

CHAPTER 5

PLACES: SCENE OF CRIME

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter of this thesis discussed geographical spaces and landscapes under the categories of urban, rural and island-scapes. These larger spaces consist of smaller units that form parts of James' settings. The setting where the crime takes place is a significant one in a crime fiction narrative. Generally, and as is the case with James, a majority of crimes occur within the premise of a built structure such as a house, museum, or church. Although there are scenarios where a serial killer commits a crime in an open space such as the isolated streets or forest grounds (such as in *Devices and Desires* (1989)), in most cases, the crime/violence occurs within enclosures.

In James' novels, these enclosures are spaces that are associated with personal experiences and memories, which assigns that space with the notion of 'place'. "When space feels thoroughly familiar to us, it has become place" (Tuan 2005, 73). While larger geographies are also 'places' associated with memory, experiences and history, as we saw in the preceding chapter, the places in this chapter are smaller units such as domestic spaces (home, nursery, kitchen), work place (hospitals, museums, court), religious spaces (churches) and the scene of crime.

When Wallander realised that he couldn't come up with a satisfactory answer, he read again through the summary he had written. Had he forgotten something? Had he overlooked some detail that would later turn out to have been significant? Even though police work was mostly a matter of patiently searching for clues that could then be combined, he had also learnt from experience that the initial impression of the scene

of a crime was important. More so when the officer was one of the first there after the crime had been committed. (Mankell 2009, 28).

Space in Police Procedurals, first and foremost, makes itself evident in the form of the crime scene. The above quote from Henning Mankell's *Faceless Killers* (1991, trans. 1997) highlights the relevance of the scene of crime to a police officer. One could say that, it is from this point – the arrival of the officer and his or her team at the crime scene, that the case officially begins. In a Police Procedural, in matters of death, the scientific takes precedence over the religious, and thus, places are rendered oppositional. For a civilian, a bloody scene of crime is a profane space invoking horror and disgust. For a police officer and the forensic team, the crime scene is a sacred space that is important for their work, and must be protected. The barricade tape, therefore, territorialises the scene of crime. Only those with permit have the power to access this space and cross over the barricade. Moreover, it is essential to retain the sanctity of a crime scene so that it is uncontaminated, and evidence can be procured by a forensic team that will ultimately help in identifying the culprit. The crime scene is a temporary space. It exists as a liminal space, that is, a space of transition, because it came into existence after the occurrence of crime. Once investigated, it may seem that the space returns to the original state, however, one learns that does not happen. The space that has experienced a crime is tainted with blood both physically and in human memory. This chapter investigates how space-place identities are formed in the post-crime scenario.

Gaston Bachelard in the *The Poetics of Space*, translated from his 1958 French work, *La Poétique de l' Espace*, talks about such spaces that are personalised and carry within them associations of human psyche which he calls “Topoanalysis” (8). Elaborating on the transition of a house to home, he explains, “The house, even more than the landscape is a “psychic state,” and even when reproduced as it appears from the outside, it bespeaks intimacy” (Bachelard 1994, 72). The house is both the macrocosmic “world” and the microcosmic intimate private

space (37). Similarly, a crime scene is both a microcosmic private space, associated with the victim's life experiences. But, it is also a macrocosmic space, that facilitates movement and invasion of an outsider (assigned and legalised) into the private domain. According to Sandvik and Waade (2008), "reality of places is both deconstructed and reconstructed in crime fiction" (3). They argue, "[r]epresentation of places means how places are mediated and presented in media, scripting places is how places are conceptualized and imagined, and navigating places means how people operate, act and perform in actual places through their imagination, expectations and knowledge about the place" (Sandvik and Waade 9).

This chapter analyses James' representation of places under three categories: pre-crime, as a crime scene, and a place post-investigation. This chapter aims to understand how the identity and perception of place changes in each case.

5.2 Scene of Crime

Crime scenes are places that are "encoded so that the particular actions and events, which have taken place, have left a variety of marks and traces, which may be read and interpreted" (Sandwick and Waade 3). A crime scene is a place invested with meaning and symbols, such that it drives the entire narrative of a work of crime fiction. According to Knight (2020), "place is space made legible by the detective. For much crime fiction, the most important place is the crime scene itself. Seemingly mute, crime scenes are places where clues communicate, where the detective makes meaning from the seemingly incomprehensible, where questions find answers" (213).

In case of murder, a scene of crime can either be an indoor space that once held an identity of being a private space, or, outdoor and natural spaces. The latter is challenging for the detective and the forensic team because:

- a) there is a possibility of contamination

- b) interaction with natural forces that can lead to withering
- c) possibilities of tampering with the evidence are higher
- d) the scene of crime is not a confined space and it is difficult to demarcate the area from which there is a possibility of collecting forensic evidence

Therefore, relatively, a confined scene of crime has more potential to collect and sample evidences. Here, samples of dust, imprints (shoe or finger), hair or fabric, blood, remain accessible and can be collected for forensic evidence. Even though the scene of crime may not always provide physical evidences, it is significant because:

- a) it is the first point of contact between the deceased and the investigating officer
- b) the body itself forms an important part of the crime scene that provides significant clues
- c) the space reveals about the victim and the murderer

The space where a body is found indicates a narrative: why was the victim there in the first place? Why did the murderer decide on this space to commit the crime? Is it premeditated or on a spur of the moment? How did the murderer have access to this place? And importantly, the space reveals how the act of crime was executed. As stated in *The Map and the Territory*:

The one responsible for an investigation should always examine the crime scene in person; Jasselin always insisted on that in the lectures he gave to the training institute for inspectors at Sait-Cyr-au-Mont-d'Or. A crime, and especially one that is villainous and brutal, is a very intimate thing, where the murderer necessarily expresses something of his personality and of his relationship with the victim. Hence in the crime scene something individual and unique, practically a signature of the criminal; and this is particularly true, he would add, of atrocious or ritual crimes, of those for which you are naturally disposed to steer the investigation towards a psychopath. (Houellebecq 2012, 183–184)

