



“Distance Lends Enchantment”: Photography and The Dialectics of Space and Time in Graham Swift’s *Out of this World* (1988)

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Abstract – This article examines the dialectics between distance and proximity in Graham Swift’s *Out of this World*. It specifically addresses the relationship between Harry Beech, one of the main characters, and his relatives, namely his daughter and his father, Sophie and Robert, respectively. As a photojournalist, Harry travels around the world; he seldom stays at home. The close proximity he enjoys with the victims of war he photographs, in defiance to his father who is an arm manufacturer, ironically entails a distancing whose effects are often perverse. This results in a paradigmatic pattern in which distance generates transient proximity and proximity reflects distance.

Keywords: Graham Swift, *Out of this World*, photography, postmodernism, distance, proximity

1. Introduction

In Graham Swift’s *Out of this World*, a peculiar emphasis is put on the opposition presence-absence. Graham Swift’s novel works out this dynamics of exclusion through its two main characters, Harry and Sophie. Harry is Sophie’s father. However, they are portrayed to be living in estrangement; neither Harry nor Sophie is in the presence of one another in the whole story. Harry is settled in England and rovers around the world as a professional photographer, while Sophie is in New York with her husband and children. They have not met for ten years. Harry and Sophie are, to say the least, mutually exclusive in the narrative space. The only occasions in which they appear together pertain to the realm of reminiscences, flashbacks, the absent past.

As the title of the novel suggests, Swift’s text foregrounds indeed the peripheral, the *outside*. Accordingly, distance as a theme pre-eminently singles out, as shown in the separation between father and daughter. The theme of distance determines decisively the novel and, as presence does in poststructuralist thought, implies in the process its absence: proximity. Swift’s novel, primarily—but not solely—through photography, problematizes this opposition between proximity and distance in the post-industrial world. The purpose of this paper is to show, through an analysis of Harry’s relationship with his relatives, on the one hand, and through his profession as a photographer, on the other hand, that the storyline in *Out of this World* rests

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easily on a dialectics between closeness and remoteness, a dialectics in which space is subject to the focus of the eye.

2. Framing Space

The centrality of distance in Swift's novel is first and foremost called to mind in the nature of the narrative. *Out of this World* presents a narrative that is framed in a distance-proximity logic. Essentially structured by two voices, Harry's and Sophie's, it points out absence and speaks, in some instances, in favour of proximity. Harry's and Sophie's narrations, presented by a silent narrator, are fairly distinct in the narrative space; yet they are quite entangled. If Harry's can be said to be the first-level narrative, in terms of primacy, none of the two narratives really embeds, and none of them is embedded either. They are paralleled, in a syntagmatic axis, alternately excluding one another; they are set close together, but they never merge. The two voices, sometimes mourning remoteness, sometimes celebrating it, keep their distance. They diverge across the board from the beginning to the end of the novel.

The text, in reality, is framed in an alternative intervention game, a presence-absence logic, one voice appropriating the narrative space in turn. When one flips through the book, the novel resembles a photo album in which each photo of Harry is followed by a picture of Sophie. The only two voices that violate this father-daughter privacy are the voice of Anna, Harry's wife, and Joe's, Sophie's husband. Joe in the game of closeness and remoteness is portrayed as an intruder; "*a visitor, that's all. An extra guest at the party*" (OTW 147). As for Anna, she "*invades privacy*" from among the dead: she is already dead in the temporal logic of the narrative when she gives a short biographical account that would redeem her from cheating on her husband, when he was far-away, photographing the evils of war.

In fact, prior to the opening of his narration, Harry was a photojournalist. He had worked for the Air force as an aerial photographer; and he even returned later on, in 1973, to aerial photography, but this time as an archaeologist in quest of the vestiges of the Bronze Age (OTW 35-39). His life relates to a world of pictures, a world of framing, which accounts for the fact that his eyes often take the role of the focus of the camera. In the Air force, for instance, he "*looked down with a privilege no pilot ever had on target after target*" (OTW 47); and as he observes,

He learnt to distinguish the marks of destruction—the massive ruptures of 4,000-pounders from the blisters of 1,000 pounders and the mere pock-marks of 250-pound clusters—and to translate these two dimensional images, which were the records of three-dimensional facts, into one-dimensional formulae [...] while someone in the hierarchical clouds above [him] refined these figures into the ethereal concept known as 'the progress of operations' (47).



