

3 The making of pub atmospheres and George Orwell's *Moon Under Water*

Robert Shaw

Introduction

It is a Saturday in February – the day after I've signed the contract committing me to writing this chapter, in fact. A sunny winter's day, I've headed out for a coastal walk and have arrived in the centre of Sunderland, a city in the North-East of England a few miles from my home. My plan is to get some food before going to the football match that I've got tickets for. I've got slightly more time before the game than can be filled by just eating lunch, so I decide to try and find somewhere which is showing the televised lunchtime football match to keep me occupied for a couple of hours. I'm familiar with the city, but not a regular here, so I don't have a particular venue that I know to visit – instead, I head towards a part of town where I know there's a few pubs, and I walk into the first that might be suitable. A wave of warm air hits me and my glasses quickly steam up. Wiping them on my jumper I look around. The pub's got what I've been searching for – the football is on the telly and menus on a few tables confirm to me that they're serving food. I look around – there are a couple of free tables, but it's busy, and several people are standing and watching the match. I'm a bit uncertain – I know that town will be busy, but I'm hoping for something a bit quieter. I sniff – a stale, beery, sweaty musk enters my nose. It's the straw that's broken the proverbial camel's back: I don't want to eat in an environment like this. I head back out into the street to try another pub.

On the day of the event described above, I ended up spending about 15 minutes wandering between pubs and bars, before finding somewhere that I was happy to eat. Some places were too busy; others did not have the football on TV or were not serving food; and a couple of others were just a bit unpleasant. I realised, as I sat down having finally ordered my lunch, that what I had been looking for was exactly the topic of the chapter that I had just agreed to write: a pub with the right atmosphere. This should not be a surprise. As George Orwell succinctly summarised, "If you are asked why you favour a particular public-house, it would seem natural to put the beer first, but the thing that most appeals to me about the *Moon Under Water* is what people call its atmosphere" (Orwell 1946). I had spent my time in Sunderland judging and evaluating pubs based upon their

atmosphere. Orwell's essay from 1946, describing his ideal English pub, focuses on the multiple different features that create the pub's atmosphere, which for him was the key characteristic in judging a public house. As Orwell describes in his essay, I had been looking at a multitude of different features which constituted these atmospheres. I had been sensing the bar spaces themselves, the people and objects within them, and the overall comfort that I felt based upon these features. A subjective, difficult-to-grasp set of criteria had been at play in my mind, and these were not the same criteria that I would have applied on different days, at different times, or at different moments in my life-course. Had I gone into the pubs with different aims, with less time available, or had a different person gone into the pubs, the atmospheres which seemed threatening, rough or boisterous, would have appeared as inclusive, playful or lively. Or simply not have imposed themselves on my senses at all.

Researchers attempting to understand atmosphere have to deal with these difficulties. The object of our study is a personal one, yet one which is created inter-subjectively; it is one which requires a reflexive exploration of our positionality, yet one which cannot be explained by a move towards a focus on 'big' social identities. Rather, our experience of atmosphere lies between our individuality and our sociality (Bille et al. 2015). Each individual experiences their own interpretation of the atmosphere of a given space, interpretations which may be contrasting and contradictory but which are nonetheless equally real. Furthermore, elements or even the totality of an atmosphere may be missed, or misunderstood. Despite this, however, atmosphere is central to the alcohol and leisure industry. If Orwell was the first to find the language to describe the importance of atmospheres to pubs and bars, he was neither the first nor the last to notice its centrality. In the UK, the pub industry has been transformed since the mid-1980s by the spread of "pub-cos" (pub companies), chains of pubs and restaurants which have come to own the majority of businesses. The largest of these is "JD Wetherspoons", with over 900 branches at the time of writing, whose pubs were originally designed to replicate the pub as described by George Orwell (Moody and Turner 2013). Atmospheres have received attention then because they are on the one hand individual, unknowable and ephemeral, but on the other predictable and universal enough to form the core part of the strategy of highly successful businesses.

This chapter follows Thibaud's suggestion (discussing the related Francophone concept of *ambiance*) that the question to ask about these concepts is not purely ontological (what is an atmosphere?); rather, it must also engage with the epistemological: "what does an *ambiance* make it possible to be, to experience, to do, to perceive and to share?" (Thibaud 2015: 40). Ethnographic methods, I argue, are ideal to answer this question because of their orientation towards experience and practice. Here, the subjectivity of atmospheres stops becoming a problem and starts becoming an opportunity to "grapple with the challenge of sharing empirical narratives that make sense . . . while simultaneously underscoring the situatedness, partiality, contingency, and creativity of that sense-making" (Vannini 2015: 318). Building on Vannini's description of non-representational ethnographies,

this chapter places Orwell's fictional account in dialogue with a series of moments from ethnographic work in bars and clubs around the North-East of England, which has formed part of a wider project exploring the atmospheres which constitute the night-time economy (Shaw 2014, 2015). In doing so, it looks to Orwell as a theoriser and describer of bar atmospheres, which have – in comparison to regulation (Talbot 2007), social relations (Jayne, Valentine et al. 2011) and more recently the diversity of actants involved in consumption of alcohol (Demant 2009; Bøhling 2015) – received relatively little attention in contemporary alcohol or night-time economy studies. The core argument is that bar spaces are best understood as spaces in which both material and immaterial elements are constantly being enrolled to produce consumption-oriented atmospheres that produce the wide variety of bar spaces.

