GANGSTERS, ZOMBIES, AND OTHER REBELS: ALTERNATIVE COMMUNITIES
IN LATE TWENTIETH-CENTURY BRITISH NOVELS AND FILMS

By

NICOLE LAROSE

A DISSERTATION PRESENTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

2006

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

him for his unfailing support of the Marxist Reading Group. Through the entire process of planning and executing the conference, just knowing that the group can turn to Phil for help makes it so much easier. Plus, the after-party would not be half as fun without him.

Throughout graduate school, different English department administrators have stressed to the students the importance of networking, and I always thought they were slightly crazy. That was until I met Gavin Keulks, fellow Martin Amis aficionado, at the Twentieth-Century Literature Conference at the University of Louisville. No other participants may have come to our early morning panel, but I still found my discussion with Gavin the most productive conference panel I have attended. If I believed in fate, I would have to say that the academic gods wanted me to have a professional relationship with Gavin because we showed up on the same panel at a small conference at the University of South Carolina a few months later. Gavin has been a valuable resource during the dissertation and the job search. I only hope that I can be as helpful to him someday.

On a day-to-day basis, my fellow English graduate students have been the most consequential in my development. I could have never made it through without the support and mentoring of Megan Norcia. I thank Meg for challenging me as a scholar and comforting me as a friend. Meg is my model of goodness and my guide to success. Without her, I would have never learned to quilt nor had the quilters, especially Kirsten Ortega, Lisa Hager, and Tonya Bain-Creed, who got me through my first years of graduate school with our Sunday night renewals of pizza and fun movies. Meg, and the other peeps, Emily Garcia, Nishant Shahani, Rochelle Mabry, and Brian Doan, kept my reading on track with our Borders trips. More recently, I have had the Jai-Alai gang

always looking after me. She told me I could be anything I wanted to be and even

indulged my ridiculous dream of being an NFL quarterback. Knowing that she believes

in me gets me through any difficult part of my life. Without her, I could have never

finished this project.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract of Dissertation Presented to the Graduate School
of the University of Florida in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

GANGSTERS, ZOMBIES, AND OTHER REBELS: ALTERNATIVE COMMUNITIES
IN LATE TWENTIETH-CENTURY BRITISH NOVELS AND FILMS

By

Nicole LaRose

August 2006

Chair: Julian Wolfreys
Cochair: Phillip Wegner
Major Department: English

"Gangsters, Zombies, and Other Rebels: Alternative Communities in Late
Twentieth-Century Novels and Films" examines how narratives from the 1980s and
1990s respond to Margaret Thatcher's neo-conservative regime and Tony Blair's "New
Britain." Through examining a range of genre fictions, I investigate the ways British
apocalyptic, gangster, and immigrant narratives imagine new social formations, which I
call "alternative communities." Chapter 1 explores the scholarly trends in postwar
British literature, calling for a political intervention that understands the potential for
narrative to express collectivity.

Chapter 2 surveys narratives of disaster and apocalypse. I begin by examining the
ways Mary Shelley, H.G. Wells, and George Orwell establish a tradition of critical
apocalypses. This tradition is built upon in J.G. Ballard's depiction of a stagnated post-
imperial Britain in *High-Rise* and *Millennium People*, Martin Amis's critique of
Thatcher's hierarchical Britain in *London Fields*, and filmmaker Danny Boyle's

interrogation of Blair's conservatism in *28 Days Later*. The apocalypses in these narratives—created by urban development, imminent nuclear war, and biological warfare—lead to the destruction of reigning racial, class, and gender divides, and, even more significantly, enable alternative communities to come into being.

Chapter 3 surveys the development of the gangster film during the postwar period. I compare earlier depictions in the genre of individuality and hypermasculinity, epitomized by the 1980 film *The Long Good Friday*, with the vision of collectivity in 1990s films such as Guy Ritchie's *Lock, Stock, and Two Smoking Barrels* and Jonathan Glazer's *Sexy Beast.* These more recent films explore popular culture's influence on national and gender identities and introduce a more flexible vision of masculinity, one that protects a new familial collective.

