end of his life is similarly described as located on the *périphérique*, the ring road delimiting the outskirts of the city of Paris.

of his usual haunts in the Left Bank and out of the cultural heart of central Paris.

We can infer from Guibert's AIDS texts that these medical sites are not merely geographically peripheral, but are also culturally marginal. *L'hôpital Claude-Bernard*, for example, is described as '[un] hôpital mort' (ALA: 55) and 'un hôpital fantôme au bout du monde' (ALA: 53), which is disused other than for AIDS patients. As 'Hervé Guibert' is textually presented as discovering, asking directions to such a stigma-laden place elicits a very particular response from ordinary members of society (ALA: 56). Similarly, the culturally tainted connotations of *l'Institut Alfred-Fournier*, a former VD clinic, are evident in a particularly ironic passage in which we read: 'Jules m'a fait remarquer qu'ils ont mis une moquette neuve à l'Institut Alfred-Fournier, un peu déclinant depuis la syphilis, et soudain prospéré comme une usine de capotes' (ALA: 182). The geographically peripheral and culturally marginal sites into which medical appointments direct 'Hervé Guibert' thrust him into new spaces within his home city, both reflecting and contributing to the detrimental impact of AIDS upon his formerly privileged cultural position. In fact, this element of Guibert's work is pertinent in terms of the light it sheds upon Bourdieu's theory of culture that I discussed above. From Guibert's AIDS texts we can infer that the advent of a catastrophic and deeply stigmatised illness such as AIDS significantly undermines the ability of an individual to determine their own place, both physical and symbolic, in culture through 'position-taking'. In this case, the impact of AIDS clearly affects 'Hervé Guibert's' cultural identity because it causes him to move out of the spaces in which he gains and exhibits his 'cultural capital' and casts him instead into sites that are both culturally and physically marginal.

In fact, 'Hervé Guibert' is not only presented as cast into new spaces by the progression of the HIV virus within his body, but his experience of familiar spaces is flagged as modified by the advent of AIDS. Driving through the Parisian *banlieue* in a taxi on the way back from some of his earliest medical tests, 'Hervé Guibert' reflects upon his and Jules's condition and concludes: 'je me dis que nous avons tous les deux le sida. Cela modifiait tout en un instant, tout basculait *et le paysage avec* autour de cette certitude' (ALA: 41, my italics). Indeed, it is driving back through 'les rues désertes de Paris' (ALA: 194) after having dinner in the Marais quarter that 'Hervé Guibert' is

presented as confessing to Bill that he is HIV positive. The places in which such definitive moments in the establishment of his status as a person with AIDS are narratively cast as taking place seem increasingly to haunt Guibert's autofictionally rendered self, colouring his perception of even very familiar landscapes. This is evident in the discussion of the anonymous HIV test which 'Hervé Guibert' tells us he had 'non loin de la statue de Jeanne d'Arc qui s'élève sur le boulevard Saint-Marcel, à l'angle d'une petite rue, la rue du Jura' (ALA: 153). He tells us: 'devant laquelle [la statue], des mois après je ne pouvais plus passer, sur le trajet de l'autobus 91 que j'empruntais pour me rendre à mes dîners avec David, sans ressentir aussitôt un frisson intolérable' (ALA: 152). Situated on Paris's Left Bank, this space would previously have constituted a familiar space of social activity and positive cultural encounters for 'Hervé Guibert'. Now it is indelibly marked by the threat and stigma presented by the HIV virus.

The most striking modifications in Guibert's narrator's experience of space can, however, only be understood in relation to his own body. In fact, the body has been hailed by many critics as an essential focus of any Guibertian study, and as such has received considerable critical attention. Michael Worton, for example, has asserted that 'le corps de Guibert est partout dans son oeuvre' (Worton 1997: 63). Moreover, Ralph Sarkonak, in the introduction to his edited collection entitled *Le Corps textuel de Hervé Guibert* (1997) argues that for Guibert '[le corps n'est] pas simplement un thème mais le principe générateur de l'oeuvre' (Sarkonak 1997b: 9). Whilst there has been, then, much fruitful analysis of Guibert's autofictional constructions of the corporeal, I wish here to address the essential, spatially-situated nature of the Guibertian body, a phenomenon that has received considerably less attention.

In recent times a flourishing body of academic enquiry has grown up, stimulated particularly by the growing prominence of identity politics and feminist scholarship, around the notion that the body and space are interdependent. In fact, as I argued in chapter 1, the notion that the body can no longer be simply dismissed as biologically given but rather is shaped by the spaces in which it moves, has become increasingly prominent with the emergence of postmodern thought. Concomitantly, there has been a realisation that spaces have a constitutive role to play in the formation of bodies. The work of those such as Elizabeth Grosz, Nancy Duncan and Heidi J. Nast, then, all

points to the conclusion that bodies and spaces are inextricably and mutually constitutively linked in the contemporary world.¹² I will now develop this notion of the inter-connectedness of body and space, focusing both on the impact of space upon 'Hervé Guibert's' own perception of his body as well as that cast upon him by society.

Across the AIDS texts, the declining physical capacities of Guibert's autofictional avatar are continually highlighted. I wish to contend here that 'Hervé Guibert's' bodily decline can be understood only in reference to the spaces in which it occurs. On the opening page of *Le Protocole compassionnel*, for example, 'Hervé Guibert' describes his increasingly desperate physical state, asserting that he is 'perdant chaque jour un geste que j'étais encore capable de produire la veille' (Le PC: 12). That these incremental physical losses are measured in relation to the narrator's home spaces is evident:

Ma force motrice continue de décliner avec le jour: pour la sieste, je suis capable de fixer le rideau de la chambre à un crochet que m'a cloué Gustave par rapport à la distance que me permettait mon bras, mais je me suis rendu compte que le soir au coucher il ne pouvait plus l'atteindre. (Le PC: 160-161)

For 'Hervé Guibert', then, it is the location of his body in a particular, familiar space that permits him to realise the extent of his deterioration. In this way, the everyday spaces of life serve as benchmarks against which to measure his former physical capabilities and the degree to which he is deteriorating. In what is perhaps one of the most poignantly humorous passages in Guibert's autofictional writing, in *Le Protocole compassionnel* we find an incident in which 'Hervé Guibert' falls over going into the 'café de la rue Alésia' where, we are told, 'il m'arrive depuis dix ans de boire quelque chose' (Le PC: 15). 'Hervé Guibert' recounts the actions of a waiter whom he had 'toujours pris pour un ennemi' but who, in the face of his inability to stand up, 's'approcha de moi et me prit dans ses bras pour me remettre sur pied, comme la chose la plus naturelle du monde' (Le PC: 15). In this incident, then, we can detect clear evidence of the deeply interdependent nature of body and space in Guibert's work: familiar spaces are presented as not merely reinforcing 'Hervé Guibert's' realisation of

¹² For a thorough discussion of the work of these theorists as well as the topic of the interdependency of body and space in general, see chapter 1.

his physical deterioration and weakness, but it is evident that his deteriorating corporeal capacities also generate a new perspective on sites that he had previously believed to be thoroughly familiar. Moreover, in an especially pertinent passage of *Le Protocole compassionnel* in which Berthe's mother makes a harsh comment about his declining health, Guibert's autofictional double tells us:

j'ai pris conscience ici, à cause des difficultés nouvelles de locomotion et de manipulation adaptées à l'espace qui m'était entièrement familier [...], à cause aussi du regard de ceux qui ne m'avait pas vu depuis un an, que je suis vraiment très malade. (Le PC: 141)

It is, then, through the presence of others, and more precisely through the evaluative *regard* of the other as it plays itself out in familiar spaces, that the narrator judges his own physical state. In fact, I wish to contend that visibility and the 'gaze' is inextricably tied up in the physical well-being/spatial mobility relationship within Guibert's work, as will become evident a little later in my discussion.

A further example of the mutually reflexive, inter-dependent nature of body and space is also to be found in the way that HIV alters 'Hervé Guibert's' capacity wilfully to move his body between and occupy different spaces. From the micro to the macro scale, the degree of mobility of Guibert's autofictionally rendered self, as well as his ability to choose between different methods of transport, are altered by the advent of AIDS. In *Le Protocole compassionnel*, 'Hervé Guibert's' means of journeying around Paris is directly related to his physical state. After initially highlighting the difficulties involved in travelling by bus: 'ça devenaient une hantise de monter la marche en m'agrippant à la barre puis de me relever du siège pour descendre à la station...' (Le PC: 11), he becomes increasingly dependent upon taxis (Le PC: 42). Having obtained a supply of 'DDI' and enjoying a subsequent physical improvement, he tells us that he begins to take the bus again: 'je reprends l'autobus, je m'agrippe aux deux barres pour monter la marche, et je fais attention de ne pas perdre l'équilibre en lâchant la main qui met le ticket dans la pinceuse' (Le PC: 97). This new physical strength and the consequent possibility of travelling by bus is not as trivial as we might assume. On the contrary, for 'Hervé Guibert' we can ascertain that it casts him into a different relationship with the spaces of the city. Far from resembling the isolated cocoon of a taxi moving directly from starting point to destination, the bus is de-

picted by Guibert as the means to a broader journeying experience, filled with unknown and stimulating encounters, perhaps a modern equivalent of *flânerie*.¹³

In fact, in his textual representation of bus journeys, Guibert seems implicitly to foreground the importance of the visual within the body/space relationship. Within the bus itself, for example, 'Hervé Guibert' interacts with unknown people, turning upon them the gaze of which he is often the object. He tells us: 'dans l'autobus, derrière des lunettes noires, je regarde les jeunes femmes. Je les trouves jolies, presque appétissantes' (Le PC: 97). Moreover, serving as a mobile vantage point, the glass windows of the bus seem to invite a speculating *regard* on the outside world. In this way, travelling by bus seems to furnish Guibert's autofictionally rendered self with unexpected tales and incidents to recount. We are told, for example, that 'samedi vers 16 heures, à l'arrêt du 58 à Montparnasse, j'ai vu un homme mourir d'une crise cardiaque sous mes yeux' (Le PC: 112). Initially uncertain of what to do, 'Hervé Guibert' is cast as telling the bus driver to call an ambulance, thus allowing him, he recalls, to play at 'mes ambulanciers' (Le PC: 114). It is pertinent to draw, here, upon Marcy E. Schwartz's study of Latin American literary constructions of Paris, in which she overtly addresses the importance of windows in the city. She tells us that in the work of Julio Cortázar, 'the ambiguity of glass, transparent yet enclosing, delicate yet restraining, contributes to [... the] construction of Paris as liminal and interstitial: as a passageway between alternative modes of behaviour, different but coinciding historical times and moments of metamorphosis' (Schwartz 1999: 35). Certainly, for 'Hervé Guibert', being enclosed within the 'dangerous [glass] boundaries' (Schwartz 1999: 35) of the bus represents something much more significant than merely a cheap way to travel. In fact, in the passage cited above, 'Hervé Guibert's' observation of the world through the windows of the bus prompts him to try to help an ill stranger. In this way, he undertakes an active role, permitting him to resist his usual position as the abnormal object of society's gaze and his normal role of passive victim. Just as for Cortázar, then, for 'Hervé

¹³ The figure of the *flâneur* is often associated with Modernist literary representations of the city, and refers to a privileged figure who wandered around the city observing urban life. Perhaps most famous is the work of Walter Benjamin on Charles Baudelaire's textual constructions of *flânerie*. For a discussion of this see Tester (1994).

Guibert' the windows of the bus represent 'a passageway between alternative modes of behaviour'. Moreover, the mobile nature of this 'passageway', travelling as it does around the city, allows him to participate more fully in his urban environment. Overall, we can infer that the interdependency of space and body, interlinked with visibility, are not only crucial aspects of 'Hervé Guibert's' ability to undertake different activities, but are also of paramount importance to his own sense of identity and his role in the world.

In *L'Homme au chapeau rouge*, travelling by bus seems inextricably interlinked with the Guibertian narrator's key occupation: that of collecting paintings. He tells us that instead of going directly to the usual 'salles de ventes de banlieue [...] moi je prends l'autobus' (HCR: 34). It is his ability to look out of the window as the bus weaves a winding path through the fabric of the urban landscape that allows the intratextual Guibert to discover new art shops rather than merely visiting those that he already knows, thus forging new relationships with his home city. He adds: 'je me souviens de chaque autobus qui m'a permis de découvrir un tableau' and even goes so far as to name particular bus routes: 'la boutique du boulevard Raspail qui aujourd'hui n'existe plus, je l'ai repéré depuis l'autobus 68' (HCR: 34). I will return later in my discussion to the argument that the collection of *tableaux*, permanent works of art, is undertaken by the ailing autofictionally rendered Guibert in order to resist his increasingly all-engulfing status as a person with AIDS and to wrestle for himself a non-AIDS defined, non-ephemeral dimension to his identity. For the moment, however, it is clear that the narrator's ability to travel by bus, in turn dependent on his physical well being, considerably affects his knowledge of the space of Paris and the activities that he is able to undertake.

Affecting his movements in domestic spaces as well as his mobility and activities in city space, 'Hervé Guibert's' diseased body is also flagged as impacting upon his ability to negotiate international space. Indeed, 'Hervé Guibert' is presented as so aware of the potential threats to his mobility that the incursion of AIDS into his body represents, that he insists upon taking an anonymous HIV test. We are told in *A l'ami*: 'je dis au docteur Chandi qu'en raison de mes incessantes allées et venues entre l'Italie et la France je devais avant tout préserver ma liberté à passer cette frontière' (ALA: 153). Despite this precaution, however, impediments to the autofictionally rendered

Guibert's international movements do become evident. When he is stopped at customs on his trip to Moscow in *L'Homme au chapeau rouge*, for example, we are told that 'ils ont immédiatement saisi les douze sachets du médicament qui me tient provisoirement en vie' (HCR: 140). Later on, when confronted with a similar situation upon arrival in Ouagadougou, 'Hervé Guibert' avoids having his movements restricted by fallaciously explaining away his 'tonne de médicaments' by claiming to have the more socially acceptable illness of leukaemia (HCR: 164). As Leslie Hill argues, illness represents 'l'impossibilité de confier à son propre corps le soin exclusif de sa survie' (Hill 1995: 92). In the case of 'Hervé Guibert', it is not merely the fact of being ill, but the stigmatised nature of the illness itself that is significant. Indeed, his bodily disorder is marked by the necessity of carrying substantial quantities of medicines across national borders, generating suspicion and the potential for his entry into foreign countries to be refused. The disruption of the body of Guibert's autofictionally rendered self as monadic and self-sufficient presents a serious threat to his ability to move outside of French space and to transgress national borders. This not only demonstrates the interdependency of body and space on an international scale, then, but reinforces the argument by Sabatier that I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter that a classic response to 'plague and pestilence' has been to restrict the movements of strangers (Sabatier 1988: 103).

Perhaps the most convincing indicator of the crucial textual interdependency of body and space in Guibert's *autofictions* can be detected in his pervasive usage of the device of pathetic fallacy. In this, the state of Guibert's autofictionally rendered body seems to be mirrored by the landscapes through which he moves. When depicting his autofictionally rendered self's physical struggle across Paris to attend early morning medical appointments, for example, Guibert allows the space of Paris to become equally dysfunctional and out of control. Before his first visit to the *hôpital Claude-Bernard*, Guibert's narrator has to 'traverser de bout en bout Paris paralysé par la grève semi-générale' (ALA: 51, my italics). Commenting on the lack of availability of a taxi which might take him easily across the city, Guibert's narrator tells us: 'j'avais dû m'écrabouiller dans la masse puante et résignée qui bondait un compartiment de métro dérégulée par la grève' (ALA: 52). Similarly, it is when 'Hervé Guibert's' test results have begun to decline, with serious implications for his future ability to

take life-prolonging drugs, that he has to travel across Paris himself to *l'Institut Alfred Fournier* 'à cause de la grève générale qui paralysait le courrier' (ALA: 210). Jean-Pierre Boulé's assertion that 'generally speaking, space [in Guibert's writing] is defined by the progression of the virus' (Boulé 1995a: 45) seems, then, to be something of an understatement. Redefining and mutually modifying each other, Guibert's narrator's body and the spaces in which it moves are textually constructed as highly interdependent from the micro- to macro-scale. It is in the context of this essential situatedness of the body in space that I will now turn to examine the spatial leitmotifs pervading Guibert's autofictional writings. I will argue that the pervasive themes of Guibertian space as it is represented in his AIDS texts consist of confinement, resistance and escape.

3.3 Spatial Leitmotifs

Confinement: the Medical, the Concentration Camp and the Cellar

Perhaps one of the most striking spatial leitmotifs within Guibert's writing is his recurring preoccupation with imprisonment and confinement. Brad Epps, in a footnote to his essay 'Le Corps «techno-ascétique»; Guibert, le sida, et l'art de la maîtrise de soi', notes that 'chez Guibert l'espace lui-même est souvent contraint et contraignant' (Epps 1997: 61). As I have argued above, 'Hervé Guibert's' movements are often restricted by the medical appointments that compel him to make inconvenient and difficult journeys through space in order to present his ailing body within geographically peripheral medical spaces. Moreover, the environments of such medical encounters are themselves presented as physically confining and restrictive. Whilst few critics have commented upon space within Guibert's writing, the confinement that his narrator endures within medical spaces has provoked some stimulating academic scholarship.

Imbued as they are with power relations, the medical spaces in which the intratextual Guibert moves can be seen to constrain the narrator's body, and indeed his identity, in particular ways. The Foucauldian reading of these spaces undertaken by Alex Hughes in *Heterographies* is particularly helpful in understanding this phenomenon. This work draws upon Foucault's argument in *Surveiller et punir*

(1975) that in order to achieve their aim of producing 'docile bodies', which may at best be harnessed to play a productive role in society and at worst controlled in order to be of minimal hindrance to society, institutions undertake strategies to contain bodies within segregated and cellularised, visually surveillable spaces (Foucault 1977). Applying this Foucauldian logic to Guibert's autofictional writing, Hughes argues that the spaces into which Guibert's narrator moves particularly once he is diagnosed as HIV positive

are revealed as partitioned, partitioning loci. They are cast as segmented spaces where the AIDS victim enters so many *cellules*, *cabines*, specially dedicated *pavillons barricadés* and *boxes de ponctions du sang* that isolate him from the community of the well whilst keeping him in proximity to it, expose him to codifying operations of knowledge/research, and or regulate and contain the contagion – and the medical challenge – intrinsic to his condition. (Hughes 1999: 110)

These cells, which represent the rational, masculine logic of containing and controlling disease, are defined by their geometry and clean lines. Constituting the clear antithesis of curving, sinuous, female forms of enclosure, these boxes seem to allow no possibility for the existence of plurality, but effectively control the bodies placed within them.

In addition to the power-imbued control mechanisms that riddle medical space and are referred to by Muzil in *A l'ami*, many of Guibert's AIDS texts emphasize the ways in which seemingly random encounters with incompetent staff and poor equipment increase confinement. In *Cytomégalo-virus*, the *journal d'hospitalisation* which recounts a stay in hospital endured by Guibert towards the end of his life, and which is a more simply referential text than those previously discussed, the matter of spatial confinement is most vividly presented. In this work, Guibert's intratextual self is confined to residing within a medical institution and to obeying its mores for two weeks. His restriction within this medical environment extends unnecessarily to control his most mundane and trivial movements by the lack of provision of a movable IV transfusion stand. Becoming increasingly frustrated with his immobile, broken stand, we are told that 'cela réduit énormément mes possibilités de mouvements dans la chambre' (C: 13) and he tells us that he plans his movements so as to accomplish as much as possible in each space and thereby avoid having to return. Al-

ready restricted by his deteriorating physical state to limited mobility, the movement in space of Guibert's textually represented body is further inhibited by the sub-standard nature of the medical environment in which he finds himself.

Moreover, within Guibert's autofictional writing, the confinement visited upon his autofictionally represented body by the medical establishment is shown to restrict his movements on a much wider scale. In *L'Homme au chapeau rouge*, for example, 'Hervé Guibert' tells us: 'j'avais de la fièvre, je toussais, le docteur Nacier insistait pour que je renonce à ce voyage à Madrid avec le peintre Yannis' (HCR: 15). The power of the medical establishment is such, then, that once it assumes responsibility for his case, 'Hervé Guibert's' movements are restricted in all aspects of his life and he becomes effectively imprisoned in Paris. Particularly helpful in any investigation of just how the medical establishment succeeds in extending its grip in this way is a passage in *Le Protocole compassionnel*. In this, 'Hervé Guibert' recounts the refusal of his doctor, Claudette Dumouchel, to allow him to go away to Italy, telling us:

Je dis à Claudette: «Je veux partir» et Claudette me répond: «Je ne vous laisserai pas partir.» Je n'ai rien d'autre à faire à Paris que voir Claudette, dont je suis le prisonnier qui l'aime finalement. Je sentirais terriblement déçue si elle me donnait le feu vert, je me sentirais abandonné par elle. (Le PC: 58)

Evidently, the insidious nature of control exerted by the medical establishment engenders a feeling of emotional as well as physical dependency, which is expressed by 'Hervé Guibert' as a fear of moving his body out of reach of the sites of medical control. Clear compliance can be seen here with a model of medical power relations that Deborah Lupton advances in *Medicine as Culture: Illness, Disease and the Body in Western Society* (1994). In this she argues that, at least in Foucauldian terms, power in the medical context

is not a unitary entity, but a strategic relation which is diffuse and invisible. Power is not necessarily a subjugating force aimed at domination which itself is vulnerable to resistance, but rather is closer to the idea of a form of social organization by which social order and conformity are maintained by voluntary means. (Lupton 1994: 111)

In the case of 'Hervé Guibert', then, his spatial restriction is not the result of any threat of punishment or retribution if he fails to comply with the medical advice he is given, or even any physical barriers put in the way of his movement. In fact, it is the result of his adoption of the accepted Western model of what Lupton terms the 'passive patient' who is socialized to accept the constant regulation of his body by medical testing and supervision. The insidious nature of medical power relations, then, engenders an emotional dependency in 'Hervé Guibert' that is presented as constraining him to remain in close spatial proximity to his doctors. Indeed, an examination of the textual representation of Guibert to be found in *CytomégaloVirus* indicates that this growing dependency takes a similarly spatial form to that expressed in *Le Protocole compassionnel* above. In *CytomégaloVirus*, the intratextual Guibert tells us that his hospital room has become 'un cocon insidieux qui, petit à petit, rend effrayant l'espace réel de l'extérieur, même le couloir' (C: 47). In sum, throughout Guibert's AIDS texts, the medical establishment is associated with spatial confinement and restriction. The pervasive yet subtle reach of medical control is shown to confine Guibert's textually constructed selves not only within medical environments, but also even in terms of their international movements, a factor that seems to engender increasing emotional dependency.

In an essay entitled 'The Language of War in AIDS Discourse', Michael S. Sherry adds an interesting dimension to the discussion of people with AIDS and feelings of confinement. Sherry argues that the fear of confinement experienced by many people with AIDS at the time of Guibert's writing can be attributed to their very real belief in the possibility that they might be indefinitely quarantined in concentration camp-style detention centres (Sherry 1993: 41). Such a fear is clearly evident in Guibert's narrator's ironic comment: 'heureusement vraiment que le sida est une maladie acrobatiquement transmissible, sinon je vous écrirais depuis ma cellule, derrière des barreaux' (Le PC: 79). This pervasive fear, Sherry argues, was countered by the use of holocaust metaphors by gay men, wishing to highlight the sinister potential of the AIDS crisis. It is certainly true that Guibert overtly employs Holocaust imagery in his AIDS texts. His autofictionally rendered self is labelled 'bébé-Auschwitz' by Jules (Le PC: 128) and 'Hervé Guibert' himself describes the sight of his wasted body in the bathroom mirror each morning as taking place 'en panoramique

auschwitzien' (Le PC: 18). Moreover, reflecting upon the future of his skeletal self, 'Hervé Guibert' directly compares his own experience with that of Holocaust survivors, telling us that 'parfois j'ai l'impression qu'il va s'en sortir puisque des gens sont bien revenues d'Auschwitz, d'autres fois il est clair qu'il est condamné, en route vers la tombe, inéluctablement' (Le PC: 19). It is of paramount importance to note that this Nazism-inflected imagery, which is argued by Sherry to be a reaction to the fear of confinement of people with AIDS, is targeted by Guibert specifically at the contemporary French medical establishment rather than at society in general. In *A l'ami*, the narrator describes the *hôpital Claude Bernard* as 'un hôpital fantôme au bout du monde, me souvenant de ma visite de Dachau' (ALA: 53). Later, he presents the doctor who carried out his first, traumatic 'fibroscopie' as having '[un] physique de sadique de film de nazis' (Le PC: 69). Moreover, employed to depict both medical space and personnel, holocaust imagery is also adopted by the narrator in relation to the very medical treatments that are allegedly therapeutic in effect. The intratextual Guibert witnesses 'une scène [...] qui m'avait paru particulièrement atroce' in which the torturous nature of the medical treatment meted out to a fellow patient leads him to suspect that 'il n'y avait plus dans ce corps squelettique qu'un hurlement ininterrompu' (Le PC: 49). Sharing the fears of many of his contemporaries that people with AIDS might be confined on grounds of quarantine, Guibert's autofictional double unmistakably points an accusatory finger at the medical establishment, implying that this is the locus both of serious confinement and of inhumane treatment.

Evidently, Guibert's autofictional narrator is constructed as undergoing considerable confinement within the medical environment. Disciplining his body, relinquishing his autonomy to the ordered, institutional spaces of hospitals that emblematised the promises of progressive French rationalism and logic, this confinement does occasionally seem to be welcomed by the narrator. The overwhelming tone invoked by his accounts of confinement is, however, that of fear, to the extent that there is a direct association between the medical establishment and the Holocaust. This fear of confinement extends into the narrator's extramedical life, and it is to the investigation of this that my discussion will now turn.

Outside his accounts of life in the medical arena, further references to imprisonment and confinement are apparent in Guibert's

AIDS texts. Perhaps most noticeably and most widely cited by critics is the incident in which the autofictional Guibert becomes locked in his own cellar. Highlighting the significance of this incident, critic Emily Apter has argued that Guibert's narrator's imprisonment in his *cave* 'emblemizes the person-with-sida's encounter with abjection, humiliation, and outrage on learning that he is to be cheated out of his life portion' (Apter 1993: 94). Most pertinent to my discussion here, however, is the narrator's implication that, at least on one level, his imprisonment in this cellar is not an accident. He tells us that not only is 'Hervé Guibert's' cellar door the only unmarked, unrecognisable one, but that 'la porte, sans aucun courant d'air, comme si une main invisible l'avait poussé dans mon dos, se referme sur moi' (Le PC: 80). In his introduction to this tale, the narrator tells us: 'le lendemain de la première fibroscopie je me laissai enfermer dans ma cave' (Le PC: 78). The *cave* incident, in which the autofictional Guibert considers his total impotence in the face of imminent death, is clearly linked by this first sentence with a torturous medical intervention that was experienced by the narrator as a horrific assault, tantamount to a rape, which makes him consider suicide. The association between death in a dungeon-like cellar and the concentration-camp-style death that he fears will be inflicted on him by the medical establishment is evident.¹⁴

Indeed, the pervasive nature of the control exerted upon the autofictional Guibert in the medical environment that seeps insidiously into the rest of his life leads him to develop what could be termed a siege mentality and a fear of invasion. Early in Guibert's AIDS corpus, Muzil is described as battling against 'la progression diabolique du champignon qui colonisait ses poumons' (ALA: 98). Moreover, discussing the progression of the virus within his own body, Guibert's narrator tells us 'il me semble connaître la cartographie de ses colonisations' (ALA: 48). As Owen Heathcote argues, 'in Guibert's AIDS novels the self is invaded by an alien other which changes and becomes a new self' (Heathcote 1995: 427). This bodily invasion by the HIV virus is closely linked to the associated invasion

¹⁴ The motif of the cellar as site of unofficial and 'illegal' death recurs in *L'Homme au chapeau rouge*, the narrator suspecting that Lena's disappeared brother has actually been murdered and his body stored in the shop cellar (HCR: 162). The very same cellar is simultaneously said to be full of 'trésors', in the form of paintings, and the association with Nazism is again intriguing.

of the most intimate spaces of the narrator's life, as his literary success, and the consequent change in his financial fortunes, makes him fear that his home will be invaded. He tells us in *L'Homme au chapeau rouge* that 'depuis quelques semaines des inconnus sonnaient à l'interphone ou à l'une de mes deux portes' (HCR: 17) and compares this home to 'un coffre-fort tapissé de tableaux. On n'est pas dans les favelas de Rio mais dehors la lutte pour la vie continue' (HCR: 18). 'Hervé Guibert's' fear of confinement, extending so far as to leave him feeling under siege and threatened by invasion and colonisation, demonstrates yet another level on which the narrator's body and home space mirror each other.

The theme of spatial confinement is certainly highly pervasive within Guibert's AIDS texts, then. Across his oeuvre, the medical establishment is presented as a major force of confinement, the scope of which extends far beyond medical spaces themselves. As the HIV virus's grip tightens, Guibert presents a nuanced picture of the person with AIDS' reaction to confinement, which is seen simultaneously as a welcome opportunity to defer responsibility onto a more powerful institution and a threat so potent that it can be compared to holocaust concentration camps. Despite the fact that Guibert's autofictionally rendered self seems increasingly spatially confined in these texts, it is important to note that space is also presented as something that can be used as a tool for resistance, and it is to this that my discussion will now turn.

Resistance

It has been argued elsewhere that Foucauldian techniques of controlling and disciplining bodies by establishing norms of behaviour within visually surveillable, cellularised spaces can be seen to be at work in the medical spaces occupied by the autofictionally rendered Guibert. The existence of such norms of behaviour, however, inevitably invites the possibility of transgression and resistance, the textual dimensions of which are extensively discussed by Alex Hughes in *Heterographies*. In this, Hughes argues that for Guibert the author, avoiding writing a text that is simply referential and opting instead for the more complex generic form of *autofiction* 'preserves its creator against a practice of readerly power that is precisely that to which his autofic-

tional counterpart “Hervé Guibert” is exposed in all the medical spaces [...] mapped in *A l’ami*” (Hughes 1999: 114-115). For Guibert, then, many of his texts are formulated in such a way as to place him out of reach of the type of judgements and controls that he casts his autofictionally rendered self as undergoing. I wish to argue here that for Guibert’s intratextual persona, space itself is shown to be employed as a tool to resist disciplinary control.

Whilst it is certainly true that as his illness progresses the autofictionally rendered Guibert is drawn into increasingly institutional spaces (Hughes 1999: 107), I wish to contend that his growing knowledge of the medical system is presented as affording him a greater capacity to resist and limit this control. Learning the traumatic nature of some medical interventions, as well as the disruption to his precious time and energy that frequent medical appointments cause, ‘Hervé Guibert’ is posited as specifically insisting that his medical appointments be kept to the absolute minimum. He refuses outright to undergo some treatments, thus limiting the time that he spends in medical spaces. Moreover, he becomes less dependent upon learning his test results, thereby limiting his need to keep contacting the medical establishment from wherever he might be. He tells us:

quand j’ai dû faire mes analyses à l’hôpital Spallanzani à Rome, [...] je téléphonais au médecin ou à son assistante pour connaître le résultat, le téléphoner à Paris et le commenter, dans une urgence qui m’apparaît maintenant complètement inutile. (Le PC: 190)

No longer unquestioningly assuming the expected role of a passive patient who allows himself to be continually tested and regulated, then, ‘Hervé Guibert’ disrupts the normal patient-doctor relationship. In placing himself outside the reach of the medical establishment both spatially and mentally, ‘Hervé Guibert’ succeeds in rendering ‘le médecin [...] impuissant’ (Le PC: 189).

Moreover, as he becomes increasingly familiar with the medical system, ‘Hervé Guibert’ is posited as undertaking meetings increasingly frequently with doctors in neutral, non-medical spaces. It is pertinent to note that in *L’Homme au Chapeau rouge*, ‘Hervé Guibert’’s friend Yannis insists on undertaking business meetings, even those with such institutionalised people as his bank manager and international art fraud police, in a public swimming pool, thus unsettling es-

established power relations and gaining more advantageous deals (HCR: 123). A similar strategy seems to be employed by the autofictionally rendered Guibert, consciously or unconsciously, as he increasingly draws doctors out of the power-ridden, institutional spaces of medicine. In *Le Protocole compassionnel*, for example, the narrator meets Dr Chandi in social environments such as bars and restaurants:

Le jeudi 31 mai, le docteur Chandi me proposa de prendre mon petit-déjeuner avec lui au *Sélect* [...]. Je l'avais inquiété au téléphone, il voulait que nous parlions ensemble *en dehors de son cabinet*. Au cours de cette entrevue il me réclama deux choses que je refusai toutes deux: 1) de prendre des antidépresseurs; 2) de faire un scanner cérébral. Il éclata de rire, il n'y avait rien d'autre à faire, quand je lui annonçai mon refus de l'une ou de l'autre de ces choses. (Le PC: 27, my italics)

In this case, the doctor-patient encounter is not merely displaced from institutional, power-ridden medical space, but it occurs instead in the *Sélect*, one of the very places that I argued in section 3.1 to both reflect and increase 'Hervé Guibert's' privileged cultural status as a writer and journalist. The effect of taking the doctor out of a space that reinforces his power is to change his behaviour: he is able to admit that he is worried, an emotion normally concealed from the patient, and can do nothing but laugh when the patient refuses his advice. In a similar incident in *L'Homme au chapeau rouge*, after a throat operation 'Hervé Guibert' draws another doctor out of medical space into a place that seems wholly inappropriate for someone who has just undergone such a treatment. He tells us: 'en sortant de la salle de repos, après l'opération, j'insistai auprès du docteur Nacier pour qu'il m'em-mène sur-le-champ à la Coupole manger des huîtres'. When his advice that 'Hervé Guibert' should go home is refused, Nacier attempts to bring his patient to order as he enters the restaurant with the words

«je ne sais pas si tu te rends compte, [...] tu n'as pas dû te voir dans une glace, je dois tout de même te prévenir que tu fais une drôle d'impression avec ce gros pansement blanc sur le cou, et ta joue est encore toute jaune de l'antiseptique [...]». Ce fut un jeune garçon que je n'avais encore jamais vu qui par hasard nous servit. Il m'observait à la dérobée avec des yeux innocents, ébahis et effrayés. Moi aussi je le regardai à la dérobée, j'avais envie de lui lécher le cul. (HCR: 43)

In the episode recalled here, it is clear that 'Hervé Guibert' again draws his doctor into a non-medical space in order to even out the power relations between them, and to exert more control over his own life. Perhaps more importantly, however, in contravening normal social codes through introducing his sick body into a non-socially sanctioned place, 'Hervé Guibert' reappropriates control over the definition of his sick body in society. That is to say that he resists his increasing confinement in medical space and inserts himself again into spaces connoted with literary and artistic values in which he feels he belongs. 'Hervé Guibert' is presented, then, as increasingly able to resist the control of the medical establishment by undermining its attempt to confine his sick body within certain spaces. In addition, he is cast as rewriting the 'non-medical' spaces of Paris by constituting a monstrous visual presence within them and forcing AIDS onto the everyday landscape.

Indeed, when obliged to enter medical space, 'Hervé Guibert' learns to resist through the same technique of performing his body in an unexpected manner and in this way undermining entrenched body-space norms.¹⁵ This technique, which I have identified as becoming increasingly prevalent in Guibert's autofictional texts, is also identified by David Caron within *Cytomégalo*virus. Caron argues that in this work, Guibert's intratextual self resists the enforced passivity of the patient under the dehumanising medical gaze by refusing to conform to 'normal' behaviour and instead turning his body into a spectacle. Guibert's textual double is recounted, for example, as refusing the humiliation of wearing a transparent blue operating gown when undergoing surgery, insisting on walking to the operating theatre in his normal clothes before donning the green gown of the medical staff. As Caron argues, the Butlerian logic of this form of resistance is clear: in subverting expected dress codes, the power-relations of the doctor-patient relationship, are also disrupted. Caron concludes: 'if Guibert cannot avoid the operation, if he has no other choice than to enter in a relationship with a doctor, he can at least change the game and impose the rules of his own survival' (Caron 1995: 239). In this case, the intratextual Guibert refuses to perform his body in the manner expected

¹⁵ As I argued in section 1.0.2 of this monograph, postmodern thought has foregrounded the notion that rather than fixed and essential, identities are physically performed.

in a particular medical space and so unsettles the entrenched power-relations and the unproblematic segregation of doctor and patient.