Understanding bar spaces

Working class drinking cultures in Orwell's Britain

Globally, drinking cultures are highly varied. In a European context, Järvinen and Room (2007) argue that despite changes in a more fluid, heterogeneous global era, drinking cultures can still be distinguished by broad regional trends based upon predominant alcoholic beverages consumed (Northern beer drinking, Mediterranean wine drinking, and Eastern/Nordic spirit drinking). On a smaller scale, a 2012 Joseph Rowntree Foundation report concluded that local drinking cultures within the UK showed significant variation (Roberts, Townshend et al. 2012), findings which fit in with quantitative research that has revealed a variation in the typology, amount and frequency of drinking habits and attitudes towards drinking between the UK's regions (Shelton and Savell 2011). While the details in this review and chapter focus on the British experience, the underlying arguments – that the control of spaces of (public) alcohol consumption might be best understood through the concept of atmosphere – is more broadly applicable. Within the UK, licensed public drinking establishments form one of the key sites at which practices of alcohol consumption, production and regulation intersect with broader questions over the governance and contestation of urban public space.¹ Indeed, the traditional name for drinking establishments, the 'public house' reveals the core tension that is at the heart of bar drinking in the UK. On the one hand, the 'public' in this name reveals a building that is notionally open to all – a 'public space'. On the other, it is a private space, a house: closed off from the city at large, with traditional frosted glass preventing the flow of information between inside and out. Pubs have thus long been associated with contestation over access, and forms of exclusion and inclusion enacted both through legislation but also through social practices. Such exclusions have been associated with big social groupings such as gender, age, class and race but also with other more nuanced forms of social difference. Crucially, atmosphere helps us access in particular the diverse actants involved in producing this second form of social exclusion, without losing sight of key questions of governance. At its heart, traditional bar

drinking in the UK has created spaces and atmospheres which reflect this contested culture of public/private.

The Mass-Observation project summarised the centrality of bars for working class culture in 1940s Britain:

Of the social institutions that mould men's [sic] lives between home and work in an industrial town, such as Worktown, the pub has more buildings, holds more people, takes more of their time and money, than church, cinema, dance-hall and political organisations put together.

(Mass-Observation Project 1970: 17)

The detailed ethnography of Mass Observation revealed the pub to be not just a place of alcohol consumption, but as a key site for a series of social practices. Savings clubs, trade unions and other political organisations, a variety of legal and illegal economic activities and broader socialisation are revealed to take place in the pub. Sitting in the public/private tension described above, the pub might be labelled as 'third-place' (Oldenburg 1999), though my preference is to avoid the addition of this category and instead to reveal and explore the tension signified by the '/'. As Vasey argues, the British pub has traditionally been a "sociopetal" space, which favours interaction across the whole room of people attending, with a tradition in particular of pub 'regulars' whose interactions might consist only of meetings in the bar itself (Vasey 1990).

Returning to Mass Observation, the drinkers identified in pubs reflect the complexity of users of any hybrid public/private space. On the one hand, "there are pub-goers amongst both sexes [sic], amongst all adult age groups . . . we do not find them to be restricted to any special type of occupation . . . nor are they restricted to any one social class" (Mass-Observation Project 1970: 154). This reflects other work which has revealed that, building on their 'public' nature, there has always been variation within the populations who use pubs (Beckingham 2012). However, and drawing from the role of the private in the pub, the same studies have also noted that within this heterogeneity, bars have had significantly unequal levels of use and access. To summarise, the pub has historically been a space of white, working-class male culture, with middle-class drinking present but more commonly associated with the home (a trend noted by research in both the 1940s and the 2000s) (Mass-Observation Project 1970; Holloway, Jayne et al. 2008). At the time of the Mass Observation project, women were to be found in pubs, although they were usually excluded from certain areas or might attend less frequently (Mass-Observation Project 1970). Indeed, the inclusion of women can be understood as an inclusion entirely on the basis of their inclusion as second rate, less valid actors within these spaces; in this way, Hey argues that the pub acted as a key replicator of patriarchal culture among working-class communities (Hey 1986). Issues of race are left undiscussed in the Mass Observation research, although some differences on religious grounds are been noted. In exploring this series of inclusions and exclusions, then, a turn to atmospheres of bars presses us to explore how the atmospheres may seem unwelcoming or inviting.