In Vietnam, among the other places he has visited as a photojournalist, Harry keeps, though at ground level this time, lining presence out of absence, fragmenting the world into “small worlds” (OTW 101). He is portrayed as the signifier of a dynamics of exclusion between being and nothingness. For him, totality is impossible; one cannot capture the world. As he remarks, hinting at the issue of perspective, *“the problem is what you don’t see. The problem is your field of vision. (A picture of the whole world!) The problem is selection [...], the frame, the separation of the image from things. The extraction of the world from the world. The problem is where and how you draw the line”* (119). This arbitrariness in photography, as well as the relativity of the photograph as the reproduction of a chronotope, is often pointed out in the text, as we shall see.

Like her father, Sophie also delimits space in taking pictures, even though she does not share Harry’s fondness for cameras. She is described as a character who suffers from an irrational fear of cameras; a phobia which contrasts with Harry’s commitment to photography. Daniel Lea, in his book *Graham Swift*, draws attention to this conflicting situation: *“Out of this World”*, he writes, *“exhibits a complex dialectical interaction between scopophilic and scopophobic tendencies. The desire, indeed compulsion, to see and to witness is counterbalanced by an equally, powerful exigency to ignore and turn away”* (111). As she explains to her analyst, Doctor K., there are *“two things [Sophie] has never allowed in the house. Toy guns (six-shooters, rifles, machine-guns or any form of toy weaponry). And cameras”* (73).

Sophie does not only abhor the camera; she also despises (toy) guns which, one way or another, deprived her of her grandfather, Robert Beech. As Elisabeta Catana puts it, Sophie *“mentally rejects the negative aspects of her past suggestively represented by toy-guns and cameras”* (85). About the gun, one can mention that her grandfather was an arm manufacturer and a distinguished soldier, holder of the Victorian Cross, who died of a terrorist bomb attack (a car bomb). As for the camera, it represents the absence of the father; it symbolizes what has ever distanced Harry from her.

This is after seeing her twins playing with toy guns that Sophie got into psychological troubles: *“I never thought my time would come as it did. A toy gun (...)”* (75), she says. Her fear of the gun and camera, about which an analogy is often drawn in the novel,¹ reduces her to a distant and passive observer indulging in a metaphysics of framing. No wonder then that memory is for her a refuge:

Dear boys. I don’t allow cameras in the house, but your mother still takes her mental photographs, still puts on mental film her aides-memoires of your ignorant, growing years. As now, through the kitchen window, where in the fading Brooklyn evening you are playing with your father (no gun this time) in the yard. A rough and ready game of soccer [...] He lets in a header from Paul. Mops his brow. Laughs. A perfect snapshot. Framed in the kitchen window. The laughing father, the laughing sons (OTW 75-76).



After this passage, Sophie alludes to the business of "images" that Joe runs, framing for American tourists the spaces to visit in Britain, "*things not to miss in Beautiful Britain*" (77), and then offers additional mental photographs to Doctor K. who, nevertheless, contends that "*an image is something without knowledge or memory*" (76).

Harry frames images in his mind as well, when he stops photojournalism (OTW 206). Incidentally, Catana is certainly right when she writes that, "*in Graham Swift's novel, the past is represented as a collection of mental photographs taken by the characters telling their stories*" (84). But this situation is not entirely exclusive to the past. The present is sometimes also represented through mental photographs. For instance, about Jenny, the assistant he has fallen in love with, Harry observes: "*I am sixty-four years old, and the picture looms before me, exquisitely framed, of building my life round a beautiful girl of twenty-three*" (120). It is obvious that the generation gap between Harry and Jenny indicated in this passage, like the spatial gap between Harry and Sophie and the ideological breach that separates Harry from his father, functions as a signifier of distance. But what matters the most at this level is that Harry, in the same way as Sophie, conceives of photographs in his ultimate subjective space: the mind!

Sophie, however, perhaps due to her mental state, surpasses Harry in drawing line patterns within the privacy of the psyche.² She is utterly eidetic in relation to the world around her. Even a map is for her a spatial patchwork in which spaces are delimited, and images reflected. When she looks at the map:

England is like a little hunched-up old lady at the seaside, her back turned towards the rest of Europe, dipping her toe into the Atlantic Ocean and pulling up her skirts round her shrivelled body. She is sitting down because she is no longer steady on her legs. Someone has thrown in her direction a two-tone beach-ball called Ireland and she is screwing up her face in displeasure (191).