In fact, Caron's argument seems indirectly to interpellate one of the most crucial aspects of Foucault's theory of spatial power relations in *Discipline and Punish*: that of the importance of visibility. That is to say that, according to Foucault, power relations within society rely not just on the techniques of spatial distribution that I have already alluded to, but on the enforcement of these distributions through visual observation. Perhaps most famously, Foucault drew upon Bentham's panopticon, a model of a prison in which the inmates are housed in a circular form around an observation tower. This form of spatial organization, in which all prisoners are constantly visible but are unable to see whether or not they are being watched, reduces the need for actual surveillance and instead encourages the prisoners to police themselves according to Foucault. Within society, Foucault stresses that power relations may often function in similar ways: rather than centring round an observation tower, self-regulation is fostered by the establishment of norms of behaviour in particular spaces and situations, again leading individuals to self-regulate. Perhaps the most striking example of the role of visibility in Guibert's work is that narrated in *Le Protocole compassionnel* in which 'Hervé Guibert' succeeds in videoing many of his medical encounters (see Le PC: 78 and 115-121). Rather than leading him to self-regulate, however, 'Hervé Guibert's' harnessing of the visual allows him to resist the disempowered position of patient that he would normally occupy. As Caron argues:

The presence of the camera affects the relationship in a fundamental way. When he films, Guibert is theoretically on both sides of the camera, as he and the doctor appear simultaneously on screen. The situation has two immediate consequences: first, the patient's position both behind and in front of the camera prevents him from simply occupying the authoritarian subject position previously occupied by the doctor; second, the doctor's presence on the screen alongside her patient levels their relationship. The doctor too has a body. (Caron 1995: 246)

The repositioning of 'Hervé Guibert' as observer as well as observed is not merely represented as affording him a greater sense of equality, but on the occasion of his throat operation, it has concrete results. Already alerted to the possibility that the operation might have been un-

successful, it is through taking the video home and watching it that 'Hervé Guibert' establishes the truth of this failed operation (HCR: 44). His use of the video, then, not only disrupts the normally irresistible power relations that objectivize the patient's body in medical space, but also allows the narrator to evaluate the medical encounter from the empowered site of his own home, thus regaining agency over his own life.

In his excellent essay, 'A Walk Along the Side of the Motorway: AIDS and the Spectacular Body of Hervé Guibert' (1998: 151-172), Murray Pratt develops a convincing argument on similar lines to that elaborated here in relation to *Cytomégalo*virus. Again revealing the inextricable interdependency of body, space and the power-ridden regard, Pratt highlights the potential of all three to generate loci of resistance. Pratt focuses on an incident that we are told occurred during Guibert's textual self's two-week stay in hospital, in which he is apparently offered a day-pass to leave the hospital in order to enjoy the unseasonably good weather. Due to the peripheral location of the hospital, the only option would be to take a walk along the side of the Parisian *périphérique*. Should the intratextual Guibert choose to undertake such an unusual activity, Pratt argues, he 'would undoubtedly become a spectacular centre of attention' (1998: 155). Rather like when refusing to behave and dress in the manner expected of someone about to undergo surgery as I argued above, Pratt suggests that in doing this, the intratextual Guibert would generate an 'optic of astonishment' that would challenge preconceptions. The spectacular image of the intratextual Guibert walking alongside the motorway, then, would present a 'strategic challenge to the visibilization of AIDS' (Pratt 1998: 159). In reinserting his socially stigmatised body into unexpected spaces within society and in this way disrupting social norms, 'Hervé Guibert' is cast as resisting the abjected position in which medical power relations seek to place him.

Occupying a prominent place in Guibert's *L'Homme au chapeau rouge*, art collecting can also be said to offer the narrator access to a form of spatial resistance. In fact, the very existence of such a non-medical theme within what is often argued to be the third part of Guibert's AIDS trilogy, is intriguing and seems to indicate resistance of the all-engulfing nature of AIDS. Martine Antle, however, argues that art collecting is not as distinct from the narrator's illness as we might presume. She tells us that 'the endless pursuit of paintings in the

text accelerates at the same pace as the advance of the virus' (Antle 1997: 192). Clearly in some way interlinked with his illness, then, the intratextual Guibert's interest in paintings can be said to play two major spatially-resistant roles in the text. Firstly, it can be seen to be part of a strategy of reinforcing the homeliness of his home space: a strategy that enables him to resist the increasingly impersonal, institutional spaces in which he is obliged to move. The paintings that the intratextual Guibert collects seem to be important in relation to the narrator's sense of home, being described, for instance, as his new flatmate (HCR: 26). Moreover, we are told that

L'achat des tableaux est aussi un substitut de sensualité et de présence, car je m'obstine à vivre seul bien qu'on me dise, les médecins et les proches, que ce n'est pas le moment, le tableau diffuse dans l'appartement une présence familière presque corporelle [...] la collection de tableaux fomenté aussi et entretient cette illusion que je vais continuer à vivre. (Le PC: 192)

Indeed, understood by Alan Buisine to have only one subject, that of death, these paintings represent static and unchanging fixtures in a life in which normal time structures are increasingly undermined and chaotic, and in which early death seems impending.¹⁶ Secondly and paradoxically, whilst offering stability and reassurance, art collecting also fulfils the function of generating reasons for the narrator to leave his home city of Paris and the confinement that he finds there. As Buisine tells us:

Toutes ces fameuses histoires de mafia russe et de KGB, de chantage et d'espionnage, de meurtres et de disparitions, de faussaires et de receleurs ont pour fonction d'entraîner l'inertie de la peinture dans une sorte de perpétuelle excitation cinétique. Les voyages du narrateur et des personnages se succèdent à toute allure – à Rome, à Venise, en Suisse, à Corfou, à Londres, à Moscou, à Istanbul, en Afrique, à Abidjan et à Ouagadougou - en un vertigineux éclatement géographique de la fiction. (Buisine 1997: 103)

¹⁶ Indeed, Martine Antle argues that painting, particularly the *autoportrait* that Yannis paints of the intratextual Guibert, serves to highlight not merely the disappearance of the subject, but the subject's opportunity to escape his own body. She tells us: 'painting, in fact, dissolves corporeal attributes and the 'flight of flesh into painting' reveals only a 'progressive bleeding of [his] soul onto canvas' (Antle 1997: 186).

Reinforcing the homeliness and permanence of his home space as well as furnishing him with reasons to travel far away from the regulatory control of Paris, 'Hervé Guibert's' interest in art may be seen to be part of an effort to reappropriate control over his own life. Indeed it is to this escape from disciplinary Paris, a prominent theme within Guibert's AIDS texts, to which my discussion will now turn.

Escape: Abjection from or Rejection of Paris

As my discussion has already established, 'Hervé Guibert' is presented as increasingly confined by the medical establishment once his status as HIV positive is confirmed, and as developing various spatial strategies in order to resist this. In addition, it is pertinent to note that a theme of 'escape' constitutes one of the most striking spatial leitmotifs in Guibert's AIDS texts, representing the ultimate form of resistance and further demonstrating the critical interdependency of body and space.

From the time of his diagnosis as HIV positive, 'Hervé Guibert' is constructed as using movement in space to escape his predicament. He tells us, for instance, that after his diagnosis he returned to Rome 'en laissant à Paris le secret de ma maladie' (ALA: 175). Similarly, on just the second page of *A l'ami*, 'Hervé Guibert' tells us that he is 'à Rome, où je suis venu seul, envers et contre tous, fuyant cette poignée d'amis qui ont tenté de me retenir, s'inquiétant de ma santé morale' (ALA: 10). The implication that in fleeing to Rome he is in some way escaping the worries that surround his normal life is apparent. Whilst the destination in such escapes varies, it seems apparent that the site to be escaped is usually that of Paris. The intratextual Guibert specifically tells us, for example: 'malgré la fatigue du voyage, j'étais rentré plus en forme qu'à mon départ. Paris ne me réussissait pas. Un ou deux jours d'air parisien, et je me sentais de nouveau crevé' (HCR: 110). As Murray Pratt has observed, the rejection of Paris is not unique to Guibert's AIDS writing. Discussing a corpus of six French AIDS writers including Gilles de Barbedette and Christophe Bourdin, Pratt states:

All six reject Paris as the prickly and regulatory partisan of the closed system, self-containment and abstract alienation – attributes which

rather than providing protection, stand accused of promoting mindsets and lifestyles propitious to infection, and of promoting the viral, post hoc, as the negative simulacrum which justifies its focus on defence. (Pratt 1997: 4)

Moreover, Pratt goes on to argue that Paris represents 'the defensive capital which acts as keystone to the nationally fixed hierarchies of viral thinking' and that each of these AIDS writers escapes to the South of France. This 'search for the sun', with which, Pratt suggests, death is uncountenanceable, seems to be displaced within Guibert's texts from the South of France to the 'Ile d'Elbe'. The positive connotations with which this place is portrayed, as I argued in section 3.1 of this chapter, include qualities of natural beauty and tranquillity as well as conduciveness to artistic and writerly production. In seeking out this place, then, 'Hervé Guibert' finds freedom from the increasingly harsh control of his body that occurs in Paris as well as escaping the type of death that seems to await him there.

Travel is also sometimes presented as a way of directly defying the doctor. In *Le Protocole compassionnel*, for example, the narrator tells us:

La plupart des malades, à leur dernière extrémité, entreprennent [...] un voyage, le plus loin possible, que leurs médecins leur déconseillent formellement vu leur état, qu'ils font quand même, pour pouvoir ensuite reprocher à leurs médecins de ne pas les avoir empêchés de partir. (Le PC: 107)

In fact, 'Hervé Guibert' seems to escape to more and more distant places, with travel playing an increasingly large role in his narratively constructed life, as the AIDS oeuvre progresses. I wish to contend that a spatial reading of the places to which 'Hervé Guibert' is cast as travelling is deeply revealing. Rather than representing an 'elsewhere', the nature of which is unimportant, it seems that the places to which 'Hervé Guibert' travels constitute the very antithesis of Paris. That is to say that whereas Paris is cast within these texts as a site that is increasingly dominated by the attempt to control and restrain AIDS, the places to which 'Hervé Guibert' travels are quite the opposite. Indeed, each of these places can be said to be implicated in some geo-cultural reference to the origin of AIDS. This form of travelling, then, represents not only the desire to escape the Parisian attempt to control the HIV virus, but also seems to imply confrontation with the source, or

the site of infection of the illness itself. As I established in chapter 1, any understanding of home space and cultural belonging necessarily implicates not only the domestic space of an individual, but the way that this is situated in national and international space. It is to the geo-cultural significance of the places to which 'Hervé Guibert' travels that my discussion will now turn in order to establish how he is cast as locating himself within the world.

3.4 World View

As I argued in the introduction to this chapter, spatio-cultural assumptions have underpinned the AIDS crisis from its earliest moments. Many nations' responses to the crisis have been underpinned by a protectionist urge to shut down borders, restrict the movement of people and to be suspicious of foreigners. According to Kristevan thought, it is precisely this sort of challenge to the borders of the nation state posed by the AIDS crisis that plays a formative role in the definition of national identity. As Kristevan exegete Norma Claire Moruzzi explains:

Defined by the emergence of a body politic and a national language, the nation-state must continually maintain the legitimacy of its identity as a subject through encounters with an other, strangers either outside or within its borders. This national preoccupation with alterity demands that otherness must constantly be ejected or assimilated, and therefore also continually recreated and renewed. (Moruzzi 1993: 142)

The analysis of Guibert's writing that I have undertaken thus far has indicated that once his intratextual self is marked by the threat of HIV, he is increasingly caught up in the struggle of French national culture to protect and define itself. For example, 'Hervé Guibert' is increasingly cast as expelled from the heart of Paris, and is pushed to the city's geographical and cultural margins. Moreover, 'Hervé Guibert' is flagged as increasingly challenging his own location as unproblematically French as he resists the tightening grip of over-regulatory medical control that this represents, and attempts to escape through travelling further and further afield. In this section I will examine in what ways the HIV virus can be said to impact upon 'Hervé Guibert's' world view, before moving on to establish where he is textually pre-

sented as travelling to, and in what ways might these places be said to intersect with the geo-cultural phenomenon of AIDS.

In a lengthy passage in *A l'ami*, the narrator lists in considerable detail the foreign places to which he and Jules travelled and in which they had sexual encounters in the decade before this book begins. This list starts with a birthday trip to Vienna in 1981 when Jules had sex with 'un petit masseur blond et frisé qu'il a chopé dans un sauna, Arthur, qui a des taches et des croûtes sur tout le corps' and continues up until Muzil's death in 1984 (ALA: 61). Whilst the list of places visited, which includes Vienna, Amsterdam, Budapest, Mexico and Japan may seem to bear little relation to the geo-cultural myths surrounding AIDS that I discussed in the introduction to this chapter, the implication is clear: in the narrator's psyche, the origins of his illness are firmly associated with the foreign.

Moreover, it is evident from early on in *A l'ami*, that 'Hervé Guibert' is posited as not entirely dismissing the pervasive cultural suspicion that the origins of AIDS could be found in Africa. He recalls how, on his deathbed, Muzil says 'c'est un machin qui doit nous venir d'Afrique'. He himself goes on to comment, without clear evidence of irony, that 'le sida, qui a transité par le sang des singes verts, est une maladie de sorciers, d'envoûteurs' (ALA: 17). Placing the burden of guilt on Africa, and even, in this case, drawing upon stereotypes of black magic and bestiality, has been argued by those such as Susan Sontag to emblemise the reflex Western reaction to the HIV virus and the threat that this unknown, little understood syndrome imposed. As Sontag has explained, such a view draws upon embedded Western stereotypes of Africa and primitive behaviour (Sontag 1988: 52). Moreover, invoking precisely the sort of culturally protectionist response that I have mentioned, this African threat is presented within Guibert's texts as continuing to lurk in the French environment. In *A l'ami*, the explanation proffered by Bill for why there are such strict controls on issuing the drug AZT within the French medical system is that 'ils doivent avoir peur que tu revendes ton AZT, à des Africains par exemple'. He goes on to explain that 'en Afrique, à cause de la cherté du médicament, on préfère laisser crever les malades et consacrer l'argent à la recherche' (ALA: 60). Later on in the same work, having obtained his first supply of AZT, the narrator tells us:

j'ai pris à la pharmacie de l'hôpital Rothschild mes cartouches d'AZT que j'ai cachés sous mon manteau en partant parce que des dealers sur le trottoir me regardaient comme s'ils voulaient me les voler pour des potes africains. (ALA: 239)

The fear of needy Africans, then, that Bill suggests troubles those in power in the French medical establishment, seems increasingly to be espoused by the narrator himself.

Reflecting other pervasive geo-cultural mythologies of the genesis of AIDS, the narrator also entertains various versions of conspiracy theory. Again, early in *A l'ami*, in a speculation about the origins of HIV virus, 'Hervé Guibert' comments that 'il s'agissait de l'instrument d'une guerre biologique lancée tantôt par Brejnev tantôt par Reagan' (ALA: 41). The USSR is regarded by Guibert's autofictionally rendered self as not only the site from which AIDS might have been launched, but also as a particularly frightening example of a national response to AIDS. 'Hervé Guibert' observes, for example, that 'en Bavière ou en Union Soviétique, on parlait de tests de contrôle obligatoires, aux frontières et pour les tranches «à risque» de la population'. Again, drawing attention to the threat that these foreign measures could pose even to those within French space, the narrator adds that such compulsory tests have been 'plébiscités également par le conseiller médical de Le Pen' (ALA: 153). The US is also evoked in these texts as a site in which the AIDS virus could have originated, this time as a tool to rid society of 'undesirables'. In *A l'ami*, for example, Bill is constructed as saying 'on pourra dire que le sida aura été un génocide américain. Les Américains ont précisément ciblé ses victimes: les drogués, les homosexuels, les prisonniers' (ALA: 251). In his perception of the world, then, 'Hervé Guibert' is posited as far from immune to some of the major geo-cultural myths about the origins of AIDS that circulated in the early phase of the existence of this virus.

Indeed, the narrator's very construction of his home country, France, seems increasingly defined in relation to foreign countries that play particular roles in relation to the geo-cultural AIDS imaginary, such as the US and Africa. Theorist Joanne P. Sharp argues that 'the constitution of a nation is not only a process which occurs within the confines of the nation itself: national identity is also constructed through engagement with the international realm' (Sharp 1996: 105).

There is considerable evidence that within Guibert's texts, France is increasingly compared with and judged in relation to other countries playing an important role in the AIDS arena. In *Le Protocole compassionnel*, for example, there is a direct comparison of the anti-AIDS 'ACT-UP' movement, which we are told makes sense in the US and has made considerable achievements there, whereas its efforts 'ne sont que des clowneries en France' (Le PC: 101). Moreover, highlighting what he perceives as the more serious situation in the US and the US's scientific advance, he tells us that 'il ne faut pas recommencer ici les bêtises qui ont été faites aux Etats Unis aux débuts de l'AZT'. At this time, the narrator goes on to inform us, people bought the drug on the black market and, unaware of the correct dosage, overdosed on it (Le PC: 100). When Jules obtains some black market DDI for the intratextual Guibert, this is posited by the narrator as demonstrating French moral superiority. He tells us that when Jules collected the doses of this life-prolonging drug, 'il ne les a pas payées comme aux Etats-Unis au marché noir, il a juste juré de ne pas parler' (Le PC: 23). If Africa seems to represent guilt and an insidiously seeping infection that threatens even those within French borders, then the US is presented as a technologically and medically advanced nation, the moral impoverishment of which must be avoided by France.

The international landscaped sketched out by Guibert's earlier autofictional AIDS writing, then, is one dominated by the US, the USSR and Africa and the geo-cultural mythologies of blame and conspiracy that surround them. Whilst in his earlier AIDS texts these places are mainly discussed from within French space and often in relation to their diametric opposition to Frenchness, in his later AIDS texts these places become the focus of the narrator's travels. Indeed, perhaps the key to understanding this is to be found in the narrator's growing need to escape the disciplinary control of Paris. In placing himself in dangerous situations in which a non-institutional, non-regulated death might occur, 'Hervé Guibert' seems to attempt to re-appropriate his destiny. Early in *A l'ami*, the death of Muzil seems to establish a template, the pattern of which the intratextual Guibert will later follow. We are told:

un jour il m'annonça, me sondant étrangement, qu'il avait pris la décision [...] de s'engager au bout du monde avec une équipe de cette association humanitaire qu'il soutenait, pour une mission dangereuse

d'où il risquait, il me fit comprendre, de ne jamais revenir (ALA: 33-34).

Considerably later, the autofictional Guibert himself tells us: 'je continuai, comme en voulant accompagner Lena à Moscou, à chercher des postures de récit dangereuses pour moi' (HCR: 66). The US does not become a focus of 'Hervé Guibert's' *voyages*, perhaps because as a reasonably rich, white, homosexual, the narrator knows he would be 'correctement soigné' there (Le PC: 101) and the country does not represent sufficient danger. The desire to visit Russia, however, associated as it is with the mysterious disappearance, perhaps murder, of Lena's brother, as well as with art fraud and the mysterious workings of the KGB, becomes a major focus of interest for 'Hervé Guibert'. Narratively inscribing the material hardships of this place, the narrator spends considerable time preparing the necessary provisions that he must take in order to survive in the Russian environment (HCR: 138-139; 144). Perhaps the key to the narrator's enchantment with the notion of travelling to this place, however, is to be found in its close association with disappearance and the narrator's need to regain control over his own death. It is helpful here to return to the description of an ideal 'death clinic' that the intratextual Guibert elaborated in *A l'ami*. In this text, this environment, imagined by Muzil, is described as follows:

Ça ne devrait pas être une institution où l'on vient mourir, mais où l'on vient faire semblant de mourir. [...] il y aurait une petite porte dérobée tout au fond de cette clinique, peut-être derrière un de ces tableaux propres à faire rêver, dans la mélodie engourdissante du nirvana d'une piqûre, on se glisserait en douce derrière le tableau, et hop, on disparaîtrait sans témoin de l'autre côté du mur, dans l'arrière-cour, sans bagage, sans rien dans les mains, sans nom, devant inventer sa nouvelle identité. (ALA: 24-25)

I wish to contend that 'Hervé Guibert' associates this notion of an ideal death clinic with dangerous travel. In fact, clearly interpellating the description of the ideal death clinic, Muzil's desire to undertake a dangerous humanitarian mission at the very end of his life is explained by the narrator thus: 'il allait chercher au bout du monde cette petite porte de disparition rêvée derrière le tableau du mouroir idéal' (ALA: 34). For 'Hervé Guibert', disappearance seems to be not only similarly desired, being described in *L'Homme au chapeau rouge* as 'un de mes

plus grands fantasmes' (HCR: 81), but is a fantasy that the narrator actively embraces by undertaking dangerous journeys. On his trip to Russia with Lena, the intratextual narrator not only stays in the same hotel that Vigo disappeared from, but in the same room. The implication, then, is clear: in this country of material hardship, political mystery and ideological disintegration, the narrator is able to escape the regulatory control and surveillance of his homeland and to embrace fantasies of disappearance and the construction of a new identity.

In his accounts of his travels to Africa, 'Hervé Guibert' signals that this continent is also associated for him with danger and misfortune. In *Le Protocole Compassionnel*, for example, he not only describes Tunisia as 'ce pays pleins d'adversités', but goes as far as to question his own motivations for undertaking his trip there (Le PC: 198). Moreover, on his planned trip to Mali with Yannis and Gertrud, the tension is heightened by their chosen date of departure. After reserving their seats on 'Air Afrique' for the 16th January, Gertrud is presented as telling the narrator: 's'il y a la guerre le 15 [...], tu sais il y a cet ultimatum des Etats-Unis fixé au 15 pour l'embargo, je n'irai pas, ce serait trop risqué, toi tu feras ce que tu voudras avec Yannis' (HCR: 129). Indeed, when requesting his visa, we learn, Yannis is informed:

Les responsables [...] disaient que c'était une folie de voyager en Afrique par ces temps d'insurrection, où la guerre de surcroît couvait à côté. Dans le désert, les Touaregs menaçaient de prendre le pouvoir. Les coups d'Etat pleuvaient dans les Etats voisins. (HCR: 130-131)

Expelled from the healthy inside of French culture and rejecting his position within marginal, disciplinary French space, the narrator seems attracted to the danger of foreign travel. Selecting countries culturally perceived of as highly dangerous, perhaps, ironically, because they are geo-culturally implicated as possible sites of the genesis of AIDS, the narrator frees his ailing body by moving to spaces representing the antithesis of his confinement within the rational spaces of French disciplinary medical control. Moreover, it is the antithesis of rational French reactions to his illness that the narrator actively seeks out abroad, as he seems increasingly enchanted with mysticism. Thus in *L'Homme au chapeau rouge*, the narrator considers taking up Lena's offer of sending his photo to a Lebanese Armenian healer she knows in the US so that she can pray for his survival (HCR: 68-70).

Perhaps most striking of all, however, is the trip to North Africa that Guibert's narrator undertakes to see a Tunisian healer. The record of this incident is entitled in Guibert's tale as 'Miracle à Casablanca' and seems to represent a return to one of his intratextual self's earliest understandings of AIDS as 'un machin qui doit nous venir d'Afrique. [...] Le sida, qui a transité par le sang des singes verts, est une maladie de sorciers, d'envoûteurs' (ALA: 17). As Phillip Winn has argued in relation to this observation, 'sorcery and black magic, almost stereotypical in any Western depiction of Africa's exoticism and dangerousness are brought into the picture and exposed as key elements in the imagery of AIDS' (Winn 1997: 4). Perhaps losing faith in the rational, controlling French response to the AIDS syndrome, the narrator seeks to embrace the 'sorciers' who he believes may be responsible for its genesis. Indeed, the narrator's whole perception of this country is over-laden with instinctive impressions and non-rational feelings. It is in the previously unknown city of Tangiers that the narrator finds

cette terrasse que je reconnus immédiatement comme un endroit familier, m'appartenant déjà au même titre qu'à ses autres occupants qui me semblaient même pas remarquer ma présence, un lieu totalement en accord avec ce temps si curieux, à la fois paralysé, dilaté et accéléré, d'une fin de vie (Le PC: 239).

This terrace, then, previously unknown to the narrator, and on which he knows none of the other occupants, seems to represent a place in which he feels completely at ease and in harmony. Certainly generating the same feelings as a home space, this terrace, anonymous, sunny, and peopled by similarly imperfect human beings as himself, can be said to represent the complete antithesis of rational French space and its ideals of control and progress. Not only resisting and rejecting French disciplinary spaces, Guibert again demonstrates the inextricable interdependency of body and space. His autofictionally rendered self is cast as most at home when located within the monstrous, abjected other of French cultural consciousness: the colonially abjected North Africa.

For 'Hervé Guibert', then, sense of home and cultural belonging are textually presented as significantly altered by the advent of AIDS. As I have argued, 'Hervé Guibert's' 'marks of distinction' as a privileged member of the French literary elite who situates himself primarily in the coveted spaces of the Parisian Left Bank, are undermined as

he is cast as increasingly drawn into stigma-laden medical spaces. Textually constructed as using space to both resist and escape this process, I have argued that 'Hervé Guibert's' relationship with space can only be understood by analysing the interdependent nature of body and space. From the domestic to the international, then, the advent of the catastrophic illness of AIDS changes 'Hervé Guibert's' perception of his home space. From an apparently unproblematic affiliation with the space of Paris, Guibert's autofictionally rendered self seems increasingly to desire to escape to a less regulated country, perhaps one heavily tainted with AIDS connotations.

4.

Doubrovsky: Autofictional Constructions of Self and Place

As I argued in chapter 2, Serge Doubrovsky's considerable reputation has been assured by his noteworthy contribution to the theorisation of some of the most innovative trends in late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century literature, particularly within the field of life writing. No less important in establishing Doubrovsky's credentials, however, have been the five volumes of his own autofictional writing that are the focus of this chapter. These works are situated at the forefront of the very literary innovation that Doubrovsky the critic has theorised. Far from constituting literary exemplars, conceived solely to prove pre-existing critical arguments, it is clear that these works are the product of a strong creative impulse on Doubrovsky's part, which has in turn informed his theoretical writings, and a substantial degree of personal investment. As my discussion in chapter 2 highlighted, despite the overtly ambiguous nature of the play between fact and fiction within Doubrovsky's *autofictions*, there is considerable evidence to suggest that these works are closely interlinked with the author's own life and identity. In a recent interview Doubrovsky went as far as to assert that 'je considère que dans mes livres j'ai vraiment raconté ma vie de façon aussi véridique que si j'avais écrit mon autobiographie' (Doubrovsky in interview with Contat 2001: 120). In fact, rather than constituting a mere reflection of selfhood that must by its very pretence to referentiality be flawed, Doubrovsky's *autofictions* play an active role in constructing his own sense of self. These texts draw greatly upon the author's interest in his unconscious and in many ways seem to represent Doubrovsky's attempt to prolong his psychoanalytic experiences. As the man himself commented in an interview, 'le sens d'une vie n'existe nulle part, n'existe pas. [...] il est à *construire*' (Doubrovsky in interview with Contat 2001: 77). Just like psychoanalysis, then, *autofiction* provides a forum in which a 'fiction' of personal history and selfhood with which the individual can live is

constructed. In studying Doubrovsky's autofictions, we are in fact examining not merely the author's textual re-presentation, but his re-construction. It is clear, then, that despite the gap between the author and his textually rendered self, these works constitute a site of identity construction that is of great importance to Doubrovsky.

In this chapter, my discussion will examine the ways in which Doubrovsky constructs his intratextual self as interacting with space. The topic of cultural belonging and home space, whilst not widely explored by critics, is one of fundamental importance to Doubrovsky's work. In one of the few critical interrogations of this aspect of Doubrovsky's textual self re-construction, for example, Régine Robin argues that 'il s'agit bien d'un problème de place' (Robin 1993b: 76). Indeed, the intratextual 'Doubrovsky's'¹ identity is presented within these autofictional texts as nothing less than underpinned by a lifelong search for 'une place'. In *Fils*, Doubrovsky's first *autofiction*, for instance, 'Doubrovsky' himself states that

MA PLACE. N'EST JAMAIS LA MIENNE. J'existe. LÀ OÙ JE NE
SUIS PAS. Là où je suis. J'EXISTE PAS. Si je suis au bord de la mer,
devant les flots. Je pense: c'est beau la montagne. Si je suis à la mon-
tagne, je rêve d'un lac. (F: 256)

Indeed, so pressing is the sense of dispossession with which 'Doubrovsky' is presented, that he frequently describes himself in such crushing terms as 'un outlaw, un heimatlos, sans feu ni lieu, sans foi ni loi, une âme errante, un Jean-sans-Terre' (UAS: 369). Moreover, Doubrovsky's autofictionally rendered self is plagued by the refrain: 'mon lieu sur terre mon canton de l'univers mon coin d'espace suis OÙ mais OÙ mazout' (F: 111). The quest for 'une place' that pervades these works, then, is both geographical and cultural, both literal and figurative, and it plays a strikingly pervasive role in Doubrovsky's autofictional constructions of selfhood.

In chapter 3, I argued that Guibert's autofictionally rendered self's sense of belonging in space is textually constructed as having

¹ In order to reflect the difference between the author and narrator-protagonist of Doubrovsky's writing, from now on the term Doubrovsky will be used to refer to the extratextual author and 'Doubrovsky' to refer to the intratextual narrator-protagonist.

been radically affected by the advent of the catastrophic illness of AIDS. In Doubrovsky's *autofictions*, the sense of cultural displacement is both more pervasive and more deeply interwoven in his textual avatar's identity. In fact, 'Doubrovsky's' frequent self-description as 'un juif errant' is a telling indicator of the intersections of ethnicity, culture and geographical location that I will argue to underpin the identity of Doubrovsky's narrator. Just as I argued in chapter 2 that the experience of growing up in France in the Second World War, which culminated in him spending nine months in hiding, is a primary motivation for Doubrovsky's writing, so it is presented within these works as a significant influence upon 'Doubrovsky's' identity and relationship with space. Indeed, it would be hard to infer from these texts anything other than the highly formative nature of the anti-Semitism of 1930s and 1940s France upon Doubrovsky's autofictional avatar's identity.² Moreover, despite Doubrovsky's overt eschewing of chronological life writing narratives, I will argue in this chapter that a progression, or a logical follow-on, can be identified between his construction of his textual avatar's sense of ethnic and cultural dispossession during childhood, and his relationship with space in adulthood. In his depictions of adulthood, 'Doubrovsky's' spatial anxiety remains clearly in evidence in the form of the intricate spatial structure woven for his life: a structure that compels him to move regularly between the US and France in a phenomenon that has constituted the focus of considerable critical attention (Chiantaretto 1995: 164; Robin 2000-2001b: 192-209).

This chapter will, then, seek to characterise the nature of 'Doubrovsky's' relationship with space as it is portrayed in Doubrovsky's life writings in order to gain insight into this autofictional articulation of identity. In elaborating my reading, I will draw upon existing critical material as well as Doubrovsky's autofictional corpus, and will seek to bring my arguments into dialogue with the work of theorists such as Michel de Certeau and Michel Foucault. In the first section of this chapter, I will focus on the detail of Doubrovsky's self-inscriptive and self-reconstructive writings in order to establish how his autofictional avatar's childhood experience of space and place is presented as

² For a discussion of this period, see Marrus and Paxton (1995: chapter 2) and Zuccotti (1993: chapter 1).

translating into a preoccupation with movement and dispossession in adulthood. I will consider the dialectic of confinement and liberation that pervades these works, before concluding the chapter with a discussion that links the role of spatial division with that of the division of identity within Doubrovsky's work, drawing upon Lacanian theory in order to reach a deeper level of understanding.

4.1 An Unsettled Sense of Belonging in a Stable World

In these life writing texts, 'Doubrovsky' is presented as having been born in the ninth *arrondissement* of Paris and as having growing up in and around this city. His early experiences of place in this city are frequently re-narrated and cited as formative elements of his cultural identity. Externally referential landmarks are evoked in order to imply that 'Doubrovsky's' mental map of Paris is dominated by places with specific family connections that root him firmly into a potentially impersonal environment. His nuclear family's home space, for example, is depicted firstly as centred around his father's tailor shop in central Paris, before becoming that of 'la grande propriété ancestrale du Vésinet' (UAS: 66) in the outskirts of the city. The latter home space is portrayed in an idealised light (LPC: 62; 147-148; 163), as we are told that it was originally established by 'Doubrovsky's' grandfather and that it remains a feature of 'Doubrovsky's' cultural and mental landscape long after his mother has died and it has been sold (UAS: 145-148). Such a landmark is clearly presented as a site of stability for 'Doubrovsky', constituting a symbol of continuity and selfhood for him long after we are told that it has ceased to feature in his daily life.

'Doubrovsky's' narrated map and, to draw on the terminology used in the work of Pierre Nora (1984: VII), his 'géographie mentale', is also narratively presented as encompassing physical landmarks drawn from the wider Parisian environment: the 'rue de la Tour' is cited as the home of his mother before the First World War; '118, rue de la Pompe' remains the home of 'Doubrovsky's' uncle, Henri Weitzmann, right up until Weitzmann's death as an old man. Perhaps most importantly, the Trocadéro is cast as the site of shared family entertainment (UAS: 67; F: 232-233; LLB: 35). As Régine Robin has pointed out, 'toute la famille communie dans l'amour du spectacle. L'oncle est limonadier en chef au vieux Trocadéro, ils vont tous au

théâtre voir Mounet-Sully, Paul Mounet et Sarah Bernhardt' (Robin 2000-2001b: 196). The significance of these points of reference is textually constructed as continuing even in 'Doubrovsky's' adulthood as, having spent many years abroad, his walks around Paris are portrayed as remaining coloured and even directed by memories of past family landmarks. Traversing Paris on the fortieth anniversary of VE day, for example, Doubrovsky's narrator in *Un Amour de soi* tells us that

[je] connais le terrain. C'est mon territoire immémorial. Je l'ai arpenté avant de naître. Avant le palais de Chaillot, j'ai habité le vieux Trocadéro. Pas encore venu au monde, j'y logeais depuis des décennies. (UAS: 33)

Memories of the shared family heritage of stories passed down to 'Doubrovsky' from his mother and uncle as well as of his own lived experience are presented, then, as continuing to anchor him into the social and material space of Paris (F: 24-25; AV: 52 and 147; LLB: 33; UAS: 67 and 96). In *Laissé pour conte*, for example, he tells us that 'ma promenade traverse un siècle entier, mais impalpable, j'ai mes racines dans le passé, au présent aucune présence, rien que des restes...' (LPC: 211). Doubrovsky constructs his autofictionally rendered self's identity as fundamentally bound-up with the city of his childhood, the specific spaces of which he must frequently re-experience in order to recapture his sense of self. For 'Doubrovsky's' spatially anchored identity, then, the 'home space' of Paris is located in a complex intersection of time, space and memory.