Changing the atmosphere: diversification and feminisation of drinking spaces

Since this ethnographic research in the 1940s, drinking establishments have undergone a series of transformations in the UK. These changes have shaped ever-evolving dominant pub atmospheres. An overview of this period shows a gradual easing of licensing restrictions, and an associated diversification in the style of drinking establishments, the type of people drinking in them, the types of alcohol consumed – all of which are productive of atmosphere (Vasey 1990; Hadfield 2006; Nicholls 2009). A major change for the atmosphere of bars came in 1989, when the Department of Trade and Industry mandated that large breweries – which had previously owned 75 percent of all pubs in the UK – had to sell a portion of their stock. A large proportion of sold pubs were purchased by investment and retail companies which later became ‘pubcos’. Whereas pub-owning breweries had specialised in selling their own beers, pubcos were interested in selling a range of food, alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks. Pubcos diversified: creating distinct brands (*Slug and Lettuce, Walkabout, Pitcher and Piano, Yates’s*); focusing on food and soft drink sales during the day; blurring the lines between pub and club; and creating what has been labelled as a ‘night-time high street’ (Hadfield 2006). While these changes were hoped to contribute towards a new ‘night-time economy’ that would revitalise city centres, in practice the night-time high street that emerged consists of nationwide chains of bars selling higher volumes of alcohol to the “mass volume vertical drinker” (Hadfield, Lister et al. 2001). This has been understood as a neoliberalisation of the night-time city and the alcohol market (Shaw 2010). While it is highly contested as to where these changes fall between polls of, on the one hand, producing a series long-term threats to the inclusivity of urban life and the general health of the population, and on the other hand, of a continuation of long-held leisure practices which are demonised by a media focus on particular subgroups (Jayne, Gibson et al. 2012), they have most definitely transformed the variety of atmospheres encountered in different bar spaces.

However, there has been comparatively little focus on what such changes have meant to bar spaces themselves (Hadfield 2006), and it is these changes which are productive of atmosphere. What research does exist suggests that bars and pubs have become more open to a wider audience, as the types of drinking establishments have diversified. In particular, alcohol consumption in pubs has been ‘feminised’, both with bars made more open and appealing to women and through shifts in the types of drinks consumed. Nonetheless, women in drinking spaces remain subject to a sexualised gaze: “women going out must negotiate the highly gendered and sexualised spaces of the patriarchal night-time economy and their bodies within them” (Waite, Jessop et al. 2011: 261). On the one hand, women in pubs and bars are expected to have fun, to be available for conversation, flirtation, dancing and sex; on the other, women remain subject to negative discourses surrounding this behaviour in pubs in ways that men are not (Eldridge and Roberts 2008). Similarly, while diversification in drinking establishments have resulted in

a generally more open atmosphere, bars still remain sites of racial exclusion, with the imagined night-time economy a predominantly white space (Talbot 2007). While licensing restrictions have become superficially more relaxed, a variety of different controls remain. As Beckingham summarises in his discussion of female drinking in nineteenth century Liverpool, the “licensing process helped shape the social norms around alcohol in public and private space, in and beyond licensed premises” (Beckingham 2012: 662). Similarly, contemporary bar spaces show this governance-practice dialectic relationship. It could be argued that the transformation of pubs in the UK since the 1990s has thus mirrored the transformation of public space: while spaces have become superficially more open and accessible, there remain a series of socially-coded rules, governmental surveillance, and forms of exclusion which work to the detriment of the least powerful (Minton 2009).

British bar spaces have thus been understood as key sites which have acted as a public/private hybrids, and which have produced similarly contrary atmospheres. The changes that have occurred to them since the Mass Observation project offered a first detailed ethnography of pub culture have been generated by a social liberalisation and an economic neoliberalisation. On the one hand, the masculinist, white, narrow culture associated with the pub has been broadened; on the other, forms of control and governance have persisted which now control behaviour less on the basis of identity and more on the basis of subjectivity and behaviour. Throughout, this question of ‘atmosphere’ has been haunting these understandings of the bar. As pubs have been modernised, atmospheres have become more inclusive and open, but also more oriented around the consumption-purpose of the pub as opposed to the social role identified by Mass Observation.