Chapter 4 explores the ways the genre of the immigrant *bildungsroman* imagines postcolonial hybrid identities. I argue that female authors, such as Zadie Smith, adapt the paradigm of second-generation immigrant narratives established by Hanif Kureishi to the particularity of the female immigrant experience. The resolution of the conflict between their families' efforts to maintain tradition with their own desires to become more fully "English" reveals an emergent cultural identity freed from older historical determinations.

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION: IMAGINING ALTERNATIVE COMMUNITIES

Community is, in a sense, resistance itself: namely, resistance to immanence.
Consequently, community is transcendence.

—Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*

Tricksters or fakes, assistants or 'toons, they are the exemplars of the coming
community.

—Giorgio Agamben, *The Coming Community*

So it was; in Eighties fiction, apocalyptic visions, corrupted Utopias and threatened
cities were everywhere. Gothic violence, the uncanny, the fantastic and the
grotesque, were back; here innocence is generally corrupted, violence erupts
suddenly, psychic extremes are explored, danger stalks the dead world, and there is
an unstable relationship between 'real life' and art. Dracula, Vlad the Impaler,
Jekyll and Hyde, Jack the Ripper—now in the changed guise of 'the serial killer,'
the marauding mobile man who represents the dangerous urban darkness—were all
dusted down from their role in popular myth, and popular movies, and recycled for
the service of modern narrative. Freaks and monsters, incest and sexual violence,
all the devices of the uncanny, estranging and deceptive on offer in the rich stock of
Gothic reappeared in profusion.

—Malcolm Bradbury, *The Modern British Novel*

Malcolm Bradbury's summary of the British novel of the 1980s suggests violence,

extremism, and the presence of misfits as the definitive characteristics of the novel at this

moment. His assessment forces us to see the novel since 1980 as an exploration of the

condition of post-imperial British history and hybridized English identity. Following

Bradbury's lead, this project takes up the figures of three specific formations of the

misfit, defined generally as any figure that embodies dissension against an assimilating

idea of Englishness created by the imperial project. The figures under examination—the

zombie or automaton, the gangster, and the immigrant—inhabit three crucial genres of

1

postwar British literature. Each genre that corresponds to these figures—the apocalyptic, the underworld, and the immigrant narrative—addresses the impact of cataclysmic change and violence on the individual and the individual's relationship to society. Through a genealogy of each genre, I argue that these late Twentieth-century narratives imagine productive collective formations, which I am calling alternative communities. These alternative communities respond to the hegemonic political discourse that determines identity construction by revealing the limits of the preconceived ideas and indicating change.

This project follows several strands of theoretical inquiry concerning: first, the idea of British literature, its relationship to political debate, and the means by which scholars explore this interaction; second, the meaning of community, particularly the imagining of collective formations as a narratological act; and third, the role of spatial theory in understanding narratives that are self-reflexively concerned with the production of the spaces of the city and the effects such built environments have on the individual and the community. Alternative communities emphasize protection of a collective social organization and destruction of reigning racial, class, and gender divides; alternative communities embrace hybridity, heterogeneity, and the transience of society, while at the same time understanding the alienating realities of cultural estrangement and the need to share experience in hopes of collective understanding.

Malcolm Bradbury's aforementioned survey of the Twentieth-century British novel epitomizes one of two prevalent critical trends in the field, both of which influence how I situate my project: these are the thematically or temporally organized survey and the single author study. This second category attempts to construct a canon of contemporary

literature by providing introductions to students of literature. While these works do often

accomplish careful readings of an author's oeuvre that can lead to more extensive

scholarly explorations,[1] the theoretical limits dictated by their audience constrain these

studies to the surface. One unfortunate reality that emerges from such studies is a cult of

celebrity that inevitably includes authors in the salacious pages of the gossip columns.

When the friendships and feuds, the love affairs, and the exorbitant pay and purchases of

literary celebrities become part of the scholarly debate, intellectual rigor becomes

difficult to maintain.

The other strand of critical inquiry, the survey, influences my project more directly.