The space of Paris is clearly presented by Doubrovsky as representing stability and continuity for his autofictional avatar, providing him with some degree of cultural anchorage. This city is, however, as many urban theorists have recognised, a plural, shifting and sometimes contradictory space that must be continually remapped, mentally, narratively and physically. Michael Sheringham, for example, in his 1996 study *Parisian Fields*, argues that 'the cultural space of the city – the way it exists in the minds of its inhabitants and visitors [...] is [...] always involved in a process of transformation without established boundaries or categorical restrictions' (Sheringham 1996: 2-3). Indeed, in 'Doubrovsky's' repeated citation and renegotiations of Paris, multiple readings of the city are effected, highlighting the complex ways in which within it meanings and identities are continually reinvented. Perhaps most consistently within his narratives, Dou-

brovsky depicts the home space of Paris as a site of renewal and a source of life-giving force to which his textual double must return frequently in order to carry on living (LPC: 272). In *L'Après-vivre*, for example, after a disturbing incident of sexual impotency in the US, 'Dobrovsky' comments 'signal d'alarme, il est temps de rentrer en France. [...] Je vais me reconstruire à Paris' (AV: 119). The city is continually associated with his own mother, as well as often being linked with the maternal in general. Again referring to the incident of impotency, for example, Dobrovsky's narrator tells us that he must 'retour[ner] à Paris, au bercail' (AV: 121). Moreover, so closely associated is Paris with the maternal in 'Dobrovsky's' account that the death of his mother has a serious impact. Returning to the city for the first time after this event, 'Dobrovsky' tells us 'PARIS EST MORT ma mère ma France la France disparue' (F: 332) and references to it recur throughout the *autofictions* (UAS: 66; LPC: 191). Clearly, for 'Dobrovsky', then, the sense of belonging that he feels within the city of Paris is deeply bound up with childhood memories and family connections, to the extent that the death of his mother seems synonymous with the death of the city. The link between 'Dobrovsky's' *mère* and his *pays matrice* will comprise a crucial focus of my argument in the last section of this chapter.

In *L'Après-vivre*, Paris takes on perhaps the most striking form of all, however, as the city is mapped out as an allegory of 'Dobrovsky's' most intimate physical and emotional self. So strong is 'Dobrovsky's' sense of affiliation with this space that the city is depicted as a friend whose life runs parallel to and mirrors that of 'Dobrovsky' himself. This is particularly evident in 'Démolition', one of the structuring strands of *L'Après-vivre*, in which the buildings of his Parisian *quartier* are described as 'mes voisines' and we are told that 'nous vieillissons ensemble, nous sommes d'un autre âge' (AV: 12). A clear parallel is drawn here between 'Dobrovsky' himself and the Parisian cityscape. In this, a clear link can be seen with the arguments of Michel de Certeau that I discussed in section 1.0.5 of this monograph. De Certeau stresses that rather than possessing a Godlike, bird's eye view down over space, places are brought to life and given meaning by the everyday movements of people. In 'Dobrovsky's' case, more than merely feeling a sense of special belonging to particular places, his sense of affiliation with the space of Paris is so strong that he suggests the city to parallel his own identity. The comparison is made

more acute by the desperate state of both: just as 'Doubrovsky' is depicted as grieving for his dead wife, Ilse, and contemplates the crumbling fragments of the life he built with her, so the decaying urban fabric is awaiting destruction, its future unknown. The demolition of 'Doubrovsky's' Parisian surroundings will leave a gaping hole, echoing, perhaps exacerbating, the void that Ilse's death has left in 'Doubrovsky' himself. As Michel de Certeau argues, spaces are 'brought to life', or in this case put to death, by the presence of bodies within them (de Certeau 1990: 148). For 'Doubrovsky', so strong is his sense of identification with the spaces of Paris that he perceives the future of the urban fabric as synonymous with his own.

Evidently, the space of Paris is constructed in Doubrovsky's autofictions as highly significant for 'Doubrovsky'. Paris is textually presented as the clearly demarcated space in which his childhood took place and to which he retains a strong sense of affiliation. Cast as remaining important throughout his life, the city's meanings and associations are not, however, immobile. Across his accounts of selfhood, Doubrovsky retells and recasts Paris in a number of roles so that the city emblematises, variously, the maternal; the site of life-giving force; and a peer undergoing the same physical assaults and emotional trials as 'Doubrovsky' himself. However, if the city of Paris can be said to be the uncontested, if multi-layered, home space of 'Doubrovsky's' childhood, a space presented as that in which his early experiences of the world all took place and which remains significant throughout his life, it would be misleading to accept Paris as an unproblematic home space in which 'Doubrovsky's' sense of cultural belonging is firmly rooted. I wish to contend that two particular factors can be identified as of paramount importance in the creation of 'Doubrovsky's' complex and even conflictual sense of geographical identity: diverse family roots and the ideological climate of his formative years.

Family Roots

In the first piece in Doubrovsky's autofictional corpus, Doubrovsky's narrator cites his family name as a label that alienates him from what he feels to be his real origins: 'un nom à coucher dehors, d'où que je sors. Père, Tchernigov. Grand-père, Dombrowicz. Ça se dit né à Paris,

dans le 9^e (F: 105). Much later in the autofictional *oeuvre*, 'Doubrovsky' invokes himself as 'Julien-Serge, Janus Bifrons, toujours divisé, scindé, schizé' (LPC: 238). Doubrovsky presents his textual avatar as torn between an inner feeling of being French and a knowledge that his family's ethnico-cultural heritage is considerably more complex. This ambiguity is also evident in the relationship that 'Doubrovsky' is presented as having with language. Unable to speak Yiddish or *alsacien*, Doubrovsky's narrator tells us that he is unsure of the language in which his mother articulates her pet names for him:

c'est moi *poupele meins* c'est moi me connais pas me comprends pas [...] ma mère qui m'appelait ainsi j'ai la langue des autres la mienne il me reste à l'inventer je l'ai perdue quelque part entre Tchernigov-Ukraine Dombrowicz-Pologne entre deux grands-pères entre deux guerres ma mère mi-rue-de-la-Tour mi-Alsace ma grand-mère de Strasbourg. (F: 123)

'Doubrovsky' is, then, cast as unsettled by the unfamiliarity of his family's familiar names for him, and as left feeling that some part of his cultural heritage has been lost. The disjuncture between 'Doubrovsky's' actual situation and his familial heritage is clearly implied to play a formative role in the construction of his identity, creating inner conflict. In *Fils*, for example, Doubrovsky's narrator affirms that 'je m'appelle *Doubrovsky* en caractères cyrilliques ou hébraïques peux pas me lire peux pas m'écrire traduit trahi [...] j'ai disparu dans l'alphabet romain avalé par la langue de Descartes' (F: 124). This suggests that in not speaking the languages of his ancestors he feels he has committed an act of betrayal that undermines the authenticity of his identity. In fact, a direct link can be seen here between Doubrovsky-the-author's relationship with the French language, and that which he constructs for his intratextual self. In a recent interview, Doubrovsky himself specifically addressed his own feeling at having been gifted in the study of French language and literature at school and yet having been denied a sense of belonging to French culture by the society around him. He asserted that 'je jongle avec tous les mots de cette langue, ce sont mes comptes à régler avec la France' (Doubrovsky 1992: 131-183). Clara Lévy, a sociologist who has specifically addressed the question of Doubrovsky's ethnic identity, helpfully points out that it is not uncommon for precisely this sort of feeling of foreignness in relation to 'la langue d'écriture' to act as a

source of inspiration for French Jewish writers (Lévy 1984: 100). Lévy goes on to suggest that such writers may become so attached to their 'langue d'écriture' that it is in this that they root their cultural identity (1984: 100-103). Whilst this may, indeed, be true for Doubrovsky-the-author, it is certainly clear that his autofictional avatar is presented as being deeply unsettled, rather than inspired, by his sense of linguistic dispossession.

If 'Doubrovsky's' sense of belonging is shown to be unsettled by his very name and his family's relationship with the French language, then the parental voices that reverberate across the autofictional texts that chart his existential trajectory constitute further destabilizing influences. 'Doubrovsky' regularly cites the formative parental messages that we are told he received during his childhood (LLB: 270-271; F: 124 and 248-258), and tells us that these messages 'm'ont pétri de contradictions' (LLB: 275-276). In *Le Livre brisé*, a clear picture is painted of the ambiguous parental expectations and aspirations to which Doubrovsky's autofictional avatar is constructed as having been subjected as a child. Projecting himself back into his childhood self, Doubrovsky's narrator tells us:

je m'appelle Doubrovsky, je suis un bon petit Français: tricolore et incolore. On me dit sans cesse, *tu n'es pas différent des autres*, on me répète à satiété, *rappelle-toi d'où tu sors*. On a fabriqué un gosse à l'identité androgyne: un juif non juif. (LLB: 276)

Doubrovsky portrays his autofictionally rendered self's parents, then, as passing on a paradoxical view of the family's place in the world: we are told that they simultaneously urge their son to remain faithful to the family's humble origins and incite him to achieve all he can (LPC: 334). In short, 'Doubrovsky' is constructed as compelled, somehow, to take advantage of the opportunities offered to the French bourgeoisie without actually becoming either entirely French or entirely bourgeois.

The complexity of these parental messages is heightened by the evocation of a constant refrain inciting the family to conform to the mores of the society around them (F: 124). The mother's remembered, re-cited voice punctuates the narrative with the reminder that, in order to play a part in French society, 'il faudra faire un effort supplémen-

taire, être plus français qu'un Français' (LLB: 271). From her, we are told that 'Doubrovsky' learns

le Discours de la Méthode Assimil similitude pareil aux autres il faut être comme tout le monde ne pas se faire remarquer perdu dans la foule au restaurant ne pas parler trop haut dans la rue ne pas crier trop fort ne pas avoir le nez trop long (F: 124).

The suggestion is clear that social acceptance and a sense of belonging can only be achieved through the performance of learned, perhaps even caricatured, 'French' behaviour and the repression of their 'natural' selves. Alienated by the distance of his lived experience from his family roots and lifestyles, the young 'Doubrovsky' is therefore constructed as further alienated from his contemporary surroundings by the perpetual parental voices that remind him that he is different and potentially unacceptable.

Ideological Context

As many historians and theorists have documented,³ the escalating waves of anti-Semitism that characterised France in the 1930s, exacerbated by economic depression and popular perception of increased levels of immigration, culminated in the extremely repressive experience of the Nazi Occupation of France in the 1940s. To adapt the terminology of Kathleen M. Kirby, this Occupation and the prevalence of anti-Semitism in French society could be termed a 'crisis of the boundaries of public space' (Kirby 1996: 52), in which distorted power relations introduced new dangers into the environment for particular citizens, casting upon them new, stigmatised identities.⁴ A deliberate impulse to, at the very least, highlight the 'difference' of Jews was fundamental to the anti-Semitic project, emblematised by the compulsory marking of Jews with 'une étoile jaune'. References to the

³ See, for example, Marrus and Paxton (1995); Zuccotti (1993); and Kedward (1985).

⁴ In fact, a clear parallel can be seen here with the way in which I argued 'Hervé Guibert''s ability to move in space to have been affected once he was marked by the socially unacceptable illness of AIDS.

enforced wearing of the yellow star recur in Doubrovsky's texts, sometimes being described by 'Doubrovsky' as 'mon stigmate jaune' (LPC: 34). Worn on the chest at all times, this physical mark of difference and shame has been described by Régine Robin as 'un signe de visibilité' (2000-2001b: 197) comparable to circumcision. Unlike the 'marks of distinction' that I discussed in Chapter 3, which function as ways in which individuals can express their cultural superiority, these marks of visibility continually jeopardised the wearer's safety whilst moving through the spaces of everyday life. References to the fear invoked by wearing the Jewish yellow star are particularly evident in *Laissé pour conte*, the last work in Doubrovsky's autofictional corpus, indicating Doubrovsky's intention to signal the ongoing significance of this experience (LPC: 74; 115; 199; 329; 356. Also F: 303). As Patrick Saveau has remarked, in 'Doubrovsky's' case this visible marking enforced a confrontation with ethnicity and cultural belonging, causing him first to reject Jewishness and claim his ancestors to be the Gauls, then to seek to establish his cultural heritage in classical literature (Saveau 1999: 28), a point to which I will return below when I discuss 'Doubrovsky's' construction of a French identity in the US.

Perhaps an even more serious threat to the stability of 'Doubrovsky's' cultural identity is textually presented as that cornerstone of nazi ideology, accepted and even put into practice by a significant number of French people: ethnic cleansing.⁵ This is inscribed within these works in the form of Doubrovsky's narrator's recollection of slogans being broadcast across the *place de la Concorde* in the heart of French national space, describing Jews as 'vermin' and inciting the populous to 'épur[er] la race française' (LLB: 13 and 21; LPC: 410 and 411). Doubrovsky presents his intratextual double as being left in no doubt about his lack of place in the 'new' French society that these slogans called for (LPC: 242). Moreover, cast as having been brought up to believe in the positive, enriching nature of culture, the '*Exposition: le juif et la France, entrée gratuite pour les écoliers en groupe*'

⁵ Marrus and Paxton argue that although the Vichy government did not plan the mass extermination of Jews, and merely intended to enforce re-emigration, the radical measures effected by the Nazis would not have been possible without the active collaboration of the French in ethnic cleansing. The Vichy Government was one of the only countries in Europe to hand over Jews to the Nazis for deportation from non-occupied zones (Marrus and Paxton 1995: xvii).

(LLB: 16) is depicted as a particularly harsh shock for the young 'Doubrovsky'. The Nazi philosophies that increasingly invaded the space of his youth, then, are textually presented as casting upon 'Doubrovsky' a feeling of difference and of not being truly 'French'.

Doubrovsky's narrator portrays a combination of diverse family roots, complex ethnico-cultural heritage and the powerful anti-Semitic climate of his formative years as playing important roles in the generation of an increasingly unsettled and problematic sense of cultural belonging for 'Doubrovsky'. I wish to contend that these factors can be best understood in Doubrovsky's *autofictions* through an analysis of the complex intersections of the body and space. That is to say that 'Doubrovsky's' sense of spatio-cultural belonging is presented as significantly influenced by the impact of discourses such as anti-Semitism upon his physical identity. I will now scrutinize this phenomenon, drawing upon the work of Michel Foucault and engaging with his argument that rather than constituting biologically given, immutable structures, bodies are fabricated through discourse as an effect of power and knowledge.⁶

Alan Petersen develops Foucault's argument about the construction of bodies through social discourse in a monograph entitled *Unmasking the Masculine: 'Men' and 'Identity' in a Sceptical Age* (1998). In this, Petersen specifically addresses the ways in which racism operates through the imputation of negative characteristics to the bodies of particular peoples, and the strategic deployment of biological differences in order to draw boundaries between dominant groups in society and 'Others'. Carrying both the 'marks of visibility' that I discussed earlier, circumcision and 'l'étoile jaune', 'Doubrovsky's' formulations of self-image are depicted as at least partially constructed through the eye of the 'Other', in this case, the anti-Semite. Directly engaging with the voice of the *Exposition le juif et la France*, for example, 'Doubrovsky' tells us 'cheveux pas crépus mais ondulés, yeux comme tout le monde, le nez, là, accentué, un peu épais, front fuyant, j'ai le type' (LPC: 331; LLB: 214). The degree to which these discourses are internalised by 'Doubrovsky' is evident in his frequent expressions of dissatisfaction with his own appearance (F: 41 and 59).

⁶ This argument is developed by Michel Foucault in *Surveiller et punir*, a work that I discussed in more detail in chapter 3.

Moreover, Petersen argues that in relation to Jewish ethnicity, the denigration of masculinity has often been tied up in anti-Semitic discourse. The act of circumcision, for instance, is connoted in anti-Semitic discourse with notions of diseased sexuality, flawed masculinity and the potential to corrupt (Petersen 1998: 45-46). In 'Doubrovsky's' case, gender and sexual identity are certainly shown to be the site of anti-Semitic stigma. Doubrovsky's narrator tells us 'forme du zob, politique' (F: 105) and goes as far as to describe his circumcision as 'la morte entre les jambes'. 'Doubrovsky's' physical identity, as it is cast upon him by social discourse, is textually represented as the reason not merely for his sense of lack of popularity with French women (LPC: 331) and his nine months in hiding, but to an enduring sense of cultural alienation within the very space that he is cast as feeling was his childhood home.

Again, parental voices are cited as further complicating 'Doubrovsky's' ethnico-cultural identity. His father's voice is continually recalled in the narrative, and he is posited as having continually exhorted his son to exercise during his nine months of confinement despite his hunger and lack of food (LLB: 203-204). In response to 'Doubrovsky's' complaint 'je dis au père, à *quoi ça sert, ces exercices, quand on n'a rien à manger?*' his father is cast as having replied sternly '*il faut, mon gars, il faut*' (LLB: 203). 'Doubrovsky's' father is presented as the unwitting tool through which the anti-Semitic construction of the male, Jewish body as 'unmasculine' and weak is perpetuated. Within the narrative he is posited as asserting, for example, that '*je déteste les femmelettes*' (LLB: 116) and as reproaching his wife for pampering 'Doubrovsky': '*tu vas en faire une poule mouillée!*' (LLB: 114). In inciting his son to develop his strength, take physical risks and undertake other forms of masculine behaviour, this paternal figure is cast as unwittingly perpetuating the anti-Semitic social construction of the Jewish body as 'feminised and soft' (see Petersen 1998: 46) and transporting the discourses dominating public space into the private space of the home.

In the first section of this investigation of Doubrovsky's autofictional construction of spatial identity I have argued that despite portraying his textual avatar's childhood as having taken place within a relatively stable location, he remains plagued by a sense of lack of belonging. This is narratively presented as the result of the combined effects of diverse geographical, social and ethnic roots, references to

which reverberate throughout the narrative recollections of the voices of his parents. Doubrovsky's intratextual self's complex heritage is constructed as having been further problematised by the contemporary ideological context of his youth, including the dominant discourse of anti-Semitism during the Occupation of Paris, a city that I have argued to be textually presented as of great importance to 'Doubrovsky's' identity. Moreover, the denigration of his masculinity by anti-Semitic discourse reinforces our awareness of the importance of body and space in the construction of a sense of cultural belonging. The feeling of lack of belonging and dispossession evident in 'Doubrovsky's' recollections of childhood will now be argued to be cast within Doubrovsky's writings as translated into a leitmotif of displacement and exile in his textually constructed adulthood.

From Cultural Dispossession to Spatial Displacement

In addition to his depiction of Jewish ethnicity in twentieth-century France, one of the most striking aspects of Doubrovsky's *œuvre* is to be found in the complex spatial structure around which his textual avatar's life is presented as built. Freed from his time in hiding, 'Doubrovsky' is depicted as quickly embarking upon the first of the overseas trips with which, we are told, his adult life is punctuated. Engaging with the work of those critics who have discussed this aspect of 'Doubrovsky's' identity,⁷ I wish in what follows to focus upon Doubrovsky's relationship with space as it is depicted in his accounts of adulthood. In particular, I will argue that 'Doubrovsky's' experience of cultural and social displacement as a child and adolescent is narratively presented as a key causal factor in his later dependency on spatial displacement in the search for reconciliation with his own identity.

The two years that 'Doubrovsky' is posited as having spent at Trinity College, Dublin are depicted as a relatively happy, constructive period during which, once over the initial culture-shock, Doubrovsky's narrator begins to find his feet and establish himself as an independent adult (LPC: 115-118). His relationship with the US, however, is cast as considerably more complex. Far from constituting the

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See particularly Robin (2000-2001b).

locus of occasional visits that remain peripheral to his autofictionally rendered sense of self, this country is continually cited within Doubrovsky's texts as playing a key role throughout the time span encompassed by the autofictional *œuvre*. Doubrovsky's narrator often describes this place as 'le Nouveau Monde' (UAS: 47; LPC: 50), and seems strongly attracted to the American 'melting pot' of cultures, 'le creuset américain' (LPC: 132). In this environment, the dominant cultural values are depicted as being those of enterprise and self-motivation rather than the ideals of racial purity and long-established national roots that, I have argued, are shown to predominate in the France of 'Doubrovsky's' youth (LPC: 133). Particularly significant, perhaps, is the description of the US as 'la Terre Promise' (F: 128). The religious connotations of this phrase are clear, and if 'Doubrovsky' is not presented as becoming a more ardent Jew during his time in the US, it is certainly clear that Judaism seems a more easily accommodated part of his identity here than it was in France. In *Fils*, for example, Doubrovsky's narrator tells us that 'je me renjuive à New York Céline disait Jew York des retrouvailles je me remange *gefüllte-fisch* au raifort c'est bon *borachtch*' (F: 126). The cultural diversity that Doubrovsky depicts in the US is presented as permitting his autofictionally rendered self to reappropriate certain aspects of his Jewish cultural origins. Perhaps most important of all is the fact that 'tout le monde est circoncis l'Amérique a pas de prépuce aux pissotières toutes les pines sont pareilles les zobs sans bonnets bas la culotte ici ça servirait à rien' (F: 126). Even physically the space of the US is portrayed as allowing 'Doubrovsky' to conform, and as freeing him from the stigma and danger that the discursive regulation of his body produced in Occupied France. Revealingly, he tells us that 'j'ai changé d'espace, d'espèce' (F: 59).

However, if spatial displacement in the form of migration to the US is portrayed as offering 'Doubrovsky' a certain degree of freedom from the repression that he experienced in France, it would be wrong to infer that once established in the US his sense of belonging is cast as simple, unified and unproblematic. 'Doubrovsky's' sense of belonging and spatial identity is portrayed as remaining irremediably torn between France and the US throughout his adulthood. Regularly moving between the two countries, the intricate spatial structure that 'Doubrovsky' is depicted as building for his life is shown as having been facilitated by his ascent of the academic hierarchy and his grow-

ing ability to dictate the terms of his own employment. Indeed, just as I argued in chapter 3 that 'Hervé Guibert's' 'cultural capital' facilitated his movements in privileged spaces in Paris and Italy, so 'Doubrovsky's' acquisition of educational 'marks of distinction' permit him to move between the US and France.⁸ From spending the entire academic year in the US followed by a three-month summer vacation in France, he is eventually able to command a job allowing him to spend alternate years in Paris and New York (LLB: 193-194).

If the US is where 'Doubrovsky' is portrayed as earning a living, marrying his first wife and establishing a family home, it is to his *patrie* that he is nevertheless presented as continually drawn back. As Doubrovsky's narrator explicitly acknowledges in *L'Après-vivre*:

Je porte à jamais en moi une France ambivalente. [... La guerre] me revient toujours, remonte soudain en moi comme une lointaine nausée. Pourquoi je suis parti en Amérique. Tout le monde s'appelle Doubrovsky, tout le monde est circoncis. (AV: 31)

As I suggested in the introduction to this chapter, then, despite Doubrovsky's rejection of the chronological narrative, a clear progression can be identified within the identity he constructs for his autofictionally rendered self. That is to say that the cultural dispossession that 'Doubrovsky' is depicted as feeling in France during his youth is constructed in such a way as to suggest that it comprises a central motivation for the spatial displacements, particularly his migrations to the US, that characterise 'Doubrovsky's' adult identity.

Despite the essential role that Doubrovsky constructs for the US within these texts, which as I have argued is cast as the result of repression and persecution in France, there is an irrefutable sense that his autofictional avatar's identity remains firmly grounded in the space of France. That is to say that, underneath the layers of cultural dispossession, 'Doubrovsky' is cast as feeling that his true home is France, and it is to this country that he feels compelled to return. The constant carrying of both American and French wallets and identification documents is a particularly appropriate allegory of this:

⁸ In this argument I am adopting Bourdieu's notion of 'cultural capital' and 'marks of distinction' as discussed in section 3.1 of this study.

La vérité, je ne l'ai pas dans la tête, mais dans la poche. La poche-portefeuille. Dans mon portefeuille français. Le noir. Quand je change de portefeuille, à l'arrivée à Paris. Toujours avec moi, dans ma serviette. Après la douane, je change. C'est mon vrai passeport. Mes pièces d'identité. Ont pas la même taille ici et là. Suis plus le même. (F: 167)

Quite clearly, Doubrovsky wishes to portray France as the real home of his autofictionally rendered self, the real place of belonging from which his narrative counterpart is compelled to exile himself by his early experiences, however impermanently. He is, however, constantly pulled back to France, and as Régine Robin has highlighted, 'il ne peut pas envisager de prendre sa retraite ailleurs qu'à Paris, il a besoin du français comme écrivain, comme horizon. Rien d'américain malgré toutes ces années à New York' (2000-2001b: 196). Cast as becoming increasingly dependent in old age upon his unequivocally American daughters (LLB: 81), however, as well as feeling a growing desire to return to Paris, 'Doubrovsky' is presented as destined never to escape his spatial dislocation, and his permanent sense of lack.

It is also evident that the conflictual nature of the spatial identity that Doubrovsky affords his autofictionally rendered self, in particular the incongruity of feeling fundamentally French yet being denied this by those around him, is presented as a major motivation for his continual movements across space. For example, the distance that 'Doubrovsky' is presented as having established between France and himself seems to operate like a strategic retreat that he uses to reassemble his forces for a later attack. In allowing himself a period of respite from his battles with France and his French identity, he is cast as able to establish himself as an academic and writer of some repute. Perhaps more importantly, he can also position himself very firmly as 'French' in the eyes of his American colleagues and neighbours. In this, 'Doubrovsky's' escape to the US is represented as a direct result of the Occupation of France: 'l'empire familial est détruit par l'invasion des barbares. Je suis parti rebâtir mon royaume en Amérique. Un jour, j'aurai mon appartement à Paris' (UAS: 211). In Doubrovsky's autofictional construction of selfhood, it seems that his narrator never intends to renounce being French: he merely retreats to another space in which a play with the ubiquitous and elastic label of 'foreigner' enables greater scope for self-definition. 'Doubrovsky's

academic and literary aspirations are quite clearly cast by his autofictional authorial creator as being linked to a sense of displacement:

Les lettres sont des lettres de noblesse. Une activité éthérée, certes, mais qui vous naturalise. Un juif, lui, n'écrit pas vraiment pour se faire un nom: il s'agit de le refaire. Il s'appelle Bergson, mais on ne s'en aperçoit plus. S'ils devient suffisamment célèbre, le voilà enfin comme tout le monde. (LLB: 271)

The strategy of spatial displacement and migration to the US, then, is presented as enabling 'Doubrovsky' to gain financial security, material comfort and an academic reputation, thus realising some of his parents' aspirations. It is clearly the transcendence of ethnico-racial barriers that literary acclaim would bring to which he really aspires, however. Indeed, 'Doubrovsky's' sense of Frenchness is not portrayed as rooted in cultural myths or shared cultural practices, but rather in French literature. The figures Doubrovsky's narrator evokes as 'truly' French include writers such as Corneille, Racine and Proust, crowned by the figure of Jean-Paul Sartre. Sartre constitutes such a significant figure for 'Doubrovsky' that his own mother labels him her son's 'père spirituel'. The significance of these French writers for 'Doubrovsky', has been extensively discussed by critics (Chard-Hutchinson 1994; Miguët-Ollagnier 1992a; Miguët-Ollagnier 1992b; Robin 2000-2001b; Saveau 1999: 28) and in *Le Livre brisé*, the narrator himself stresses the importance of Sartre, telling us: 'ses bouquins m'ont éclairé à mesure, guidé comme des phares. Il n'a pas évité tous les écueils, qu'importe. Son itinéraire balise mon trajet' (LLB: 72). Martine Chard-Hutchinson's comment that Sartre represents a 'point d'encrage et point d'ancrage' (Chard-Hutchinson 1994: 164) for Doubrovsky's narrator is particularly appropriate as 'Doubrovsky's' 'place' will eventually be portrayed as found by following the cultural map drawn by Sartre and in aspiring to reach the heights of literary acclaim. Michael Worton and Judith Still argue in their (1993) book, *Intertextuality: Theories and Practices*, that the imitation, citation or plagiarism of pre-existing works of literature is a strategy that is often consciously adopted by writers in order to inscribe their work in 'Tradition' (Worton and Still 1993: 12-13). This seems particularly relevant in relation to Doubrovsky as the writers he cites as emblematically French are not merely well established figures of the French cultural topography, but as both Régine Robin and Marie Miguët high-

light, they also have specific links with Jewishness (Robin 2000-2001b: 195-197; Miguët-Ollagnier 1992a: 76). Clearly, Doubrovsky wishes to imply that the destiny of his autofictional avatar is to find a place where he belongs within the literary elite of French society, in this way transcending the stigma and exclusion visited upon 'ordinary' Jews.

Being based in the US is certainly presented as allowing 'Doubrovsky' to escape from the anonymity he would feel in France. His involvement with New York's *maison française* allows him to play a greater role in French literary circles than he would be able to in France itself. Doubrovsky's narrator consciously highlights this irony, telling us that 'il faut que j'aille à New York pour rencontrer, le temps d'une soirée, le Tout-Paris de l'intellect, le *Who's Who* de la culture hexagonale, en France je sombre dans la masse épaisse, anonyme, perdu entre Trocadéro et bois de Boulogne' (LPC: 39). Again, in a quest for 'une place', America is portrayed in a redemptive role, providing the opportunity for 'Doubrovsky' to establish himself within French literary circles. Despite his considerable literary and academic successes, in aspiring to join his 'pères spirituels' in the upper echelons of French literature, 'Doubrovsky' is placed in a range of *positions fausses*. These are, once again, bound up with questions of spatial, ethnic and national identity that weave further complexities into Doubrovsky's autofictional construction of selfhood. For example, in *Le Livre brisé*, the serious effects of these *positions fausses* in terms of 'Doubrovsky's sense of identity are strongly highlighted:

J'ai tellement de fausses positions que je ne peux plus m'y reconnaître. Un juif qui n'a jamais lu en entier la Bible, dont l'aliment favori est le porc. Un Français qui vit la moitié du temps en Amérique, pour y vanter, y vendre la France. En France, où j'écris, où je publie, je parle forcément de l'Amérique. [...] Ma langue maternelle est le français. La langue que je parle avec mes filles, la paternelle, est l'anglais. Je rêve bilingue. (LLB: 58)

Doubrovsky portrays his autofictional self as condemned to living in *l'entre-deux*, a phenomenon to which I will return later. Indeed, 'Doubrovsky' never does completely transcend the barriers of ethnicity and religion and, for example, never feels entitled to participate in debates about French politics:

Me joindre aux bataillons de pétulants Zola, désolé, mon nom à coucher dehors est tout petit, ma signature d'immigré par mon père d'Ukraine, par mon grand-père de Pologne, ne pèse pas lourd dans les éruptions franco-françaises. (LPC: 274)

As an authorial subject, Serge Doubrovsky may, then, have achieved widespread literary and academic acclaim, his place within French literary circles being validated by invitations to such great French institutions as the literary television programme *Apostrophes*, but his autofictional double, 'Doubrovsky', argues that he is never sufficiently accepted within French society to feel able to express his opinions on internal French politics. The sense of cultural belonging to be gained from literary achievement, then, seems to be incomplete and fragile.

In the discussion of the spatial relations mapped out in Doubrovsky's *autofictions* offered above I have demonstrated that, despite growing up in a clearly delimited, fixed location, rooted in social and physical space by stable family points of reference, Doubrovsky's narrator's sense of belonging is represented as unsettled by the complexities of his own family and ethnic heritage and as undermined by the anti-Semitic ideological context of 1930s and 1940s France. The cultural and social dispossession that he is portrayed as having experienced during childhood, I have suggested, translates into the spatial displacements recorded in his account of his adulthood. These accounts reveal 'Doubrovsky' to have built his life around a complex pattern of movements between the US and France. Seeking liberation from his ethnico-cultural dispossession through literary achievement, 'Doubrovsky' is clearly presented as aspiring to ascend to the literary level of those such as Sartre and in this way to find a place in French society. Using the US as a base is shown to afford him various academic and material advantages, yet it also complicates his sense of self by putting him in a range of 'positions fausses'. Whilst 'Doubrovsky's' constant fluctuations between the US and France remain in evidence throughout Doubrovsky's autofictional *oeuvre*, these movements are never suggested to have entirely reconciled 'Doubrovsky' with his own identity, or to have afforded him an unproblematic sense of belonging. Moreover, it seems that despite living in perpetual movement, a fear of confinement continues to pervade 'Doubrovsky's' life and his perception of space. This chapter will now seek to establish the nature of the dialectic of liberation and confinement

that I have suggested underpins ‘Doubrovsky’'s search for ‘une place’.

4.2 Liberation and Confinement: An Inescapable Dialectic

The fear of confinement evident in the *autofictions* comprising Doubrovsky's *oeuvre* can quite clearly be traced back to ‘Doubrovsky’'s experience of enforced hiding during the Nazi Occupation of France. As ‘Doubrovsky’ recalls, the fact that his adolescent self both looked stereotypically Jewish and was definitively marked by the Jewish practice of circumcision ensured that he was condemned to remain in hiding for nine months (LLB: 12; 19; 20). In *Le Livre brisé*, ‘Doubrovsky’ tells us: ‘consigne absolue: ne pas montrer le bout du nez. Surtout que je l'ai prononcé, proéminent. Crochu, ainsi qu'on disait dans les journaux’ (LLB: 15-16). As I argued above, the key role played by physical appearance in confining Doubrovsky's textual avatar within such a limited space is clear. In several places in his narrations of the past, ‘Doubrovsky’ implies that he has never been entirely able to leave this experience behind, the scars and stigma of this time colouring his later life (F: 205; LPC: 238; LLB: 384). Moreover, I wish to contend that this experience of confinement is presented as having definitively altered ‘Doubrovsky’'s notion of home space. In particular, binary oppositions of good and bad home spaces and the notion of home as either safe-haven (LLB: 18; LPC: 62; F: 81) or confining prison (UAS: 19; LLB: 21) remain particularly prevalent features of ‘Doubrovsky’'s relationship with space. Even the family property at le Vésinet, a location that I have argued to represent stability and continuity for ‘Doubrovsky’ seems to take on ambiguous properties after the war. The narrator of *Fils*, for example, refers to the solidity of the walls and to the metal grills on the windows of this house: ‘LA GRILLE c'est là à nous la nôtre on touche au port notre havre’ (F: 237). Features that would normally symbolise a prison, then, are presented by ‘Doubrovsky’ as emblems of his home space.

The second confinement that ‘Doubrovsky’ is represented as undergoing during the first twenty-five years of his life is in a sanatorium. Diagnosed with ‘la tuberculose au testicule gauche’ (LLB: 32), he is condemned to two years' convalescence. This time is depicted as one of extreme frustration for ‘Doubrovsky’, as he is forced to remain

inactive, passing the time by memorising lists of English words. For the young 'Doubrovsky', with his desire to become sexually active, the most serious consequence of this illness is depicted as being its impact upon his sexual performance. Perhaps most threateningly, this illness also potentially 'feminizes' 'Doubrovsky's' body, as his treatment involves being injected with female hormones (UAS: 33).

Quite clearly, both of these periods of confinement can be seen to be linked to 'Doubrovsky's' physique, and both are, to a certain extent, the legacy of his father. It is 'Doubrovsky's' Jewish appearance, combined with his father's choice of the name 'Israël', that is presented as inescapably marking him out as a target for Nazi persecution. As I argued before, whilst in hiding, 'Doubrovsky' recalls that his father added a further dimension to his confinement by continually exhorting him to do exercises and, implicitly, to fight the feared fleshy, unmasculine 'Jewish' body. Furthermore, it is tuberculosis, transmitted, it is implied, by his father, that confined him to two years' bed rest and several more years of sexual difficulties. These two specific experiences of confinement can be seen to be related to 'Doubrovsky's' more general feeling of being ill at ease within his body, and of not really belonging to it. In *Fils*, Doubrovsky's narrator tells us:

jamais été comme les autres à l'aise dans son corps heureux
dans sa peau habitant paisible de sa tripe normal de vivre joie
des muscles inconnu néant. (F: 41)

In relation to the pervasive theme of spatial confinement, then, we see again the complex intersections of 'Doubrovsky's' experience of space and his own body. The persecution to which 'Doubrovsky' was subjected by anti-Semites is portrayed as making him ill at ease with his own body, something that is exacerbated by his father, who at once controls and invades his son's body. If a positive sense of belonging to the space of Paris is fundamentally associated with the maternal in Doubrovsky's autofictions, then the sense of cultural dispossession can be seen to be at least partially linked with the paternal, a point to which I will return.