Elsewhere, I have described atmospheres as “a geographical phenomenon in which a particular assemblage ‘gains place’” (Shaw 2014: 88). Atmospheres are emergent from place because, as this chapter outlines, they are resultant from the specific arrangements of objects, bodies, affects and images present in a location. Here, affect takes that double meaning that has been developed by Deleuze and scholars who have since referenced him, as first the embodied experience of the ways in which other ‘bodies’, broadly defined, shape or modify (that is, ‘affect’) us (Deleuze 1978), and also as a name for the collective forces which these interactions cause (such as ‘hope’, ‘fear’, etc., see Berlant 2011). My perspective follows strongly from de Certeau, who has described how certain places become dominated by practices which have their ‘proper place’ (de Certeau 1984), coming to control and characterise those spaces. This hints at the idea certain places might be more atmospheric than others (Edensor 2012): building on both de Certeau but also the work of Casey, Duff describes these places as having ‘thicker’ atmospheres: such places “support more intensive, or affectively resonant, experiences of [affective] outgoing and incoming” (Duff 2010: 886). We might understand this as a description of certain places having more intense and/or more strongly cultivated atmospheres. The mixture of deeply ingrained cultural practices and strongly contested forms of culture as revealed by academic understandings of bar spaces contribute to their becoming places of particularly thick atmospheres. The changes outlined above suggest that these thick atmospheres have, since the

1940s, been mixed and stirred in a variety of ways. In the next stage of this chapter, I draw from my own ethnographic data and Orwell's *Moon under Water* text. In so doing I drill down into the variety of different actants that produce atmosphere, before focusing on the orientation towards consumption.

Understanding the multiple moons under multiple waters

Space and materiality

To begin with, its whole architecture and fittings are uncompromisingly Victorian. It has no glass-topped tables or other modern miseries, and, on the other hand, no sham roof-beams, ingle-nooks or plastic panels masquerading as oak . . . everything has the solid, comfortable ugliness of the nineteenth century.

(Orwell 1946)

The pubs and bars of Newcastle have a varied range of bar architecture. The city's swankiest clubs and bars can be found along Collingwood Street – an area called 'the Diamond Strip'. Here, bars and clubs are situated in buildings not originally designed as leisure venues, but converted during the 1990s from previous uses. Many are former shops or professional offices, but the largest, which I visited several times during my research, is in an old bank ("My bank is now a trendy wine bar" as the 1990s UK advert had it). The bar runs long, along one side of the large, open room that forms the bulk of this bar. Booths are located on the side of the room opposite the bar, and above these is a mezzanine level with room for standing. At the end of the room is a second raised level with tables and seating. The bar is dimly lit, with the furnishings and carpets largely red. Lights rotate around the bar, sending different patterns in time to the music. This bar, like many others, is full of screens – during the day these play music videos, but at night they show images of clubbers and promote drinks offers. While the building architecture from the 18th century is older even than Orwell's "uncompromisingly Victorian" *Moon under Water*, the fittings are much more 21st century.

Other modern bars have subtle variations on this theme. One of the bars in the city's more mainstream entertainment area, the Bigg Market, is fitted out in almost entirely silver décor – this 90s-themed bar is going for cheese and kitsch – the music is ridiculous, and the club is too. Others are built to enhance the visibility of dancers, either from members of the public or staff employed by the bar. One bar in 'The Gate' entertainment complex has what appears to be a full replica of Bentham's panopticon, although here brightly lit dancing staff in the middle are always visible – it is the watching crowd, hidden around them, who may or may not be observing. Another places a stage in a second-floor window – female customers are encouraged to dance here, the bar relying on the customers themselves to attract others in. And Newcastle does have its fair share of *Moon under Waters* – popular 'old man' pubs, where the décor would have looked old fashioned in Orwell's time.

The materiality of a bar's architecture and internal design is perhaps the starting point for the atmospheres which emerge. Here, my use of materiality derives from

a tradition which has sought to integrate the role of materials into practice-based theories (Ingold 2005; Anderson and Wiley 2009; Miller 2008). Such approaches do not seek to invoke materiality as ‘physicality’. Rather, they view all interactions as imbued with important material qualities. As such, “matter potentially takes place with the capacities and properties of any element (i.e. earth, wind, fire, air) and/or any state” (Anderson and Wiley 2009: 319). Such an understanding of the productive role of materials in atmosphere can be gleaned from Orwell. Building design might not dictate the activities that take place in a location, but it does delimit the field of possible behaviour (Hadfield 2006). Small, cramped pubs will not be able to create the space for large dancefloors – pubs which try this typically quickly revert to type. More modern constructions are – particularly in the city’s chain pubs – meticulously designed to produce a series of affective encounters and a particular atmosphere. Cache (1995) refers to this as “the frame of probability” of architecture (ibid.: 24), which he divides into two key features. The first is ‘separation’, which in practice both divides spaces but also allows for people to be brought together as well. The pubs that Orwell and the Mass Observation project describe both consist of multiple divided rooms; this contrasts with the open spaces of the bar described above (Orwell 1946; Mass-Observation Project 1970). The opening up of bar spaces, and the reduction of separation, is one of the ways that modern bars have attempted to create more public atmospheres: although not universally true (recall that we are talking about ‘frames of probability’), spaces which are more open tend to have thinner atmospheres (Edensor 2015), as affects are more easily able to diffuse or escape. If thick bar atmospheres emerge from more densely separated sites, then the second role of architecture – the ‘selection’ – starts to shape the type of atmosphere that we find. As Cache argues, architecture first “removed us from the territory; the second function re-establishes connections, selectively” (ibid.: 24). Here, Cache argues that this function of architecture is represented by the window, which selectively allows light through and helps cast a series of different shadows internally. Affective selection still goes on in bars and pubs of course, and this greatly shapes the atmosphere and as such whether a bar is welcoming or off-putting. This leads us onto the many immaterial sources of atmospheres in bar spaces.