This personification of England with an allusion to the I.R.A bombing campaign, one of the main sub-themes of the novel – her grandfather was killed in an I.R.A. car-bomb – intervenes soon before she leaves New York for London. She, at that moment, gets out of the psychoanalytic space she was confined in all along the story to fill out the gap that has, for ten years, separated her from her father.³ And as she sets herself in a dynamics of reducing distance, Sophie seems to unconsciously long to shorten time. For example, when her twins look impatient, she calms them down thus:

You think it's a long time to be on a plane? [...] But look at it another way. Only seven hours to fly from New York to London. It takes days to cross the Atlantic Ocean by ships. It used to take weeks [...] Or look at it another way. Seven hours. And yet we're flying so fast that we'll actually shorten time. You'll see. In a little while it'll be dark, but it won't stay dark for very long [...] when we land in London it'll be breakfast-time there, when for us it should still be the middle of the night. And it will all seem strange [...] It'll be tomorrow before it's even stopped being today (201-202).



This passage is very telling as to the place given to technological advances in *Out of this World*, “the cold technological age the main characters would like to escape from” (Catana 86). A technological age that is mainly referred to in the novel through some advances that unprecedentedly reduce distance but also shorten, indeed crystallize time.

3. Zooming out Proximity

While TV is often brought to mind, and satellites sometimes evoked, photography remains in the novel the technological device that best illustrates the presence-absence logic of post-industrial societies. In fact, as it frames space, and reduces distance, so does a photograph crystallize time and in so doing records the past. As Barthes suggests in *Camera Lucida*, a photograph is always separated from its viewer by History (64). The temporal value of photography, which also testifies to the relevance of Hutcheon’s assertion that “the absent past can only be inferred from circumstantial evidence” (69), often comes to mind in the novel. For instance, when Harry sees a picture of his mother who died when he was born – she died in childbirth – he observes:

A photo is truth positive, fact incarnate and incontrovertible. And yet: explain to me that glimpse into unreality. How can it be? How can it be that an instant which occurs once and once only, remains permanently visible? How could it be that a woman whom I had never known or seen before – though I had no doubt who she was – could be staring up at me from the brown surface of a piece of paper? From a time before I existed. From a time before, perhaps, she had even thought of me and when she was undoubtedly ignorant of what I would mean to her (205).

This presence of absence, the presence of the past in the present, gets the concept of proximity – which photography embodies in the novel – fully operating. The past in Sophie’s psychological world used to be “a good refuge”, concealed in the privacy of the mind; but when it is immortalised through a photograph, the past becomes mere empirical data, a subject to the eye, and then coexists with the present. Photography, Harry says,

Should be about what you cannot see. What you cannot see because it is far away and only the eye of the camera will take you there. Or what you cannot see because it happens so suddenly or so cruelly there is no time or even desire to see it, and only the camera can show you what it is like while it is still happening (55).

Photography generally imports proximity because it implies in its nature distance. And in this respect, it symbolizes to a great extent the dialectics between closeness and remoteness around which *Out of this World* revolves.

There is, in fact, an outstanding conflicting relation at work between proximity and distance in Graham Swift’s text; an antagonistic situation which, as it saturates the narrative space, reveals the ontological link between closeness and remoteness, and their inseparability as well. This opposition, as one can



easily notice, underlies the narrative from its incipit to its ending. From the onset, for instance, in the very first chapter, the reader is made aware of this irreconcilable relation: he or she is in the presence of an account of the historical moon-landing in 1969 and its broadcasting. This event obviously indicates both and at the same time closeness and remoteness: the Appollo mission distances itself from Earth to become completely proximate to the moon and, through TV, viewers are being artificially "close" to and empirically distant from these first "moon-men".⁴ Distance shifts here into proximity, and proximity renders distance. They are simultaneously signified in both actors and spectators of the event.

In addition, this spatial dialectics, which unfolds at the initial point of the story, appears in the unfriendly father-son relationship between Robert and Harry. As Lea observes:

The chapter is dominated by perspectival oppositions: the earth and the moon are the most obvious but Harry and Robert's ages (50 and 70 respectively) parallel each other [and] frequent references to being 'out there' and 'far out' emphasise a sense of distance, but that is counterbalanced by Harry's admission that the event enabled an unprecedented intimacy between father and son (109).