In James' novels, we see a variety of crime scenes. In *Unnatural Causes* (1967) and *Devices and Desires* (1989) the scene of crime is the shore. In the *Black Tower* (1975), it is the headland. But in the remaining of her novels, the scene of crime has largely been indoor spaces, such as:

- a) religious spaces: the church in *A Taste for Death* (1986) and a theological college in *Death in Holy Orders* (2001)
- b) a laboratory in *Death of an Expert Witness* (1977)
- c) a court in *A Certain Justice* (1997)
- d) a museum in *The Murder Room* (2003)
- e) a hospital in *Mind to Murder* (1963)

A crime scene is neither a private nor a public space. It is a restricted space that allows selective access to the police officers, the surgeon, SOCO, forensic team, and the photographers. During this period, the crime scene is in a state of liminality, a temporary space in transition. However, even if the investigation terminates, the space retains its soiled identity within human memory. The setting gets associated with death, the air with the stench of blood, and the space splattered with blood that cannot be completely cleaned. In *The Lighthouse* (2005), Mrs Burbage can see Adrian Boyde's blood on the floor and wonders "if it will ever completely fade" (317). She considers if "she should ask someone to scrub the floor. In the end she decided to keep the door open and leave it to time and the elements" (317).

The forensic cleaners are responsible for biohazard remediation. They ensure decontaminating of the crime scene and the removal of blood and body fluids. While the physical remains of the act of crime are addressed through the process of vigorous chemical cleaning, ideologically however, the space cannot be completely disassociated. For an indeterminate duration, the crime scene influences the psychological perception of place. As

a result, narratives are built around these spaces, such as the story of the victim, the culprit and the events of the crime committed. As argued by Rohkrämer and Schulz (2009), “A sense of place is shaped by ideologies and understandings of the time. . . . The meaning of places is contested as they are claimed by different users. . . .” (1341). Consequently, spaces become sites of tourism such as museums or historical places, which become memorialised as sites that record crimes against humanity.

a) Dark tourism

The Whitechapel murders in London, popularly known as Jack the Ripper murders that occurred between 1888–1891, subsumes placial identity as sites of crime. Even decades later, one knows the particular house or the street as where the victim of Jack the Ripper lay (Keppel *et al*, 2005). “Jack the Ripper Tour” organised by writer Russell Edwards, claims to be a walking tour around London that will take one to such important locations and crime scenes (“Russel Edwards: Jack the Ripper Experience”, Web). Sharma (2020) in her study associates dark tourism with human morality. These sites of tourism not only reflect the act of violence but also questions the tourist’s engagement with that site. Sharma (2020) writes, “Dark tourism provides new spaces in which not only immorality is (re)presented for contemporary consumption, but also in which morality is communicated, reconfigured and revitalized” (2).

These sites of crime are reminders of pain and suffering. As a place of tourism they aim to remind individuals to refrain from such acts of cruelty by providing an experiential journey by physically visiting these locations. Lopez (2020), in “This is Where it Happened” talks about crime tourism in eight countries including Matsukoni area known for the Yakuza community in Kyoto, Japan; “history of crime” tour in Frankfurt, Germany; the “Anti-Mafia

Tour” in Palermo, Italy; the “Pablo Escobar Escape Route” in Medellin, Columbia, among others (14).⁸

b) Historical importance

Incidences of mass murders at the Jallianwala Bagh, Auschwitz, the Hiroshima Atomic Bomb site, and similar examples across the globe that form places of historical importance. These places are preserved as sites that narrate and document history of a particular time and act as constant reminders of trauma in an effort to remind people of the consequences of violence. It shows that despite decades, these crimes haunt memories and lives of people who not only experienced it but also the future generations. Such crime psychologically affect people but also in cases like the Atomic bombing, studies show that the after-effects of radiations have resulted in physical health ailments and disabilities. The story of Sadako Sasaki, a young girl who suffered from leukaemia, nearly 10 years after the bombing, is well known. A victim of radioactivity due to the bombing (*hibakusha*), Sadako made a thousand origami cranes using papers in which her medicines came in. Origami cranes have since then become a cultural symbol of peace and her monument near the Peace Memorial in Hiroshima, represents all the child victims of the nuclear attack.