If 'Doubrovsky' is represented as confined by his wartime experiences, his health, and by his feeling of not belonging within his own body, then the key figure of liberation is predominantly repre-

sented within Doubrovsky's autofictional works by the US. It is the arrival of the Allied forces, embodied in the young 'Doubrovsky's' mind by the figure of an American soldier that allows him to leave his hiding place for the first time in nine months. In *Fils*, for example, 'Doubrovsky' tells us: 'Américains ils sont grands [...] supériorité matérielle Libération aussi supériorité morale' (F: 218-219). It is to the 'New World' that 'Doubrovsky' is presented as travelling after the war, and the ironic name of the boat on which he makes this trip does not escape the narrator of *Laissé pour conte*: 'le *Liberté*, paquebot si bien nommé' (LPC: 13). As I have already suggested, the US is presented as a place that liberates 'Doubrovsky' from persecution and allows him to establish himself within academia (F: 124-126). Perhaps more crucially in relation to the dialectic of liberation and confinement that I have identified within Doubrovsky's *autofictions*, it is in the US that 'Doubrovsky' escapes the stigmatised conception of his Jewish body and finds himself to be perceived as sexually attractive for almost the first time. Indeed, 'Doubrovsky's' marriage to his American first wife, Claudia, leads him to establish the home that is portrayed as the most stable and unambiguous place of belonging of Doubrovsky's whole autofictional *œuvre* (UAS: 212; F: 81 and 383; LPC: 137). The US is, then, a key figure of liberation for 'Doubrovsky', both in constituting the catalyst that releases him from his nine months in hiding, and in providing a space in which 'Doubrovsky' is released from the stigma and hunger of his confined body.

If 'Doubrovsky's' relationships with home spaces are ambiguous, and the US is portrayed in a liberating role, then the role of women within the dialectic of liberation and confinement must also be examined. As I have already briefly argued, 'Doubrovsky's' first wife Claudia, and the establishment of the marital home of Queens, which allowed 'Doubrovsky' to feel rooted again for the first time since before the war, were clearly liberating for him. 'Doubrovsky's' subsequent girlfriend Rachel, who features prominently in *Un Amour de soi*, however, is portrayed in an entirely different light (UAS: 201; 159; 160; 173). Even before she convinces 'Doubrovsky' to leave Queens and move in with her, Rachel's flat is described as prison-like despite not having metal grills on the windows like those of her neighbours. 'Doubrovsky' narrates his first visit to her flat, commenting upon 'le vestibule étroit, obscur' with its 'boîtes à lettres fermés à clef, la grille de l'interphone,' and 'la cage de l'escalier s'étrangle

comme un puits à pic' (UAS: 19). This depiction of oppressive and dangerous space comes to characterise Rachel herself once they live together: 'elle me déprime, m'opprime. Ses grands yeux noirs enjôleurs sont une geôle' (UAS: 162). Moreover, in a direct reference to his wartime experiences, 'Doubrovsky' indicates that Rachel restricts his spatial freedom:

pour circuler, je dois demander l'autorisation. Un Ausweis, comme pendant la guerre, laissez-passer. Sinon, elle me colle au Poteau d'exécution d'une crise de nerfs. Je suis condamné à la fusillade à bout portant, lettre après lettre. Douze engueulades dans la peau. (UAS: 157)

Whilst Doubrovsky certainly portrays his autofictional double's identity as being threatened by Rachel as she tries to restrict and confine him, 'Doubrovsky's' relationship with her and the space she represents is far from unambiguous. He is, for example, highly dependent upon her, describing her as 'nourricière, nutritive, qu'elle me remplit [...] qu'elle m'adore à la place de ma mère, à la place où j'ai pas eu de mère, à la place où j'ai pas eu de place, qu'elle me bouche mes interstices...' (UAS: 261). When Rachel's behaviour becomes too oppressive for 'Doubrovsky', far from seeking independence, he instead seeks liberation with another woman. Carol, with whom he goes to Dieppe, is portrayed as both liberated and liberating, making love by an open window looking out onto the sea, and demanding little in the way of commitments. 'Doubrovsky' indicates that without his brief relationship with Carol, he would not have been able to stay with Rachel for so long: 'Carol m'a débouché l'horizon, débondé l'outre des vents, ouvert son ventre goguenard, entre ses cuisses étalées fuse le rire' (UAS: 162). Whilst life with Rachel is compared to Nazi levels of spatial restriction, Carol liberates him spatially and physically. If his relationships with women sometimes restrict and confine him, then they are also depicted as being essential in liberating 'Doubrovsky'.

In discussing 'Doubrovsky's' relationship with women in relation to home spaces and spaces of belonging, it is interesting to examine his depiction of water. Just as women are portrayed as essential, if sometimes imprisoning, factors within 'Doubrovsky's' relationship with space, then water is similarly significant. Drawing upon the symbolic links of what he terms 'l'irrémissible féminité de l'eau' (F: 424), 'Doubrovsky' himself consciously highlights the importance of

both water and the mother figure in his relationship with space.⁹ In *Le Livre brisé*, for example, we are told:

de mer en mer d'une rive à l'autre de l'océan suis un animal aquatique
peux exister qu'imprégné de sucres femelles sinon je suffoque
sans ma ration d'émois moites j'étouffe si je ne baigne pas dans du
féminin comme un poisson à sec sur la sable je crève (LLB: 394)

'Doubrovsky' repeatedly travels from one side of the Atlantic to the other in his search both for liberation from his mother and for a place of belonging of his own. Whilst portrayed as a barrier that he places between his two halves (F: 355; LLB: 194 and 206), the water that divides him is also his home and he is condemned to living in the 'entre-deux' of the Atlantic (F: 333). In many ways, water may be said to be the irremediably female life source essential to his survival and his sense of belonging. If the River Seine in Paris is depicted as the place of origin of 'Doubrovsky's' life journey, then the gentle flow of this 'écoulement berceur, qui nous désancore' (F: 190) is an ambiguous home. It continually pushes away and expels that which is within it, just as maternal fluids ease the child out of its home in the mother's body. Forming a relationship with a woman allows 'Doubrovsky' to feel that he has again anchored himself within the mobile female sea that surrounds him, stabilising his identity. For 'Doubrovsky', being part of a couple allows him to 'rentre[r] au port, un port d'attache un havre de paix' (AV: 214), in the unsettled world in which he lives.

In what precedes, I have sought to show how the perpetual search for 'une place' that marks 'Doubrovsky's' relationship with space is underpinned by a dialectic of liberation and confinement. My argument will now turn to an important aspect of 'Doubrovsky's' spatial identity that I alluded to above, that of the divisions in his life and his identity. In this, I will propose that the continual geographical displacements and division between two home spaces that characterise this autofictional construction of selfhood represent a fundamental, psychological division in 'Doubrovsky's' identity. To what extent,

⁹ This is a theme developed in Bachelard's (1974) *La Poétique de l'espace*.

then, are ‘Doubrovsky’'s divisions cast as conscious, and what role are they depicted as playing in his life?

4.3 Divided Identity in Divided Spaces

As established above, Doubrovsky's narrator's adult life remains enduringly divided between the US and France. The existence of a division in ‘Doubrovsky’'s life is something of which ‘Doubrovsky’'s narrator is very aware and which has a direct parallel in the life of Doubrovsky the author. In an interview with Alex Hughes, Doubrovsky attributes this division to his Jewishness stating that ‘c'est mon ultime fracture. Nous avons déjà abordé le fait que tout, chez moi est scission. La dernière opposition binaire naît de mes rapports avec la judéité’ (Doubrovsky in interview with Hughes 1999). Critic Régine Robin endorses a similar argument in relation to ‘Doubrovsky’ the narrator, writing that ‘le rapport à la judéité, c'est en termes de *coupure, de blessure* qu'il faut le saisir’. She goes on to argue that Doubrovsky's narrator is mired in ‘la coupure, la brisure, la fêlure, la fissure’ and lives in ‘deux lieux qui ne constituent pas pour autant une place’ (Robin 2000-2001b : 195-197). Some aspects of Doubrovsky's autofictional *oeuvre* would seem to suggest that this division is deliberately constructed by his autofictional counterpart as, for example, the narrator tells us in *Un Amour de soi* that ‘côté cour et côté jardin, j'ai mes deux vies. Mes deux villes, Paris-New York, maintenant Manhattan-Queens. Maintenir mes moitiés séparées, mon système est strict [...] Pas d'interférence entre mes schizes’ (UAS: 252). The system to which ‘Doubrovsky’ refers as he invokes his divided identity is known as ‘le système S.D.’ (AV: 29), and he explains it at length:

J'ai construit mon va-et-vient depuis plus d'un quart de siècle. J'y tiens, il me tient. Divisé par le milieu, en dédoublant ma vie, il la redouble. Deux appartements, deux langues, deux cultures, deux pays, deux peaux, un an sur deux. (AV: 29)

This system attempts to reconcile, or at least to explain, a life lived between two cultures and two languages, as well as frequently two home environments. As a young man ‘Doubrovsky’ is torn between the need to establish a new life in the US that offers cultural, academic and personal opportunities, and the sorrow of leaving his mother in France,

but the negative effects of this division become more prevalent as he gets older. For example, he is presented as increasingly perceiving his two halves as irreconcilable rather than complementary: 'moi, zig-zaguant entre mes Paris-New York, des mondes séparés, hostiles, en guerre' (LPC: 187). More specifically, in *Le Livre brisé* 'Doubrovsky' reports Ilse's complaints over the negative effect of his lifestyle on her own attempts to find work, and he even attributes part of the blame for her sudden death to their geographical separation (LLB: 376). We are told: 'vertige des voyages zigzags d'errances mes hésitations géographiques mes indécisions planétaires mon éternelle bourlingue M'AS-SASSINE (LLB: 394). As 'Doubrovsky' becomes increasingly dependent upon his daughters in his old age, he realises that 'mes filles veulent leur père. Je le leur dois. J'ai été, avec mes voyages en zig-zags, dans leur enfance, un père à éclipses' (AV: 29). He comes to regret the cultural gap between him and Renée, saying 'tout est dit, moi en français, elle en anglais, [...] on n'est pas séparés par Manhattan-Queens, mais par l'Atlantique, on partage le même amour mais pas la même langue' (LPC: 350; AV: 34).¹⁰ Perhaps most seriously of all, 'Doubrovsky' worries that 'quand je prendrai ma retraite, je suis condamné à les perdre. De vue, pas question de me fixer ailleurs qu'à Paris. Je les verrai aux vacances et de vacances, en Amérique, on a quinze jours' (AV: 35). Having built his life around two separate cultures and two distinct spaces, 'Doubrovsky' is condemned to living without some of the most important people in his life for significant amounts of time.

The *système S.D.* involves, then, a division based on loss. The geographical displacements that are presented as having been motivated originally by the cultural and social displacements of his early life, do free 'Doubrovsky' to establish his career and do afford him greater independence from his mother than would otherwise be possible, but they also engender considerable damage to his close relationships. I have suggested that the impact of this is presented as felt more

¹⁰ Intratextually, we are told that 'Doubrovsky' also regrets the fact that Renée will never read the books that he writes (AV: 37). Annie Jouan-Westlund, however, argues that in fact Doubrovsky does not wish his daughters to read his work, perhaps because of the harsh revelations about Doubrovsky that can be found in his writing.

acutely in older age. In accepting 'France Amérique, [son] destin double, à jamais scindé en deux' (LPC: 52), Doubrovsky's autofictional narrator accepts a life constantly located in the *entre-deux*. As he remarks in *Le Livre brisé*: 'ça me déforme. Un pied de chaque côté de l'Atlantique, parfois je nage. Il m'arrive de perdre pied' (LLB: 59). In living in both France and the US, he is narratively cast as decisively rooted in neither and therefore always operates in a state of lack.

Lacanian Geographies and Divisions

That the *système S.D.* and the spatial and cultural duality that it entails is significant for 'Doubrovsky' on a psychological level is acknowledged both by critics and by 'Doubrovsky' himself. Critic Hélène Jaccomard, highlighting the importance of the psychological in the work of Doubrovsky, has suggested that 'c'est à un voyage dans les méandres de l'inconscient que nous sommes conviés' (Jacomard 1993: 85). 'Doubrovsky' himself tells us in *L'Après-vivre* that:

Il faut toujours qu'une moitié de moi me manque [...]. Vingt ans j'ai été Julien, depuis quarante ans, je m'appelle Serge. Mes deux prénoms me divisent par une frontière invisible, insurmontable. Je l'ai reproduite partout, je l'ai étendue à tous les domaines. Pourquoi j'ai inventé ce système qui me fend la vie, le cœur, par le milieu. [...] J'ai tenté de m'en expliquer, de me l'expliquer, il y a longtemps, dans d'autres livres. Avec *Fils*, chez mon analyste. Naturellement on découvre mon oedipe. (AV: 30)

Doubrovsky's narrator's explanation of his division centres, not unironically, around the notion of the Oedipal conflict, suggesting that in order for 'Doubrovsky' to become an independent individual capable of forming adult relationships with women, it is necessary for him to extricate himself from an excessively interdependent relationship with his mother. This psychological separation is presented as perceived by 'Doubrovsky' to necessitate a spatial separation, and he argues that it is necessary for him to put geographical distance between the two of them in the form of the Atlantic Ocean (AV: 30). This phenomenon has been addressed by psychoanalyst and critic Jean-François Chiantaretto, who argues that

la prise de distance géographique sera auto-interprétée par le narrateur-analysant comme un acte symbolique [...], un acte qui compenserait partiellement une défaillance des processus de symbolisation, sans prendre au plan psychique la valeur d'un opérateur symbolique. Gagner sa vie aux Etats-Unis consiste à «coexister», [...] il ne s'agit pas d'une union séparation engageant la symbolisation de l'absence, mais d'une séparation où il manque toujours une moitié. (Chiantaretto 1993: 169-170)

This chapter will now move on to argue that a parallel can be drawn between 'Doubrovsky's' construction of divided geographies in which to live his life and the internal or psychological divisions that so fundamentally mark his identity. The phenomenon will be presented through a reading fuelled by Lacanian theory, which will focus particularly upon Lacan's theorisation of the 'imaginary' and the 'symbolic' stages of subjectivity development. Whilst attempting to psychoanalyse a (semi)-fictional character is clearly not entirely unproblematic, in 'Doubrovsky's' case, some justifications can be found. As has already been indicated, the author himself has stressed his desire for these autofictional texts to constitute a continuation of his own extratextual psychoanalysis, a goal that he seeks to achieve through his free-flowing, 'consonantal' writing style. The intratextual self to be found in these works, then, may not be a living entity with a genuine psyche of his own, but he is very clearly a psychic projection of Doubrovsky himself. In the textual 'Doubrovsky' that we find in these works, then, the author is seeking to establish and construct a 'truth' or 'truths' of his own selfhood. Bearing this in mind, it seems far from unreasonable to engender a dialogue between the vagaries of 'Doubrovsky's' textual identity and psychoanalytic theory.¹¹

The psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan has been credited with making a crucial contribution to contemporary thinking on subjectivity and its constructions: a contribution whose resonances have penetrated epistemological fields outside the psychological domain proper. In particular, his development of Freud's psychoanalytic paradigms has encouraged a dialogue between poststructuralist thinking and psychoanalysis, which has enabled psychoanalytic theory to adopt a more ho-

¹¹ For further discussions of the merits and potential pitfalls of psychoanalysing literary characters, see Wright (1984).

listic approach to the interactions and interdependencies of the individual in society (Sarup 1988: chapter 1). On initial inspection, there are a number of areas of particular compatibility between Lacanian thinking and the work of Serge Doubrovsky. Both are clearly concerned, for example, with exploring the interdependencies of corporeality, visuality and language in identity formation. Like Freud, for instance, Lacan sees language as the site of the truth of subjectivity (Vergole 1970: XX), the unconscious being accessed through the analysis of dreams, word play, slips of the tongue, puns and jokes (Lemaire 1970: 43). Similarly, as discussed in chapter 2, Doubrovsky employs a 'consonantal' writing style which, as Patrick Saveau argues, is 'writing based on alliteration, assonance, homonyms, paronyms, antonyms, anagrams [resulting in] the poetic meanderings of language let loose' (Saveau 1999: 27). Doubrovsky's writing does, then, rely on just this type of creative word play, as well as dream analysis in order to construct the real 'truth' of his autofictional selfhood. Perhaps most crucial is the status of the mother in relation to identity: Lacan sees overdependency on the mother and lack of separation from her as damaging and as potentially resulting in psychosis, whilst 'Doubrovsky's' construction of selfhood in *Fils*, seems to be battling with precisely this problem. Indeed, using his narrator 'Doubrovsky's' lengthy psychoanalysis as a significant motor for *Fils*, Doubrovsky's extensive critical engagement with psychoanalytic theory is clear.

Having very briefly delineated some points of convergence between Doubrovsky's writing and Lacanian theory, I will now re-examine 'Doubrovsky's' split spatial identity, in particular his relationships with France and the US, in the light of Lacan's theorisation of the various arenas of identity formation, particularly the imaginary and the symbolic.¹²

The Lacanian exegete Anika Lemaire explains that

Lacan defines the essence of the imaginary as a dual relationship, a reduplication in the mirror, an immediate opposition between consciousness and its other in which each term becomes its opposite and

¹² A particularly helpful discussion of notions of the imaginary and symbolic is to be found in Wright (1984).

is lost in the play of the reflections. In its quest for itself, consciousness thus believes that it has found itself in the mirror of its creatures and loses itself in something which is not consciousness. (Lemaire 1970: 60)

In the pre-linguistic stage to which this citation refers, without access to the tools of language that permit the differentiation of self from Other and of self from environment, the 'subject' functions in a state of interdependency, normally with its mother. In this moment, individual identity formation occurs, but it is a false identity that is cast upon the subject from outside. The existence of this type of subjectivity can, I wish to argue, be detected within Doubrovsky's autofictional construction of selfhood. As I have already proposed, in the early stages of 'Doubrovsky's' identity construction, particularly during his childhood and adolescence in Paris, Doubrovsky's autofictional double, to judge by his recollections, is very definitely dominated by his mother, seeming to be the subject of a highly interdependent relationship with her (F: 230-233). This psychological state seems to play a clear role in the identity formation of Doubrovsky's autofictionally rendered self. Indeed, he is portrayed as feeling that his life's mission is to become that which his mother never could, and in this way to live in her place. For example, even at such an early stage as deciding on a name, 'Doubrovsky's' mother is depicted as already hoping that he would become a writer, and thus perpetuate her family's love of literature and theatre. In reference to this 'Doubrovsky' tells us: 'elle dit. *J'ai raté ma vocation. J'écirai donc. À sa place*' (F: 253). 'Doubrovsky' feels that he is 'CHARGÉ D'EXISTER À SA PLACE' and that

tout ce qu'elle n'a PAS PU. JE POURRAI. Forcément, se joue à deux. Je suis personne. Tu seras quelqu'un. À ma place. C'est la règle. Notre pacte. On sera UN-EN-DEUX. Deux corps, un cœur. Le même être. (F: 230)

A link can be established between this idea of 'UN-EN-DEUX' mooted here in relation to 'Doubrovsky's' identity, and Lacan's notion of the initial mirror stage. This phase is not seen as providing the child with individuated subjectivity because 'in the other, in the mirror's image, in his mother, the child sees nothing but a fellow with whom he merges, with whom he identifies' (Lemaire 1970: 78). Doubrovsky does quite clearly cast his autofictional self as merging with his mother, both in terms of his aspirations and his identity. Lacan

suggests that at this stage the unmediated subject will seek to become the object of the other's desire and in this way indispensable. In becoming a writer, 'Doubrovsky' is attempting to fulfil his mother's fantasy (LLB: 270).

Furthermore, Lemaire tells us that during the mirror phase as it is theorised in the Lacanian psychoanalytic model

the subject is his own double more than he is himself [...]. The whole drama of the dual relationship is played out here: consciousness collapses into its double without keeping its distance from it. There is an immediate opposition in which each term becomes its opposite. (Lemaire 1970: 81)

Again, clear examples of the development of a contradictory desire to both occupy his mother's place whilst also being different from her are evident in 'Doubrovsky's' narration of selfhood. In *Fils*, he tells us 'je veux être LE CONTRAIRE D'ELLE' (F: 251) and he specifies that he wishes neither to make the level of self-sacrifice that his mother does, nor live always in the same place without doing any significant travelling as she has done. Far from becoming an independent individual, then, 'Doubrovsky's' identity seems to be highly interdependent with that of his mother, as he seeks to become either the object of her desire or her exact opposite.

Drawing upon the argument offered above, the notion that Doubrovsky's narrator is entrapped in a mirror-relationship of unmediated dependency can be extended to encompass not only 'Doubrovsky's' mother, but also his *pays matriciel*. France is depicted as the environment in which 'Doubrovsky' originally establishes himself as a subject, and in which he formulates his aspirations, goals and values. As argued earlier, the link between the maternal and 'Doubrovsky's' geographical and cultural sense of belonging, i.e. between 'Doubrovsky's' *mère* and his *mère-patrie*, is both clear and conscious. 'Doubrovsky's' sense of belonging to France is presented as rooted in his mother: it is her memories that root him to the space of the Trocadéro, for example, and it is the family rituals of familiar meals and customs that provide his sense of home. Perhaps more importantly, my argument that 'Doubrovsky' must leave France and move to the US in order to establish his academic career and own family can be seen to play a role within the narrator's need to separate himself from his mother in order to achieve independence and achieve the transition

from the imaginary, dependent stage to the independent, 'symbolic' stage. Clearly fusing both these themes, 'Doubrovsky' states in *L'Après-vivre*: 'mais moi, ce que j'aime, ma mère, ma mère patrie, il faut tôt où tard que je le quitte' (AV: 146). 'Doubrovsky's' construction of a complex web of spatial movements through which to live his life, may, then, be far from merely a result of the development of a particular identity, but may actually be presented as playing an active, causal role within the most fundamental aspects of his psychological development.

If 'Doubrovsky' must leave France, his *pays mère*, and his mother herself in order to develop as an individual, what can be said to be the role played by the US, in 'Doubrovsky's' identity formations as they are adumbrated across Doubrovsky's self-metamorphic autofictional corpus?

If Lacan's Imaginary can be said to be paralleled by 'Doubrovsky's' relationship with France, and if it seems that he must leave this country in order to enter the next stage of identity development, then perhaps the US itself can be equated with the Symbolic stage in Doubrovsky's autofictional geography? If as Lacanian theory suggests, accession to the Symbolic depends upon developing the tools through which to recognise individual autonomy and to distance the self from the immediacy of lived experience, then this is certainly the role that the US is cast as playing in 'Doubrovsky's' life. As I have already argued, 'Doubrovsky's' migration to the US is presented as partly motivated by the need to escape his mother, and in this way to escape the UN-EN-DEUX enough to form relationships with other women. Similarly, it is the US that provides him with the opportunity to re-negotiate the identity cast upon him by the exclusionary discourses operating in the France of his youth and to see himself as a valuable human being, as well as the chance to acquire financial independence, status and academic success (AV: 31; UAS: 211; LPC: 39). The US is, then, a place of enlightenment and individual development for 'Doubrovsky'. Perhaps most significantly, it is in the US that he is portrayed as undergoing his lengthy analysis, the initial aim of which is to free himself from his mother after her death, both in order to be able to form relationships with other women and to recover sufficiently from his grief in order to function normally. If such an argument is, then, sustainable, and the US is depicted as an environment in which Doubrovsky's narrator can separate from his over-dependency

on both his mother and his *mère patrie*, why is it that ‘Doubrovsky’'s autofictional self continues to be plagued by division in so many aspects of his life?

Lacan argues that the accession to the symbolic order effects the *spaltung*, or splitting, of the subject because in mediating oneself in discourse, the immediate relation of self to self is destroyed. ‘Truth’ will in this way be lost from consciousness and an unconscious established. Indeed, the symbolic must always be based on lack as

The impossible coincidence of the (I), the subject of the enunciation, with the ‘I’, the subject of the utterance, begins the dialectic of the subject’s alienations. The subject becomes set in his utterances and social roles, and their totality is alienation which makes him construct his ego as another and for another. (Lemaire 1970: 72)

A parallel can again be drawn with ‘Doubrovsky’'s relationship with space. If the symbolic stage introduces the subject to a subjectivity that is marked by division, as the unmediated imaginary still exists simultaneously in the form of the unconscious, then this subjectivity is manifest in the dual existence of homes in both the US and France in ‘Doubrovsky’'s adulthood. Despite living primarily in the US and forging himself a successful career in this country, ‘Doubrovsky’'s conflictual allegiance to his ‘true’ homeland, France, remains an important part of his identity (AV: 31).

Furthermore, discussing Lacan’s work, Lemaire argues that the psychoanalytic cure represents a return to the imaginary, to the ‘truth’ that has been forgotten:

The cure is the transition from the non-symbolized imaginary to the symbolized imaginary. It is, in other words, the access to the truth of the patient’s personal code. Restored to its essential status of a symbol, the symbolized imaginary stands opposed to the alienating imaginary. (Lemaire 1970: 74)

Therefore, whilst for ‘Doubrovsky’, psychoanalysis helps him to come to terms with the death of his mother, which, as I have argued above, he often links with the death of his *mère patrie*, it certainly does not convince him that the US is the space in which an unproblematic home can now be found. In *Fils*, for example, he tells us:

PARIS EST MORT ma mère ma France la France disparue père russe
 moi j'ai jamais eu de patrie qu'une matrice un amatrie désert d'errances
 l'Amérique n'est pas mon pays mon lieu c'est OÙ. (F: 332)

Psychoanalysis allows 'Doubrovsky', he reveals, to construct a story of his past with which he can live, freeing him from the excessively interdependent relationship with his mother, and from the experiences that he underwent in his *mère patrie*. Just as it is a return to the truth of the unconscious that is sought in psychoanalysis, so 'Doubrovsky' seeks a return to his *pays matrice* and the establishment of his identity as 'French' in his relationship with space.

Despite his 'cure', however, the identity of Doubrovsky's autofictional double remains in many ways divided and lacking. As Chiantaretto argues in the citation invoked at the beginning of this section, this separation is never about complete loss or complete possession, but an in-between, *entre-deux*. Doubrovsky's writings convey the fact that his autofictional self never entirely belongs either to France or to the US, and never really feels part of a group. 'Doubrovsky' locates himself very firmly in a state of in-betweenness. Referring to his mother, he says 'mon pacte: *serai comme Maman*. Mon serment: *serai jamais comme elle*. Entre les deux. Dans l'entredeux....' (F: 255). Similarly, writing about his location in space, he depicts himself as '[un] bateau ivre entre la France et l'Amérique navigue sans amarre démanté désemparé sans port d'attache' (F: 333). If the 'imaginary' could be said to be paralleled by France and the 'symbolic' by the US, then what can be said of this *entre-deux* state? Perhaps most reasonably, the in-betweenness that is the cipher of the identity of Doubrovsky's autofictional avatar could be said to constitute the return to the Imaginary that a psychoanalytic cure is said to represent. In this case, *l'entre-deux* represents a state in which the patient is able to access the inner 'truth' of his unconscious whilst remaining within the symbolised universe. It is the space of the US that affords 'Doubrovsky' the means and opportunity to effect this re-entry into the Imaginary, and as such he is unable ever to entirely leave this country behind, never fully establishing himself within one country or one culture.

Finally, it is productive to link this analysis of Doubrovsky's autofictional construction of identity with one of the most fundamental aspects of Lacanian theory: the role of language in identity formation. In 'Le Séminaire sur «La Lettre volée»' (1966: 19-75), Lacan

stresses the importance of the accession to language in the child's development. As I have outlined above, accession to language, constituting the substitution of a symbol for a thing or an idea, ends the immediate, direct relationship of very young children with their surroundings. The accession to language, furthermore, is argued by Lacan also to represent the child's accession to the Symbolic Order, as the pre-existing structure of rules that language represents initiates the subject into social and kinship relations (Vergole 1970: XVIII). Language is crucial, then, for the recognition of a subject's autonomy, for the development of the subject's awareness of its role as a member of society, and for the necessary transition to occur from the unmediated, pre-linguistic stage of the 'Imaginary' to the mediated, independent subject position of the Symbolic. Perhaps most crucially, Lacan highlights the way in which everything is registered in the unconscious through language (Vergole 1970: XVIII). In the case of 'Doubrovsky', however, his relationship with his 'langue maternelle' is far from simple, being inherently linked with the questions of cultural, ethnic and national belonging that plague his narration of selfhood as discussed earlier in this chapter. If a person's identity is mediated and even refracted through the prism of language into the subject's unconscious, then perhaps this may explain the ongoing and irreconcilable division within 'Doubrovsky's' identity. Clearly feeling that French is his 'langue maternelle', 'Doubrovsky' is, however denied the identity of 'French' by the society around him. This externally enforced distancing from his mother tongue may, then, indicate the inscription of alienation within his unconscious, perhaps going some way to explaining the irreconcilable sense of exclusion that pervades Doubrovsky's work. Similarly linked with the desire to escape the identity cast upon him from outside is the desire to reappropriate this emblem of Frenchness through achieving literary acclaim and mastery of the French language.

This section has suggested that light can be shed on Doubrovsky's articulation of 'Doubrovsky's' divisions through the application of Lacanian theory. In particular, it has proposed that 'Doubrovsky's' two principal home spaces, France and the US, play key roles in his negotiations of the imaginary and the symbolic stages of subject formation as elaborated in the Lacanian model. If both of these spaces can be said to constitute symbols of 'Doubrovsky's' arenas of development, then I have also argued that his spatial movements act as

a strategy allowing alternative identity formations. In particular, whilst 'Doubrovsky' is able through his transition to the US and the psychoanalysis that he undertakes in this country to effect a return to the Imaginary and an examination of his 'inner truth', he remains divided between the imaginary and symbolic stages just as he is destined to remain divided between France and the US.

The autofictional writings of Serge Doubrovsky, in sum, present a vision of subjectivity in which home space and cultural belonging are of prime importance. Clearly indicating Paris to be the space with which he feels the greatest affiliation, 'Doubrovsky''s sense of cultural belonging is deeply unsettled by the anti-Semitic discourses of the mid-twentieth century, and he is presented as becoming irremediably torn between France and the US. Despite living in perpetual movement 'Doubrovsky' is presented as remaining plagued by a complex fear of confinement and a recurring desire to be liberated. The Lacanian reading that I have undertaken demonstrates the extent to which geo-cultural division is portrayed as deeply interwoven in 'Doubrovsky''s very psyche.

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5.

Robin: Lost, Imaginary, Urban and Moving Home Spaces

Régine Robin's literary oeuvre, which comprises a novel entitled *La Québécoise*, a book of short stories, *L'Immense Fatigue des pierres*, and an autobiographical Internet project, *Papiers perdus*, is clearly more diverse in generic terms than the works of either Serge Doubrovsky or Hervé Guibert. Indeed, as I argued in chapter 2, Robin's writings seem to move restlessly between a range of literary genres and textual forms. Despite the evidently problematic nature of any attempt to suggest that Robin's three pieces of literary writing could be treated as undifferentiated parts of a whole, it will be central to my argument here to identify commonalities between them. In fact, as I suggested in my introductory discussion in chapter 2, despite their differences in generic and textual form, there is considerable overlap between these texts' primary concerns. In particular, a formative role is played in each by the author's will to create a literary inscription of the complexities of her own identity. Each text explores, to some extent and in some way, what it is to be a Franco-Jewish academic whose subjectivity and life experience have been unsettled by the decimation of her ethnic and cultural heritage, as well as by the slaughter of fifty-one members of her family in the Second World War. The complex nature of Robin's life writing project is deepened by her belief that the extreme events of the Holocaust have undermined any possibility of realist representation, and that only a fragmented, provisional and plural fiction is capable of representing the atrocities that occurred. Despite her rejection of any simply self-referential, realist narrative, each of Robin's literary writings can, then, be considered to constitute a particularly innovative form of life writing, and all three can loosely be said to comprise an autobiographical corpus for Robin. In treating all three texts in the same discussion, I shall not be seeking to elide the differences between these diverse works, but rather will seek to highlight continuities and shared

traits, with the aim of paving the way to drawing some conclusions about Robin's overall writerly project in chapter 6.

Throughout these works¹, space plays an important role. In many ways there are parallels between the constructions of home space in Robin's writings and those of Doubrovsky's *autofictions*. Expressing a feeling of disorientation and lack of a clear home space, for example, the various voices of Robin's works seem repeatedly to tell us of their feeling of a lack of spatial belonging. In *La Québécoise*, the main characters of both the first and third of the three parallel scenarios express a sense of rootlessness. We are told, for example, 'je suis autre. Je n'appartiens pas à ce Nous si fréquemment utilisé ici. [...] Je ne suis pas d'ici' (Q: 54) and later 'ici ou ailleurs, je n'ai jamais été chez moi' (Q: 178). In Robin's collection of short stories, *L'Immense Fatigue des pierres*, the different narrators seem to express similar sentiments, telling us that 'j'habite l'exclusion depuis si longtemps' (IFP, 'L'Immense Fatigue': 33) and 'je me perds, me dissipe, m'éparpille' (IFP, 'Journal': 142). Perhaps most interestingly, and also in symmetry with the work of Doubrovsky, this lack of feeling of belonging is often associated with Jewishness. In *La Québécoise*, for example, one protagonist asserts that 'depuis toujours nous sommes des errants. Immerrants. Immergés. Immer toujours. Himmel le ciel. La perte du nom, de la mère et du lieu. Sans feu, ni lieu...' (Q: 63).

¹ This chapter will focus on *La Québécoise* (Montreal: Typo, 1983) which I will refer to as 'Q'; *L'Immense Fatigue des pierres* (Montreal: XYZ, 1999) which I will refer to as 'IFP', and the internet home page *Papiers perdus*, <http://www.er.uqam.ca/nobel/r24136/bio.html> which I will refer to as 'PP'. When referring to particular examples within *L'Immense Fatigue des pierres* I will indicate the precise provenance of the citation by placing an abbreviated version of the name of the individual short story in quotation marks after the abbreviated name of the book. For example, a citation from the second story, 'Le Dibbouk inconnu', will be marked (IFP, 'Le Dibbouk': 56). The following abbreviations will be used: 'L'Immense Fatigue' for 'L'Immense Fatigue des pierres'; 'Le Dibbouk' for 'Le Dibbouk inconnu'; 'L'agenda' for 'L'agenda'; 'Gratok' for 'Gratok. Langue de vie et langue de mort'; 'Mère perdue' for 'Mère perdue sur le World Wide Web'; 'Journal' for 'Journal de déglingue entre le Select et Compuserve'; 'Manhattan bistrot' for 'Manhattan bistrot'. When citing Robin's internet site, *Papiers perdus*, it will be impossible for me to give page references due to the nature of this internet site. Instead, I will indicate that the quotation comes from 'PP' and then give the name of the fragment from which my citation is drawn.

Cast against a background of dispossession and homelessness, the identities of the characters that Robin constructs in her literary works are, then, fundamentally bound up with their relationships with space.

More specifically, the post-Holocaust, twentieth-century Jewish experience of space is evoked in Robin's work. This experience is shown in these texts to highlight the importance of migrations between spaces and to undermine any notion of 'natural' rootedness in a particular national space. For instance, in *Papiers perdus*, Robin's most overtly autobiographical work, Robin's textual avatar embarks upon an overt discussion of the importance of her parents' migration from Eastern Europe to France. Her narrator asserts self-reflexively that 'si tu étais née en Pologne, tu serais morte bien sûr aujourd'hui mais tu serais restée Rivkale et personne d'autre. Je dois à la France d'avoir été Régine' (PP, 'Rivka A').² It is a movement in space, then, that is cast as having saved Robin's intratextual self's life, a message that is repeated elsewhere in *Papiers perdus* (see 'La Génération de mon père'). This migration, however, is also recognised as the source of her complex and divided identity, of her continued oscillation between different cultural codes and languages as Yiddish-speaking Rivkale of Polish Jewish origin at home, and French-speaking Régine at school. Moving between and inhabiting different spaces, then, is presented by Robin as of crucial importance: such movements wield life-saving potential, but may have a radical impact upon cultural and linguistic identity.