Space and immateriality

In the Moon under Water it is always quiet enough to talk. The house possesses neither a radio nor a piano, and even on Christmas Eve and such occasions the singing that happens is of a decorous kind.

(Orwell 1946)

My research in Newcastle consisted of a series of short participant observation periods with different actors in the night-time economy, interspersed with periods of ‘deep hanging out’. On a night’s walk around the city centre, I would (usually unaccompanied) spend a period of two to four hours following a habitual series of routes around the city. Orwell identifies noise as a key element of bar

atmospheres. Unlike Orwell's *Moon under Water*, most pubs and bars in the city centre do play recorded music. The large bar that I described previously played mainly contemporary chart music, a common feature of most pubs and bars in the centre of Newcastle. The music set at a level which is just about tolerable for two people to chat: I get the sense that they want to allow for people to sit and talk – the atmosphere has to be inviting – but to encourage drinking and dancing. At this bar, a few groups dance though there is a slightly empty space in the middle of the bar: people seem a little uncertain about creating a 'dancefloor' in this space. Other pubs are more interested in facilitating 'lingering', and here music levels might be lower. Lighting varies significantly between bars, though there appears to be no simple correlation between particular lighting levels and particular atmospheres. In other words, the effect of lighting is dependent upon the relationship between the light and the materials on which it falls (Bille 2015).

Ingold argues that what we call the immaterial is in fact "the medium through which persons and organisms move in perception and action" (Ingold 2005: 97). He rejects the distinction between materiality and immateriality, or at least rejects that these are *oppositions*. While the analytical distinction between the material and immaterial can be useful, perspectives on atmosphere have also rejected this distinction (see for example McCormack 2010). Indeed what emerged from my ethnographic work, and through a reading of *Moon under Water*, is the very material sources of the ways in which immateriality shaped the bar space. Lighting and sound levels were particularly key. Interestingly, both sound and light operated similarly, reverberating around bar spaces and changing atmospheres but with no inherent relationship between greater or lesser levels. In some pubs, quiet produces an intimidating atmosphere, particularly for people who do not fit into the spaces' dominant social groups; in other locations, a quiet pub can create a welcoming atmosphere that attracts groups searching an escape from the noise of other venues. Lighting worked similarly, with no inherent relationship between atmosphere and darkness/brightness of a bar. Here, then, it is suggested that the effect of the immaterial depends upon its 'fit' with the material; the atmosphere is emergent from the relation between the two.

One notable absence from the bar spaces of my ethnography was another 'immaterial' element, that of smoke. Any reflection on bar atmospheres in the UK prior to the smoking ban might have noted the major effect that the presence of a layer of cigarette smoke has on the atmosphere of bar spaces (Tan 2012). In many countries, the smoky atmosphere of bars is a key element of drinking spaces. Debates over the smoking ban revealed the importance of the immaterial in making bar spaces accessible or exclusive, and the complexities embedded within this. On the one hand, the presence of smoking has been associated with a particularly male environment, discouraging the opening up and cleaning of pubs which has helped make spaces more accessible. On the other, these atmospheres have been praised as inclusive; they are certainly, literally, 'thick', encouraging and affinity with the pub. Accounts of atmosphere need to deal with the reality that the smoky bar may be simultaneously attractive and repulsive, and the smoking ban's sanitisation both includes and excludes.

In the two previous sections, we have considered the emergence of atmosphere from both material and immaterial sources, and focused on the ‘fit’ between these. I want to move on now to consider the power and control over this emergence, focusing on consumption practices.

Atmospheres and consumption

“The barmaids know most of their customers by name, and take a personal interest in everyone. They are all middle-aged women – two of them have their hair dyed in quite surprising shades – and they call everyone ‘dear’, irrespective of age or sex. (‘Dear,’ not ‘ducky’: pubs where the barmaid calls you ‘ducky’ always have a disagreeable raffish atmosphere)” (Orwell 1946).