Though they have been almost always physically and intellectually isolated from one another—the former regretting a 'bad' son and the latter committing parricide as he photographs the atrocities which arm manufacturing engenders—on the day of the moon-landing, the gap between Robert and Harry is, as if by magic, significantly reduced. The logic of separation which characterized their relationship is no longer operating; distance has shifted back into proximity: "*we sat up together all night watching those first moon-men take their first, shy steps on the moon [...] we were close that night [...] for some reason we were closer than we'd ever been. It was our closeness that mattered, more than the men on the distant moon*" (OTW 11-14). The last sentence of this passage clearly evokes it; the opposition proximity-distance and their perverse relationship permeate the novel.

As a news photographer, Harry's desire is to get the closest possible to warfare victims (Algiers, Vietnam, north-eastern Congo, etc.). But the proximity he longs for in war photo-journalism ironically produces ruinous distance: it engenders a perverse closeness at the place of departure. As a matter of fact, the proximity Harry desires to experience distances him from his family. He challenges his father, showing to the world the negative side of the latter's business (arm manufacturing); and he is seldom present at home by the side of his wife and daughter. As a result, he is disinherited by his father; his wife gets pregnant from his friend Frank; and Sophie simply decides to disown him and transpose the image of the father to Robert, her grandfather.



About the infidelity and subsequent pregnancy of Harry's wife, his father spells out the causality: "*You were away so much, don't forget. Taking pictures [...] And as I recall, you were even more eager, that winter, to get as far away as possible. The further, the better. The more dangerous, the better*" (169). As the passage points to, the causality is grounded in the distancing logic Harry had set himself in. Sophie, on the other hand, despises Harry because of his constant absence, mostly after the accidental death of her mother.

This situation which affected so much Sophie—though she never explicitly expresses it—made her turn towards her grandfather as a substitute for her absent father so she can transcend the disjuncture imposed on her. "*I first realized that Mum was never coming back*", she regrets, and "*that Harry was never going to be at home much anymore*";

He was never really going to be my father again [...] he still kept going away—out of guilt maybe. So perhaps if I'd said to him, it's all right, Harry—it's all right, Dad—you don't have to be guilty about Mum, I know she's dead already, he might have come back to stay for good. But by this time I'd grown to like Grandad as my father, and I'd grown to realize—and the feeling was mutual—that I was the most precious thing [Grandad] had" (61).

Grandad is Sophie's new father, and Harry becomes to her transparent, *trans-parent*. Also, the psychological effects of Harry's absence on her as a grown-up are far-reaching and implied in nearly all the accounts she gives to Doctor K. She is, for instance, deeply disappointed in Harry when he misses her tenth birthday (OTW 64).

Nonetheless, the fact that mainly prompted the absolute estrangement between Sophie and her father is *presence*: the presence of Harry on the day Grandad dies; a breach to the distancing logic Harry had till then adopted. The fact that mostly hurt Sophie on that day is the gruesome reduction of distance, the cruel crystallising of time, the sinister framing of space he indulges in. Harry's immediate reaction at the bomb attack was (a professional reflex?) to photograph the blast, to photograph his own father dying. That was for Sophie an unforgivable 'blasphemy'. And from that point on, Harry is no longer "Dad" for her. Now he is merely "Harry". Putting a special emphasis on distancing and absence, Sophie reveals this repudiation as follows:

It's easy, it's simple; you just go away. You just make sure you're not at the scene. You just don't be there. [Harry] held his arms outwards, like a pair of useless wings. I know what he wanted. He wanted to embrace me [...] I let him flap his arms like that [...] I said to myself: you're never going to see, you're never coming near your grandchildren. Then I put out my hand. I saw the look in his eyes. He took it, pressed it. And I said, 'Goodbye. Harry' (88).

The distancing she decides from Harry to her children is also the starting point of absolute estrangement from Harry for a period of ten years, as already mentioned, and the reunion suggested in the text never really happens in the



narrative, as Stef Craps has observed.⁵ "Though the narrative is inexorably drawn to the fulfilment of its promise of healing, reparation and revival", Craps writes, "the readers desire for closure is ultimately thwarted" (308).