In all three of Robin's literary texts, the arbitrary and provisional nature of belonging to any particular space is dramatised through speculation about the ways in which different destinations could have easily been chosen for key migrations. In *Papiers perdus*, for example, many fragments of the 'Bistrots' section are underpinned by variations on the theme of 'si mes parents étaient arrivés en Amérique en 1932 au lieu de venir en France, j'aurais sans doute épousé un pitcher des Milwaukee Brewers' (PP, 'Le tabac des peupliers'). In *L'Immense Fatigue des pierres*, the main character of 'Manhattan bistro' speculates at length about what would have happened if her par-

² Rivka or Rivale is the name by which Robin was known at home, whereas Régine was the French name by which she was known at school and in her career.

ents' families had, like so many other East European Jews, migrated to the US in the first decade of the twentieth century instead of staying in Poland. Not only would her family have contained 'cinquante et un membres de plus' (IFP, 'Manhattan bistro': 179) as they would have escaped the Holocaust, but her parents would have been brought up and educated as Americans. We are told 'rien ne change et tout change. Le nom d'abord. Rivka Ajzerstejn n'est pas devenue Régine Robin, mais Rebecca Ajerstein (prononcer Ajerstin). Une Américaine' (IFP, 'Manhattan bistro': 180). This migration to a different space would have changed many aspects of life that are of critical importance to identity formation, particularly the protagonist's name and family circumstances. In *La Québécoise*, the arbitrary nature of Robin's characters' occupation of particular spaces is made most obvious in a passage in which the main character of the first section speculates about a possible scenario for her grandfather's migration from Eastern Europe to the US. Travelling by boat, he is constructed as casually agreeing to swap tickets with a friend, therefore ending up in Montreal rather than Chicago (Q: 24). Robin's protagonist's rhetorical question, 'sait-on jamais pourquoi on se retrouve ailleurs?' (Q: 178) seems, then, particularly appropriate in indicating the fragility of any identity that is built upon the occupation of a particular space.

In the works by Régine Robin that comprise the focus of my study in this chapter, then, it is clear that the intersections of space and identity are of paramount importance. Indeed, in their multifaceted narrations of tales of migration, these works are united by a shared will to dramatise the impact of inhabiting different spaces upon questions of identity and upon survival itself. Whilst the characters in these texts are cast as being clearly preoccupied by space and by their lack of a sense of belonging, the very notion of belonging in space is thrown into question by the apparently arbitrary nature of movements in space upon which identities are based. In this way, all three of Robin's literary writings seem to directly question what it is to belong in space, particularly as a Jewish person struggling with the aftermath of the Holocaust.

In addition to their greater generic complexity when compared to the writings addressed in the two previous chapters, then, it is important to note that the sense of home space and cultural belonging in Robin's literary writings is also more complex than those that I discussed in the works of Hervé Guibert and Serge Doubrovsky.

Whereas ‘Guibert’'s sense of cultural belonging could be said to be fundamentally based in certain areas of Paris, albeit being rendered more problematic by the advent of AIDS, and ‘Doubrovsky’'s could be said to be torn between France and the US, the sense of home space in Robin's texts is less easily identified. Indeed, in what is perhaps the most sustained analysis of the role of space in Robin's work, Rosemary Chapman argues that

Robin's texts, though written in French, include words and phrases in Yiddish, Hebrew and English, and historical, cultural and spatial references to Eastern Europe, France, Britain, Hungary, Canada, the US, the former USSR, Israel and many more places. [...] It is this multiplicity of points of reference which marks out Robin's work from that of many other migrant writers for whom the experience of migration more typically involves a physical and psychological movement between two places. (Chapman 2000: 237)

In accordance with the structure that I elaborated in chapter 2, the spaces of home and cultural belonging to be found in this, the final chapter of my study to focus upon the work of a single writer, are characterised by the greatest complexity. For reasons of both generic status and textual content, then, Robin's works could be said to be the most prone to ambiguity and slippage. Chapman's argument that ‘as readers we cannot settle in Robin's texts, cannot establish our bearings’ (Chapman 2000: 237-238) seems unquestionable. In the discussion of Robin's articulations of home space and cultural belonging that follows, distinguishing between the narrators and characters within each text will, by necessity, be difficult due to the deliberately ambiguous and shifting nature of Robin's narrative. In order to overcome this, when drawing upon specific textual examples, I will highlight not only the volume, but the particular section of the work from which my citation is drawn. In this chapter I will analyse in turn the various types of cultural and spatial belonging that are proposed in Robin's literary works, encompassing the notion of an idealised but lost home space, two significantly different urban spaces, the importance of intercultural spaces and the significance of *non-lieux*.

5.1 Lost Home Space

Perhaps the most consistent and stable formulation of home space throughout Robin's works is that of a lost home space. This space is directly associated with Jewishness, as is demonstrated in *La Québécoise* in the first of the three parallel stories, in a passage in which the main character is lost and turns to those around to ask for directions. We are told that 'elle leur demandait son pays, mais il n'existait pas ayant été oublié par Dieu au jour de la création. Un pays sans Histoire, sans date, sans traités, sans maître et sans serviteurs' (Q: 66-67). From this, we can infer that a national space of belonging is lacking. Robin's narrators display considerable nostalgia not just for lost home countries, but also for lost hometowns. The narrator of the first scenario of *La Québécoise*, for example, professes the desire to 'pleurer le grand deuil du ghetto perdu' (Q: 81), a theme that is echoed elsewhere in Robin's writings (see IFP: 20 and 36; Q: 63 and 102). The general loss of Jewish ghettos is accompanied in Robin's works by the frequent recurrence of one particular lost hometown, the ghetto of Kaluszyń in Poland.³ Kaluszyń is indicated in *Papiers perdus*, Robin's autobiographical Internet project to be the very place in which the intratextual Robin's parents grew up (PP, 'La Génération de mon père') and is repeatedly cited as a long-established site of belonging. In this ghetto, we are told, many generations of the protagonist's father's family lived as musicians prior to World War Two. Moreover, within both 'Manhattan bistro' in *L'Immense Fatigue* and the internet project, it is here that the father's all-important conversion to communism and early political activism are cast as having taken place (IFP: 201; PP 'La Génération de mon père'), events which are presented as of enduring significance for Robin's textual protagonists' senses of self.

This Polish place, then, seems in some ways to correspond with the definition of a home space that I elaborated in chapter 1. It is a long-established, physical site of belonging that is marked by considerable emotional investment when it is evoked by Robin's protagonists. However, despite being repeatedly referred to in Robin's writ-

³ In fact, references to Kaluszyń as a lost hometown recur not merely in those literary works that I am discussing here, but also in Robin's theoretical writings. See, for example, Robin (1995a: 111).

ings in this idealised way, Kaluszyn is certainly not presented as a site of ‘safety, security and dignity’, characteristics of home space described by Stanislaus Kennedy (1996) that I discussed in chapter 1. On the contrary, it is synonymous with notions of loss and cultural destruction. The male narrator of ‘Le Dibbouk inconnu’⁴ in *L’Immense Fatigue*, for example, quotes a plaque found near the old site of the ghetto as saying:

Kaluszyn en 1939:
3000 Polonais
6500 Juifs. (IFP: 63)

Invoking Kaluszyn as once having been home to a substantial number of Jews, the narrator of this story frequently reminds us of the complete decimation wrought by the war. Indeed, so thoroughly was the Jewish presence eradicated from this space, that the same narrator points out that ‘il n’y a même plus de cimetière à Kaluszyn’ (IFP, ‘Le Dibbouk’: 62). Likewise, in a lengthy section of poetic text that occurs a little later in the same text, we are told that

Je n’ai rien vu à Kaluszyn.
Il n’y avait plus rien à voir à Kaluszyn.
Rien. Rien.
Ni le vieux cimetière
Ni le nouveau cimetière
Ni la synagogue
Ni la maison de ma mère avec un grand rosier devant
Ni la confiserie de mon grand-père [...]. (IFP: 60)

The oft-invoked home space of Kaluszyn, then, is at once cast as a site of plenitude, of family and cultural stability, and as a site of lack – all has now disappeared. Constituting a symbol of idealised home space throughout Robin’s works, this construction of Kaluszyn emblematises a ‘natural’ place of belonging from which Robin’s textual protagonists have been cut off. Whilst Kaluszyn is not evoked in *La Québécoise*, it is certainly true that there is evidence of a similar notion of

⁴ This male narrator is revealed to have had a younger sister called Rivka, and as I argued in chapter 2, could loosely be seen as a fictional construction of Robin’s older brother.

a lost or unknown home space. In the first scenario, for example, there is an overt profession of longing on the part of the principal female character for 'son vrai pays [...] son monde à elle, qu'elle n'aurait pas connu' (Q: 69), and this is articulated in almost identical words by the main character of the second scenario (Q: 102).

The presence of this lost home space, in addition to imbuing Robin's narratives with a feeling of dispossession and lack, also propels to the foreground a vision of imaginary spaces of affiliation. As Rosemary Chapman points out in *Siting the Quebec Novel* (2000), for the children of immigrants in particular, since the Second World War the *shtetl* has taken on a mythical status, 'surviving in stories, sayings and the Yiddish language, yet beyond their own experience. [The *shtetl*] has retained, though, immense symbolic power' (Chapman 2000: 258). This is evident within Robin's work as the 'monde disparu' of the Kaluszyn ghetto is cited as having constituted a principal focus of the bedtime stories of the father of the narrator in *Papiers perdus* (PP, 'La Génération de mon père'). Far from simply narrating his past life, we are told that these stories overtly drew upon the fictional, and whilst always communicating similar themes, demonstrated 'd'étranges variations'. Elsewhere in Robin's work, in a volume entitled *Le Naufrage du siècle* (1995) that errs primarily on the side of theory rather than fiction, these stories are again referred to and their fictional nature is directly confronted. Robin asserts that 'mon père ne saurait absolument rien de nos origines', and so he answered her childhood questions 'en me faisant une sorte de récit mythique des Juifs en général' (Robin 1995a: 197-198). In those works that comprise the focus of my study here, a similar turn towards the imaginary when information is lacking is identifiable with regard to the protagonists' home space. In particular, Robin seems to highlight the fact that in the destruction of Kaluszyn, it was not merely the physical fabric of the ghetto that was lost, but also a large part of the community's historical and cultural identity. In order to come to terms with the gaping holes in their own self-knowledge, survivors are presented as turning to the fictional and the imaginary. In terms of their sense of home space and cultural belonging, Robin casts the destruction of Kaluszyn as motivating her protagonists to turn towards imaginary spaces of affiliation (see IFP, 'Le Dibbouk': 61).

Kaluszyn, then, is an anchoring point, the incomplete nature of which generates a tone of lack and separation in many of Robin's nar-

ratives, and demonstrates the importance of the imagination in the formulation of places of belonging. In chapter 2, I discussed Robin's belief in the importance of creating fictional, proxy narratives in the aftermath of the Second World War in order to imagine the stories of those who had been killed. A parallel can, perhaps, be seen with the lost home space of Kaluszyn that I have discussed here: having been destroyed in the war, Kaluszyn is presented in Robin's narratives as passing into the zone of the imagination and in this way constituting a proxy site of belonging. Indeed, these texts seem to suggest that if a 'natural' home space has been destroyed, then there is little left to do other than to resort to the imaginary and the fictitious.

In Robin's literary writings, it seems that an idealised notion of home space is to be found in the Jewish ghetto, particularly that of Kaluszyn. This physical site of continuity and family roots evokes considerable emotional investment from Robin's protagonists. However, this idealised home space is unfailingly presented as flawed within Robin's work, as it has been destroyed. All three of Robin's literary texts display a preoccupation with a lost home space, then, which both fills the narrative with a sense of not-belonging, and encourages protagonists to turn towards an imaginary notion of home. What, though, could be said to comprise 'real', physical spaces of belonging within Robin's narratives?

5.2 Urban Spaces of Belonging: Paris and Montreal

Perhaps some of the most dominant images of non-imaginary spaces that are to be found within Robin's writings are those of urban spaces. Robin constructs an extremely positive view of the urban, citing, for example, a poem by Chagall in which he describes the streets of the city as the place in which he is reborn and the city itself as like a finely tuned instrument to be played by inhabitants (Q: 40). It is upon the two most prevalent urban spaces of Robin's *œuvre* that my discussion will now focus: that is to say, the cities of Paris and Montreal.

Paris

Perhaps the closest thing to a home space that is actually in existence and is presented as having been experienced by the protagonists of Robin's literary writings is that of the city of Paris. In the first story of *L'Immense Fatigue des pierres*, Paris is described as the 'lieu d'origine' (IFP, 'L'Immense Fatigue': 45) of the two principal characters. Moreover, this city, and in particular the Belleville area, is textually constructed as the site of childhood in all three of Robin's literary texts (Q: 58; IFP: 85; PP, 'le carnet magique'). In the first scenario of *La Québécoise*, considerable affinity is expressed with the Parisian quartier in which the main protagonist grew up, and we are told: 'tu avais été ce morceau de Belleville au coin de la rue Piat et de la rue Vilin' (Q: 58). Furthermore, this character's childhood inhabitation of the heart of French physical and cultural space in Paris is presented as synonymous with a certain childhood affinity with Frenchness itself. We are told, for example, that 'pour un peu, toi aussi tu te mettrais à traverser le Luxembourg, une besace sur le dos comme les dictées tirées d'Anatole France' (Q: 58). The implication is clear that in moving through the same spaces as a character in a typically French dictation text, Robin's protagonist feels a sense of affiliation with both the space and the French culture that it represents.

However, very much as it is in the work of Doubrovsky, Robin's protagonists' affinity with the childhood home of Paris is constructed as having been rendered significantly more problematic by the experience of the Second World War. Particular spaces of Paris are cast as continuing to resonate with the echoes of the anti-Semitic events that took place in them. This is clear in the following extract from the second section of *Le Québécoise*:

La place de l'Abbé Henocque. Cette place si calme, si ombragée. C'est là qu'ils ont tué P. Goldmann- les souvenirs du Juif polonais né en France s'arrêtant là. UN JUIF POLONAIS ASSASSINÉ EN France. Tu te souviens de cette douleur violente quand tu appris la nouvelle. (Q: 101)

In direct opposition to the way in which family associations with particular places are presented as forging positively connoted 'lieux de mémoire' within the Parisian cityscape for 'Doubrovsky', then, the horrific acts of the Second World War seem to be indelibly imprinted

upon the urban fabric of Paris within Robin's texts. Even the street mentioned as once the site of a childhood home and which therefore is connoted with a sense of belonging is polluted by the disturbing experiences that occurred in it during the war. The narrator of the fourth story of *L'Immense Fatigue* is, for example, constructed as having spent a year in hiding during the Occupation of Paris, sleeping in a disused garage 'sur un terrain vague au bout de la rue vilin' (IFP, 'Gratok': 85). It is on the corner of this very Rue Vilin that the main character's mother is cast as being arrested during the 16 July 1942 raids, only just escaping deportation (IFP, 'Gratok': 91). Perhaps the most powerful emblem of the indelible, unsettling marks of the Second World War on the Parisian landscape can be found, as both Simon Harel (1992: 406) and Rosemary Chapman (2000: 263) note, in the recurring references to 'Grenelle' metro station. This site, from which Jews were deported in the particularly crushing and extensive 'vent printanier' raids of 16 July 1942, is the subject of frequent references within *La Québécoise* (Q: 194 and 204) and also features within *Papiers perdus* (PP, 'le cybercafé'). Punctuating and disrupting the narrative at frequent intervals, the history synonymous with the site of Grenelle is constructed as a threat to the coherence of the city of Paris itself. We are told: 'Paris se déchire [...] Rien que Paris au métro Grenelle' (Q: 206). The space of Paris, then, constructed as a childhood home space, is shown to have been compromised by the events of the Second World War and the indelible marks it has left on particular sites within the city. In this, a space with which Robin's protagonists have established a private sense of affiliation and personal belonging is shown to have been invaded and undermined by the ideological discourse of anti-Semitism. Whereas for 'Doubrovsky' the anti-Semitic discourse was at least partially transmitted into the home by his own parents, for Robin's textual avatars any notion of home space within the city of Paris is polluted by the public phenomenon of History, which remains enduringly emblematised by the Grenelle metro station.

In *L'Immense Fatigue des pierres*, the impact of the Second World War upon the space of Paris is made particularly explicit. Much as it is in Doubrovsky's narratives of Paris, the wartime period is constructed in this text as fissuring the city into two distinct worlds. These take the form of the world of the Yiddish speaking Jew whose life is in constant danger, and that of the French-speaking Paris of Aryans

and Nazis, which remains a place of freedom and relative hedonism. We are told that

Ainsi à Paris, il y avait deux vies, deux mondes qui ne se rencontraient que dans ces moments furtifs qui duraient une demi-seconde. Le monde de ceux qui portaient l'étoile, qui devaient se cacher, qui parlaient tout bas, qui parlaient yiddish, et le monde de ceux qui buvaient du champagne, qui allaient au caf'conc', qui chantaient *J'attendrai* et qui allaient au guignol. (IFP, 'Gratok': 90)

Whereas in Doubrovsky's *autofictions* the division of Parisian space is formulated around a political or ideological notion of 'good' and 'bad', synonymous with collaborationist and resistant elements of society, in Robin's texts the two worlds within the city are presented as divided primarily upon ethnico-religious grounds. In both cases, the discourses structuring society can be seen to be materialised in space.⁵ As the citation above demonstrates, the two halves of Paris are presented as requiring and permitting strikingly different types of behaviour. Despite the clear rules and expectations of particular people in this space, Robin does not suggest that her protagonist establishes a simple sense of belonging and selfhood. With reference to the main character of this story within *L'Immense Fatigue*, we are told: 'elle apprit à séparer les deux mondes, celui de la mort et de la vie. Elle savait qu'elle appartenait aux deux et que sa vie [...] c'était l'entre-deux' (IFP, 'Gratok': 90). Hiding in a garage with her Jewish mother by night and spending the day with her Aryan French nanny, Juliette, the protagonist of this story is constructed as learning to switch fluently between languages and cultural codes. Indeed, so fluent in this does she become that even as a small child she is presented as refraining from displaying her familiarity with the language being spoken by German soldiers in Juliette's house. As Robin has commented elsewhere, the German and Yiddish languages are remarkably close (Robin 1993a: 131), and revealing familiarity with the former might have given away the protagonist's Jewishness. Even in the deeply polarised cityscape of wartime Paris, then, Robin does not suggest this protago-

⁵ This notion of social relations being 'materialised' in space is discussed by Barker (2000: 296).

nist to establish any simple sense of belonging, but rather positions her within the *entre-deux*, a notion to which I will return.

The city of Paris does remain a recurring presence in Robin's writing, her adult protagonists often regularly visiting the pastures of the left-wing intelligentsia such as the famous cafes and bistros of the Left Bank (Q: 135; IFP: 55; 77; 146). However, this compromised, divided site of youth and adolescence is constructed as affecting Robin's adult protagonists in similar ways to those that I identified in chapter 3 in relation to 'Doubrovsky'. That is to say that the experience of having lived in the fissured, divided space of wartime Paris is presented as leaving its mark, and Robin's adult protagonists are often cast as unable to establish a single, stable home space. In *La Québécoise*, for instance, specifically referring to the division of Paris during the war, the narrator of the first scenario comments:

Ses déambulations ressemblent à des fuites lentes entre deux rafles. Elle ne saurait jamais où la porteraient ses pas. Désormais le temps de l'entre-deux. Entre deux villes, entre deux langues, entre deux villes, deux villes dans une ville. L'entre- les parenthèses qu'on appelle en yiddish des demi-lunes. (Q: 63)

That an almost identical refrain is repeated later in this work (Q: 152) as well as in *Papiers perdus* (PP, 'le cybercafé') indicates the ongoing significance of the 'entre-deux'. Unsettled by their wartime experience of Paris, Robin's adult protagonists are cast as unable to continue living there in any stable way, and as condemned to inbetweenness.

Indeed, this city is rarely positioned as the site of a long-term, permanent home for Robin's adult protagonists. In *La Québécoise*, for example, in both the first and second scenarios, it serves as a summer holiday destination. We are told: 'on irait l'été à Paris' (Q: 104). The protagonist, however, expresses ambiguous feelings about this:

On serait bien. Par moment quelque chose clocherait. Cela viendrait par surprise, se faufilant dans les interstices d'un bonheur aux mailles serrées. On ne pourrait jamais prévoir ces moments lourds. (Q: 36)

The nature of this lurking, negative feeling is not made explicit, merely hinting that Paris as a home space remains problematic. Even in 'Le Dibbouk inconnu' and 'Mère perdue sur le World Wide Web', stories within *L'Immense Fatigue* in which the respective protagonists

live permanently in Paris, it is on journeys elsewhere, to Washington and Montreal respectively, that the narrative drama relies (IFP, 'Le Dibbouk': 53-74 and IFP, 'Mère perdue': 99-125). The ambiguous nature of Paris as a home space then, is perhaps best summed up by the narrator of 'Mère perdue sue le World Wide Web' in *L'Immense Fatigue*, who tells us that

chez soi, chez soi! [...] Y a-t-il jamais un chez-soi? [...] Pour moi, il n'y a que Paris. Je ne sais plus qui a dit qu'on pouvait se faire chier n'importe où, mais qu'il valait mieux alors se faire chier à Paris, tu comprends? (IFP: 120)

Tellingly, the protagonists of both *La Québécoise* and *L'Immense Fatigue* who have left Paris to live elsewhere in adulthood seem to battle with ambiguous desires to return to the city. At the end of the first scenario in *La Québécoise* 'elle' does indeed choose to come back to Paris and we are told: 'elle se serait retrouvée rue de la Mare à Paris, dans le vieux quartier de son enfance' (Q: 89-90). Trying to make a fresh start, however, is presented as impossible as 'rien ne serait plus jamais comme avant. La France aurait changé' (Q: 90), a refrain which is repeated at the end of the second and third scenarios when the main character attempts the same thing (Q: 167 and Q: 206). A similar feeling of the impossibility of finding the old Paris causes the protagonists of the first story of *L'Immense Fatigue* to reach the opposite decision, and to opt not to return. The narrator asserts:

revenir à Paris leur semble impossible à l'une et à l'autre. En vingt ans, la France a trop changé et il n'y a pas de retours en arrière. Retrouver quoi exactement? Je me souviens d'un coin perdu aujourd'hui disparu [...]. (IFP, 'L'Immense Fatigue': 46)

This Paris, then, is not only tarnished by the war, but is also infused with a feeling of being under threat and at risk of disappearing. It is shown, in short, to manifest traits that also characterise the lost home space of Kaluszyn. However, it is no longer the catastrophic extremes of war and ethnic cleansing that threaten Paris, but a rather more mundane enemy: that of property speculation. In the fourth story of *L'Immense Fatigue* we are told:

Depuis, presque tout a disparu, le garage, le terrain vague, le réverbère, les escaliers de la rue Vilin, et même la rue Vilin et le passage Ju-

lien-Lacroix. La spéculation immobilière s'est acharnée sur tous ses souvenirs. (IFP, 'Gratok': 94-95. See also PP 'La Génération de mon père')

That the forces of modernisation are destroying not only those spaces of Paris that represent the city's more glorious past but also those in which the narrator's most painful memories are stored, seems particularly harsh. Indeed, it seems that the old threat posed to the cultural identity of the Parisian cityscape by anti-Semitism has been replaced with a new one: that of gentrification. The space of Paris, it seems, cannot be relied upon to bear witness to the events of personal importance that are constructed as having taken place in it.

The city of Paris then, a recurring presence within Robin's texts, is constructed as a stable site of childhood, tarnished and rendered problematic by the events of the Second World War, reminders of which linger in the cityscape. Unable to fully detach themselves from this city, Robin's protagonists follow complex spatial itineraries, frequently involving some degree of inhabiting Paris. The locus of their repeated arrivals and departures, this city is continually juxtaposed with other cities in which Robin's protagonists also live. Just as in Doubrovsky's *autofictions*, it is the New World that provides an alternative home space for most of Robin's protagonists. Whilst displaying some interest in the New York that is so fundamental to Doubrovsky's writings, Robin's works are focused primarily on the city of Montreal. Indeed, critic Simon Harel argues that this city is so influential within *La Québécoise* that it influences the protagonist's perception of her childhood home, Paris. He asserts that '[Paris est la] ville centrale dans *La Québécoise* de Régine Robin mais qui est toujours perçue à travers le prisme montréalais' (Harel 1992: 401). Implying that the two cities of Paris and Montreal are inextricably linked, Harel even proposes that they blur into an indistinguishable construction of the urban in Robin's writings. Whilst the non-linear, achronological structure of Robin's writing frequently leads to a close and sometimes confusing juxtaposition of these two cities, I wish to maintain that each retains a very distinct individual identity. As Ralph Sarkonak observes in relation to the constructions of Paris and Montreal in Robin's writing, 'each has [...] a distinctive urban texture, complete with unique friends and lovers, streets and metro lines' (Sarkonak 1987:

100). It is precisely this, the distinct identity and role of Montreal within Robin's writing to which my discussion will now turn.

Montreal

Montreal is undoubtedly the other space that is offered in Robin's writings as a possible hometown. Perhaps most strikingly, unlike Paris, this city is constructed in Robin's work as a space in which Jewishness, rather than being an object of repression, is presented as an acceptable element within a diverse cultural cityscape. In *L'Immense Fatigue des pierres*, for example, there is mention of both a Jewish hospital and a Jewish library (IFP, 'Mère perdue': 107 and 111), the existence of which suggest an established and substantial Jewish population. Moreover, in the same story, one of Robin's protagonists describes glimpsing a group of 'hassidim'⁶ in the street in Montreal. Rather than being condemned to attempting to hide their Jewishness as they would have had to in wartime Paris, in the city of Montreal their presence is visible and they move freely 'en costume avec leur caftan et leur *shtraïml*' (IFP, 'Mère perdue': 109). Jewishness is presented as similarly unproblematically woven into the urban fabric of Montreal in *La Québécoite*. In the third scenario, for example, we are told that 'partout [il y a] des boucheries kascher, des synagogues, des maisons de prières et des congrégations. La Bagelerie Van Horn, l'épicerie Budapest et le marché Aviv' (Q: 190). Picking up on the theme of food, in the first scenario of *La Québécoite* we are told: 'il y aurait aussi à l'angle de Décarie et de Queen Mary le restaurant *Pum-pernik Cornichons* – harengs – Creplar – Knödle' (Q: 30). The significance of this is clear: the evidence and availability of Jewish food types is presented as inherently bound up with the existence of Jewish culture and traditions within this city. In fact, Robin herself has commented elsewhere that food often plays a crucial role in the transmission of culture and tradition between generations (Robin 1995a: 128),

⁶ Hasidism is a Jewish movement that emerged in Eastern Europe in the 18th century. The majority of communities were destroyed in the Holocaust in Eastern Europe, but some remain in the UK, US and Israel. Followers are identifiable by their distinctive traditional dress, including, for men, Homberg hat, streidel and dark suit. See Lavina and Dan Cohn-Sherbok (1995: 70-71).

an argument that finds considerable support within Laura U. Marks' *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment and the Senses* (2000). In this, Marks stresses the importance of food to those who have been displaced from their land of origin, arguing that 'food is central to many cultures [...] In the absence of other records food becomes even more a vehicle of memory' (Marks 2000: 225). For those who have changed cultural space, then, particularly those such as Robin's protagonists who have been harshly cut off from their cultural heritage, the presence of traditional foods within the cityscape may help to forge a sense of belonging.

Indeed, Robin's literary depictions seem to tap into a widespread perception of the city of Montreal as not only containing a sizeable Jewish community, but as being characterised by cultural pluralism in general. Simon Harel, for example, argues that whilst Paris may be described as 'un centre métropolitain relativement immuable', Montreal is remarkable for its 'porosité' (1992: 401). Moreover, he argues that

Le Québec, société post-industrielle en continent nord-américain, se voit bon gré mal gré projeté au coeur d'un monde où la constitution interculturelle est une préoccupation constante. [...] L'identité québécoise n'est pas la reconnaissance d'un destin stable et prévisible dont des citoyens autochtones seraient les légataires, mais plutôt une structure ouverte. (Harel 1992: 375)

Reinforcing the view of this city as an open, multicultural place, critic Pierre Nepveu has commented upon the increasing audibility of the voices of immigrants in the last two decades within the literature stemming from this city (Nepveu 1999: 190). Such a view seems to be supported in Robin's writings since, in addition to emphasizing the presence of visible Jewishness in Montreal, the narrator of the fifth story of *L'Immense Fatigue* overtly describes the city as 'une métropole cosmopolite' (IFP, 'Mère perdue': 110). The view of Montreal as a cosmopolitan city is reinforced in *La Québécoise*, in which it is described as

Ville schizophrène
patchwork linguistique
bouillie ethnique, pleine de grumeaux
purée de cultures disloquées
folklorisées

figées
 pizza
 souvlaki
 paella. (Q: 82)

Different food types are, again, positioned as emblems of cultural diversity and mixing in this passage and as distillations of Montreal. Indeed, whilst Paris is characterised within Robin's works as a site of nostalgic remembrance, tarnished by its binary, ethnic and racial division during the war, Montreal is cast as considerably more forward-looking. We are told: 'Montréal est une de ces métropoles où se lit déjà en clair l'avenir de toutes les métropoles. L'hybridité comme nouvelle identité, comme seule forme de mémoire collective' (IFP, 'L'Immense Fatigue': 48). It is clear that it is hybridity and cultural pluralism that are positioned as symbols of the progressiveness of Montreal in Robin's narratives.

For Robin's protagonists, constructed as having lost the natural home space of the ghetto, and condemned to instability by the experience of wartime Paris, the open and plural space of Montreal is in some ways an ideal setting. Seeming to pinpoint those very issues that are most in question for Robin's protagonists, Alain Médam has recently argued that

l'urbanité montréalaise implique la mise en scène d'une sociologie de l'entre-deux. Ville métropole dont la trame complexe est composée de multiples quartiers, Montréal, par son intégration malaisée dans l'ensemble québécois, remet en question l'élaboration d'une identité unitaire. (Médam cited in Harel 1992: 389)

Médam asserts, then, that the space of Montreal evokes a radical questioning of notions of singular, unified selfhood. This message is reinforced by Ralph Sarkonak who argues that 'inbetweenness is anchored in the fabric of the urban space of Montréal, as though it were some giant, concrete metaphor of otherness' (Sarkonak 1987: 101). The appropriateness of Montreal space for Robin's characters who are firmly marked by the 'entre-deux' and the plurality of their identities as I argued above, is clear.

However, far from being cast as a value-neutral melting pot of cultures in which plural identities are unproblematically accommodated, in Robin's writing the city of Montreal displays a mixed bag of

positive and negative traits. Some aspects of its curious mix of French and North American cultures are clearly constructed as pleasurable in Robin's texts. For example, in the second section of *La Québécoise*, the narrator elaborates upon how 'elle's life would have been in this scenario and we are told: 'elle se serait follement amusée à voir cette France d'opérette mi-René Clair, mi-comédie américaine' (Q: 105). This city is far from a simple construction of an idealised France on the North American continent though, being firmly inscribed with the culture of 'américanité'. The narrator of the first part of *La Québécoise* comments that 'ici on parle français/ et /on pense américain' (Q: 86). In the second scenario, the protagonist's frustrations become clear when she is reminded by her husband that her cherished communist ideals have no place in Quebec's political spectrum. Mockingly, her husband accuses her of 'europcentrisme' and tells her: 'va donc rejoindre le parti communiste, avec toi ils seront assez nombreux pour jouer au bridge [...]. Tu me fatigues avec tes critères européens' (Q: 132). A little later in the same section of this work, the main character's husband again reinforces her status as an outsider by warning her not to interfere in local politics. We are told that her husband 'aurait pris l'habitude de lui dire que n'étant pas d'ici, elle n'y connaissait rien' (Q: 132). Far from comprising a site in which many voices of differing cultural and ethnic origins speak with equal volume, Montreal is painted in Robin's narratives as remaining tainted by a clear cultural hierarchy. This city may comprise a diverse range of peoples, but it is clear that they are not all equally empowered or equally imbued with a sense of cultural and spatial ownership.

It is pertinent to note that even the diverse range of food types which I argued above to emblematisé the visibility and presence of a wide range of cultures within Robin's narratives are accompanied in her texts by the ultra-American presence of fast food. This is particularly evident in *La Québécoise*, in which we read:

un Québec coke
un Québec french fries
un Québec avec des rôties, de la relish et du ketchup
des œufs retournés et du bacon. (Q: 85)

Perhaps more importantly, the sense of belonging forged by the presence of traditional Jewish foods in Montreal is cast as undermined for

Robin's protagonists by their symbolic over-powering by the dominance of 'américanité' as 'tout est pris dans la graisse, l'huile, la margarine américaine – vous assaisonnez vos salades avec le Kraft dressing sucré' (Q: 82). Indeed, the narrator of the first section of this work seems to express anxiety about the serious impact of these smothering, fatty substances upon the cultural identity of those whose origins are elsewhere. We are told that

L'oubli commence par le goût des aliments, après la couleur du ciel, le son des voix, l'odeur des rues. Qui se souvient de la piazza Navona, des ramblas de Barcelone, des ruelles d'Athènes? Qui se souvient du ghetto de Varsovie? [...] LOVE IT OR MAPLE LEAVE IT. (Q: 82)

Whereas Marks suggests that traditional foods could comprise an empowering way of keeping in touch with their cultural memory for migrants and exiles (Marks 2000: 234), the metaphorical smothering of other cultural food types in the bland, numbing sauces representative of American culture, is cast in Robin's work as the first stage in the loss of an immigrant's culture of origin. The command to 'LOVE IT OR MAPLE LEAVE IT' seems to suggest that the ethnic minorities of Montreal must embrace North American ways of eating or leave the country, an imperative incongruous with a genuinely cosmopolitan society.

Indeed, it seems that Robin's writings on Montreal space not only seek to investigate the personal significance of this city for her intratextual avatars, but could also be seen to constitute more general interventions in debates around the very nature of cosmopolitanism itself. Drawing again upon the work of Alain Médam, Simon Harel makes a highly pertinent contribution to this discussion in an article entitled 'La Parole orpheline de l'écrivain migrant' (Harel 1992: 389-392). Here, he asserts that the notion of cosmopolitanism, highly relevant to Montreal, is far from transparent and he argues further that accepting the notion of cosmopolitanism as denoting an unproblematic coexistence of different cultures within a particular space is dangerously over-simplistic. Harel identifies various different types of cosmopolitanism, each of which represents a different model or strategy for the coexistence of different cultures within a particular space. One

such strategy, for example, may be seen in those multicultural societies that attempt to transcend ethnicity, subscribing to a desire for a universal culture.⁷ The dangers inherent in this model, in its suppression of ethnic diversity and non-conformist cultural traditions are clear. An alternative model of cosmopolitanism may take the form of an accumulation of cultures and ethnicities that are optimistically conceived of as building up in a harmonious addition of differences and which require no subscription to a notion of super- or universal culture. Harel again overtly signals the dangers inherent in this model, asserting that 'ces différences culturelles, faute d'être dites et de faire l'objet d'une inscription dans le discours social, deviendront autant de ghettos permettant à chacun d'aller quérir son ethnicité' (Harel 1992: 390). Far from enabling any real state of dialogue between cultures and ethnicities, then, this variant of cosmopolitanism suggests a state in which different cultures exist distinctly and separately, albeit in close physical proximity with each other.

Seeming directly to engage with this last vision of a cosmopolitan society, particularly in *La Québécoise*, Robin's textual construction of Montreal invokes a society whose divisions and inequalities are evident in its physical character. In the third section of *La Québécoise*, for example, as Robin's protagonists stroll home across the city one evening, we are told that 'on quitte un ghetto pour un autre, [...], chez les Juifs, puis chez les Italiens, en passant par chez les riches. Que des ghettos, Tu as remarqué?' (Q: 190). The city of Montreal is posited here as highly spatially segregated on both ethnic and wealth lines, suggesting the presence of distinct ghettos, a fact that does seem, at least superficially, to afford the different groups a sense of belonging. We are told, for example: 'chacun ici dans son petit quadrilatère-refuge, ses bouts de rue, ses repères' (Q: 192). The 'ville d'exils

⁷ In this model, certain parallels can be seen with French society and its traditions of 'laïcité' and the universal ideals of 'Liberté, Égalité et Fraternité'. Many examples could be cited to support this view, but see particularly Jacques Dubois on the subject of Parisian cultural industries. He argues that 'la république des lettres est certes hospitalière à tous les républicains. Mais elle tolère mal que votre langue, votre imaginaire, votre comportement institutionnel diffèrent des siens. Comme si l'identité culturelle française, puissante, souveraine, ne pouvait supporter l'existence d'une altérité culturelle française, celle de l'autre dans le même' (Dubois 1991: 124).

juxtaposés' (Q: 192) that *La Québécoise* textualises is far from a melting pot in which cultures mix and blur. Instead, Robin portrays a society in which different ethnic and cultural groups retain very distinct identities, lifestyles and home spaces, a characteristic that, as I argued in section 1.0.3, has been identified by urban geographers to be typical of many North American cities.⁸ In her theoretical writings, Robin has indicated that the very movements of her protagonists around Montreal in *La Québécoise* were constructed in order to demonstrate the difficulties presented by 'la cohabitation et la coexistence de communautés ethniques et culturelles différentes' (Robin 1989: 132). As Chapman argues specifically in relation to *La Québécoise*, whilst this form of 'ethnic ghettoization' is presented as initially offering a superficial sense of belonging for protagonists, it must eventually lead to entrapment in stereotype (Chapman 2000: 266). Indeed, in the section of *La Québécoise* in which this type of cultural landscape is most prominent, the main character does indeed fail to establish a satisfactory sense of belonging and home space and does eventually return to Paris. In *La Québécoise* it is clear, then, that Montreal is portrayed as a space where different cultures do come into contact and mix with each other to a much greater extent than in Paris, as is evident in the wide availability of different food types and the fact that Robin's protagonists are presented as free to move across the different ghettos of the city. However, constituting more of a complex patchwork of cultures than a melting pot, Montreal could be said to be constructed within Robin's work as a cultural contact zone, if not a site of real cultural mixing.