As part of my research I attended a hiring day at one of the city’s clubs. Following an informal presentation in which we were introduced to this particular chain’s “unique customer focused values”, we were set a series of individual and group tasks during which staff monitored our performance. In the opening activity we passed a beach ball around the group – on receiving it we had to give our name, our favourite movie, and an interesting fact about ourselves. My favourite film (‘24 Hour Party People’) received largely blank stares, and my interesting fact (“I once carried a live goose on a bus around Newcastle”) probably required more explanation to make any sense. More popular answers seemed to focus on children’s and cheesy films from the 1980s and 1990s (‘Back to the Future’ and ‘Lion King’ received the biggest group acclimation), and tales from package holidays. Our next activity was a group exercise – in teams of five our challenge was to create and perform a short sketch. Our performances needed to include the words ‘giraffe’, ‘peanut’, ‘helicopter’ and the club’s name – humour based on attempts to indicate the fun-loving and ‘random’ side of working at the club. Groups were encouraged to put on performances that were loud, unusual and involved lots of action. These activities, by the way, were for a series of part time and temporary bar serving or glass collecting jobs, paying only slightly higher than the UK’s minimum wage.

These tasks were testing the communicative abilities of the prospective employees – to make a group of strangers laugh and understand us in a quick piece of conversation. As such, this was part of attempts to foster a workforce whose corporeal capacity for interaction and being with others is their main tool of production (Virno 2007), that is, those people who had the greatest capacity to affect others (Deleuze 1978). However, staff were being tested not only for their affective capacities, but also for their ability to read and judge an atmosphere in order to encourage greater consumption – to add to or replenish the thickness of the atmosphere (Duff 2010). Orwell’s comments show a long history to this relationship between corporeal capacity and the affective atmosphere of a bar. Indeed, the Mass Observation project similarly quotes a publican who states that “the good landlord is of a type who would lead a pack; . . . leads the easily led. He along with his wife . . . are a type. Grotesque in the lady, coming out with flashy dress and speech in the more choice specimens” (Mass Observation Project 1970: 52).

While emergent from the material and immaterial features of a space, these atmospheres do not emerge by chance. Rather, bar atmospheres are constantly being shaped by actors who may not have the capacity to control the atmosphere but who nonetheless complete several strategies to try and shape the emergent atmospheres.

While this use of corporeal capacity suggests a quick and responsive way of producing atmospheres, timetables and product choices also excrete atmosphere over longer timeframes:

You cannot get dinner at the Moon under Water, but there is always the snack counter where you can get liver-sausage sandwiches, mussels (a speciality of the house), cheese, pickles and those large biscuits with caraway seeds in them which only seem to exist in public-houses. Upstairs, six days a week, you can get a good, solid lunch – for example, a cut off the joint, two vegetables and boiled jam roll – for about three shillings. The special pleasure of this lunch is that you can have draught stout with it. I doubt whether as many as 10 per cent of London pubs serve draught stout, but the Moon Under Water is one of them. It is a soft, creamy sort of stout, and it goes better in a pewter pot.

(Orwell 1946)

Across all of Orwell's description, and pervading throughout my ethnographic work, is the importance of the commercial side of bar spaces, as exemplified by Orwell in the food and beer available. As noted, Orwell's description was heavily influential on the development of the *JD Wetherspoon* chain of pubs, which by 2010 had a turnover of £1 billion and which has over 900 branches in the UK. Inspired by Orwell, the chain seeks to "control the atmosphere" (Moody and Turner 2013: 257) of its pubs in order to produce a standardised, familiar product which maximises consumption by changing and moulding atmospheres over the course of the day. In Newcastle city centre there are five *Wetherspoon* pubs, two under its *Lloyds* sub-brand. It's in one of these where I explored the regimented timetabling of night and day, as atmospheres are shifted and shaped to encourage different forms of consumption. On a March Saturday in mid-afternoon, the bar is full of people taking a break from weekend-activities: families or couples with shopping, people meeting for tea and coffee. Pop music plays in the background, and a wide range of products are being consumed. At 16:20, the pop music that had been playing throughout the day was made notably louder. Staff began moving around the bar, and five minutes later we were asked to move from our stools, in the centre of the bar, to seats elsewhere in the bar; this allowed for a large central dancefloor to be opened up. No new family groups arrived after this point, and the profile of drinks being consumed shifted towards alcohol. The music was made louder again at 16:45, and became disassociated from the video screens, which had previously been playing music videos to accompany the sound. At 17:00 the food menu changed with fewer options being offered, and the dancefloor was fully cleared. Shortly after this the lighting of the bar was changed, with

red lighting replacing the daytime white light at around 17:30. The final major change in the bar itself came at 19:00, when a DJ took over from the loop of pre-recorded music. During this period, the profile of consumers in the bars gradually became younger, and groups began to dance, shout and drink as on a night out.