⁸ See the third newsarticle, Appendix II

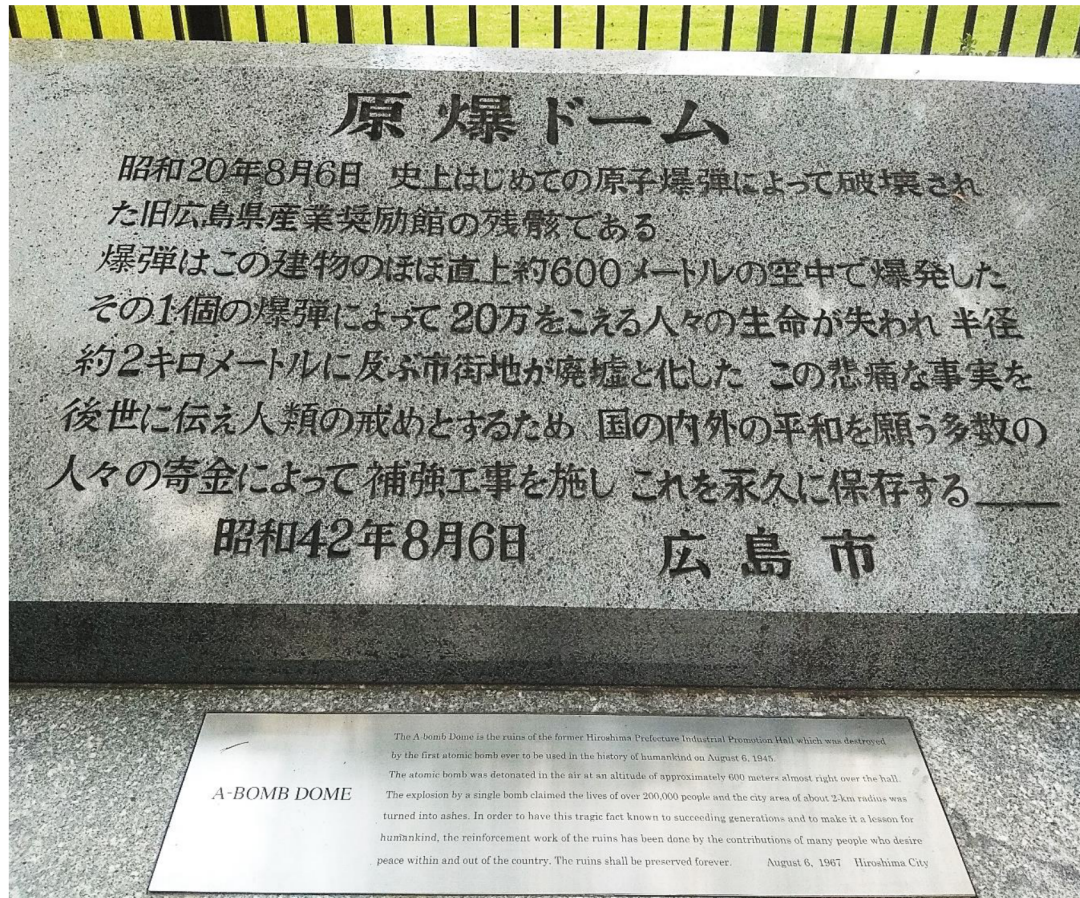


Figure 5: The inscription and plaque at the Atomic Bomb Dome site, Hiroshima City.

Photo Credit: Shrija Srinivasan. Date: 18th August 2019.



Figure 6: The Hiroshima Atomic Bomb Dome site and the declaration of the Genbaku Dome as the World Heritage Site.

Photo Credit: Shrija Srinivasan. Date: 18th August 2019.

The images above (Figure 5 and Figure 6) indicate that spaces and memories are deeply interwoven with time. The Genbaku Dome is preserved, and thereby in a frozen in time, in the post-bombing state of destruction. The visuality of the Dome is jarring as it stands among the surrounding redeveloped areas. The decision to leave the Dome as it is, without restoring it to the earlier state, renders the dome to be a historic symbol of the dangers of nuclear warfare. James too recollects the “mushroom cloud” in *Devices and Desires* (1989) (593–594). With the entitlement of a World Heritage Site, the Dome attracts tourists who visit the site and the Peace Memorial and Museum (Figure 7 and Figure 8).



Figure 7: The Peace Memorial near the Hiroshima Atomic Bomb Site. In this picture the Genbaku dome is visible through the centre of the curvature of the memorial.

Photo Credit: Shrija Srinivasan. Date: 18th August 2019.



Figure 8: Display inside the Peace Memorial Museum, Hiroshima.

Photo Credit: Shrija Srinivasan. Date: 18th August 2019.

Figure 8 from the Peace Memorial Museum, assimilates time, history, memory and experience. The stone slab exhibited in the museum and the museum itself encapsulates space at one particular time. The display titled “Human Shadow Etched in Stone”, as seen in the image, reads:

These stone steps were at the entrance to the Hiroshima Branch of the Sumitomo Bank. Exposed to the atomic explosion at close range, the person sitting on the steps waiting for the bank to open is thought to have died on the spot with no possibility of escape. The intense heat of the A-bomb turned the steps whitish; the stone under the sitting person remained dark, like a shadow. Several families have suggested that the person killed on the steps may have been one of their own.

The varying colour gradient on the stone slab narrates two stories: the whitened space documents the bombing and the blackened space the lost human life. This structure in the museum preserves physical space of the stone slabs but also the embedded space of the individual resting on these slabs, along with the time of the explosion. Therefore, not only are the scene of crime or the geographical site important, but museum spaces play a crucial role in the preservation of narratives, artefacts and as seen in Figure 8 architectural spaces.

c) Representation in Museums

Crime and crime scenes are preserved and curated in museums spaces. Documenting crimes serves to inform future generations of the pain and suffering of people and the consequences of violence. Crime museums are also used for training police officers to both hone their investigatory skills for upcoming cases as well as to learn from the mistakes of previous investigations. James' fictional Dupayne Museum in *The Murder Room* (2003) established by Max Dupayne in 1961 is dedicated to the interwar years (1918–1939). It contains the Murder Room, which is a specific unit dedicated to murder cases that are either solved or unsolved.

The Murder Room documents the real-life incident of the “Brighton Trunk Murder Case” where it displays the trunk that held the body of Violette Kaye, a dancer and prostitute murdered by her lover Tony Mancini. This case was also broadcasted as Episode 18 titled “The Hammerhead” in Orson Welles’s radio program titled *Tales from the Black Museum* (1952) which talks about the cases documented in Scotland Yard’s Black Museum. The Dupayne invokes the Crime Museum also known as the Black Museum at New Scotland Yard which was earlier used to train officers in investigative techniques, and the River Police Museum situated at Wapping (*The Murder Room* 28; “Inside the Metropolitan Police’s ‘Black Museum’ of Crime”, Web).