Defined by Mary Louise Pratt as 'social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination – like colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out across the globe today' (Pratt 1992: 4), the notion of the cultural contact zone seems particularly appropriate to Robin's construction of Montreal. Despite its apparent freedom from the extreme and exclusionary discourses with which Robin portrays Paris, this city is certainly not presented as a value-free space in which the immigrant can easily estab-

⁸ The most famous example, as I discussed in chapter 1, being the city of Los Angeles, as discussed by Davis (1984).

lish a sense of belonging. Rather, it is a space that is imbued with a range of competing cultural values operating within a complex network of power relations, amongst which new arrivals must establish their sense of self and belonging. As I argued above, in *La Québécoite*, Robin casts Montreal as occupied by 'américanité' and the neo-colonial forces of globalisation. Perhaps more significant for Robin's characters in *La Québécoite*, however, is the postcolonial struggle that inhabits the spaces of this city. Robin's construction of her protagonists as of French origin weaves considerable complexities into their identities and undermines the possibility for them of forging senses of belonging within the space of Montreal. In *La Québécoite*, for example, we are informed that it is impossible for this originally French woman to become 'Québécoise'. In order to do so

il lui aurait fallu faire oublier sa trop visible «francité», son accent où percerait sans qu'il y paraisse un je-ne-sais-quoi d'impérialisme culturel, ses années de Sorbonne, d'Ecole normale supérieure, ses années de *cursus honorum* un peu trop parfait, faire oublier toutes ses parisianités. (Q: 105)

It is not merely the fear of specifically anti-French feeling that prevents the establishment of a home space in Montreal, but a more general fear of the Quebec nationalist movement. Whilst deliberating upon which way to vote in the referendum, for example, the protagonist of the second scenario in *La Québécoite* expresses

La peur de l'homogénéité
de l'unanimité
du Nous excluant tous les autres
du pure laine
elle l'immigrante
la différente
la déviante. (Q: 133)

Reputed for its cultural diversity, Montreal is however represented within Robin's works as a space that is occupied by a range of neo-colonial, postcolonial and other cultural values. The space of this city is in some ways, then, the battleground upon which these cultural forces are fighting for dominance, and is a far cry from the harmonious and peaceful melting pot of cultural diversity that it is sometimes perceived to be.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, Montreal is not constructed as permitting the establishment of an entirely settled, comfortable home space for any of Robin's protagonists. The complexity of the situation is best summed up in the fifth story of *L'Immense Fatigue des pierres*, when an Argentinean friend advises the protagonist:

Oh! tu sais, on ne se sent jamais vraiment d'ici. C'est un pays bien compliqué. On n'en fait pas vraiment partie, non. Mais on s'y sent bien. C'est comme si on était à la fois dedans et dehors, à la bordure, jamais totalement impliqué, mais jamais totalement indifférent. Ce n'est pas le sentiment de l'exil, non. C'est un ailleurs. On n'est pas chez soi, voilà tout. (IFP, 'Mère perdue': 119-120)

A return to the work of Simon Harel is, again, helpful. In his discussion of the role of Montreal in the works of 'des écrivains migrants', a corpus that includes Robin's own work, Harel highlights the differing status of Montreal for various immigrants. For some, this city of cultural diversity is adopted as a final destination or point of arrival in which their migration will end. For others, however, the situation is more complex. He tells us:

Montréal peut aussi caractériser une inscription topique éclatée, une mémoire fragmentaire, défusion des langues, douleur du sujet qui erre dans une ville qu'il ne peut habiter. Montréal comme hors-lieu. C'est le sens des écrits de [...] Régine Robin. (Harel 1992: 388-389)

This notion of the *hors-lieu* is generally attributed to Marc Augé, an anthropologist whose work I drew upon in chapter 1. Displaying considerable familiarity with both Augé's work and the theory surrounding the *hors-lieu* or *non-lieu*,⁹ Robin asserts that *non-lieux* may be defined as 'tous lieux où l'on ne fait que passer, dans lesquels on se trouve en transit, dans l'anonymat malgré tout l'arsenal d'identification des cartes à puce, des codes particuliers etc' (Robin 1997a : 236). She goes on to explain that Augé opposes these *non-lieux* to those spaces traditionally conceived by anthropologists as markers of identity, such as the local and familiar spaces which are charged with the weight of history, family and culture. Robin proposes non-places to

⁹ In her theoretical work, Robin uses the terms 'hors-lieu' and 'non-lieu' interchangeably (Robin 1989: 181).

permet 'une démagnétisation de l'épaisseur historique et de ses connotations' (Robin 1989: 181). This is particularly relevant to any understanding of Robin's protagonists' attempts to establish senses of belonging. As I have argued, it is the weight of the physical and cultural decimation wrought by the Holocaust that prevents many of Robin's protagonists from occupying either the idealised home space of Kaluszyn or the tarnished space of Paris. It is the 'ville désémanisée' (Harel 1992: 409) of Montreal, one that is free of a singular, totalising meaning or history that Robin turns to in order to 'laisser parler cette voix narrative du lointain, de l'ailleurs, du neutre, bref ce que j'appelle le hors-lieu' (Robin 1989: 17).

Montreal, then, this open, plural and perhaps chaotic space permits 'la mise en scène d'une multiplicité des mémoires' (Harel 1992 : 401). Whilst no simple sense of belonging is established here, the cultural and ethnic plurality means that the city is sufficiently incoherent for the incoherence of traumatic holocaust memories to be remembered by Robin's protagonists. We are also told that

Montréal chez Robin traduit l'inscription topique paradoxale d'une ville qui, au lieu de consolider un sentiment d'identité, introduit une mélancolie difficile. [...] En somme, Montréal dans ce roman de Robin accentue la certitude d'un effondrement déjà éprouvé mais difficilement énoncé (le passé traumatique que représente la rafle de juillet 1942 à Paris). (Harel 1992: 400-401)

In the complex, multi layered space that is Montreal, one that is inhabited by a range of conflicting cultural debates, the plurality of Robin's protagonists' identities can be accommodated. Far from a space of prescription and entrenched notions of identity and history, this space is constructed to be shifting and open to renegotiation.

The notion of Montreal as a space of the possible is particularly explicit in *La Québécoise*, a work whose narrative drama is, as I have already indicated, structured around three possible, parallel stories, each variants of the others and each articulated around a different home space. The settings for these parallel scenarios range from the house of an aunt in the mainly Jewish quarter of Snowdon; to a house 'au sein de la bourgeoisie québécoise dans les hauts d'Outremont, dans une belle maison cette fois' (Q: 97); to the mainly immigrant area 'autour de la marché Jean Talon' (Q: 171 and 180). The divided, fissured space of Montreal is presented as the inspiration for each of

the different scenarios. Whilst some features of the life constructed for the protagonist remain constant in each of the three scenarios, many aspects seem to correspond with the particular place in which the protagonist lives each time and to differ accordingly. In the bourgeois scenario, for example, this space is shown to penetrate even the protagonist's relationship with her own physical being. We are told that in this scenario, and this scenario alone, she would devote considerable time and effort to 'aimer son corps, à se sentir bien dans sa peau' (Q: 103). Not only do these scenarios dramatise the segregated nature of Montreal, then, but they also demonstrate the significance of these spaces, and in particular these houses for the protagonist's identity in *La Québécoise*. Having examined the recurring constructions of Robin's protagonists' lack of sense of belonging in these works on both national level and at the level of the hometown, it is to the microscale of spatial belonging that my discussion will now turn. I wish to argue in what follows that in Robin's textual constructions of houses, similar debates about cultural diversity and cosmopolitanism are in play.

5.3 Houses

Not merely underpinning the narrative drama of *La Québécoise*, houses are similarly evident in *L'Immense Fatigue des pierres*. The first story of this collection dramatises a mother-daughter relationship at a crisis point, the catalyst for which is the daughter's decision to sell her home. In the subsequent debate about where each will live in the future, issues surrounding the nature of home and belonging are interrogated. It is pertinent to note that common to both *La Québécoise* and *L'Immense Fatigue* is the sturdy, substantial nature of the home spaces that are evoked. In the first story of *L'Immense Fatigue*, for example, we are told that 'il s'agit d'une énorme maison de pierres blanches, ocres, rosées avec un bow-window surmonté d'une grande terrasse' (IFP, 'L'Immense Fatigue': 8). Similarly, in *La Québécoise*, we learn that 'la maison à pignons aurait trois niveaux en comptant l'entresol aménagé. De grandes galeries de bois ajouré recevraient le soleil du matin' (Q: 149). The depiction of these sturdy, enduring houses seems to be linked by Robin's narrator in the fourth story of *L'Immense Fatigue* with the general feeling of dispossession and

quest for a place of belonging in this story. We are told that what the main character desires is

Une maison avec un escalier de pin ancien comme l'illusion de l'enracinement.

LA PORTE REFERMÉE, UN PAYS,
à soi quelque part. [...] Une maison pour mourir de mort naturelle de vieillesse ou de maladie. (IFP, 'Gratok': 97-98)

The houses presented in these writings are often described as being at least partially made of stone (IFP, 'Gratok': 98). Consideration of the symbolic nature of stone as a long lasting material used not only to build solid structures but also often used for memorial artefacts such as gravestones, permits us to deepen our understanding of the role of houses within Robin's writing. In a poem discussing those members of her family who have been lost, the narrator of the first story of *L'Immense Fatigue* tells us:

je leur donnerai dans ma maison et dans mes murs
Une place et un nom... qui ne périra pas. (IFP: 21)

Perhaps employed as a touchstone whose evocation combats the essential feeling of dispossession and homelessness that pervades these texts, these solid houses represent not just a type of sanctuary for the present, but also a site for safeguarding the preservation of the memory of those who have disappeared.

Further examination of the descriptions of houses in Robin's works indicates that whilst they are solid, enduring constructions that provide sanctuary and a site of remembrance, these dwellings do not attempt simply to iron out the problematic kinks of identity, but are inherently inscribed with the marks of cultural pluralism. Our introduction to the all-important homestead in the first story of *L'Immense Fatigue*, for example, tells us that 'le rez-de-chaussée est carrelé d'*azulejos* mexicains', and that the shelves contain '[des] statues rapportées de lointains voyages, en particulier du Mexique et de Bolivie'. Furthermore, it is furnished with 'des masques [...] indonésiens, mexicaines, africains' as well as an Afghan trunk, a Persian vase, a Pleyel piano from Paris and 'un samovar comme Mémé avait rapporté de Pologne' (IFP, 'L'Immense Fatigue': 8-10). A home similarly filled with a panoply of artefacts from a wide range of cultures is evi-

dent in *La Québécoise*. Here, the house occupied by the main character of the second scenario contains ‘un tapis de Perse’; ‘des pièces de cuir travaillées par de lointains Amérindiens’; ‘une plaque de rue de Paris’ as well as ‘des statues africaines’ and a diverse selection of newspapers including ‘*Le Monde et Le Nouvel Observateur – Business Week – Fortune – Playboy et Penthouse*’ (Q: 98-100). This house is portrayed as a key meeting place for the protagonist’s range of immigrant friends. The narrator asserts that this space of freedom would contain

pas de stéréotype. Les Latino-Américains n’auraient pas de guitare, les Ukrainiens ni Kobzal, ni balalaïka. [...] Les exilés, de nulle part, sans attente, parlant toutes les langues et affrontant tous les défis historiques. Leurs paysages par moments tricoteraient un patchwork, bigarré. (Q: 143)

Seeming to constitute solid, enduring structures, then, the houses that Robin depicts in her writings also appear in some ways to resemble the cityscape of Montreal. Comprising multicultural spaces in which cultural artefacts from many different places coexist and in which those members of the family lost in the Holocaust can be remembered, the parallel with Montreal is clear. The view of cosmopolitanism offered by these houses, however, is perhaps more idealised. Rather than being segregated into distinct ghettos, the different cultures emblematised in the varying cultural artefacts decorating these houses’ interiors combine and coexist to constitute a harmonious space.

Perhaps one of the most crucial dimensions of these home spaces, as constructed in Robin’s literary writing is, however, the fact that the protagonists are constructed as almost always feeling compelled to leave. Each of the three scenarios in *La Québécoise*, for example, ends with the protagonist returning to France. Similarly, as I argued above, the first story of *L’Immense Fatigue* consists of the drama arising from one of the protagonist’s desires to sell her long-term homestead: ‘la fille veut ficher le camp de ce lieu qu’elle a cru habité par les dieux [...]. Et puis, la déception, ce n’est pas ce qu’on croyait, on n’est vraiment pas chez soi...’ (IFP, ‘L’Immense Fatigue’: 46). Even these solid, enduring structures, then, are shown to have failed to become stable home spaces in which the protagonists can unproblematically reside. In *La Québécoise*, reflecting upon the failure

of the third scenario to reach the satisfactory resolution of the establishment of a stable home space the narrator wonders:

Où la mener? Elle ne peut tout de même pas habiter tous les quartiers de Montréal. [...] Lui donner des amants de toutes les nationalités et après? Restera l'exil, l'éternel sentiment d'être ailleurs, déracinée. Montréal ou Paris, Budapest ou Jitomir ou New York. Les villes se cherchent et se répondent dans la nuit. Parfois elles se ressemblent. Quelle importance! Quelque part dans l'imaginaire de la ville. (Q: 187)

It seems then, that there is much justification for Chapman's argument that 'just as neither a country nor a city ensure a coherent or stable identity, nor can a home, the domestic space, offer any permanence, any possibility of "enracinement"' (Chapman 2000: 265). The cities of Paris and Montreal, as well as the various houses depicted, are all presented as possible home spaces. However, none is cast as constituting an enduring, long-term site of belonging. Unable to live stably in any one house or city, perpetual movement is the lot of Robin's protagonists, and my discussion will now turn to that movement.

5.4 Travelling Identities/ Dwelling in Travel

Movement constitutes a recurring leitmotif in Robin's work. The narrator of the first scenario of *La Québécoise* asserts, for instance, that 'depuis toujours nous sommes des errants' (Q: 63). Considerably later in the work, in the third scenario, a similar opinion is uttered: 'j'aime ça, l'errance. J'aime ça, être perpétuellement ailleurs' (Q: 178) and the verb 'error', suggesting a movement without a fixed destination or purpose, recurs in various forms on many occasions (Q: 80; 83; 154; 178). In *L'Immense Fatigue des pierres*, a similar sentiment is evident in the first story, the protagonists telling us for example: 'nous sommes des errantes, des étoiles filantes, toujours à côté de nos pompes, de nos lieux, de nos langues' (IFP, 'L'Immense Fatigue': 11). Considerably later in the work, in the fourth story, the life of one character is summed up with the words: 'après tout, la vie de sa mère, c'était ça et, sans doute, ça n'était que ça. Allées et venues, écriture, lectures, rendez-vous' (IFP, 'Gratok': 82). Movement is clearly placed at the top of this list of characterising features. In both works, then, the protago-

nists are shown to continually leave one home space in order to set out for a new one.

It seems that rather than being a journey between two fixed places, it is the condition of movement itself that is important to Robin's protagonists. For example, at one stage in *La Québécoite*, the narrator comments: 'l'autre rive. Oui, l'autre rive. Passer la Seine ou l'Atlantique' (Q: 56). The implication is clear that it is not the destination that is important, but the action of moving, of covering distance. Indeed, movement is portrayed as so insidious, so inescapable that it even exceeds the control of the narrator. In the second scenario, commenting on the protagonist of *La Québécoite*, for example, the narrator says:

ce personnage fantôme m'échappe. Impossible à fixer dans cette géographie urbaine, dans cet espace mouvant. Dès qu'elle est installée, intégrée, elle s'enfuit, déménage, et m'oblige à casser le récit alors que je commençais à m'y installer moi-même, à y prendre goût. (Q: 138)

The question of why this desire for movement should be so preponderant within the text is overtly posed as the narrator of *La Québécoite* asks 'pourquoi ces cavalcades d'un lieu à l'autre, d'une langue à l'autre, d'une histoire à l'autre ces sauts, ces fuites, ces retours, ces remords?' (Q: 139).

Simon Harel suggests that migrants are often not only characteristically obsessed with topological inscription, but are also often 'désireux de poursuivre l'errance car la quête du lieu perdu [...] peut être la source d'une nostalgie intarissable' (Harel 1992: 388). His remarks illuminate the activities of Robin's protagonists who are indeed propelled into motion by the loss of their idealised home space. As I argued above, however, it is the weight of history no less than the complexities of Robin's protagonists' plural identities that can be identified as motivations for movement. We are told that 'le poids de ces millions de morts m'étouffe. En errance d'Europe en Amérique avec ces morts encombrants qui réclament leur dû dans un silence assourdissant' (Q: 141). Confronted with the responsibility of remembering all those who died in the holocaust, Robin's protagonists are condemned to continual movement in an impossible search for a place in which their memories can be heard. Moreover, in the first story of

L'Immense Fatigue, weighed down by this impossible quest, one protagonist expresses the incredible fatigue that it brings. She asserts that

il me faut un coin où l'Histoire cesse d'enforcer ses vrilles dans la chair humaine, un coin d'ombre amnésique, idyllique [...]. Ne plus migrer. Ne plus bouger, ne plus chercher un lieu. Cesser de croire qu'ici, enfin, on va déposer ses valises, on va être bien, on va souffler. Enfin chez nous. Enfin à nous. Enfin. S'arrêter simplement ici ou là, ici plutôt que là, comme ça. (IFP, 'L'Immense Fatigue': 30-31)

Again, the actual destination seems to be less important than movement, or rather, in this case, the impossible desire to stop moving. With all meaning and logic disrupted by the Holocaust, Robin's protagonists are constructed as unable to live stably and coherently in any one place, but are propelled into constant movement and an impossible quest. In *La Québécoise*, the narrator of the second scenario asserts: 'ERRER/ Noter toutes les différences, faire un inventaire, un catalogue, un nomenclature. Tout consigner pour donner plus de corps à cette existence' (Q: 154). In the impossible juxtaposition of a desire to remember the past and awareness of the impossibility of any meaningful and coherent historical narrative, Robin's protagonists are condemned to fragmented movement and to list-making.

Rather than arguing any one place to constitute more of a home space to Robin's protagonists than another, it seems more appropriate, then, to subscribe to the notion of 'dwelling-in-travel'. This understanding of travel as home space derives from the work of ethnographer James Clifford. As he is deeply concerned with the relationship between notions of home and travel, in his 1988 work *The Predicament of Culture*, Clifford addresses the assumption that dwelling represents the most significant site of any community, and that travel is merely a supplement. That is to say, he attempts to reassess the common belief that being 'rooted' in a particular space is of greater importance for identity formation than the 'routes' that individuals trace. He proposes a reconceptualisation of notions of travel and culture, arguing that practices of displacement and movement play an important role in constructing cultural meanings. Accepting that 'location' can be an itinerary rather than a bounded site as Clifford argues, it is easy to see that Robin's protagonists, propelled into movement by the excesses of the Holocaust, situate their identities in movement rather than stasis. Moreover, the protagonists of these works are con-

structed as perpetually caught up in a struggle with their essentially plural and divided selfhoods. Clifford's assertion that diasporic living can represent a way of maintaining connections with more than one place whilst practising non-absolutist citizenship is clearly relevant (Clifford 1997: 9). Movement between places is constructed in Robin's works as permitting a wider definition of selfhood. As one character of *La Québécoise* asserts: 'je me sens/ new-yorkais de Paris ou/ montréalais du Shtetl si vous voulez' (Q: 35). These complex and fluid identities are clearly better served by the notion of itineraries rather than single home spaces.

The notion of 'dwelling-in-movement' can also be seen to intersect with the notion of non-places that I related to Robin's work in an earlier section of this argument. As Marc Augé explains, non-places are particularly prevalent in sites pertaining to air, rail and motorway travel.¹⁰ Within Robin's work, *non-lieux* aeroplanes and airports are highly visible. The first story of *L'Immense Fatigue*, for example, is shared between two parallel characters, each on a different long-haul flight, preparing to meet up in Paris. One of these characters expresses strong feelings of belonging within planes, asserting that 'peut-être ne suis-je moi-même qu'en avion, dans l'absence aux abords du ciel, dans les lames noires, la houle duveteuse des nuages, et bientôt l'orange, le violet du lever de soleil, nulle part, sur l'océan'. She goes on to claim that 'mes racines sont en l'air, sans identité et sans lieu' (IFP, 'L'Immense Fatigue': 30). Not only does this character feel most at home whilst flying through the unidentifiable spaces of the sky in an aeroplane, but the primary meeting place for her and her daughter is that of airports (IFP, 'L'Immense Fatigue': 13). Their regular meetings at 'les aéroports les plus divers, La Guardia, Kennedy, O'Hare, Roissy, Orly, Ben Gurion' are described and she goes on to explain:

on les a presque tous faits. J'en connais tous les recoins, les cafétérias, les restaurants, les chiottes, les stands de journaux [...]. Nous passons une partie de nos vies dans ces aéroports entre deux avions qui ne vont jamais dans la même direction. (IFP, 'L'Immense Fatigue': 15-16)

¹⁰ Robin's own discussion of Augé's ideas is particularly useful. See Robin (1997a: 235-238).

Clearly, both airports and aeroplanes themselves are exactly the sort of ahistorical sites that are free of any family or community meanings, and therefore may be classified as *non-lieux*. Moreover, the sense of belonging felt in these places is markedly less problematic than in the other places I have discussed. The non-places of airports and aeroplanes are free of painful historical memories and of cultural contact, and perhaps more importantly, being located in such places is always provisional. These spaces are, in sum, cast as relatively unproblematic sites of belonging,

Pertinently, another locus of transit which the narrator of the first story of *L'Immense Fatigue* describes as 'comme un second chez moi' (IFP, 'L'Immense Fatigue': 40), is that of the various hotel rooms in which the protagonist regularly stays when travelling around the country visiting editors. The narrator explains that

de Hilton en Sheraton, de Holiday Inn, je connais par coeur ces chambres fonctionnelles, sans apprêt, où la douche est bonne [...], où l'air conditionné fonctionne toujours en été et le chauffage en hiver, où la télé en couleur ne fait jamais défaut et où l'on peut se faire réveiller à telle heure, se faire apporter une bière et un club sandwich n'importe quand. (IFP, 'L'Immense Fatigue': 39-40)

An identical sentiment of belonging is expressed in *Papiers perdus*, when the narrator describes hotel rooms as possessing '[la] charme des non-lieux, des lieux éphémères, de passage, lieux-prothèses' (PP, 'chambres d'hôtel'). She goes on to explain that she has a weakness for bland places 'sur lesquels on peut projeter ce qu'on veut, pas encombrés de passé, de mémoire, disponibles' (PP, 'chambres d'hôtel'). Such spaces are clearly a long way from the spaces of Paris that remain inscribed with the conflicts of the Second World War, and even from the home spaces constructed in Montreal in which the quest for empowering cultural diversity is played out. These *non-lieux* are constructed as allowing Robin's textual avatars to escape the weight of history and, perhaps, to 'cesser de se battre encore avec l'altérité' (IFP, 'L'Immense Fatigue': 31).

The three life writing texts by Robin that I have examined in this chapter depict particularly complex visions of home space and cultural belonging. Haunted by the lost home space of the ghetto, disillusioned by the tarnished childhood space of Paris, it seems initially that the multicultural space of Montreal is the closest thing to a space

of cultural belonging for Robin's *personnages*. Even this site of plurality and mixing, however, is shown to be occupied by a struggle for dominance within the cultural hierarchy, and it is in movement and ahistorical *non-lieux* that the characters peopling Robin's texts are presented as establishing their most unproblematic senses of home.

6.

Life Writing and Postmodern Cartography

As I discussed in chapter 1, the experience of space is argued by a growing body of theorists to have changed in recent times. At a scholarly level, the perception of space as a neutral, passive arena in which events merely take place is increasingly rejected, and there is growing recognition that space is an active, meaningful force in the formation of culture and society. Spaces are, it is argued, imbued with ideological meanings, and hence are subject to and part of the power relations that structure the world. In more practical terms, innovations in transport and telecommunications technologies mean that contact between spaces, and hence between cultures, is both more prolific and more instantaneous than at any previous time. The implications of this for cultural and national identities are clearly highly significant. On a smaller scale, the everyday spaces in which individuals move may be characterised by greater complexity and plurality, by networks of multiply-layered, multiply-coded places, and by the growing influence of multinational capital rather than international geopolitics in the contemporary world. Of great importance to this book has been Fredric Jameson's hypothesis that these changes in the nature and experience of space are inextricably bound up with the emergence of postmodernism. Perhaps of yet greater significance in this chapter is Jameson's contention that, faced with the bewildering and disempowering nature of contemporary space, there is a pressing need for the creation of new maps. That is to say that, according to Jameson, the only way in which to overcome the confusion that is so endemic in the contemporary world, is through deepening our understanding of the postmodern space that disorients us. As I discussed in chapter 1, this argument has been developed by Brian Jarvis, who proposes that what we need in order to better understand contemporary space is not the creation of new maps but a new definition of maps. In fact, Jarvis suggests that the maps we need may already be in existence in the form of contemporary artwork. Drawing upon this argument, as well as those of other

key theorists, at the end of chapter 1 I posed the question of whether or not contemporary life writing could, in fact, be seen as a form of the 'postmodern cartography' that Jarvis called for.

If cartography is understood as the 'science of map-making' (Oxford English Dictionary), then 'postmodern cartography' can be interpreted as a way of representing space that is particularly appropriate to the postmodern world. A number of superficial compatibilities between life writing and postmodern thought suggest that perhaps life writing could indeed be seen to be an appropriate arena in which to map contemporary space. For instance, as I discussed in chapter 1, a key concern of contemporary cultural geographers in relation to the representation of space is the need to move away from over-reliance on 'science' and 'facts'. Those such as Peter Dicken and Peter E. Lloyd claim that such an over-dependency has led to generalisations about society and to the neglect of the individual in the geographical scholarship of recent decades (Dicken and Lloyd 1981: 1). These critics claim that not only must the individual constitute a greater focus of any study of the postmodern world, but that such studies must embrace the subjective, non-rational elements of human experience. That is to say that traditional maps that rely upon an apparently objective representation of physical and 'factual' features of particular spaces, are no longer accepted to be adequate depictions of the postmodern world. The experience of any space may be affected not only by the physical characteristics of that space, but also by the cultural and political meanings, the imaginary and personal associations, with which it is infused. Autobiographical writing, then, in which an individual sketches out a vision of his or her life, often touching upon experiences that are deeply personal as well as those that are widely shared, may perhaps constitute an important way of 'mapping' space.

In addition, as I discussed in chapter 1, Cultural Geographers such as Steve Pile and Nigel Thrift have highlighted the importance of developing ways of understanding space that do not rely on fixed and static representations. They propose the notion of 'way-finding', which they argue to comprise a 'down-on-the-ground', multi-layered view of space as an alternative to that offered by conventional maps. Rather than representing a single view of space conceived at one moment in time from a bird's eye view, 'way-finding' proposes a more 'mobile' and plural form of representation (Pile and Thrift 1995: 1). Whilst space has always been a changing and plural matter of study,

the particular attributes of postmodern space that I elaborated upon in chapter 1 may make the call for non-static representations of space particularly pressing. The multi-layered depiction of space that is offered by a life writing text, one that may change and progress alongside the development of the narrative, may prove to be a privileged way of representing the deeply complex character of postmodern space. It seems, then, that life writing may offer a way of knowing and mapping the world that complies with some of the most fundamental calls of postmodern thought, and some of the basic requirements that underpin the notion of 'postmodern cartography'.

In this chapter, a more rigorous discussion of the possible compatibility between life writing and Jarvis's notion of postmodern cartography will be undertaken. In addressing this complex question, I will seek to bring into dialogue the material discussed in the previous five chapters and to focus in particular upon the ways in which the life writings of Doubrovsky, Robin and Guibert could be said to map the postmodern world. The first section of this examination will link the arguments of chapters 1 and 2 by discussing the ways in which the type of experimental life writings, often *autofictions*, that have been discussed in this study could be said to be classifiable as 'postmodern'. That is to say, to what extent could the ontological and philosophical tenets underpinning the life writings of Doubrovsky, Guibert and Robin be said to be compatible with postmodern thought? Next, focusing upon the work of each author in turn, I will examine firstly the ways in which the spaces depicted in each of their life writing corpuses could be said to display postmodern characteristics. Then, drawing upon the notion that a map could comprise not merely a passive representation but also an active guide to the contemporary world, I will examine the extent to which in producing life writing texts, these three authors could be said to be undertaking a form of 'way-finding' or down-on-the-ground mapping of the postmodern world. That is to say, by way of conclusion to my discussion of each author's works, I will discuss the extent to which the production of these life writing texts could be said to serve as a form of orientation through which a more concrete sense of belonging in the postmodern world can be forged.

As in previous chapters, the order in which the three individual *œuvres* will be analysed is dictated by the content of the discussions themselves. Thus, the general discussion of autofiction will lead into a

section on Doubrovsky due to the obvious relationship between these topics and the clear evidence of a parallel between Doubrovsky's literary project and the notion of postmodern cartography. Reflecting the diminishing ease with which simple links can be drawn between their literary corpuses and the characteristics of postmodern cartography, the discussion will then focus on the works of Robin and finally those of Guibert.

6.1 Autofiction and Postmodernism

In chapter 1, I argued that whilst the phenomenon of postmodernism is deeply ambiguous and surrounded by contention, it can be usefully mobilised by the identification of a set of characterising 'family traits'. I wish to contend here that a similarly useful group of 'family characteristics' can be identified in relation to postmodern literature. Perhaps more importantly, as my discussion will now demonstrate, these postmodern characteristics are greatly in evidence in the experimental life writing texts of Guibert, Doubrovsky and Robin that this study has addressed.

In *Postmodern Literary Theory* (1997), Niall Lucy argues that one of the most notable traits of literature during the postmodern period has been a tendency to undermine strict genres (Lucy 1997: 84-85). As I discussed in chapter 2, one of the distinguishing features of the life writings of Serge Doubrovsky, Hervé Guibert and Régine Robin is the generic experimentation that each of their *oeuvres* displays. Whilst retaining a clear desire to draw upon their own life experiences as inspiration for their literary productions, each of these writers rejects allegiance with the established and much-theorised genre of classic autobiography. In the case of Doubrovsky and Guibert, I have argued their writings to be classifiable as *autofiction*. So important is generic experimentation to this type of life writing that John Ireland has speculated about whether this literary formulation owes its very existence to the desire to undermine the genre of classic autobiography (Ireland 1993: 4). With regard to Robin, so generically diverse and prone to slippage is her literary corpus that more precise classification than 'experimental life writing' is problematic. As I discussed in chapter 2, it is clear throughout her literary writings that rather than being an incidental effect of the creative process, generic

innovation is a formative element of her writerly project. The life writing of each of these three authors, then, clearly demonstrates the genre-twisting characteristics that Lucy has proposed to be typical of postmodern literature. In chapter 1, I elaborated upon the importance within postmodern thought of undermining and unsettling the rational, organising features of the Western world, such as binary categories. In the same way, these literary texts display a will to undermine the established categories of literary analysis. It seems then that in this regard, the life writing texts constituting the focus of this study are underpinned by ontological tenets that show allegiance with postmodern thought.

Another significant way in which established categories and boundaries are often undermined within postmodern literature is identified by Niall Lucy in terms of the relationship between creative and critical practices. That is to say that, according to Lucy, the distinction between literature and theory is often eroded in postmodern literature (Lucy 1997: 32). Again, this is an argument with which the life writings of the three authors studied here are greatly in tune. As I discussed in chapter 2, Doubrovsky played a key role in not just writing the first piece of literature that was overtly labelled *autofiction*, but also in forging and theorising the genre-bending notion itself. Moreover, within Doubrovsky's work, the theorisation of this literary phenomenon often spills over into the *autofictions* themselves (LLB: 256; UAS: 90; LPC: back cover). In this, then, the boundary between the creative and the critical is eroded, just as Lucy argues to be typical of postmodern literature. With regard to Robin, this characteristic is also in evidence. Within her work, there is a strong intertext between those texts that could best be categorised as 'theoretical' and those that are primarily 'literary'. To cite but one of many examples, the primarily theoretical *Roman mémoriel*, for instance, contains discussions of both *La Québécoise* and *L'Immense Fatigue des pierres* (Robin 1989: 130 and 179).¹ Within Guibert's experimental life writing texts, the blur-

¹ Other examples of the close relationship between Robin's theoretical and literary writings can be found in 'Vous! Vous êtes quoi vous au juste? Méditations autobiographiques autour de la judéité', in which Robin discusses *La Québécoise* (see Robin 2001c: 111-125). In addition, at a thematic level, further correspondences can be seen between the theoretical and literary elements of Robin's *oeuvre*. Themes that I have identified within Robin's literary writ-

ring of the boundary between literary criticism and creation is perhaps less obvious, Guibert having participated little within the field of literary theory. However, his autofictional works certainly dialogue with the world of the arts in general as well as sometimes covertly drawing upon the theories of those such as Michel Foucault and Roland Barthes. In addition, the author's work as a photography and art critic for *Le Monde* often seems to serve as a source of literary inspiration. The postmodern trait of eroding the distinction between literary creation and theory, then, is greatly in evidence in the works of Doubrovsky and Robin, and evident to a lesser extent in Guibert's writings.

In fact, the blurring of boundaries within postmodern literary texts is to be found not only within the content and structure of these works, but it is also evident from the changed relationship that such examples of literature typically have with the external world. In his (1999) study entitled *Theorizing the Avant-Garde: Modernism, Expressionism and the Problem of Postmodernity*, for example, Richard Murphy asserts that postmodernism challenges modernism's assumption that art and life are separate realms (Murphy 1999: 267). Lucy reinforces the argument by telling us that alongside the general 'debunking' of all that is revered in society, postmodern thought has called into question the separate and privileged status of literature. He explains: 'I think "postmodernism" refers to the generalization or flattening out of the romantic theory of literature which marks it as a "radical" theory of the nonfoundational, structureless "structure of truth"' (Lucy 1997: ix). That is to say that whereas literature used to be privileged over other modes of cultural production as having a particular capacity to perceive and express 'truth', it is seen in the postmodern world as 'just another text' that is deeply implicated in real life. In the case of the three writers studied here, some correspondence with this argument is evident. The works of Doubrovsky, Guibert and Robin, for example, are certainly all deeply embedded in society and reality. Far from representing the type of 'flight of imagination' of which literature is sometimes accused (Mallory and Simpson-Housley 1987: xii), each writer draws deeply upon his or her own life. In this way, the works could be said to correspond with the postmodern trait

ings, for example, the importance of the Yiddish language are to be found within her theoretical works (see Robin 1993a).

of merging life and literature. Moreover, rather than suggesting literature to contain some sort of privileged, self-contained 'truth', each of these writers seems to use the literary arena as a place in which to explore and articulate some of the most deeply pressing contemporary questions about identity and belonging. The writings of all three of these authors are typically postmodern, then, in that they are not only deeply preoccupied with the external world, but they position literature as a privileged arena in which to explore issues of subjectivity, rather than in which to find an innate and pre-existing worldly truth.