As well as hiring staff to shape the atmospheres through their affective capacities, both the Moon under Water and *Wetherspoon's* are also generating atmosphere through more regimented regimes of spatial practice. Again, this reveals the ways in which bar atmospheres – and many atmospheres more broadly – are always controlled, emergent from a series of strategies and tactics, to use the vocabulary of de Certeau, which attempt to assert their own agenda upon a place through the creation of a dominant atmosphere.

Conclusion: Orwell's embedded atmospheres

Among the various atmosphere theorists that have been drawn upon in the literature – Böhme, Deleuze, Sloterdijk, de Certeau and Brennan amongst others – Orwell might seem an unusual addition. This chapter has been an attempt to use his work to offer a typology of how atmosphere is produced from a mixture of material and immaterial features. His essay *Moon under Water* offers both an evocative (fictional) ethnographic description of a bar atmosphere, but also a more general typology for how atmospheres might be understood. In particular, 'atmosphere' in Orwell is deeply embedded in place, emerging from a location's material, immaterial and interpersonal relations. Atmosphere is for Orwell excreted out of dozens if not hundreds or thousands of repeated practices. In thinking through atmospheres ethnographically, I am minded of Guattari's claim that:

Over thousands of years, perhaps in imitation of crustaceans or termites, human beings have acquired the habit of encasing themselves in all kinds of shells: buildings, clothes, cars, images and messages, that they never stop secreting like a skin, adhering to the flesh of their existence just as much as do the bones of their skeletons.

(Guattari 2005: 119)

Ethnographic exploration of atmosphere, seeking to create productive descriptions and narratives of the spaces that atmospheres make possible (Thibaud 2015; Vannini 2015), might best be understood as attempts to capture both the secretion of atmosphere and the experience of being within it. In so doing we see in atmosphere a concept which defies the distinctions between agency/structure, permanence/transience, individual/collective that pervades social science. Rather, atmospheres demand a research method which conveys the multiple practices and actors which shape the 'being-there'.

Bar spaces in the UK are distinguished by their atmosphere. Two different venues can serve the same drinks, play the same music and be in the same street, but have distinctly different atmospheres. This comes from the thickness of atmospheres in most licensed premises: a thickness which both emerges slowly over

time, through repetition of a series of learned practices, and also which is reinforced by the actions of staff and others who respond quickly to the emergent affects of a bar or club space. Bars are spaces whose atmosphere is both material and immaterial, but perhaps where most crucially these two are intertwined: atmospheres emerge from their interaction. As public/private spaces, atmospheres become important due to their role in producing the ‘soft exclusion’ associated with feeling (un)comfortable within an atmosphere. It is important to note that, in this context, atmospheres of bar spaces are not produced neutrally or by accident. While many features may be unintentional, there are always in consumption places attempts to govern, produce and shape atmosphere.

Note

- 1 Although they are far from the only spaces of alcohol consumption more broadly. Indeed for some social groups or subcultures, drinking in the home (Holloway, Jayne et al. 2008) or in open public spaces (Wilkinson 2015) is more common.

Bibliography

- Anderson, B. and Wiley, J. 2009. On Geography and Materiality *Environment and Planning A* 41(2), 318–335.
- Beckingham, D. 2012. Gender, Space, and Drunkenness: Liverpool’s Licensed Premises, 1860–1914. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 102(3), 647–666.
- Berlant, L. 2011. *Cruel Optimism*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Bille, M. 20015. Lighting Up Cost Atmospheres in Denmark. *Emotion, Space and Society* 15(1), 56–63.
- Bille, M., Bjerregaard, P. and Sørensen, T. F. 2015. Staging Atmospheres: Materiality, Culture, and the Texture of the in-Between. *Emotion, Space and Society* 15(1), 31–38.
- Bøhling, F. 2015. Alcoholic Assemblages: Exploring Fluid Subjects in the Night-Time Economy. *Geoforum* 58, 132–142.
- Cache, B. 1995. *Earth Moves: The Furnishing of Territories*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- de Certeau, M. 1984. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Deleuze, G. 1978. *On Spinoza*. Available at <http://deleuzelectures.blogspot.co.uk/2007/02/on-spinoza.html> [Accessed 20 November 2013]
- Demant, J. 2009. When Alcohol Acts: An Actor-Network Approach to Teenagers, Alcohol and Parties. *Body & Society* 15(1), 25–46.
- Duff, C. 2010. On the Role of Affect and Practice in the Production of Place. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 28(5), 881–895.
- Edensor, T. 2012. Illuminated Atmospheres: Anticipating and Reproducing the Flow of Affective Experience in Blackpool. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 30(6), 1103–1122.
- Edensor, T. 2015. Producing Atmospheres at the Match: Fan Cultures, Commercialisation and Mood Management in English Football. *Emotion, Space and Society* 15(1), 82–89.
- Eldridge, A. and Roberts, M. 2008. Hen Parties: Bonding or Brawling? *Drugs-Education Prevention and Policy* 15(3), 323–328.
- Guattari, F. 2005. Architectural Enunciations. *Interstices* 6, 119–125.