Furthermore, like her mother when Harry was far-away, Sophie cheats on Joe during the latter's trip to Greece. As Joe has distanced himself from her, so she has got proximate to Nick, the plumber. And *Out of this World* is so much moulded in this insidious and sometimes perverse opposition between distance and proximity that in disclosing this infidelity to Doctor K., Sophie does not so much 'expose' her psyche to the analyst as she reveals her desire to get intimately close to him, to drastically reduce the gap between them. But because Doctor K. chooses to remain professional despite the overtures she keeps making to him, she only has fancy to content with: "Darling Doctor K., we mustn't go on meeting like this. Here in your darkened room, on your couch, with my mind all undressed. People might talk. People might tell [...] it's getting to be serious, you and me. It's getting to be a regular thing" (95). The implied analogy between psychoanalysis and sexuality, it is true, evokes the former's inextricable link with the realm of intimacy; but what is more interesting in this passage is that proximity seems to prevail over distance: Sophie and Doctor K. are meeting frequently and distance, between the analysand and the analyst, is getting symbolically reduced. However, all this remains illusory; proximity never really happens in the present of the narration. It is no surprise, therefore, that this illusory proximity is narrated in the very chapter where a hope for reconciliation, a possibility of symbiosis, a prospect of closeness to her father is announced in the narrative: Sophie receives a letter from Harry inviting her to his planned marriage with Jenny. But as already told, this reunion is never fully experienced in the diegesis.

On occasions, Swift's novel seems to be hostile to the notion of proximity. And it apparently questions the illusion of proximity associated with photography. For, in reality, however distant Harry gets from his family to become proximate to the events he wants to make the world discover, absolute closeness is never acquired in relation to the target, which would otherwise obviously make photography impossible. In fact, there looms a space within the space separating Harry and his relatives in his photographic enterprize: Harry is at focal length from his targets. One of the best examples of this distancing from what Barthes calls the *spectrum* of the photograph (9) is when Harry takes a picture of the dying pilot. To give his photograph the required form, both representational and ideological, in short to actualize the image, he 'steps out' (of the scene):

When I took that photograph I thought to myself, if not in so many words: Let this have no aesthetic content, let this be only like it is, in the middle of things. Since I knew already that photos taken in even the most chaotic circumstances can acquire, lifted from the mad flow of events, a perverse



formality and poise. I thought this as I took the picture [...] One second please, face the camera please (but his eyes were shut to the world), to record your moment of glory. I half hid behind the swung-open ambulance door, then stepped out and clicked (106-107).

This passage not only illustrates the focal-length proximity question, it also points to the nature of photography as a mode of representation which, despite its evidential force, lends itself—like the (realist) novel and the other modes of representation using narrative—to “reconstructions”. As Hutcheon reports from Davis, “*the photograph has ceased to be a window on the world, through which we see things as they are. It is rather a highly selective filter, placed there by a specific hand and mind*” (117). This is so much true of photography that Harry, in trying to clear aesthetic and political content from the photograph he takes, only succeeds in giving the photograph—for the required reality-effect—an ideological content (“I half hid...then stepped out and clicked”). This scepticism about photography as a mode of representation is what Stef Craps points out when he observes: “*despite its pretensions to mimetic verisimilitude and truthfulness, photography in the age of simulation ends up producing a sense of reality-loss*” (296).

Another example on how the perverse nature of proximity in photography—the interplay between presence and absence—is underscored in the novel is given in Bill’s account to Harry about an American corporal at Nordhausen:

The GI was approaching the corpses with a handkerchief held over his nose and mouth, but he also had a camera round his neck—his own camera, new-looking—and he started to take pictures, he would wrench his hand from his face, raise the camera and repeat; ‘Oh my God, oh my God’, apparently not noticing Bill [...] But the point of the story is that in his agitation the American had forgotten to take the lens-cap from his camera (108).

Despite the proximity of the American corporal with what he ‘photographs’, in terms of witness-evidence, he is as distant as the “the folks back home” (OTW 108) for whom these photographs were intended. Proximity has therefore proved here ineffective.

Harry’s closeness to the victims of war as a photojournalist might be said to have been useless as well: he implicitly acknowledges the futility of his enterprise when he agrees on the need for arm manufacturing.⁶ Moreover, as already told, the ‘proximity’ he desires ironically defines him in remoteness. In the novel, unarguably, the corollary of proximity is distance. This is besides one of the basic laws of physics: the nearer one gets to point B, the further one is from point A. This is what Derrida expresses when he asserts that “*proximity is a distancing*” (233).