Concomitant with the reassessment of the relationship between art and life that Lucy claims to have been spawned by postmodern thought has been a reappraisal of the status of the author. At least partly as a result of poststructuralist thought, Lucy argues that the status of the author has been greatly diminished in postmodern thinking. Rather than seeing literature as a work of genius, we are told, postmodernism believes it to be produced by forces that are deeply embedded in society and are beyond the control of any individual. The active, productive role of language and the unconscious are, then, foregrounded in postmodern literature (Lucy 1997: 1). In terms of the works of literature studied here, this trait of postmodernism could be said to be least evident in the work of Guibert. In Guibert's case, his syntactical and linguistic style is predominantly rational and conventional, seeming to retain the illusion that the author might be in full control of the text. As will be evident from my discussion in chapter 2, however, the importance of language and the unconscious is very clear in the works of Doubrovsky. As I argued earlier in this monograph, these are presented as playing a primary role in dictating both the form and the subject matter of Doubrovsky's *autofictions*. Similarly, Robin's literary texts are marked by highly poetic uses of language, often involving the complete abandonment of conventional prose page layouts and uses of punctuation. Indeed, the writings of Doubrovsky and Robin both seem to display some of the specific characteristics of language identified by Magnan and Morin in a work entitled *Lectures du postmodernisme dans le roman québécois* (1997) as typical of postmodern texts. In this, they argue that whereas modernism pushed language to the limits of meaning, postmodernism is more associated with the multiplication of meaning rather than its disappearance. Both Robin and Doubrovsky could be said to multiply meaning in their use of fragmented, complex writing styles that incor-

porate frequent puns and word play, and their inscription of more than one language in their texts. Through the inscription of languages such as English, German and Yiddish in Doubrovsky's case, and English, Spanish and Yiddish in Robin's, these Francophone texts are rendered ambiguous and multiply-coded without meaning being undermined altogether. Francophone scholar Lise Gauvin specifically addresses contemporary writers' innovative approaches towards language in her rhetorical question: 'faut-il lire dans ces pratiques de décentrement, de rupture, voire de transgression et de questionnement du statut des langues [...] des exemples du postmodernisme?' Her own feeling is unequivocal: 'assurément' (Gauvin 1997a: 14).

A further characteristic of the literary writings of Doubrovsky and Robin that is particularly in tune with postmodern thought is their preoccupation with fragmentation and plurality.² On the back cover of *Laissé pour conte*, for instance, Doubrovsky's textual voice tells us that

A l'inverse de l'autobiographie, explicative et unifiance, qui veut res-saisir et dérouler les fils d'un destin, l'autofiction ne perçoit pas la vie comme un tout. Elle n'a affaire qu'à des fragments disjoints, des morceaux d'existence brisés, un sujet morcelé qui ne coïncide pas avec lui-même. (LPC, back cover)

The implication is clear that *autofiction*, as opposed to classic autobiography, is underpinned by a will not to totalise and explain a life story, but to convey a considerably more fragmented and partial picture. This argument was reinforced by Doubrovsky in a recent interview when he professed his desire to 'donner l'impression d'une vie détota-lisée, fragmentaire' (Doubrovsky in interview with Hughes), a phrase which could be taken from a postmodern textbook. A very similar notion of life writing is openly flagged in Robin's *Papiers perdus*. In this, Robin's intratextual avatar asserts that

[un texte autobiographique] ne pourrait se penser aujourd'hui que dans le fragmentaire, le disparate, l'hétérogène, confronté à la mort des grands récits, en particulier du récit de soi, le soi ne serait plus

² As literary critics Lucie-Marie Magnan and Christian Morin inform us, in postmodern novels 'la narration revêt souvent un caractère hétérogène' (Magnan and Morin 1997: 43).

pensable en dehors de sa division, de son ou de ses clivages (PP, 'Mail de soi').

Eschewing the singular, unified textual construction of selfhood that a classical autobiography would foreground, Robin refutes any sense of identity being singular and coherent and rejects any notion of life writing that does not incorporate this rejection. It seems, then, that there is considerable evidence to suggest that the works of Doubrovsky and Robin are underpinned by postmodern principles and reveal postmodern characteristics.³

In relation to Guibert's writing, critical opinion is divided as to whether or not it can be categorised as postmodern. Hillenaar argues, for example, that Guibert's work cannot be considered postmodern because '[Guibert] ne rejette pas nécessairement toute notion d'un moi fixe et cernable, il s'intéresse plutôt au dévoilement de soi' (Hillenaar cited in Boulé 2001: 528). Lawrence Schehr argues that the realist na-

³ In the classification of the works of Robin and Doubrovsky as postmodern a note of caution must be sounded. Many of the characteristics that are frequently argued to be typically postmodern may also be claimed to be typically Jewish. Clara Lévy, for example, sees the experiences of exile, dispossession and the search for identity as particularly typical of French Jewish writers after the Second World War (Lévy 1984). In addition, the preoccupation with the breakdown of the metanarrative of History, as well as the quest for places of belonging that pervade the works of both Robin and Doubrovsky could be argued to be the result of the extreme disruption caused to Jewish communities during the Holocaust rather than to some general sense of malaise affecting the Western world. The elision of experiences that are specifically or typically Jewish within the category of that which is said to be postmodern certainly does not seem to be desirable. Indeed, the substantial criticisms following Adorno's assertion that the Jew and Auschwitz can be seen as emblematic of the late twentieth century experience illuminate the undesirability of such conflation (see Silverman, *Facing Postmodernity*, 1999). Robin's theoretical writing is particularly helpful in shedding light upon these issues. In *Le Golem de l'écriture* (1997), Robin indicates that she sees postmodernism and Jewishness as interdependent rather than separate. This view is reinforced in *Papiers perdus*, in a passage entitled 'Judéité', in which the narrative focuses on what it means to be Jewish. Robin's narrator tells us that she is not a believer but that she still feels Jewish. This affiliation, we are told, consists of the opposite of 'une identité pleine'. It is, rather, 'une appartenance particulariste: une identité rhizome par opposition à une identité racines; peut-être une identité de la post-judéité. Une judéité sans centre et sans périphérie, sans centre et sans diaspora, tout étant devenu diasporique' (PP, 'judéité'). The interdependency, rather than opposition, of Jewishness and postmodernism is, again, clear.

ture of Guibert's AIDS writing disqualifies it from being considered postmodern (Schehr cited in Boulé 2001: 529). Indeed, from the discussion above, it seems that Guibert's life writing texts seem to be less clearly in tune with postmodernism in terms of their treatment of language and the unconscious, and the plurality of subjectivity than those of either Doubrovsky or Robin. I wish to contend, however, that none of these arguments entirely precludes Guibert's writing from being considered postmodern. As my discussion in chapter 2 revealed, the argument advanced by both Hillenaar and Schehr that Guibert's work offers a realist representation in which the author attempts to unveil the truth of his selfhood, is deeply questionable. As Jean-Pierre Boulé explains, whilst the narrator may profess to tell the truth, in fact 'il la maquille, la pipe, la transforme à travers le prisme de la fiction' (Boulé 1997a: 32). Constructing deception and the disjuncture between appearance and reality as a major intratextual theme, Guibert's narrator seems to unsettle any assumptions we may make of his own identity or that of the world around him. In many ways, the world of multi-layered and multi-faceted deception that Guibert depicts seems to be emblematic of postmodernism.⁴ Moreover, Worton's suggestion that Guibert's autofictionally professed aim of 'dévoilement de soi' is a mere pretext 'à remettre constamment en scène le sujet en procès qu'il est' (Worton 1997: 70), is convincing. There are, in fact, numerous examples of the stability of the narrator's identity being challenged,⁵ and thus there is some adherence with the postmodern notion of a plural, shifting conception of selfhood.

Perhaps most important of all, however, is the primacy of AIDS within Guibert's life writing texts. As Jeffrey Weeks' (1991) essay 'Postmodern AIDS' demonstrates, the postmodern is often evoked in attempts to theorize the AIDS epidemic. As Weeks explains, the close association of postmodernism with this syndrome is partly the result of the apparent incurability of AIDS, which has seriously undermined

⁴ As Martine Antle argues, Guibert's textual representation of the art world is particularly dominated by the theme of deception. She asserts that 'in this universe of the fake, where artists have their work signed by forgers and assure for themselves the falsification of their work, the authenticity of art and of information is put into question. From this moment on, we are in the universe of simulation and the simulacrum' (Antle 1997: 191).

⁵ There is, for instance, ambiguity as to whether the autofictional Guibert ever received the Mockney vaccine (see Le PC: 186-187; ALA: 195; 268).

Modernist beliefs in ‘the triumph of technology over the uncontrollable whims of nature’ (Weeks 1991: 115). Throwing doubt on notions of progress and technological improvement, AIDS can also be seen to correspond with postmodernism in its disrespect for the laws of orderly representation and hierarchy. Lee Edelman argues that

All who are interested in writing and “AIDS” – interested that is in how those two terms interrogate, reflect, and displace one another in the discourses through which “AIDS” is constructed – have reason to take seriously this recurrent conjunction of “AIDS” and postmodernism, to read it as gesturing toward a cultural logic centrally at stake in the conflict being waged over “AIDS” and “representation”. (Edelman 1988: 12)

Edelman goes on to argue that both AIDS and postmodernism are inextricably bound up with prevailing contemporary issues such as the death of the subject and the decline of faith in rational, transparent representation. In many ways, then, it seems justified to retain the notion of postmodernism when discussing Guibert’s life writing texts, albeit whilst recognising that the postmodern traits that these works display are different to those of Robin and Doubrovsky’s texts.

In fact, the differences between the works of these three authors should not be seen to undermine their classification as postmodern. As I argued in chapter 1, what is important about postmodernism is not to be found in any consistency that the notion may or may not have, but rather in its desire to question everything. As Lucy tells us, postmodern literature is typified by a constant search for the rules by which to define itself (Lucy 1997: 65-66). Similarly, Magnan and Morin (1997: 24) suggest that the postmodern literary project may be summed up as a perpetual impulse to question and unsettle, in which ‘tout est remis en question’.⁶ Indeed, this brief discussion suggests that in many ways the life writings of Doubrovsky, Guibert and Robin do display many of the family characteristics of postmodern literature. The work of each author, for example, is marked by a will to blur and twist some of the basic categories that structure literature and its relationship with

⁶ They go on to argue that perhaps one of the most effective ways of foregrounding the importance of questioning everything in postmodern literature is for the narrative to be structured around an intratextual writer (Magnan and Morin 1997: 24). In the works of all three of these authors, this is clearly the case.

the external world. If the works of Robin and Doubrovsky could be said to be more typical of the postmodern in their treatment and use of language than those of Guibert, then the latter's relationship with postmodernism is reinforced by the primacy of AIDS, a phenomenon often theorised through a postmodern prism, within his texts. It seems then, that Sarkonak is far from mistaken in his claim that autofictional life writing is '[un] genre si représentatif de notre postmodernité et de cette triste fin de siècle' (Sarkonak 1997b: 7).

Having established the general compliance of these life writing projects with some of the theories and principles that underpin postmodernism, I will now move on to examine the extent to which the works of each of these writers could be said to constitute a form of postmodern cartography. That is to say, to what extent do these works offer us a vision, or map, of the postmodern world, and to what extent do they serve as a form of guide that orientates the subject within the postmodern landscape?

6.2 Doubrovsky and Postmodernism 'Doubrovsky': A Postmodern Subject Moving through Postmodern Spaces

A number of areas of clear similarity between Doubrovsky's autofictional constructions of space and characteristics often identified to be postmodern are instantly evident. In particular, the spatial anxieties and omnipresent search for self and place that I have argued to be fundamental to the identity of the autofictional self constructed in Doubrovsky's writings seem to be inherently postmodern. A key pre-occupation of the postmodern period that I identified in Chapter 1, for example, is that of a growing search for identity, particularly in the form of a quest for home spaces and for spaces of belonging (Sarup 1994: 18). As I have argued extensively, in the case of 'Doubrovsky', the search for 'une place' is fundamental to his identity. Not only are notions of 'home' and 'belonging' denaturalised in these life writing texts, but a number of archetypally postmodern ways of living in space are explored. For example, 'Doubrovsky' is presented as finding a stable identity in the transience of perpetually moving between the US and France. The parallel between this model of spatial identity that is anchored in movement and Clifford's assertion that postmodern ex-

perience is increasingly characterised by a transition from a focus on 'roots' to one on 'routes', is clear.⁷ In addition, 'Doubrovsky's' location between French and American cultures problematises the pervasive myth that the world is divided into bounded spaces, each occupied by a 'pure' and 'authentic' culture. In Doubrovsky's *autofictions* the world portrayed is one in which individuals are located at the complex intersections of culture, ethnicity and place, and the correspondence with postmodern thought is clear.

Moreover, the general sense of spatial and cultural disorientation that pervades Doubrovsky's autofictional *oeuvre* can be seen to reflect the breakdown of metanarratives and over-arching belief systems that are also said to be typical of the postmodern world. In many ways, despite its status in former times as one of the fundamental and unproblematic organising features of life, space itself is presented in Doubrovsky's works as problematic. In *Fils*, for example, it is presented as unknowable and alienating. We are told that 'on tourne en rond à l'infini. On va nulle part. Rien où aller. [...] Devenir difficile de se perdre, *puisque'on peut pas arriver*' (F: 88. My italics). This sense of disorientation and directionlessness is almost Beckettian in its tone of complete frustration and futility. Perhaps relating to Max Silverman's equation of postmodernism with the 'fragmentation of the "master plan"' (1999: 74) that ordered modernity's quest for unity and reason, 'Doubrovsky' wallows in a plural postmodern environment of movement and change that is unknowable and unpredictable.

The results of the breakdown of over-arching metanarratives that organise the world and make it knowable are also to be found in 'Doubrovsky's' small-scale movements through space. As I argued in chapter 4, 'Doubrovsky's' movements around Paris are often presented as motivated by the desire to regularly return to sites that are imbued with family memories and associations. Similarly, throughout the autofictional *oeuvre*, 'Doubrovsky' is depicted as making frequent trips either around France or the US during weekends and holidays, almost always accompanied by a female companion (UAS: 48-49). These trips are often portrayed as following a curious itinerary, motivated by 'Doubrovsky's' desire to incorporate revisiting his past haunts and the former routes that he has followed into his new journeys. By way of explanation for this we are told that 'j'aime parfois

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See my discussion of James Clifford's *Routes* in chapter 1.

boucler mes boucles, croisement subit, inopiné carrefour, forment un nœud. Dans une vie décousue, si on repasse par certains points, ça fait une trame' (UAS: 72). In a world of unsettled and uprooted identities, 'Doubrovsky' feels that 'il faut quelquefois se baigner dans le même fleuve' (UAS: 138). This disorientated, dispossessed postmodern subject, then, abandons fixed, linear paths through the impersonal environment in favour of the sense of security and familiarity offered by revisiting old haunts. He tells us that 'on se retisse comme on peut, j'aime repasser par mes points, boucler mes boucles [...] Faire la même chose, avec une autre. C'est différent, ça change. Dans la continuité' (UAS: 149). A clear link here can be seen with the postmodern breakdown of the metanarrative of History. As Pierre Nora argues, the contemporary world is infused with a popular perception that the acceleration of history risks erasing all that is familiar. As a result, Nora tells us that in order to replace 'la mémoire spontanée' that is increasingly disappearing, we must work actively to 'créer des archives' (Nora 1984: XXIV). In 'Doubrovsky's case, his spiralling, non-linear routes through space can be interpreted as a response to the uncertainties of the postmodern world and as an attempt to use space in order to knot himself into the security of his memories and his past experiences.

It seems, then, that in many ways 'Doubrovsky's relationship with space is presented as infused with postmodern characteristics. In addition to those characteristics that I have already identified, two particular motifs can be identified within Doubrovsky's portrayal of space that reinforce its association with the postmodern. First, it is of great importance to note the prevalence of the theme of monstrosity within Doubrovsky's work. Monsters and the notion of 'monstrosity' are recurring features of attempts to theorise the postmodern era.⁸ In relation to Doubrovsky, the theme of 'monstrosity' is of such deep significance that the author himself has claimed that it was by the title 'Le Monstre' that he initially intended *Fils* to be known.⁹ Moreover, it is evident that notions of monstrosity are used within Doubrovsky's *autofictions* in order to describe particular spaces. The city of New York, for instance, is described in *Fils* as 'la Bête de Béton' (F: 121)

⁸ For a discussion of the 'monstrous' nature of postmodern bodies see Dear (1997).

⁹ For a discussion of monstrosity in Doubrovsky's work see Ireland (1993: 2).

and 'le Béhémoth de Bitume [qui] me happe [...] Manhattan m'attend monstre m'épie m'horripile' (F: 121). Not only is this space presented as imbued with the typically postmodern trait of monstrosity, but it is also an example of the interdependency of body and space identified by those such as Elizabeth Grosz and Pile and Thrift to be characteristic of postmodernism (Grosz 1998: 42-51; Pile and Thrift 1995a: 21). Just as I argued in chapter 4 that 'Doubrovsky's' body is at times presented as caught up in a relationship of interdependency with the space of Paris to the extent that it is implied that the future of both is the same, there is great synchronicity between 'Doubrovsky' and the city of New York. Like Paris, this city is often presented within Doubrovsky's texts in personified, corporeal terms. It is described, for instance, as 'le nombril de Manhattan' (F: 93) and 'Broadway, une artère qui éructe, [...], aux entrailles des avenues' (F: 301). So close is the relationship between this city and 'Doubrovsky's' own body that they do not merely mirror each other's monstrosity, but the boundaries between body and surroundings blur into a slippery coagulation of the unsanitary and diseased. We are told, for example, that

On pue en chœur on pète en commun on pisse en public on chie ensemble c'est le vomit collectif collecte pas encore faite ordures humides [...] tous les résidus de la tripe dans les intestins de la ville au labyrinthe des boyaux du duodénum au côlon du caecum. (F: 300)

Dialoguing with the description of the city of New York as a living body filled with stinking, rotting rubbish, 'Doubrovsky's' own body becomes 'une ordure déambulant entre les poubelles immobiles' and he says of himself: 'mes immondices se déversent dans le caniveau, je suis un déchet [...] Dès pieds à la tête, je me vomis' (UAS: 172). The mutually constitutive nature of the body-space relationship that is increasingly a focus of postmodern geography (Nast 1998: 109), is, then, highly evident in Doubrovsky's autofictional *œuvre* and both body and space are portrayed with irrefutably 'monstrous', postmodern characteristics.

The second spatial symbol that recurs across Doubrovsky's autofictional writings, and which is often argued by spatial theorists to be emblematically postmodern, is that of the labyrinth. The symbol of the labyrinth is particularly prevalent in Doubrovsky's autofictional writings, being used variously to depict the city; the built environment of Queens; Rachel's childhood memories; the tragedies of 'Elle's life;

anal sex; and the female body, as well as more general experiences of being lost (UAS: 71; UAS: 271; AV: 76; UAS: 71; AV: 204). The labyrinth does, then, pervade Doubrovsky's writing to the extent that suggests it to be particularly significant in his autofictional double's relationship with the world. Originating in Greek mythology, the labyrinth was said to house the half-human, half-bull Minotaur that had to be fed on the flesh of young men and women. Built by Daedalus, this maze-like creation was said to comprise so many winding passages that escape was impossible.¹⁰ It is for its maze-like, disorientating properties that the labyrinth has in recent times come to emblemise postmodern space. It is perhaps unsurprising that 'Doubrovsky', presented as he is as perpetually disorientated and disempowered by space, should be linked to the notion of the labyrinth. Indeed, just as in mythological terms the labyrinth was notoriously difficult to escape, so it is clear that 'Doubrovsky' is not presented as finding any simple way out of the confusion of postmodern space. Far from possessing a master plan that might provide an over-arching meaning system to allow him to situate himself in his surroundings, 'Doubrovsky' seems to devise his own postmodern 'monster' plan, in the form of his unusual France-US division, and his spiralling, circling movements through familiar environments. This is, however, a 'monster' plan that confines him to dispossession and alienation in the disorientating spaces of his environment. The labyrinth is, therefore, a metaphor for a post-modern environment that is senseless and disempowering for the subject who is unable to become entirely independent and reconcile himself with his own place in society and his own identity.

It seems, then, that Doubrovsky's autofictional *œuvre* is not only underpinned by some typically postmodern philosophies but that 'Doubrovsky' is constructed as moving through some typically post-modern spaces. If a key aspect of wayfinding is a 'down on the ground', lived experience as opposed to depictions of space that work through over-arching metanarratives that normalise the environment, then Doubrovsky's autofiction is clearly pertinent. The spaces portrayed by Doubrovsky are personal, cultural and highly political: in short, they constitute the antithesis of a classic map. Moreover, far from depicting a fixed, unchanging 'snapshot' of the world at one particular moment in time, Doubrovsky's *autofictions* draw a map of

¹⁰ <http://www.mythweb.com/encyc/>.

changing, non-linear space and subjectivity which are presented as evolving throughout the course of 'Doubrovsky's' life. In negotiating the boundaries between past and present selves, past and present lived experiences, Doubrovsky draws a changing, multilayered map. In these ways, then, it seems that Doubrovsky's life writings could, indeed, be termed 'postmodern cartography'. In order to add a further dimension to this argument, I will now examine to what extent Doubrovsky's *autofictions* could be said to constitute a 'guide' that enables the individual to better orientate himself in the postmodern world.

Doubrovsky's *Autofictions* as Postmodern Cartography?

In this discussion I will address the ways in which Doubrovsky's life writings could be said to constitute a guiding force both symbolically and geo-culturally. Due to the gap between the extratextual author and his intratextual self, it is clearly problematic to extrapolate from one to the other. I will therefore focus primarily upon what the texts reveal about the role of writing for the intratextual 'Doubrovsky'. That is to say, to what extent does Doubrovsky present writing as a guiding force for his intratextual avatar? When there is sufficient evidence to draw conclusions about the role of writing for the extratextual Doubrovsky, this will be overtly signalled. In what ways, then, can Doubrovsky's writing be said to constitute a form of guide or tool for orientating the self in the postmodern world?

The life-changing significance of writing for the intratextual 'Doubrovsky' is clear. In *Un Amour de soi*, the intratextual writer claims that 'depuis que je transforme ma vie en phrases, je me trouve intéressant. À mesure que je deviens le personnage de mon roman, je me passionne pour moi' (UAS: 91). Whereas much conventional autobiographical writing is undertaken in order to record the stories of individuals who society judges to have led particularly interesting lives, 'Doubrovsky' indicates that in his case, writing plays a much more active role in constructing his sense of self. Stressing his perception that through writing he might continue his psychoanalysis, in *Le Livre brisé*, 'Doubrovsky' argues that 'l'autobiographie n'est pas un genre littéraire, c'est un remède métaphysique' (LLB: 255). Rather than merely writing in order to record the events of his life, then, it seems

that for 'Doubrovsky' literary production represents an attempt to explore some of the deepest complexities of his innermost self. 'Doubrovsky's' argument that he could never write such a work in his second language, English (AV: 31), suggests that writing constitutes a form of mapping the depths and extents of his inner self that he could never achieve in analysis due to both linguistic barriers and the prohibitive cost that such an extensive project would entail. The correspondence with Nora's impulsion to 'cartographier notre propre géographie mentale' (Nora 1984: VII), is clear. The incremental progression and inscription of this exploration of the inner self, rather than constituting a totalising, fixed 'snapshot', is clearly in tune with the aims of postmodern 'wayfinding'.

The life-changing role of writing is reinforced in *Le Livre brisé*, when the intratextual 'Doubrovsky' claims that 'mes écrits plaident ma cause' (LLB: 66). Not only is writing the story of his life presented as a way in which 'Doubrovsky' can chart the depths of his inner self, but it is also presented as a method through which to renegotiate and re-map his relationship with others. Contravening Régine Robin's argument that autobiographical writing is often undertaken in order to anticipate death (Robin 1993b: 73-86), 'Doubrovsky' makes it clear that it is his place in life not death that he is seeking to change. That is to say that rather than trying to guarantee that his achievements would be remembered and therefore that even posthumously he would have a certain place in the world, the concerns of 'Doubrovsky' are considerably more immediate. In *Le Livre brisé* he asserts that 'on m'attend. J'y ai ma place. Ma mort n'est pas un problème. Le problème, c'est ma vie' (LLB: 228). This is reinforced in *Laissé pour conte*, in which we are told that 'si on me lit, ça me relie [...] écrire m'inscrit quelque part chez quelqu'un dans le siècle, toute petite, me donne une place, actuelle, virtuelle, imaginaire' (LPC: 273). Writing is overtly hailed as a medium through which 'Doubrovsky' can re-negotiate his place in the world and find a sense of belonging, whether actual, virtual or imaginary. In this, the correspondence with the notion of 'postmodern cartography' is again clear.

Perhaps most crucial here is the fact that the renegotiation of 'Doubrovsky's' place that occurs through writing is situated partly upon the terrain of culture and is directly linked to the matter of spatial belonging. That is to say that writing can be argued to be a medium through which 'Doubrovsky' is presented as seeking to resolve

the sense of spatial and cultural dispossession that unsettles his identity. As I argued in chapter 4, for instance, 'Doubrovsky' is presented as believing that literary success will bring with it the transcendence of ethnico-racial prejudice. He tells us that

Les lettres sont des lettres de noblesse. Une activité éthérée, certes, mais qui vous naturalise. Un juif, lui, n'écrit pas vraiment pour se faire un nom: il s'agit de le refaire. Il s'appelle Bergson, mais on ne s'en aperçoit plus. S'il devient suffisamment célèbre, le voilà enfin comme tout le monde. (LLB: 271)

If spatial displacement and migration to the US are presented as enabling 'Doubrovsky' to gain financial security, material comfort and an academic reputation, then it is important to note that it is primarily in France that he wishes the fruits of his literary achievements to be borne. In *L'Après-vivre* we are told that

Le français est ma patrie. [...] Mon unique fibre patriotique est hexagonale. Comme mon écriture. Je n'ai jamais écrit une ligne en anglais. Aux États-Unis, j'ai perdu mon nom à coucher dehors. Mais mon nom, comme écrivain, je ne peux, ne veux le faire qu'en France. Je me suis même arrangé pour que ce que j'écris soit strictement intraduisible, inexportable. (AV: 31)

It is not merely social status that 'Doubrovsky' seeks through literary acclaim, but the specific renegotiation of his stigmatised identity within the arena of French culture. Indeed, as I discussed in chapter 4, this strategy is presented as in some ways successful within Doubrovsky's *autofictions*. Whilst writing cannot be said to iron out all the problematic aspects of 'Doubrovsky's' identity, it is presented as allowing him to become accepted within French culture to the extent that he attains considerable recognition and, for instance, is invited onto celebrated French television programmes such as *Apostrophes*. In this way, then, writing could be argued to constitute a form of post-modern cartography for 'Doubrovsky' as it is presented as the medium through which he can renegotiate his geo-cultural identity and re-map his place within 'Frenchness'.

Whilst Doubrovsky himself has remained reticent about the relationship between his writing and his cultural identity, in a recent letter to me, he referred to his 'homelessness that seeks, beyond the experience of war-time Jewishness and peace-time geographic meander-

ings, the ultimate grounding in (symbolic) Frenchness through writing'. He reinforced this assertion by referring to the effect of finding the word *autofiction* listed in the Larousse and Robert dictionaries, one of which attributed the word to 'S.D, 1977'. He writes that 'I felt I had finally settled home, become 'French' fully, since I even created a new accepted term in the French language'.¹¹

Overall, it seems that there is considerable evidence to suggest that Doubrovsky's *autofictions* do constitute a form of postmodern cartography. The genre of *autofiction* is underpinned by a range of ontological tenets that are clearly in tune with postmodern thought. Moreover, the spaces portrayed within these works often display typically postmodern characteristics, and correspond with the incremental and down-on-the-ground notion of 'way-finding'. Doubrovsky's *autofictions* could, then, be said to draw a map of the postmodern world. Finally, if the aim of postmodern cartography may be said to be the cognitive mapping of the environment in order to orientate the self and negotiate a stable identity within a fluctuating world, then it does seem that 'Doubrovsky' is presented as being anchored in the space of his life, both symbolically and geo-culturally, by writing. Perhaps even more tellingly, it seems that for Doubrovsky himself, writing these *autofictions* has provided him with an opportunity not only to map out and construct a version of his deeply problematic cultural identity, but it has allowed him to renegotiate his sense of geo-cultural belonging. Having established the compatibility of Doubrovsky's *autofictions* with the notion of 'postmodern cartography', it is to a discussion of Robin's literary works that I will now turn.

6.3 Robin and Postmodernism

Robin: Plural Identities and Heterogeneous Spaces

In many ways, the spaces depicted within Robin's texts do seem to display postmodern characteristics, and numerous parallels can be seen with the spaces of Doubrovsky's *autofictions*. As my discussion in chapter 5 has shown, for example, the main characters in Robin's texts are frequently shown to be uprooted, perhaps rootless, individuals. Like 'Doubrovsky', in fact, they often belie the typically post-

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Serge Doubrovsky, personal correspondence dated March 30, 2003.

modern characteristics of spatial and cultural disorientation. As I have already argued, Robin's characters frequently express their sense of being lost in assertions such as: 'ici ou ailleurs, je n'ai jamais été chez moi' (Q: 178) and 'je me perds, me dissipe, m'éparpille' (IFP, 'Journal': 142). In *La Québécoise*, a typically postmodern experience of space underpins the narrative, as each of the three parallel scenarios is based around the story of a woman who emigrates to Quebec and tries to set up home there. Max Silverman's assertion that the postmodern condition is plagued by exile, contingency and marginality (1999: 23), seems to correspond particularly well with this example of Robin's writing. Not only do these characters remain on the margins of the society that they migrate to, but any sense of belonging that they may establish in their country of arrival is shown to be provisional, as the characters ultimately return home. As I argued in chapter 5 and as I have argued in relation to 'Dobrovsky', the notion of 'dwelling in travel', as 'routes' replace 'roots' in grounding identities, seems particularly appropriate to describe the experiences of many of Robin's characters. Certainly within *La Québécoise* and *L'Immense Fatigue*, rather than merely travelling between fixed places, the condition of movement itself is important to Robin's protagonists and I have argued that it is in movement that they seek to establish a sense of belonging. The complex and fluid identities portrayed in Robin's writings are clearly better served by the notion of 'itineraries' rather than single 'home spaces', and the link with postmodern space is clear.

In fact, the complex identities of her characters is a striking feature of Robin's writing, and one that is particularly relevant to the topic of postmodernism. It is particularly noteworthy that these characters are often presented as not merely feeling disorientated and unsettled in relation to their cultural belonging, but their identities are often presented as fundamentally plural and divided. I wish to contend here that these divisions are often portrayed as deeply entwined with spatial division. Far from implicating purely fictional characters in models of divided selfhood, the division of space and identity is most evident in *Papiers perdus*, the most obviously self-referential of Robin's literary writings. For example, so strongly divided an individual is Robin's intratextual self in the section of *Papiers perdus* entitled 'Le Cybercafé', that not only are we told that she lives in two different places, Paris and Montreal, but that she takes to sending emails from one of her selves to the other. We are told:

Soudain, l'illumination! C'est à moi que je dois envoyer des messages. Rivka A écrit à Régine Robin et réciproquement. Rivka A écrira quand elle sera à Paris et Régine Robin lui répondra quand elle sera à Montréal. (PP, 'Le Cybercafé')

In this, division in space directly mirrors a divided character: Régine is a University lecturer in Montreal whereas Rivka is a writer in Paris. And it is the division in both character and space that provides the text's reason for being, consisting as it does of an email dialogue between the two selves. This protagonist is clearly postmodern in her division and her plurality, a message that is reinforced when she is described as 'une addict de la communication' (PP, 'Le Cybercafé'). A divided self, living in two different cities, speaking different languages and communicating with herself via email; a more inherently postmodern motif of selfhood would be difficult to imagine.

The theme of plurality can also be identified in Robin's literary writings on a larger scale. Like in Doubrovsky's *autofictions*, Robin's texts present a view of space that undermines the notion of discretely bounded spaces that are occupied by 'pure' and 'authentic' cultures. In fact, the topic of cultural plurality and mixing is addressed even more directly in Robin's writings than in those of Doubrovsky. Rosemary Chapman's argument that I cited in chapter 5, that space in Robin's works is marked by a multiplicity of points of reference, is particularly relevant. Whereas in Doubrovsky's *autofictions*, contact between different cultures seems to follow a bi-polar pattern of a dominant culture and a threatened culture, in Robin's writings, the spaces portrayed are often filled with a wide range of different cultures. As I have argued, for example, in *La Québécoise*, houses that are filled with a broad array of objects with different cultural origins play a significant role in the text. In the depiction of spaces that comprise a heterogeneous mix of peoples, cultures and languages, postmodern theories of interculturalism and cosmopolitanism are clearly invoked.

Postmodern characteristics are, then, clearly identifiable within Robin's general portrayal of space. It is to the close reading of two particular urban spaces, spaces that are frequently associated with the postmodern, that I wish now to turn. Whilst the city of Paris is presented as a highly regulated and regulatory space in which cultural di-

versity is downplayed, the contrary is true of the urban spaces of Montreal and New York in Robin's work. These environments are posited as showcases for cultural plurality and other characteristic features of postmodern space. In *La Québécoise*, for example, New York is shown to be infused with postmodern global culture. Praising this city as a comfortable 'no man's land', the narrator tells us:

Elle aimerait les hamburgers huileux avec relish, mustard sucrée et ketchup. Le tout arrosé d'un coke. Dégueulasse – et le café dit régulier: une espèce de lavasse teintée de café. Elle aimerait. Ce laisser-aller, ce no man's land serait son lieu. Elle se sentirait bien au milieu de cette foule obèse aux vêtements mal taillés, aux couleurs criardes. (Q: 65)

By citing particular food types that are synonymous with transnational capital, Robin portrays New York as a place in which the interests of global capital play a significant role in influencing the shape of the heterogeneous cultural landscape. The parallel with the characteristics argued by Jameson to be typical of postmodernism that I discussed in chapter 1, is unambiguous.

The city of Montreal is, perhaps, the ultimate motif of the post-modern urban environment within Robin's work. In fact, the role of Montreal within Robin's works has elicited considerable scholarship in recent times. It is pertinent to note that many of the characteristics that critics identify in relation to Robin's depiction of Montreal are clearly linked with notions of 'postmodern space'. As I mentioned in chapter 5, Simon Harel, for example, argues that Montreal is remarkable for its 'porosité' (1992: 401). He goes on to argue that

Le Québec, société post-industrielle en continent nord-américain, se voit bon gré mal gré projeté au coeur d'un monde où la constitution interculturelle est une préoccupation constante. [...] L'identité québécoise n'est pas la reconnaissance d'un destin stable et prévisible dont des citoyens autochtones seraient les légataires, mais plutôt une structure ouverte. (Harel 1992: 375)

According to Harel, then, the multicultural space of Montreal may evoke a radical questioning of notions of singular, unified selfhood. It is clear, then, that the space of Montreal, characterised by cultural plurality, the questioning of singular identity and a sense of 'in-betweenness' is not only imbued with postmodern traits, but is deeply com-

patible with many of the postmodern qualities that mark Robin's characters.