- Hadfield, P. 2006. *Bar Wars: Contesting the Night in Contemporary British Cities*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hadfield, P., Lister, S., Hobbs, D. and Winlow, S. 2001. The '24-Hour City' – Condition Critical. *Town and Country Planning* 70(11), 300–302.
- Hey, V. 1986. *Patriarchy and Pub Culture*. London: Tavistock.
- Holloway, S. L., Jayne, M. and Valentine, G. 2008. 'Sainsbury's Is My Local': English Alcohol Policy, Domestic Drinking Practices and the Meaning of Home. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 33(4), 532–547.
- Ingold, T. 2005. The Eye of the Storm: Visual Perception and the Weather. *Visual Studies* 20(2), 97–104.
- Järvinen, M. and Room, R. 2007. Introduction to Youth Drinking Cultures: European Experiences. In *Youth Drinking Cultures: European Experiences*, edited by M. Järvinen and R. Room. Aldershot: Ashgate, 1–16.
- Jayne, M., Gibson, C., Waitt, G. and Valentine, G. 2012. Drunken Mobilities: Backpackers, Alcohol, 'Doing Place.' *Tourist Studies* 12(3), 211–231.
- Jayne, M., Valentine, G. and Holloway, S. L. 2011. *Alcohol, Drinking, Drunkenness: (Dis) Orderly Spaces*. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Mass-Observation Project. 1970. *The Pub and the People: A Worktown Study*. Welwyn Garden City: Seven Dials Press Ltd.
- McCormack, D. P. 2010. Remotely Sensing Affective Afterlives: The Spectral Geographies of Material Remains. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 100(3), 640–654.
- Miller, D. 2008. *The Comfort of Things*. London: Polity.
- Minton, A. 2009. *Ground Control: Fear and Happiness in the Twenty-First-Century City*. London: Penguin.
- Moody, P. and Turner, R. 2013. *The Search for the Perfect Pub*. London: Orion.
- Nicholls, J. 2009. *The Politics of Alcohol*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Oldenburg, R. 1999. *The Great Good Places*. New York: Marlowe.
- Orwell, G. 1946. *The Moon Under Water*. Available at <http://theorwellprize.co.uk/george-orwell/by-orwell/essays-and-other-works/the-moon-under-water/> [Accessed 10 May 2016]
- Roberts, M., Townshend, T., Pappalepore, I., Eldridge, A. and Mulyawan, B. 2012. *Local Variations in Youth Drinking Cultures*. York: Josef Rowntree Foundation.
- Shaw, R. 2010. Neoliberal Subjectivities and the Development of the Night-Time Economy in British Cities. *Geography Compass* 4(7), 893–903.
- Shaw, R. 2014. Beyond Night-Time Economy: Affective Atmospheres of the Urban Night. *Geoforum* 5, 87–95.
- Shaw, R. 2015. 'Alive After Five': Constructing the Neoliberal Night in Newcastle-Upon-Tyne. *Urban Studies* 52(3), 456–470.
- Shelton, N. and Savell, E. 2011. The Geography of Binge Drinking: The Role of Alcohol-Related Knowledge, Behaviours and Attitudes. Results From the Health Survey for England 2007. *Health & Place* 17(3), 784–792.
- Talbot, D. 2007. *Regulating the Night: Race Culture and Exclusion in the Making of the Night-Time Economy*. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Tan, Q. H. 2012. Towards an Affective Smoking Geography. *Geography Compass* 6(9), 533–545.
- Thibaud, J.-P. 2015. The Backstage of Urban Ambiances: When Atmospheres Pervade Everyday Experience. *Emotion, Space and Society* 15, 39–46.

- Vannini, P. 2015. Non-Representational Ethnography: New Ways of Animating Lifeworlds. *Cultural Geographies* 22(2), 317–327.
- Vasey, D. E. 1990. *The Pub and English Social Change*. New York: AMS Press.
- Virno, P. 2007. General Intellect. *Historical Materialism* 15(3), 3–8.
- Waitt, G., Jessop, L. and Gorman-Murray, A. 2011. ‘The Guys in There Just Expect to Be Laid’: Embodied and Gendered Socio-Spatial Practices of a ‘Night Out’ in Wollongong, Australia. *Gender, Place & Culture* 18(2), 255–275.
- Wilkinson, S., 2015. Alcohol, young people and urban life. *Geography Compass*, 9(3), 115–126.