Although within these museums the exact place of crime cannot be displayed, they are documented in narrative and through the displayed artefacts (such as a trunk). For example, the Violette Saunders (known as Violette Kaye) murder by Mancini (named Cecil Lois England at birth) in 1934, is identified with the place Brighton where she was murdered at 44 Park Crescent and her body was stored in a trunk for the next two months at Mancini's flat in 52, Kemp Street (D'Enno, 2003). A museum space, therefore, is "about the individual life, how it was lived" and also indicative of where they lived (*The Murder Room* 85). The place where the crime occurred, 'Brighton' in this case, is equally relevant which is why the incident is known with its spatial reference, 'Brighton Trunk Murder Case', the geographical mappable space and the space of the trunk in which the body was confined.

Many of these murder sites such as in the case of Violette Kaye or Jack the Ripper's last victim Mary Kelly, have been domestic spaces (44 Park Crescent and 52 Kemp Street, and, 13 Miller's Court, respectively). In many of James' novels too, murder takes place inside domestic spaces such as country houses. However, according to Young (2007), many English country houses underwent a transition from a domestic home to public space such as museums (61). Young explains: "Houses are intricate objects, comprising real estate, physical fabric, arranged or decorated settings, items of furnishing, household equipment fittings; not to mention the load of human associations past and present. . . ." (60). The English Country house, therefore, is a place indicative of the English society, lifestyle and culture. It is no wonder then, that the Dalgliesh series features the English Country house as an important scene of crime. James revives the popular country house mystery trope such as that of Holmes' *The Hound of Baskervilles* (1901–1902), Christie's *The Mysterious Affair at Styles* (1920), A.A. Milne's *The Red House Mystery* (1922), and, Cyril Hare's *An English Murder* (1951).

5.3 Mise-en-scène: English Country Houses

The English country houses are architectural structures that symbolise tradition, luxury and class hierarchy as they represented the wealthy English community (Walford, 2021; DiCamillo, 2020).⁹ This community consisted of the agricultural landed gentry. With the import of cheaper crops from America, the farming practices in Britain declined and the prices of land fell resulting in what is called the ‘agricultural depression’ (Parker, 2017; Lazarus, 2018). As a result, the aristocratic community could no longer sustain the “hugely expensive maintenance cost of older buildings” (Walford, 2021). According to Parker (2017), the 1832 Reform Act impacted the political and social structure of class hierarchy due to “transfer of power in the House of Commons to a wider, more urban class. . . All this eroded the landowners’ traditional political dominance of particular territories and localities, and thus the role of the country house as a focus and display of prestige and authority” (3). With the imposition of death duties (inheritance tax) in 1894 and loss of family heirs in the First World War, it became problematic to sustain these estates.

In the 1920s, country houses were opened to the public. They existed both as domestic spaces and museums that captured British colonial history (Barczewski 2014, 3). Even today, many houses, such as the Badminton House (Badminton Estate) in Gloucestershire, are sites of tourism, and commercial venues for filming and special events, apart from being the residence of Duke and Duchess of Beaufort (“A Short History of the Estate”, Web). During the Second World War, many of these buildings were used to house troupes who mishandled these architectures. By 1955, most of the country houses were demolished, many were remodelled and new structures were established (DiCamillo, 2020; Knight, 2021; Parker, 2017; Beckett, *Lost Heritage*). James, in *The Private Patient* (2008) explains that maintaining

⁹ Here, the term country houses, also include manor houses and estates. According to Parker (2017) there is “no fixed definition of a ‘country house’” (4)

these houses is challenging even in contemporary times. According to Chandler-Powell's grandfather, "[t]he money runs out, they can't afford to maintain it. The heir makes millions in the City and has no interest in his heritage. Or their heir may be killed in a war. The landed class have a propensity for getting themselves killed in wars. Or the house is lost through folly – women, gambling, drink, drugs, speculation, extravagance" (46). Therefore, when Nicholas Cressett suffered financial loss, he sold the Manor which was bought by Chandler-Powell.

The house, as it broke primogeniture, no longer indicated family lineage as there is a transfer of property to another through bidding. However, in this story, Helena succeeds to retrieve the property as a part of the Cressett family by marrying Chandler-Powell. For Helena, the Manor is her home, a place where she spent her childhood along with her governess Letitia. For Kate Miskin, the Manor house is not a place where one could live in. A home for Miskin, is a smaller apartment, similar to the one she has in the city, whereas, a Manor is more archaic dwelling, resembling a museum-like architecture:

Passing through the great hall, Kate was again jolted into a vivid impression of light, space and colour, the leaping of the flames of the wood fire. . . Like the rest of the Manor, it seemed a place to be visited in wonder, never actually lived in. She could never be happy in such a house, imposing the obligations of the past, a publicly borne burden of responsibility, and thought with satisfaction of that light-filled, sparsely furnished flat high above the Thames. (148)

P.D. James, through the Dalglish series, revives English country and manor houses as spaces that undergo transition, with the changing social and economic dynamics of the English society. These houses are not only domestic settings here, but are also spaces of convalescence, healthcare institutions, and laboratories, apart from being crime scenes. This section of this thesis work, is dedicated to these houses in transition. Evidences are taken from *Cover Her Face* (1962), *A Mind to Murder* (1963), *Shroud for a Nightingale* (1971), *Death of*

an Expert Witness (1977) and *The Private Patient* (2008). This wide range of novels from 1962 to 2008, including James' first and last novel, depict that these houses have been relevant for James throughout her writing period.