Even within this model, we still find works like Bradbury's which spends more time

listing examples of novels that fit into the categories he labels rather than actually

conducting a reading of these novels. Bradbury introduces the concepts, theories, and

history intrinsic to the production of literature in Great Britain, but he does not engage

these topics with more than a passing glance. Like the single-author study, Bradbury's

detailed survey is more of a resource for students looking for direction or guidance as to

which novels develop similar subjects in a similar context. In this strand, we also find

studies like D. J. Taylor's *After The War: The Novel and English Society since 1945*,

which dismisses the postwar novel because of its aesthetic inferiority to the Victorian

novel, primarily in the realm of characterization. He argues that the theme of most

interest in the postwar novel is decline, and this theme results in the production of novels

that pale in comparison to their predecessors. I have to agree with Taylor that the

---

[1] I am personally indebted to James Diedrick's *Understanding Martin Amis* to which I have referred for my undergraduate senior thesis, my master's thesis, and now for this project. Diedrick's study is part of The Understanding Contemporary British Literature series from the University of South Carolina Press, which is an exceptional example of the strand of criticism to which I refer.

postwar novel and the Victorian novel are completely different beasts, but I disagree with the assumption that they are even comparable. Taylor fails to understand that the postwar novel must be read within its own political and historical context.

Unlike Taylor, several scholars do approach postwar literature and culture on its own terms and without immediate dismissal and contempt. Philip Tew's *The Contemporary British Novel*, John Brannigan's *Orwell to the Present: Literature in England 1945–2000*, and Dominic Head's *The Cambridge Introduction of Modern British Fiction, 1950–2000*, while still satisfying the role of undergraduate introductory resources, do engage with the important themes of identity and nationalism central to the postwar narrative. Significantly, they each read the novels beginning in the mid-1970s with a keen awareness of Thatcherism as a pivotal paradigm shift in the relationship between politics and textual productions.

The direct engagement with the politics and history that influence the production of literature connects these scholars to the same field of inquiry as that presented in the most important study of this model, Alan Sinfield's *Literature, Politics, and Culture in Postwar Britain*. He presents a cultural materialist study keenly aware of "the historical conditions in which textual representations are produced, circulated and received" (xxiii). He explains that cultural materialists will "engage with questions about the relations between dominant and subordinate cultures, the implications of racism, sexism and homophobia, the scope for subaltern resistance, and the modes through which the system tends to accommodate or repel diverse kinds of dissidence" (xxiii). The focus on dissidence leads him to characterize the postwar period as composed of "cultures of discord." His "cultures of discord" have a progressive utopian aim of finding a way for

"literary and leftist intellectuals to make themselves useful" by "orienting their efforts,

for the time being, towards a subcultural constituency." The subcultural constituency to

which he finds the most potential—lesbians and gay men—do not have to offer their

"efforts and talents to a disdainful or predatory mainstream" (xxiv). He suggests that

other groups disadvantaged on grounds of class, race, nation, and gender may also have

the same potential.

From Sinfield's suggestion, my project begins. The apocalyptic, gangster, and

immigrant genres imagine how the disadvantages of class, race, nation, and gender can

produce productive alternatives to the mainstream. They create a subcultural

constituency on the representational level. Also in terms of literary history, these genres

each constitute a subcultural constituency because of their historic marginalization by

traditional canon formation. They are alternative in both their realization of identity

construction and their presence in the canon of British literature.

The term alternative also has a specific political referent that contributes to my

understanding of the communitarian interest in these narrative genres. The explicit use of

the word alternative is an ironic assessment of Thatcherism, particularly the response to

Thatcherism's refusal of consensus and the liberal aims of the welfare-state. Dominic

Head explains the relationship between Thatcherism and cultural production.