Indeed, inherently plural and a site of cultural heterogeneity, Montreal is also, I wish to contend, imbued with the postmodern characteristics of being unknowable and somewhat unpredictable. In *L'Immense Fatigue*, for example, in one story in which the protagonist is searching for the mother who he believed had died during the war but who he now believes to be alive, the city is cast as holding the key to all the mysteries that he wishes to unravel. We are told that with few addresses from which to begin his search, 'il arpenta longuement la rue Sherbrooke, soucieux de tout voir, tout observer' (IFP: 102). Over the course of the story, the main character gradually deepens his knowledge of the city as if to suggest that in unpicking the details of this complex urban landscape he may discover the truth about his own family background, too. In contrast to traditional notions of 'space' as a fixed entity that exploration and mapping may make entirely knowable and familiar, this postmodern metropolis remains unknowable except in fragments and sections. Its shifting complexities seem to be beyond any quest for total mastery or knowledge. In this, as in Robin's other literary works, the texts are filled with lists and poetic verses rather than the plenitude of 'whole' narratives or conventional maps in order to depict the fragmented experience of the cityscape. It seems, then, incontrovertible that Robin's presentation of the urban environment of Montreal is that of a city that is plural and diverse, shifting and complex, and which defies any attempt at total knowledge and transparency. Intriguing and yet unknowable, then, all of these features point indubitably to the appellation 'postmodern'.

However, a note of caution must be sounded. There is some evidence to suggest that the space of Quebec, and hence that of Montreal, is marked by postcolonial rather than postmodern struggle. Indeed, it seems that many features of Robin's textual constructions of space may be traced back to the particular, late twentieth century situation in Quebec's struggle for independence. Pierre Nepveu tells us that, following the unsuccessful referendum on independence, the 1980s was a decade marked by a feeling of 'non-identité' (Nepveu 1999: 183). Whilst this may frequently be identified as a classically postmodern trait, in this case it was clearly attributed to a specific postcolonial struggle rather than to the general conditions of postmodernism. Sarkonak argues that, for the same reason, this period in Quebec was

marked by feelings of 'défiguration, dépaysement. Question du lieu, question de l'être, question de la mémoire' (Nepveu 1999: 183). These characteristics, highly evident in Robin's writings, are at once typical of the general postmodern condition, and yet are the product of a specific political and historical struggle. The experience of Québécoisité, then, already traditionally based upon notions of exile and the quest for identity, was further disorientated in the 1980s and 1990s, and thus delimiting the extent to which postmodernism is present within this space, is somewhat problematic. It would seem, however, that whether caused by postcolonialism or by the wider forces of globalisation, Robin's texts do depict a wide array of spaces that are imbued with largely postmodern characteristics.

Overall, postmodern traits do seem to be identifiable in many aspects of Robin's oeuvre. These are present in the divided identities of her protagonists, as well as the authorial philosophies underlying her writing. Many of the spaces in which the protagonists of Robin's texts move do seem to be imbued with postmodern characteristics and so it is pertinent now to ask, to what extent might these literary writings be considered to constitute a form of postmodern cartography?

Robin's Life Writing as Postmodern Cartography?

As I have previously discussed, postmodern cartography refers to the way in which writing may constitute a manner of mapping out and making sense of a particular selfhood and therefore finding new routes through the postmodern landscape for particular individuals. In order to establish whether the literary texts that I have examined in this study constitute a form of postmodern cartography, it is necessary to establish how important Robin presents writing to be and whether writing could be said to constitute a form of 'wayfinding' through the postmodern environment.

In many ways within Robin's texts, literature is posited as an invaluable resource for protagonists. In 'Mère Perdue sur le world wide web' in *L'Immense Fatigue*, for example, the protagonist's search for his mother is purported only to have occurred because he found a reference to her in a book. We are told that after 'le trou noir de la guerre' into which his mother disappeared, the site of 'sa réapparition [était] dans un livre' (IFP: 118). Moreover, it is the discovery

of her library records and details of the books that she has borrowed that convinces the protagonist that his mother did, in fact, survive the war (IFP: 111). Writing is shown to be similarly important in 'Journal de déglingue entre le Select et Compuserve', when the protagonist indicates that 'je ne me sens pas véritablement exister que par le journal' (IFP: 141). Books and writing, then, are constructed in Robin's literary works as sites of truth. More than this, they also seem to constitute a form of home space within Robin's writing. For example, also in 'Mère perdue sur le world wide web', the protagonist is presented as becoming nostalgic about his home in Paris. We are told:

Il s'imaginait assis à son bureau à Paris, entouré d'un amoncellement de livres [...]. Là aussi il était bien quand lui venaient une phrase, une idée, un mot, une image. C'était là son chez-soi dans les mots, les feuilles de papier, l'ordinateur et les dictionnaires. (IFP, 'Mère perdue sur le world wide web': 121)

For this restless protagonist, then, rather than identifying with the space of Paris, it is in the world of words, paper, computers and dictionaries that he feels at home. A little later in this work, in the short story entitled 'Manhattan Bistro', this notion of the text as home is repeated. Rather than providing a space of belonging for the protagonists themselves, however, it is the protagonist's dead family who are to be laid to rest in a text. We are told: 'est-ce bien une façon d'opérer dans l'écriture un début de travail du deuil? De me libérer de ces morts en leur assignant enfin une place, une plaque, un nom et un prénom?' It is clearly implied that writing would provide a final home space in which the weight of those relatives, murdered during the Holocaust, could be laid to rest.

Moreover, in many ways, writing seems to be constructed as a coping strategy that helps characters respond to particular spaces that they encounter. Dawn Thompson argues in her review of *The Wanderer*, the English language version of *La Québécoise*, that the endless lists that fill Robin's narratives represent 'the protagonists' attempts to map the city, to fix it in memory' (Thompson 2001: 168). This is clearly very close to the definition of postmodern cartography that I advanced in chapter 1. Furthermore, it is of paramount importance to note that in *Papiers perdus*, the work that I have argued to be the most strongly autobiographically referential of any of these works, a similar

view of the interdependency of writing and space is expressed. Robin's intratextual self tells us:

Je rêve d'un journal qui me ressemblerait. Un fourre-tout mais dans lequel on se repèrerait malgré tout, qui consignerait à la fois les rêves, les rêvasseries, les fantasmes, les projets, les réflexions, les citations, les remarques de lecture. Le tout comme un collage sans ordre mais on ne s'y perdrait pas pour autant; pas tout à fait. On se baladerait dans sa vie comme dans la ville. [...] la vie comme une déambulation urbaine. (PP, 'Fourre-tout')

It seems that in this vision of an ideal diary, the perfect text would comprise a mirror image of the spaces in which individuals move. A high degree of interdependency is evident between text and individual, then, and writing and books are cast as of life-changing significance for many of the protagonists of Robin's literary works.

Whilst the ambiguous generic status of Robin's works makes it problematic to extrapolate from the texts to the author, Alexandra Lavastine-Laignel goes so far as to suggest that it is not just Robin's textual avatars who adopt writing as a coping strategy to deal with their spatial identity. She identifies '[une] quête de soi' in Robin's works that she attributes to the writer's complex cultural identity. She claims that Robin's identity is marked by '[des] appartenances multiples' and she goes on to explain:

écrivain français? Montréalais? Écrivain juif français, juif québécois? Questions insolubles. Ecrire, n'est-ce pas, pour Régine Robin, entrer en débat avec ses diverses identités? (Lavastine-Laignel 1999: 7)

In this, then, the implication is clear: it is the complex cultural and ethnic identity of the author that provides the motivation for writing. Simon Harel sheds important light upon this topic in his analysis of the role of writing for those who have undergone the experience of emigration. He tells us: 'je suggère à cet égard que l'écriture permet la création d'une territorialité imaginaire qui a de fortes connotations endopsychiques' (Harel 1992 : 398). Harel draws upon the work of psychoanalyst Winnicott, who asserts that, uprooted from their culture of origin, immigrants often require an 'espace du potentiel' that acts as a kind of second skin or buffer zone to protect against the threats of the outside world. Harel proposes that writing may in fact constitute this very 'espace du potentiel' for many immigrant writers.

For Robin, however, it seems that it is not merely the threat of moving to an unknown country that moves her to write, but rather her loss of faith in the capacity of History to deal with the tragedies of the Holocaust and her family history. In 'Le Sujet de l'écriture', for example, Robin tells us:

L'écriture serait trajet, parcours, cette objectivation qui viendrait à tout instant rappeler qu'il y a de la perte, qu'on n'écrit que dans cette perte, que rien ne viendra combler le manque, mais que l'acte d'écrire, l'impossibilité d'écrire dans l'écriture même est la tentative toujours déçue et toujours recommencée de déjouer la perte, de l'apprivoiser, de la mettre à distance; la tentative de saturer, de suturer tout en sachant que l'on ne peut y arriver. (Robin 1995b: 99-100)

Writing, then, is cast as a strategy to deal with the horrific losses that Robin, and those like her, suffered in the past, and which linger in the confusion of the postmodern environment. This notion is reinforced in Robin's explanation about the work that would become *L'Immense Fatigue* which she describes as 'une pseudo-généalogie familiale, un hommage aux disparus en même temps qu'une traversée du siècle'. She attributes her desire to keep returning to this text as due to

sans doute un besoin de traces étant donné qu'il ne reste plus rien, [...] sans doute aussi un besoin de transmission à ma fille de ces menues traces généalogiques à partir desquelles elle-même pourra se recomposer un passé et une mémoire familiale. Savoir que la vérité du sujet ne se donnera pas dans l'écriture, mais ne pouvoir faire autrement que de courir après cette vérité dans l'écriture. (Robin 1995b: 112)

Whilst not believing that in writing all will be resolved, Robin does suggest that writing is the only possible site of inscription for the most problematic aspects of her own identity. In an assertion that demonstrates most overtly her compatibility with the underlying motivation of postmodern cartography, Robin tells us in 'Le sujet de l'écriture' that living as we are in 'un monde borgesien où tout reboucle sur soi-même, un labyrinthe, une énigme [...]' (Robin 1995b: 113) it is only through writing, and psychoanalysis, that the individual can cope.

In sum, it is clear that many aspects of Robin's work comply with the notion of 'postmodernism'. From the ontological and literary premises underlying her writing to the spaces in which her protagonists move, the postmodern is almost omnipresent in Robin's literary

writings. Whilst the complex generic status of the works focused upon in this study makes it difficult to draw conclusions about Robin's writerly motivations, there is evidence to suggest that these works do, in some ways, constitute a form of postmodern cartography. Having discussed the works of Robin and Doubrovsky, it is to those of Guibert that I will now turn.

6.4 Guibert and Postmodernism

'Guibert': Labyrinthine, Monstrous and Dysfunctional Space

In chapter 3, my discussion focused greatly upon spaces that are presented within Guibert's work as exerting control over and 'disciplining' the person with AIDS' body. Whilst this desire to control seems to indicate a belief in metanarratives and over-arching discourses that seek to organise society, it would be erroneous to suggest that the spaces portrayed in Guibert's *autofictions* are free of postmodern characteristics. Indeed, even Paris, a space that is presented in the works of both Doubrovsky and Robin as far from postmodern, is imbued with some postmodern characteristics in Guibert's work. As I argued in chapter 3, for instance, a tone of disjuncture and breakdown in the logic of the city sometimes infuses Guibert's depiction of Paris. Once his illness is confirmed, the space of Paris is often presented as just as equally dysfunctional as 'Guibert's' own ailing body, being paralyzed by transport and postal strikes (ALA: 51). Moreover, as I have already argued, once diagnosed as HIV positive, 'Guibert's' experience of this city is increasingly one of spaces that are both geographically peripheral and culturally marginal. L'hôpital Claude-Bernard, for example, is described as '[un] hôpital mort' (ALA: 55) and 'un hôpital fantôme au bout du monde' (ALA: 53). Even in the space of Paris, then, a city that is presented by Robin and Guibert as part of the Old World, within Guibert's work some postmodern characteristics are evident. Perhaps the strongest association of Guibert's AIDS texts with notions of 'postmodern space', however, is to be found in two recurring spatial leitmotifs. The themes of labyrinthine space and monstrous space that I identified within Doubrovsky's work as suggesting a particularly strong connection with postmodern space are also present within Guibert's life writing. It is to these two themes that my discussion will turn first.

The figure of the labyrinth reappears across Guibert's corpus. In an oft-cited passage, for instance, we are told that

Avant l'apparition du sida, un inventeur de jeux électroniques avait dessiné la progression du sida dans le sang. Sur l'écran du jeu pour adolescents, le sang était un labyrinthe dans lequel circulait le Pac-man, un shadok jaune actionné par une manette, qui bouffait tout sur son passage. (ALA: 13)

In this case, the spatial allegory of the labyrinth is used to denote the narrator's body, traversed as it is by a complex network of interlinking veins through which the HIV virus battles its way. Considerably later in the autofictional œuvre, the labyrinth is again mentioned, this time in order to denote the complex basement of the narrator's block of flats. Just before getting locked into his own cellar, the narrator tells us: 'j'avais recherché la porte en métal dans le labyrinthe, la seule porte de la cave où n'était inscrit aucun numéro, une porte de fait totalement dissimulée' (Le PC: 80). The use of the labyrinth to denote disorientating, entrapping space is clear. Whilst locked into the *cave*, this allegory recurs when, envisaging his helplessness, the intra-textual Guibert tells us:

Alors je me vis réellement, découvert des mois après, crevé dans cette cave, de soif, de faim, de froid et d'épuisement nerveux, comme les écoliers de la Villa Médicis, squelette recroquevillé sous des cartons. (Le PC: 83)

As I argued in chapter 3, the cellar incident causes the narrator to feel that his destiny is out of his control and is associated with the loss of autonomy that he experiences in the medical environment. The spatial leitmotif of the labyrinth, then, clearly indicates a postmodern sense of disempowerment and disorientation.

Indeed, medical spaces are constructed as particularly labyrinthine within Guibert's AIDS texts. The hôpital Claude-Bernard, for example, disused other than for AIDS patients and made knowable by no reception service or porters, is marked only by a series of arrows indicating the route patients should take. The narrator tells us: 'malgré tout mes efforts pour ne pas me perdre en suivant le parcours fléché, je m'aperçus bientôt que j'arrivais devant une sortie condamné' (ALA: 59). In this, the narrator is disorientated and confused by this unknowable, institutional space, as well as robbed of a feeling of control over

his own being, sentiments indicative of the postmodern condition. Perhaps most tellingly, in *Le Paradis*, the narrator directly links the spatial trope of the labyrinth with the medical and institutional repossession of Jayne's entire body after her death. He tells us: 'ce qui restait de son corps avait déjà été aspiré dans le labyrinthe médical' (le P: 109). For Guibert, overt textual references to the labyrinth indicate the pervasive inter-imbrication of the body, the medical establishment and even familiar spaces, and the typically postmodern feelings of disorientation and loss of autonomy that he feels in all three.

The autofictional works that I discussed in chapter 3 are further pervaded by the figure of the monster, the archetypally postmodern nature of which I discussed in relation to Doubrovsky. Perhaps most remarkably, as I have already argued, one of the main places in which Guibert's increasingly monstrous intratextual avatar finds a homely space is in the unknown city of Tangiers. Despite never having visited this place before, the narrator finds a terrace, sitting upon which he feels at home. This feeling is attributed to the other people occupying the terrace, among whom the narrator feels he belongs:

Je m'assis parmi eux, sur cette terrasse que je reconnus immédiatement comme un endroit familier, m'appartenant déjà au même titre qu'à ses autres occupants qui ne semblaient même pas remarquer ma présence, un lieu totalement en accord avec ce temps si curieux [...] d'une fin de vie. Je remarquai que ma terrasse était également fréquentée par des monstres, des boiteux, des unijambistes [...] et cela m'allait bien de me retrouver parmi eux, moi aussi j'étais un monstre. (Le PC: 239)

Indeed, reinforcing the notion that the key to understanding Guibert's autofictional construction of corporeality is in its situated, spatial interdependence, it is of paramount importance to note the geo-political significance of the site of this terrace. Expelled from the heart of French space and resisting his loss of autonomy through his use of space, the narrator finds a new home space in the colonially abjected Other of North Africa. Outside the reach of colonial regulation yet still highly visible within the French geo-cultural imaginary, Tangiers constitutes a space divorced from modernist ideals of progress and perfection. Temporarily freed from his disorientation and the power struggle seeking to discipline or eject his non-conformist body from the heart of Frenchness, the ailing autofictional Guibert finds a place of com-

fortable acceptance amongst the monsters of this North African terrace.

In fact, it is pertinent here to cite a definition of the term 'monster' as proffered by John Ireland. In a piece entitled 'Monstrous Writing', Ireland tells us that the monster can be defined as 'contrary to nature'. He goes on to explain that 'nature, of course, is what establishes genus which provides in turn the boundaries that permit classification' (Ireland 1993: 3). The link between monstrosity and nature is, then, clear. Brad Epps asserts that 'les derniers ouvrages de Guibert contiennent peu d'images de la nature «sauvage». Ce sont les intérieurs qui dominent' (Epps 1997: 47, footnote 11). Whilst it is probably true that with the exception of the North African beach that 'Hervé Guibert' visits in *Le Protocole compassionnel*, there are few images of unfettered, natural landscapes, we must dispute the implication that nature is absent from Guibert's work. Indeed, demonstrating the interdependence of monstrosity, the feeling of loss of autonomy and a failure to conform to French rational ideals, 'Guibert' increasingly describes his helplessness in animalistic terms. He calls himself 'un éléphant ligoté' (Le PC: 13); 'une baleine échouée et saignée à blanc' (Le PC: 64) and 'un scarabée retourné sur sa carapace' (Le PC: 174 and HCR: 80). Moreover, 'Guibert' seems not only to depict himself as reduced to an animalistic level of helplessness, but seeks recourse to the animal kingdom itself in an attempt to demonstrate the postmodern dysfunctional nature of even that which is most natural. Indicating the disruption of the normal hierarchy, the narrator describes a series of animals, complete with their eating habits and their place in the food chain. He concludes:

l'homme mange des animaux, des agneaux, des cochons de lait, des entrailles, des cervelles, des reins et des rognons blancs, des cœurs, des poulpes, des batraciens frits, des organismes palpitants, des huîtres crues. Le sida, microscopique et virulent, mange l'homme, ce géant. (Le PC: 180)

Monstrous and animalistic, then, the fundamental structures that organise society and space are constructed as eroded and chaotic in Guibert's *autofictions*, elements that clearly comply with the notion of 'postmodernism'.

In addition to the characterisation of spaces as either labyrinthine or monstrous, two traits typical of postmodern space, there is

evidence to suggest that the intratextual 'Guibert's' movements around space are compatible with the postmodern notion of 'way-finding'. 'Guibert's' method of art collecting that I discussed in section 3.2, for example, seems to chime with the down-on-the-ground, non-totalising nature of this type of moving through space. For instance, we are told that rather than going directly to known art vendors, 'Guibert' buys paintings from shops discovered by chance thanks to the complex weaving through the urban landscape of the public buses on which he travels. Emphasising the instinctive, non-prescribed nature of this activity, the narrator tells us: 'j'étais assis dans l'autobus, je regardais la rue par le vitre, et soudain j'apercevais dans l'arrière-fond obscur désir. Je le reconnaissais comme un objet familier, une possession de toujours' (HCR: 26-27). Rejecting the static, depersonalised maps of modernism, the narrator engages in a 'down on the ground' method of 'wayfinding', thus engaging in a postmodern experience of space.

It may be surmised, then, that the autofictional Guibert does, in some ways, seem to move through spaces that might be characterised as postmodern. Whilst the issues of interculturalism and global culture that feature in the works of Robin and Doubrovsky are not evident within Guibert's *autofictions*, his works do effectively convey a vision of dysfunctional, senseless space, as well as notions of 'labyrinthine' and 'monstrous' space. My discussion will now turn to an examination of the ways in which Guibert's autofictional project could be seen to constitute a form of guide through which the self can be better orientated in the postmodern world.

Guibert's *Autofictions* as Postmodern Cartography?

If postmodern cartography may be understood in short as the way in which writing constitutes a manner of mapping out and making sense of a particular selfhood and therefore finding new routes through the postmodern landscape, then there seem to be many examples of this in relation to Guibert's work. Certainly, the life-changing significance of writing for both the extra and the intratextual Guibert cannot be underestimated. Intratextually, writing is constructed as both psychologically bound up with the narrator's ability to carry on living and as

wielding considerable effect on the way in which he lives this life. As Robinson argues:

In both *A l'ami* [...] and *Le Protocole compassionnel*, the body of the writer becomes identified with the body of the text [...] the writing of the text is a dual writing of the writer and of that which is destroying him. Guibert's perception of the future of his condition and of his book are parallel. (Robinson 1995: 135)

Indeed, Guibert's narrator overtly signals the choice that he makes between committing suicide and beginning another book. As Leslie Hill argues, for Guibert 'écrire, c'est donc survivre' (Hill 1995: 93). Writing, then, is what maintains, at least the intratextual Guibert, alive, thereby constituting the basic element for any experience of the post-modern world. Moreover, not merely maintaining the narrator within the world, writing can also be seen to alter the paths that the narrator traces through the world and the life that he lives. Extratextually, there is evidence to suggest that writing played an equally important role in the life of the authorial Guibert as it is presented as doing in that of his narratively constructed self. In an interview with Jérôme Garcin, for example, the authorial Guibert explained his battle to continue writing until the end with the words: 'c'est encore une tentative par le récit d'évacuer le sida, de m'en débarrasser' (cited in Boulé 1997a). In this way, the authorial Guibert seems to suggest that writing allows him to exorcise and resist the illness colonizing his body, in just the same way as his autofictionally constructed self uses writing to resist the dehumanised identity cast upon him by the medical environment. In this manner, he could be said to be reorientating himself in the post-modern landscape. Presenting perhaps the ultimate form of resistance to the illness colonising him from within, writing allows Guibert to deny the erasure of selfhood that death would present. As Sarkonak argues: 'il lui était devenu important, crucial même, de produire, d'écrire, de *laisser sa trace*, de laisser le plus de traces possibles' (Sarkonak 1997b: 10). Resisting the ephemeral nature of his fore-shortened life, through writing Guibert is able to leave a permanent *trace* or record of himself that cannot be erased. Providing him with the motivation to go on living, constituting a significant locus of resistance against that which he is experiencing in his life, then, writing can be seen to be of the utmost significance in Guibert's attempts to negotiate the postmodern world.

Indeed, it is pertinent to return here to an argument that I discussed in chapter 3. Discussing the intratextual Guibert's proposed walk along the side of a motorway and the disruptive vision that he would constitute, Murray Pratt argues that the narrator 'would undoubtedly become a spectacular centre of attention. And it is in such terms – that is, as spectacular, promenading body – *that he elects to envision himself in his text*' (Pratt 1998: 155). Pratt seems to be suggesting that just as the intratextual narrator reappropriates the meaning of his sick body through exhibiting it in unexpected spaces, so Guibert may redefine his extratextual identity through the self he exhibits in the books that he writes. The notion that *A l'ami* could be classified as a resistant writing strategy is supported by Alex Hughes in *Heterographies*. She stresses, however, that it is the nature of the autofictional, rather than the classically autobiographical, genre that permits the author to fully realise the potential of a literary construction of selfhood. Hughes argues that

by virtue of its unwillingness to posit itself as a 'case' of transparent, (wholly) truthful, self-deciphering autobiographical writing, *A l'ami* deters its readers from using its contents to subject with any certainty its author Hervé Guibert to the kind of objectifying, evaluative scrutiny that would construct and produce him as an individual *cas*. (Hughes 1999: 114)

In this way, the writer not only leaves a permanent trace of his own construction of selfhood, but he simultaneously disarms the reader, rendering him or her unable to draw any definite conclusions about the 'truth' of Guibert's identity and therefore unable to ever confine the writer within the boundaries of the knowable and the classifiable.

In fact, it is this fictional dimension to Guibert's *autofictions* that provides the ultimate form of reorientation within the postmodern landscape. In incorporating non-factual elements into his constructions of selfhood the intratextual Guibert is able to further redefine the identity which external society imposes upon him. As Duncan argues in reference to Guibert's writing: 'd'un côté il sert à consolider le moi de l'écrivain face à son déssaroi corporel et, de l'autre, il invente la fiction de sa dispersion' (Duncan 1995: 103). It is to the fictional escape of the author that my discussion will now turn.

In addition to providing the means to continue living and to resist some aspects of his life, autofictional writing allows Guibert to re-

fute the notion that his identity is fixed and thus his fate sealed. As Brad Epps contends, 'Guibert s'accroche au genre romanesque, à une image de liberté, d'invention et de licence artistiques afin de contrer l'irrévocabilité du réel' (Epps 1997: 52). Through writing, the narrator constructs an autofictional double whose identity is fragmented and shifting. Perhaps one of the most intriguing aspects of Guibert's desire to rewrite his life autofictionally and thus escape his life is that represented by *Le Paradis*. This work has not constituted a major focus of analysis in this monograph, partly because in terms of generic status and content it is less strongly linked with Guibert's AIDS corpus than the other works I have discussed.¹² However, as I discussed in chapter 2, it was written co-terminously with *Cytomégalo-virus* at the end of Guibert's life and I wish to contend that it is of particular relevance to the present discussion.

In 'Visions of Excess: Filming/Writing the Gay Self in Col-lard's *Savage Nights*', Rollet and Williams argue that 'for novelists writing on AIDS, a common method of approach is autobiographical, with textual play around identity, space and time functioning as a form of personal denial' (Rollet and Williams 1998: 197). They go on to argue that Guibert rejects chronological time as a form of denial. However, examination of *Le Paradis* suggests that this is a text which denial pervades on many more levels than just that of chronological time. Reading the textual representations of space within this work, however, leads us to suspect that the key to this confusing blur of fiction and self-referentiality is considerably more subtle than it may at first seem. As Murray Pratt argues:

this is a text which allows its author to reinvent himself to write as HIV negative, heterosexual, as other than a writer, leaving behind Northern Europe for Africa, for Martinique, for Bora Bora, Guibert the author journeys to parallel and virtual identities which he may or may not have made as protagonist and as person. (Pratt 1997: 1)

I wish to argue, then, that this work could be seen to be the final escape of the bed-ridden, ailing Guibert, as he textually reconstructs a

¹² The narrator does retain the nominal appellation 'Hervé Guibert' (le P: 120) but is distanced from his counterpart inscribed in Guibert's already well-read autofictional corpus by virtue of the fact that he does not adhere to the categories of homosexual and HIV positive.

self who is physically free and mobile. Indeed, the journeys undertaken by the protagonist of *Le Paradis* seem to play a considerably greater role in this work than in any other of Guibert's novels. Whilst this self is overtly heralded as free of the constraints of an HIV positive body, analysis of the places to which the narrator travels seems to indicate that this text is not as free of AIDS as might at first be thought. Pratt argues that 'while literally diluted to a trace element in the narrative, the theme of the body with AIDS dictates the impulsive departures, doublings and delusions which texture it' (Pratt 1997: 1). Indeed, this work seems to contain many similar spatial concerns as those that I have already argued to pervade Guibert's earlier autofictional writings, but these are exaggerated. Reflecting classically postmodern characteristics, the character of Jayne is argued by Alan Buisine to be in perpetual motion. He tells us 'elle ne vit, elle ne survit que dans le voyage, le mouvement, le déplacement, la vitesse. Impossible pour elle de rester sur place' (Buisine 1997: 111). Transferring his desire for movement onto another character as well as attributing to her a certain amount of blame for their jointly endured sexually transmitted disease, Guibert is able to use this fantastic autofictional text in order to explore in fiction some of his most deep-seated anxieties whilst retaining some identitarian relationship of the main character with himself. Retaining some of the key spatial and geo-cultural themes of his earlier *autofictions*, *Le Paradis* could be said to be the ultimate escape for the seriously ill Guibert, representing as it does an opportunity to cast off his definitively condemned status and physical circumscription.

In sum, then, there is considerable evidence to suggest that Guibert's AIDS texts do, indeed, constitute a form of postmodern cartography. Whilst they are underpinned by a different range of ontological principles to the works of Robin and Doubrovsky, Guibert's *autofictions* do seem to be grounded in literary practices consistent with postmodernism. In addition, whilst the spaces mapped out in these works do not display the same preoccupation with postmodern characteristics such as cultural plurality and migration as the writings of Robin and Doubrovsky, the typically postmodern leitmotifs of the labyrinth and the monster are in evidence. The clearly life-changing nature of these AIDS texts for both the intra- and the extratextual Guibert indicates that they could indeed be classified as a kind of guide or chart through which the individual seeks to better orientate

himself in space. That is to say that these writings could, like those of Doubrovsky and Robin, be considered to be a form of 'postmodern cartography'.

Conclusion

This study has sought to bring into dialogue contemporary notions of 'space' and a range of late twentieth-century life writing texts. The investigation has been underpinned by the argument that transformations in both critical perceptions and the nature of space in recent times have led to an increasingly pressing need to re-evaluate this fundamental aspect of all lived experience. More specifically, I suggested in chapter 1 that questions of home space and cultural belonging were becoming more urgent in the contemporary world, with significant implications for both individual and collective cultural identities. After undertaking close readings of the life writing texts of Hervé Guibert, Serge Doubrovsky and Régine Robin in turn, I have established that in each case, home space and cultural belonging are presented as deeply problematic, if strongly desired, phenomena.

In the writings of Hervé Guibert, my discussion has highlighted the impact of the catastrophic and deeply stigmatised illness of AIDS upon his textual avatar's sense of belonging. As I have argued, 'Hervé Guibert's' 'marks of distinction' as a privileged member of the French literary elite who is presented as situating himself primarily in the coveted spaces of the Parisian Left Bank, are undermined as he is drawn into stigma-laden medical spaces. I have argued that 'Hervé Guibert's' relationship with space can only be understood by analysing the interdependent nature of body and space. It is against familiar, domestic spaces, for example, that he is presented as measuring his bodily decline. Perhaps more significantly, the body-space relationship is shown to offer opportunities for 'Guibert' to resist his growing marginalisation, and to reinsert himself into those spaces from which he is increasingly excluded. That is to say that through introducing his sick body into unexpected places and thus contravening codes of normal behaviour, 'Hervé Guibert' is presented as reappropriating control over the definition of his sick body in society and attempting to re-establish some sense of belonging.

Increasingly controlled and restricted in the space with which he is presented as having formerly felt a sense of unproblematic affiliation, that of Paris, Guibert's autofictionally rendered self is presented as developing a growing desire to seek home elsewhere. The countries to which the intratextual 'Guibert' increasingly travels are places in which he can escape the disciplinary control of the Parisian medical establishment. Moreover, as my analysis has revealed, places such as Russia and Africa do not merely offer 'Guibert' the opportunity to place himself in dangerous positions and in this way to wrest back control over his own death, but they are irrefutably bound up in geo-cultural mythologies of the genesis of the HIV virus. 'Hervé Guibert' is presented, then, as seeking to engender a kind of confrontation with sites in which his unknowable illness might have come into existence, and in this way effecting a 'return to the source'. It is amongst the 'monsters' of the AIDS-inflected landscape of North Africa that 'Guibert' is cast as finding an alternative home.

Despite not having garnered much critical attention until now, space does play an important role in Guibert's AIDS texts as this study has sought to demonstrate. Whilst their subject matter is not at first glance obviously spatial, these texts are particularly valuable in terms of the light that they shed on the impact of stigmatised illness upon home space. Moreover, close analysis indicates the pervasive geo-cultural mythologies underpinning international perceptions of illnesses such as AIDS. The impact of such a disease upon both individual and national senses of cultural belonging is clearly significant. The example of Guibert's life writings, then, clearly adds weight to the argument advanced at the beginning of this study that all life, and therefore all literature, is worthy of spatial analysis.

If 'Guibert's' sense of belonging in space is textually constructed as having been radically affected by the advent of the catastrophic illness of AIDS, then in the case of 'Dobrovsky', the sense of cultural displacement is both more pervasive and more deeply interwoven into his identity. I have argued Dobrovsky's *autofictions* to be pervaded by a quest for 'une place' that is both geographical and cultural, both literal and figurative. Moreover, it is fundamentally bound up with Dobrovsky's textual avatar's Jewish ethnicity, and his childhood experiences during the Occupation of Paris in the Second World War. This childhood sense of cultural dispossession, I have suggested, is presented as a primary motor for the intricate spatial structure

through which the adult 'Doubrovsky' lives his life. Despite establishing himself in the 'New World' and finding his ethnicity to be considerably less problematic there, my analysis has suggested that 'Doubrovsky' is constructed as never intending to renounce being French. In fact, his time in the US is presented as an opportunity to gain cultural capital with which to renegotiate his position in his French homeland. So deeply interwoven in 'Doubrovsky's' identity is the division between the US and France, however, that a reading fuelled by Lacanian theory was found to shed considerable light upon this phenomenon. In sum, the topic of home space and cultural belonging has been shown to be of paramount importance within Doubrovsky's *autofictions*. These works paint a striking picture of an individual whose sense of cultural affiliation and home space is clearly identified, and yet who is excluded from this site by the particular ideological forces within society.

In fact, the parallels between the constructions of home space in Robin's writings and those of Doubrovsky are striking. Expressing a feeling of disorientation and lack of a clear home space, for example, the various voices of Robin's works seem repeatedly to tell us of their feeling of a lack of spatial belonging. Moreover, constructing Paris as the site of childhood, Robin's texts, like those of Doubrovsky, portray this city as indelibly marked and tarnished by the events of the Second World War. However, if in 'Doubrovsky's' case, the desired home space is clearly identified if unattainable, then for Robin's intratextual characters, home space is even more problematic. As I have argued, these works are haunted by notions of lost 'home spaces' in the form of Jewish ghettos that were destroyed in the Second World War. Faced with the impossibility of re-creating such idealised sites of belonging, Robin's protagonists seem unable to establish anything other than temporary home spaces in any place. Indeed, in their multifaceted narrations of tales of migration, these works are united by a shared will to dramatise the impact of inhabiting different spaces upon questions of identity and upon survival itself. Home is presented as provisional and fragile, and is always coloured by a struggle for existence between different cultural and ethnic identities. In this way, all three of Robin's literary writings seem to directly question what it means to belong in space, particularly as a Jewish person struggling with the aftermath of the Holocaust. Bearing the impossible weight of the destruction of their ethnic and cultural heritage, then, Robin's *personna-*

ges are presented as seeking recourse to 'non-lieux' in which no form of memory is possible. That is to say that, failing to find any place in which the complexities of their cultural and ethnic identities can be unproblematically inscribed, Robin's characters establish some form of home space in ahistorical sites of transit such as airports and hotel rooms.

In each of the life writing corpuses addressed in this study, then, issues of 'home spaces' and cultural 'belonging' are of paramount importance. From the textual articulations of Guibert through to those of Robin, notions of 'home' and 'belonging' can be seen to become more complex and more problematic. From 'Guibert', whose sense of cultural affiliation is deeply rooted but is thrown into doubt by the extreme experience of the HIV virus, to Robin's characters, whose home space is definitively lost and whose cultural affiliations are multiple and competing, the analysis of home space in these works has been deeply revealing. Indeed, it is central to this study to contend that the spatial analysis of life writing texts such as these does not only illuminate our understanding of the texts themselves. In their intricate narrations of the impacts of some of the most significant events of the twentieth century upon geo-cultural identity, these life writings comprise invaluable resources in deepening our understanding of the experience of space itself. As I argued in chapter 6, in the case of each of these authors, life writing could be said to constitute a form of 'post-modern cartography'. That is to say that not only are these writings underpinned by principles that could be said to chime with the fundamental precepts of postmodernism, but that each, in different ways, maps out spaces that display postmodern characteristics. For each individual, there is evidence to suggest that writing constitutes a form of active guide, both symbolic and geographical, which helps to orientate them in the confusion of the postmodern world. Moreover, it is my contention that these personalised, multi-layered and shifting narratives, whilst in many ways constituting the antithesis of static and rational maps, offer a richness of vision of contemporary space that should not be underestimated by geographers: text-led readings of space may provide a particularly useful way in which to replace the emphasis on the individual, the subjective and the personal in geographical enquiry.

In sum, it is hoped that this study has gone some way towards its objective of opening up the channels of communication between

the fields of geography and literary studies in order that the underlying assumptions that have sometimes dogged this interdisciplinary terrain might undergo a re-evaluation. The text-led readings undertaken in this book have aimed to demonstrate that it is not only those texts that are most obviously concerned with spatial phenomena that are worthy of spatial analysis: all life experience, and hence all life writing, occurs within and is mediated by space. Moreover, it is my strong belief that focus upon the nuanced, complex narrations of space proffered in literature has the potential to be of much greater significance to those within the discipline of Geography than its traditional role might suggest. Altogether, it seems clear that further exploration of this interdisciplinary subject area has much to offer.

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