Since country houses dominated the south of England, it also determines James' geographical setting for her novels. While these houses are the setting for crime, they also take up much of the narrative space to describe the architectural details and styles such as: Elizabethan, Victorian and Georgian designs. However, James' Anglican representation ignores the colonial influences in their architecture and interior design.¹⁰ According to Barczewski (2014):

Country houses contributed to this bifurcation by serving as venues in which European culture, in the form of its architectural and aesthetic styles, were displayed to its maximum effect, thereby presenting an argument of its superiority and, by implication, reducing other cultures to alien and subordinate status. But at the same time, country houses admitted a variety of imperial influences, blurring the boundaries between empire and metropolis with their architecture, interior décor and material culture. Country houses were thus sites in which metropolis and empire were in some ways kept apart but in others brought together. (139)

The country houses in the Dalgliesh series borrow from James' contemporary society which saw the remodelling of spaces, such that, while parts of these houses retained their European aesthetics, parts of it functioned as office spaces and commercial centres. In crime fiction, they are also spaces of conflict and undergo social and/or structural disintegration as a consequence of the crime.

¹⁰ The interior design of a country house reflected colonial and slave trade. Artefacts and décor such as paintings, sculptures, carpets, were brought from colonised regions such as India and Africa which formed a part of the interior design.

5.3.1 Social Disintegration

Cover Her Face (1962) is set in a fictional village called Chadfleet in Essex county. The narrative goes back and forth between London and Essex, but the fictional epicentre remains the Martingale Manor House. This Elizabethan manor house, is a symbol of the upper-class strata, the Maxies. In a detailed description of the Martingale house, James writes:

. . . a typical Elizabethan manor house, simple but strongly formalized in design. The large two-storeyed bays with their mullioned and transomed windows stood symmetrically on each side of the square central porch. Above the dripstone was a heavy carved coat of arms. The roof sloped to a small open stone balustrade also carved with symbols in relief and the six great Tudor chimneys stood up boldly against the summer sky. To the west curved the wall of a room which Dalgliesh guessed had been added at a later date – probably during the last century. The French windows were of plated glass and led into the garden. . . To the west a grey stone wall ran from the corner of the house in a wide sweep towards the gates and lost itself behind the shrubs and tall beeches. The trees were very close to the house on this side. Above the wall and half-concealed behind a mosaic of leaves he could just see the top of a ladder placed against an oriel window. That presumably was the dead girl’s room. (*Cover Her Face* 58–59)

The architectural embellishments such as the coat of arms and the carved balustrade depict the typical aesthetics of English country houses. Contradictorily, the paragraph ends with the indication of murder as it leads to the “dead girl’s room”. The French glass windows is an ominous indication of the vulnerability of the house to external penetration and theft. Additionally, the Martingale Manor house has multiple entrances such as the south door or the kitchen door which makes it difficult to monitor any security breach. Stephen Maxie tells Dalgliesh, “Even if we lock the doors carefully the house wouldn’t be burglar proof. Anyone

could get in through the French windows in the drawing room. We do lock them, but the glass could easily be broken. It has never seemed worthwhile worrying too much about security” (80).

Similarly, the south door of the manor house:

. . . leads directly to the flight of stairs which go up to the old nursery. To that extent Miss Jupp slept in a part of the house which can be said to have its own entrance. Almost a self contained flat in effect. Once the kitchen quarters were closed for the night she could let a visitor in through that door with little risk of discovery. If the door were left unbolted a visitor could gain entrance to her door with reasonable ease. (79–80)

The nursery is isolated from the main house and accessible to an outsider who can enter the premises without notice and commit a crime. In this novel, therefore, characters can easily move from one place to another, in and out of the Manor house, facilitated by points of access such as windows, doors, or open country grounds.

The characters also travel to and fro between London and Martingale, that is the city and country space. Stephen and Catherine work at St Luke’s hospital in London as a surgeon and a nurse respectively. From outside their hospital window, they can see the “shining curve of the river and the towers of Westminster” and “ceaseless rumbling of traffic” which was “muted” by the “unobtrusive background to the occasional noises of the hospital, the clang of the lift gates, the ringing of telephone bells and the passing of brisk feet along the corridor” (33). London and Martingale serve as symbols of the country–city binary, without much scope of an intermediary suburban influence at Martingale.

For Catherine, the fête is an opportunity to move away from the city space for a rejuvenating experience. Her visits at Martingale are “perfect week-ends away from the noise and grime of this dreadful city” (26). On the contrary, for Deborah and Felix, the city is where

they find entertainment, leaving behind them a monotonous country life. In the city, they watch movies at Baker Street or engage in urban activities such as shopping. However, as they leave London in their car, they cross Canningbury which James describes in great detail as an emerging suburb:

. . . there was a long wait at the traffic lights which regulated the surge of traffic meeting at the High Road and Broadway. It was obviously a popular shopping afternoon in this over-crowded suburb of east London. The pavements were filling with housewives who every now and then propelled by some primeval urge, streamed with maddening slowness across the path of the traffic. The shops on both sides of the roads had once been a row of houses and their grandiose windows and frontages were an incongruous contrast to the modest roofs and windows above. The town hall, which looked as if it had been designed by a committee of morons in an excess of alcohol and civic pride, stood in isolated splendor bounded by two bombed sites where rebuilding had only just begun. (160–161)

Canningbury, is a space in transition. It is an intermediary between the traditional and modern, incorporating architectural detailing of intricacy and simplicity, of the unique and aesthetic, and the mechanically produced identical industrial housing. It is a space that is rebuilding, taking on a new form from a dilapidated bomb site.

The city and the country, on the other hand, have definite identities in the novels, however, they are perceived differently by different people. For Stephen and Catherine, the city space is a place of work and the countryside is a refuge, a retreat, an escape from the raucous city life. For Deborah and Felix, the suburbs and the city space is a refuge from the silence and dull ambience of the country space. The city space is a place of activity and vibrancy. It is a retreat from the country space, a space where one can indulge in the extravagance of shopping and entertainment as opposed to simple and possibly pastoral living.