> The election of Margaret Thatcher as Prime Minister in 1979 signaled the definitive
> end of the post-war consensus. The policies of Thatcherism attacked consensus
> politics on every front: her government stood for privatization and a free-market
> economy, and for the reform of trade union law. Backed by an authoritarian
> approach to resisting groups, and a monetarist squeeze on inflation, the Thatcher
> government 'redefined' British politics. . . . The changes to British society and
> culture were dramatic, generating a spirit of either adventurous entrepreneurship or
> deplorable avarice. . . . Novelists tended to take the latter view, lamenting the
> imminent collapse of the welfare state, and a new era of inequality and social
> division. (30)

Head acknowledges that the divisive nature of Thatcher's economic policies forced artists and novelists to explore the meaning of such alienating and hierarchical organization and to engage the social problems that resulted. Thatcherism coined the infamous acronym TINA, "there is no alternative" to global neo-liberal capitalism. Because of this belief, the Thatcher government policies celebrated individual ingenuity and responsibility as the pinnacle of British success and the essence of Englishness. She touted a return to Victorian values accompanied by a minimization or absenting of state intervention in society. In most historical and theoretical analyses, Thatcherism is immediately connected with economic policy,[2] ignoring social and moral issues.

Anna Marie Smith notices this gap and interrogates the ways the new right discourse shapes attitudes towards race and sexuality. The moral vision of Thatcherism, as Smith explains, was that "[e]conomic renewal, therefore entailed a moral revolution: a return to individual responsibility, free market entrepreneurialism and British nationalism" (3). By identifying immigration and homosexuality as opposed to this formation of morality, the new right was able to manipulate the societal fears surrounding the end of consensus politics. Smith argues, "Powellism and Thatcherism were hegemonic discourses in the sense that they proposed new visions of the social order and successfully stigmatized alternative visions so that their political projects appeared to be the only credible frameworks for the interpretation of the national crisis" (69). Smith's analysis of these discourses highlights their existence as myths that organize the formation of identity and society; in other words, they function as hegemonic narratives that attempt to foreclose the potential for alternatives.

---

[2] For example, see Peter Riddell's *The Thatcher Era and Its Legacy* or Dennis Kavanagh, *Thatcherism and British Politics: The End of Consensus?*

Influenced by Smith's argument, I maintain that the relationship between postwar politics and the production of narrative literature centers on the circulation of four ideologies that create a vision of Englishness in the postwar period. Literary narratives respond to these ideologies, elevating them to myths in the sense that Nancy establishes in *The Inoperative Community* as "the will of community" (57). Through this acknowledgement of these myths, the literary narratives thus reveal the limits of these ideologies by presenting the alternatives that the myths have attempted to destroy. The four ideologies of central concern to the postwar narrative are the end of consensus, Powellian rascism, Thatcherite individualism, and Blarite New Britain. Each emerges from a perceived crisis, especially postwar decline, black immigration, and the end of the imperial project, and attempts to satiate the dangers of the crisis. The narratives and genres under examination acknowledge the hegemonic organization of these political myths and then imagine alternative utopian communities that propose a way to rethink the collective identities that organize postwar society.

My understanding of the relationship between these myths and the imaging of community by the narratives of the postwar also develops from a polyvalent understanding of the meaning of community. Examining the metaphysical categories of being, singularity, and community, Jean-Luc Nancy deconstructs community to see it not as fusion, but instead as political resistance. Importantly, the transcendence that Nancy sees as possible is to come; it is the utopian potential. He suggests understanding the community to come through literary communism. In forming this definition, Nancy differentiates between myth, which we have previously defined as "the will of community"(57), and literature as interruption, but that which does not know what it has

interrupted (72). For my study, it is important not to view narrative as myth, not to view

it as a unifying force for community. Instead, I want to examine how narrative as

literature can interrupt and thus open the space for the community to come, or what I am

calling alternative communities. I intend for the semantics of this phrase to establish a

relationship similar to what Nancy sees between myth and literature. Whereas myth,

which may very well be destructive and false, creates a fusion, literature causes the

disruption. Moreover, as in Nancy's formulation of an understanding of literature

requiring an understanding of myth, the alternative community can only be realized

through its disruption of a unified, hegemonic version of community. In my argument

this unified version is defined through the political myth that dominates the period of the

narrative's production.