As a war-photographer, Harry is near-by and far-away. He is relatively close to his targets but far from the “*Sunday-morning newspaper readers*” (OTW 116), from his father, and from his family. And this has perverse effects on his life: for the Sunday-morning newspaper readers, he invades privacy with his



horrifying photographs, and as already mentioned, he is disinherited by his father, his wife gets pregnant, and his daughter has disowned him. Yet, Harry (the marriage with Jenny and reunion with Sophie being only mythical in the narrative) keeps fostering distancing. In the present of the narration, he lives in a country cottage and has left photo-journalism and photography at ground level. He is now in aerial photography, suggesting Bachelard's contention that "*in distant miniatures, disparate things become reconciled*" (172). He has chosen to take now pictures vertically downward, to take low-angle pictures, from the air, from far away, from distance, because for him, most probably, distance lends enchantment to the view.

4. Conclusion

In *Out of this World*, as Pascale Tollance puts it, «*ce qui intéresse [Swift] est bien plutôt l'affect que met en jeu la photo et son emprise imaginaire, en particulier l'effet de séparation, de distance, ou d'étrangeté qu'elle crée*» (60). To be sure, separation is inscribed in the novel and maintains the course of the story; one could not, without much difficulty, assert the same of reconciliation. We have argued that Swift's novel is reflective of a dialectics between distance and proximity. Harry's story, to take but one example, confirms, as we have seen, that the need for proximity always ironically entails, in the novel, a distancing whose effects are often perverse. While discussing the opposition between distance and proximity, through Harry, Sophie and photography, we have noted that very often one of the terms of the binary opposition turns into its opposite; distance generates transient proximity and proximity reflects distance.

Also, space appears to be determined by this dialectics. The main characters of the novel through their distribution both in the narrative and diegesis, and through their psychological representations of the world around them, illustrate this conception of space. Sophie is mainly isolated in a room where, drawing margins, she resorts to framed images to remember and relate her past to her analyst, while Harry selects spaces, places and *spectra* out of the world. As a postmodernist fiction chiefly concerned with photography as a mode of representation, Swift's text reveals how distancing, whether chronological or spatial, always questions the effectiveness of the reverse movement of 'closeness' to the referent. The possibility to know reality, even with such an apparently objective medium as photography, is shyly but clearly interrogated in the novel, "*the subject-framing eye of the photographer*", as Hutcheon observes, "*is difficult to reconcile with the objectivity of the camera's technology, its seemingly transparent realism of recording*" (117). As the novel gives to understand, namely through the character of Sophie, *Out of this World* reflects the idea that, in the



same way as it can be produced from the physical world, a photograph can be framed in the mind.

Notes

- a) "You can shoot with both. You can load and aim with both. With both you can find your target" (OTW 77). See also Stef Craps on this analogy (Craps 297).
- b) "For Sophie being 'out of this world' means being out of touch with reality as a psychological condition. Her sense of outsidership is not due to material conditions of postmodernity, with its general sense of placelessness and loss of the real. Rather it is a matter of personal circumstances which she eventually seems to come to terms with" (Smethurst 275).
- c) Besides the question of the I.R.A, it might be interesting to note, about the political life in the UK as it appears in the novel, the sub-theme of the Falklands War and the analysis Stef Craps gives of it. In his insightful article, "Cathartic Fables, Fabled Catharses", Craps observes that "the Falklands episode may be seen as a symptom of Britain's failure to come to terms with the trauma of its loss of prominence in the world. In the post-war period, Britain's status changed from a world power to a middle-sized country with chronic economic difficulties. Its political and economic downfall was sealed by the Suez crisis in 1956, which conclusively signalled the end of British imperial power. Britain's decline sparked a national identity crisis and gave rise to a profound sense of insecurity, which the Falklands War was expected to assuage if not altogether surmount" (Craps 303).
- d) As Paul Smethurst observes, "film tends to collapse distinctions between 'real' place and representations of place" (273).
- e) It would be interesting to note that the instable and antagonistic father-daughter relationship, between Harry and Sophie, reads like a *mise en abyme* of the impossibility of symbiosis in the father-son relationship between Robert and Harry. This hostile relationship is what Malcolm refers to when he writes: "Harry's whole life is a reverse image of his father's" (Malcolm 121). As the narrative indicates, this father-son relationship is illustrative of the Oedipus complex.
- f) Harry mainly chose to be a war photojournalist to condemn his father's business (arm manufacturing); but at some point of the narrative, he observes: "Let's have no shilly-shallying and moral niceties. We need arms for our defence. We need arms to maintain law and peace" (OTW 89).



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