For Simon and Eleanor Maxie, Martingale is their home, infused with nostalgic memories. There is a sense of attachment and belongingness. It subsumes the characters into it. The church fête brings together all members of the family and their acquaintances within the premises of the house and the village. Stephen Maxie and Catherine Bowers travel from London to Chadfleet. Deborah Riscoe and Felix Hearne, are also present at Martingale. The dinner party at the Martingale House includes Miss Alice Lidell (in-charge of St Mary's refuge), Dr Epps (Simon Maxie's doctor) and Mr Hinks (Vicar of Chadfleet). Sally Jupp arrives with Jimmy (her infant son) looking for work and is recruited as the parlour maid. After her death, the police officers and the forensic team assemble at the Martingale house, and finally, James Richie, Sally's husband, returns from Venezuela to Martingale. Martingale, thus, similar to a blackhole, subsumes most of the characters in the novel into this small space. We have characters from different classes and professional backgrounds, and therefore, James associates Martingale as a microcosmic representation of the country/state: "This was Martingale. This was England" (99). The identities and existence of each character revolve around Martingale even though they are situated at various places across the country thereby establishing their relevance in the narrative. The spatial setting thus influences the narrative structure and plot of the novel.

For Simon Maxie, however, Martingale is not this microcosmic representation of the macrocosmic whole. Martingale Manor house, or rather his bedroom within this Manor house is a private and safe haven. After his paralysis and ill health, Simon is confined to his room and is provided care and assistance by Eleanor Maxie, his wife, and Martha Bultitaft, the house maid. His room and the house is a space he is familiar with, and associates with comfort. He refuses to be uprooted and sent to a hospital. The hospital is unfamiliar and strange and deprives him of his sense of identity and spatial belonging. He asks Eleanor, "You won't let them take me away, Eleanor?" and she replies, "Of course I won't." (27). Simon's death within

the premises of the home, brings to him the peace of being at a place where he has invested his memories and experiences, as opposed to a hospital space where he has no emotional and psychological attachment.

Martingale Manor house is not just a space of convalescence but also a place of nurture and growth. The “family nursery” and the “family cradle” belonging to Stephen and Deborah are well preserved and symbolise tradition (63, 20). The safeguarding of the nursery in a way treasures their childhood and a nostalgic past. The white walls symbolise purity, sanctity and innocence associated with children. However, with a murder within this nursery, the illusion of this sacred space is broken. As a shocking contrast, the space that represents nurturing of a child, now reflects death, violence and loss, especially as Jimmy is deprived of his mother.

The investigation of this crime brings to the forefront the sense of ownership and attachment to spaces. For Simon and Eleanor, Martingale is an asset, a place that documents their lives, and an integral part of their identity. However, for Stephen who largely lives in the city, a house in the countryside curtails his freedom: “If only he could have enjoyed Martingale for its beauty and its peace without being chained to it by this band of responsibility and guilt” (18). The transfer of property to the male member of the family after the death of the father, or primogeniture, is a patriarchal burden. The women members of the family are not a part of this inheritance and legacy but do see the space as private and intimate.

Martha Bultitaft, who has been serving the Maxies for many years, develops a sense of entitlement and loyalty. Thus, when Jupp is introduced as the new parlourmaid, she feels threatened. She disapproves of Jupp’s presence in the kitchen which for her is a territorial intrusion. Jimmy’s presence in the kitchen is also intimidating and compared with monarchical territorialisation: “Jimmy was fast entering that stage of childhood in which meals become less a pleasant necessity than an opportunity for the exercise of power. . . . Sitting there. . . he seemed to dominate Martha’s kitchen like a throned and imperious miniature Caesar” (23).

This conflict of power threatens both Eleanor and Martha which results in the crime: the murder and drugging of Sally Jupp. With time, space is invested with “social power” (Schmid 2012, 8–9). Martingale’s kitchen voices the macroscopic concerns of territorial borders and conflicts at an international and national scale. As a consequence of the crime, towards the end of the novel, the Martingale house disintegrates (not physically but socially).

As Yeats in his poem “The Second Coming” (1919) wrote “Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold”, Martingale loses its characteristic as the epicentre of the lives of its characters. Post-crime, Martingale is no longer a home but a crime scene. It permits access to the police officers and forensic team who are strangers to the community. It restricts access to the nursery while assuming the house residents to be potential suspects. The business room of the house is converted into an interrogation room: “Everything about that room had been homely and comfortable” unlike the depersonalised interrogation rooms at police stations (*Cover Her Face* 63, 90). Once the investigation terminated and the case is resolved, Martingale loses its identity and fails to revert to its original state.

Firstly, Simon’s death symbolises the end of family history and tradition. Eleanor Maxie believes that her duty at Martingale has been completed since she no longer has to nurse Simon. She confesses to the crime and is sent to prison. The denouement also informs that Martha has felt Martingale. The nursery is desecrated with crime and no longer associated with innocence, childhood and family history. Jimmy is sent to St Mary’s refuge. Relations between Stephen and Catherine terminate. Stephen moves to London where he works. Felix Hearne moves to Canada. The only person that remains in Martingale is Deborah Riscoe who is also present in James’ next novel in the series. Her presence at Martingale is however not important, instead, her role as Dalgliesh’s love interest takes precedence. Martingale Manor house retains its structure but is now a lonely place that was once vibrant with visitors and

family members. With the change in spatial identity, Martingale shows the changing social relations around it.