The status of the zombie, the gangster, and the immigrant as the vehicle for the

imaging of the alternative community develops from Giorgio Agamben's naming of the

actors of the coming community—Tricksters or fakes, assistants or 'toons. These very

real actors named by Agamben are on the periphery, those who struggle to create a name

and a place for themselves within a community. The struggle itself, like the interruption

of literature, exposes both the power of dominant hegemonic forms of community and the

selfish benefit for those who dictate the hegemonic order. Each of Agamben's actors is

subordinate within the dominant order, but from that subordinate position arises a new

formation of power aimed at revealing the oppression of hegemonic power and thus

calling for an alternative (A similar relationship to power will be revealed through my use

of spatial theory). Thus, the alternative community embraces those actors like the

zombie, the gangster, and the immigrant who are not easily assimilated into the

organizing myths of political discourse and thus are more readily able to work against the dominant vision.

The work of the actors of the alternative community suggests a parallel to Walter Benjamin's messianic thought as both are a means to think potential within an era of uncertainty. Specifically, the angel of history suggests a potential for explaining the unthinkable. Benjamin's angel establishes a perspective without the fallacies and limits of academic, monumental historiography and a perspective able to withstand the dangers associated with hegemonic discourse. Also, Benjamin's idea of the flaneur opens another vision of prophetic potential. As a symbol of the bourgeois, the flaneur does not have to be cognizant of the work actually accomplished nor must the work be static and final to have effect; the traces that emerge can provide resistance to symbolic power despite the impermanence. Similarly, the real examples Agamben lays out as exemplars of the coming community need not be aware of the potential within their actions. Thus, the work accomplished by the zombie, the gangster, or the immigrant in the creation of productive alternative communities may not be a part of the collective agenda—instead, it will arise from the collectivity.

It is impossible to discuss community without interrogating Benedict Anderson and Raymond Williams, as both address the relationship between community and nationalism. Anderson's famously named notion, "imagined communities," explains that while members of a community will never actually encounter each other they share a deep transhistorical bond based on their believed acceptance within this imagined community: "Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuiness, but by the style in which they are imagined" (6). Developing Anderson's framework, Phillip

Wegner explores the workings of "imaginary communities" as a way to understand the convergence of modernity and the rise of the nation state He argues, "They are not real in that they portray actual places in the world; rather, they are real . . . in that they have material, pedagogical, and ultimately political effects, shaping the ways people understand, and as a consequence, act in their worlds" (xvi). Wegner indicates the progressive potential for reading the creation of narrative communities as the vehicle for action, as those whose effects cannot be ignored or erased.

Williams also sees potential for understanding the imagination of community. In *The Country and the City*, Williams coins "knowable communities" in order to address the changing social relationships throughout the later half of the nineteenth century. Because of the rise of industrialization and the metropolis, the transformation of labor and class made the ability to know a whole community more and more difficult. So instead 'knowable communities' arose based on communication instead of face-to-face contact. The emphasis on communication makes the circulation of material, most notably novels and mass media, essential for the creation of communities. Again within Williams' formation, we see a new form of community, one based on commonality of reading and knowledge, come to exist within the pragmatic idea of community, an organization of similar individuals yoked together because of their proximity. The 'knowable community' opens up the idea of community, emphasizing mobility and circulation, but it presents new problems in terms of language. Williams responds in ways similar to Nancy, who claims literature is an interruption but then does not explain how to fully recognize or conceive of the interruption. Williams sees novels by such writers as George Eliot and Thomas Hardy providing new ways of looking at the

language of farmers, craftsmen, and other working people and thus providing a new way to look at class structure within the 'knowable community.' Like Williams's literary examples, the narratives under examination in this project introduce new ways to look at the language of gender, sexuality, and class.

In "Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory," Williams begins the project of rethinking the examination of class through his formation of a methodology for cultural studies. Questioning the relationship between productive forces and social relationships, Williams challenges the notion of a totality for cultural theory. He sees this totality as hegemony or as he defines, "a whole body of practices and expectations; our assignments of energy, our ordinary understanding of the nature of man and his world. It is a set of meanings and values which as they are experienced as practices appear as reciprocally confirming. It thus constitutes a sense of reality for most people in the society" (9). From hegemony derives the historical practice of the "*selective tradition*," what the dominant culture chooses to emphasize of their tradition and past. Because of the 'selective tradition,' Williams wants cultural theorists "to recognize the alternative meanings and values, the alternative opinions and attitudes, even some alternative senses of the world, which can be accommodated and tolerated within a particular effective and dominant culture" (10). The alternative is also opposed to the dominant culture, but it can lead to residual and emergent forms of culture. The residual are the lived practices of some previous social formation, whereas the emergent represents the creation of new practices and formations. My readings of the alternative communities in the three generic traditions show how Williams' cultural practices take on concrete form.