5.3.2 Structural Disintegration

The Nightingale House in *Shroud for a Nightingale* (1971) invokes the figure of Florence Nightingale and the profession of nursing. Nursing students under training who aspire to join the John Carpendar Hospital are called the Nightingales. One can argue that James must have borrowed the setting from ‘The Nightingale Home and Training School for Nurses’, St. Thomas’ Hospital in London, founded by Florence Nightingale in 1860s which was “[o]ne of the first institutions to teach nursing and midwifery as a formal profession” (British Library, Web; Nutting and Lavinia 1935, 462). It is now known as ‘Florence Nightingale Faculty of Nursing, Midwifery & Palliative Care’ and is a part of King’s College London (King’s College London, Web). This historically important institution is fictionalised as the Nightingale House in James’ novel *Shroud for a Nightingale*, which is situated in a fictional town Heatheringfield on the Sussex-Hampshire border.

The Nightingale House is not associated with Florence Nightingale, but with the fictional Thomas Nightingale, a local string and rope manufacturer with no association to the medical profession (*Shroud for a Nightingale* 37, 197–198). A domestic space built in 1880 by the Nightingale family, the house has an unsettling past. According to James, Nancy Gorringe, a nineteen-year-old orphan girl, who was also one of the maid servants, committed suicide by hanging herself from a tree on the Nightingale grounds. “When the body was cut down it was apparent that she had been systematically ill-treated, beaten, tortured even, over a period of months. It had been calculated sadism” (197). Consequently, the Nightingales were sent to prison and the house was sold off. The property was transferred successively, until it was remodelled into a hospital.

James writes:

It has always been something of an embarrassment to the hospital; no one has been quite sure what to do with it. It's not really suitable as a nurse training school, but it's difficult to see what exactly it would be suitable for. There's a story that Nancy Gorringer's ghost can be heard weeping in the grounds after dark at this time of year. I've never heard her and its tale we try to keep from the students. But it's never been a happy house. (198)

This historical and contextual background to the house presents a gothic undertone with the presence of a vengeful ghost that haunts the premises indicating an ominous foreboding to the crime to come. Significantly, it highlights that incidents of crime and violence morph into mythical and social representations deeply rooted in a sense of place. The quote also informs the uncertainty of architectural structures as they morph into varied spaces depending upon the utility. Such as the Nightingale House transfigures from a domestic place to a nurse training school. The House is ideally unfit to be a hospital space, however, the post-war English society had many hospital spaces that suddenly sprouted, as reflected in James' settings in her early novels.

The Steen Clinic, in James' second novel in the Dalglish series, *A Mind to Murder* (1963), is a "house" with a "Georgian" architecture functioning as a psychiatric centre (24). The consulting rooms in the clinic have "been formed by partitioning the large and elegant Georgian rooms" (10). It was "founded between the wars by the family of a Mr Hyman Stein" who was seeking psychotherapy, and later, their family changed the name to Steen to make it sound Anglican (41). Avoiding a Jewish name for the clinic depicts the anti-Jew sentiments that rose during the Nazi period. The need for a centre dedicated to mental health showcases that psychology and psychiatry as branches of study were established as the consequences of war which induced post-traumatic stress disorder, earlier misunderstood as physical illness ("Medicine in the Aftermath of War", 2019). James talks about the use of ECT

(electroconvulsive therapy) administered at the Steen Clinic as done in the Royal Army Medical Corps hospitals (“Medicine in the Aftermath of War”, 2019).

Nightingale House and Steen Clinic are fictional examples of similar domestic spaces remodelled into medical facilities. One such prominent example is the Queen Mary’s University Hospital in Roehampton. According to Weedon *et al* (1996), “Similar houses and indeed schools, parish halls and any other available buildings were being turned into auxiliary hospitals all over the country. They were attached to military hospitals” (8). The Roehampton House was built between 1710–1712 and over the years went through multiple ownerships and architectural alterations especially those made by Lutyens in 1910. Around 1915, “the House was requisitioned by War Office as a troop hostel” wherein “patients were accommodated in the main house and the limb makers in the basement” (52). With the patronage of Queen Mary and Queen Alexandra, the Roehampton House acquired the status of a hospital and “by 20th June 1915 the first 25 patients were admitted” (9).

In *Death of an Expert Witness* (1977), the manor house situated in Chevisham village, away from the city, “isolated” (199) and “hidden by its belt of trees” (144), is used as a laboratory space dedicated to forensic science. The Chevisham Manor, now the Hoggatt’s Laboratory, also consists of a Chapel on the manor grounds which was once used as a chemical store by Hoggatt. Although a forensic laboratory, associated with crime and investigation that unearths evidences of human cruelty, it is perceived differently by the local residents. The domestic identity still lingers within the psyche. It is considered a safe space where Mrs Pridmore can send her daughter Brenda to work, unlike the unsafe city. “Every yard of it was familiar, reassuring, unmenacing. And even Hoggatt’s Laboratory, blood or no blood, had been part of the village for nearly seventy years, while Chevisham manor had stood for nearly three times as long. . . Nothing frightening could happen to their Brenda at Hoggatt’s” (28). The laboratory retains an identity of an idyllic countryside house in the memories of local

community, however, to the employees, it is a work-space of a scientific community. For Dalglish and his team, the Hoggatt's is a scene of crime.

With domestic spaces used for non-domestic purposes, there exists an incongruity between architectural design and utility to which it is put. The Hoggatt's is not an ideal space for a laboratory due to its "low ceiling" and "stuffy and ill-ventilated" rooms (48). Similarly, the Nightingale House is never considered a professional space for nurse training. The nursing students at Nightingale house are instructed to keep their rooms unlocked. The rooms are not soundproof. According to Matron Taylor: "We do get to know things here; there's no real privacy" (*Shroud for a Nightingale* 115–116). These strict rules make the space permeable. On the one hand, it facilitates ease of movement in and out of the rooms in case of an emergency, and on the other, it makes the occupants of these rooms vulnerable to crimes, as seen in the text. Moreover, the lack of privacy also enables one to learn about each other's habits and practices. James writes: "Even poor Brumfrett's choice of nightcap and her usual hour for bed were common knowledge. Small wonder that Nightingale House bred its own brand of neurosis. . . ." (115–116).

The crime that occurs in the Nightingale House indicates that it is an insider who knew about these practices and was a part of the system, since there was awareness of the victim's habitual practices and routines. For example, the murderer is aware that the training session involves feeding a patient through a gastric tube, or where the milk bottles are stored, and when Fallon has her nightcap. However, it is important to note that even though spaces are open and accessible, the nurses at the Nightingale House harvest secrecy of their pasts which leads to conflict and blackmail. The lack of privacy also does not dissuade the culprit to displace the milk bottle with the disinfectant, hide the poison in sand buckets (169) or seek refuge in the Gardener's wooden hut (202–203).

The presumed transparency through unlocked doors is denuded and rendered farcical. With murder, blackmailing, theft and false identity, the flaws in human character are attributed to the place. The place, here the Nightingale House, is evil. The house is anthropomorphised and undergoes purgation upon demolition. James writes: “The house looked as if it had been clumsily cut in two by a giant’s cleaver, a living thing wantonly mutilated, with its shame and its nakedness exposed to every gaze” (286). According to Muriel Beale, the Inspector of the Nurse Training Schools from the General Nursing Council:

Here was normality, sanity, a world she recognised and knew. This emotion, suspiciously like regret, at witnessing the violent destruction of Nightingale House was really too ridiculous. She fought against it resolutely. It was a horrible house; an evil house. It should have been pulled down fifty years ago. And it had never been in the least suitable as a nurse training school. (287)

The Cheverell Manor in *The Private Patient* (2008) is not destroyed like the Nightingale House post-crime. It retains its identity as a domestic space, however, the space loses its status of a surgical clinic. The bifurcated identity continues, as the space is renovated to serve as a restaurant to be run by the Bostocks. Similar to the Nightingale House, the Cheverell Manor is associated with a dark past. The Cheverell Stones on the Manor grounds documents the burning of Mary Keyte, who was accused of being a witch in 1654 (*The Private Patient* 50, 63). James explains:

As usual after dark, the circle of twelve stones seemed to become paler, more mysterious and more impressive. . . Seeing them in day-light they were clumps of ordinary stone. . . To Chandler-Powell, approaching the circle, even the tallest central stone standing as an evil omen in its ring of dead grass induced little emotion. He thought briefly of the long-dead woman bound to this stone in 1654 and burnt alive as a witch. And for what? An over-sharp tongue, delusions, mental eccentricity, to satisfy

a private vengeance, the need for a scapegoat in times of sickness. . . She was only one of millions who down the ages had been the innocent victims of the ignorance and cruelty of mankind. (50)

The circular placement of the stones invokes structural similarity with the Stonehenge in Salisbury, located nearly 70km from Dorset. However, with the witch-hunting narrative, and later a scene of crime when Candace attempts to murder Sharon (or Shirley), the Stones acquire a reputation distinct from that of the world heritage site.

The Cheverell Manor too, becomes a scene of crime and the incident of Rhoda Gradwyn's murder alters the spatial identity of the place. Helena Cressett disagrees with Chandler-Powell who thinks that people will eventually forget the murder. She says, "it will be a part of the history of the Manor. And I don't think anyone will ever forget your last private patient" (384). However, for Letitia, crime not only alters the place but also the people associated with that place: "Looking back at the windows of the west wing, her mind turned to that private patient whose murder had changed the lives of all who, innocent or guilty, had been touched by it. But wasn't that what violence always did?" (390).

5.4 Conclusion

A scene of crime is a place that encapsulates and documents the time of occurrence of crime, the story of the victim, the interaction of the victim with the perpetrator and the clues to why the crime occurred. Neither a private nor public space, it is a place significant to the investigators. This chapter saw how, although temporary, the crime scene impacts human memory and psyche and undergoes a transition as a 'conceived space'. It is a constant reminder of aberration in human society. It is also a place that denotes a struggle for powers. As a place of conflict, the crime claims both the body and the space.

Crime stories can have innumerable varieties of places as scenes of crime. Among these the domestic space: the house or the home, is a recurring *mise-en-scène*. Be it in

Houellebecq's novel, where the fictional Houellebecq's sliced body is found in his countryside home in Souppes village in Loiret or James' murdered bodies in English country houses, the place where the crime occurs has been significant:

- i. James' country houses establish the dichotomy of the urban and the rural.
- ii. They document the history of English country houses, manors and estates and their architectural designs.
- iii. They delve into how places undergo transformation socially and structurally.

The English manor house is a space of transition and change at two stages. The first stage is the social utility of the manor house and the second stage is its habitat. We see these houses as isolated domestic spaces situated in a countryside, surrounded by meadows and stables, and are predominantly used as a retreat (which is what it is initially conceived as in the mental space, in Lefebvrian terms). Gradually as we read through the series, these manor houses move further away from their domestic identity. They are no longer isolated spaces but multi-purpose and multi-functional spatial units that accommodate diverse people. Some undergo reconstruction to form an apartment like living space, or, are used for official purposes such as hospitals, spaces of convalescence, laboratories, and tourist centres.

With the occurrence of crime, the habitat of the country house changes. It undergoes disintegration either socially or physically. As we saw with the Martingale house, the house retains its structural integrity but disintegrates socially without claims of inheritance by the heir, and without any permanent residence. Nightingale House is destroyed and the Cheverell manor remodels itself into a restaurant and a home, discontinuing as a clinic. A crime scene not only thus changes the nature of space but also associates the space with anthropomorphic attributes, such as being an evil house. The crime scene, in this manner act as liminal spaces, where they begin to undergo social and structural transition. The human body or the embodied

space is also a liminal space that documents the narrative of the lived space, which will be addressed in the next chapter.



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