The issue of methodology that reappears in these studies of community necessitates a focus on narrative theory and the circulation of narratives. Thus, each chapter of the project will contribute to an overall genre study of narratives of community, permitting me to trace the historical development of each genre. This focus on genre will encourage an examination of specific narrative similarities, repetitions, and reiterations within the genres. Frederic Jameson most informs my desire to combine narrative theory with a politically and culturally aware study. At the very start of *The Political Unconscious*, Jameson identifies "the priority of the political interpretation of literary texts" (17) as the inevitability of all reading and interpretation. Citing Deleuze and Guattari's idea of schizo-analysis, Jameson hopes to shift the question of literary interpretation from the question of what does the text mean to the question of how does the text work. The traditional focus of interpretation has many of the limits of Nancy's idea of myth; this mode of interpretation reveals the always already read nature of texts because of the layers of cultural influence the individual reader brings to the text. The desire to look at how texts work does not mean an immediate escape from the limits of mimetic interpretation, but through the political examination, readers can acknowledge the historical and cultural influences to themselves and the texts.

By the act of sorting and grouping, genre is always a political and historical construct dictated by the literary market and the modes of interpretation. My desire to establish a politically aware narrative theory in my project necessitates acknowledging how these texts circulate, a product of both the market and the criticism. First in terms of theoretical circulation, the generic genealogy must explain how the community between temporal periods arises. Community is itself a narrative, the narrative most able to

withstand the violence of postwar society in a productive rather than dismissive way. I

contend that the resilience, adaptability, and accessibility of narratives of community

make them an attractive and necessary field of study. In order to examine the circulation

of narrative, the representative novels and films within each generic tradition have

reached a wide audience, or in other words continually circulate.[3]

The final theoretical school that influences and shapes my study of community is

spatial theory. Community needs to be examined as a spatial construct, as a means to

understand spatial environments, such as cities. Also, the imagining and understanding

of space reveals the affects on the individual and the collective. Space has a deep

connection to an understanding of culture, particularly how the construction of the

environment shapes the community. Such a focus reveals just as much about the

environments as the people. In *Out of Place: Englishness, Empire, and the Locations of

Identity*, Ian Baucom argues that space and place in literature are essential concepts for

the creation of identity. Baucom looks at the British government's attempts to make

Englishness correspond to race and not space. Baucom challenges the governmental plan

by looking at the identity shaping forces of particularly English places. In these

instances, he explains the meaning of place and space.

> Place here is not a mere expanse but something that contains and communicates a
> certain type of tradition. Whereas space in the legal discourses on Britishness
> serves as the basis for a system of categorization, in this mediation of Englishness
> place grounds a system of education. Where British space bestows only a common
> name on all the empire's subjects, English place [. . .] reforms the identities. (18)

---

[3] One possible way to look at the commercial circulation is through the culture of literary and film prizes in
Britain, since many of the novels and films in my study have appeared on award lists and been nominated
for excellence.

Baucom reveals the nuances associated with an understanding of the spatial construct of Englishness and identity under post-imperialism.

The spatial theories of Henri Lefebvre and David Harvey also contribute to my understanding of urban spaces. In *The Production of Space*, Lefebvre establishes a three-part schema for thinking about space, which he labels "spatial practice," "representations of space," and "representational space" (38). These three correspond to the experienced, the perceived, and the lived (or as Harvey prefers, the imagined). The representational spaces, the imagined spaces are the work of the alternative community.

Developing a similar tripartite system, Harvey, in *Justice, Nature, and the Geography of Difference*, analyzes Raymond Williams's understanding of space, place, and environment. He asserts that this tripartite system develops in Williams's novels because it did not in his cultural theory. Harvey attempts to correct Williams's divisions by viewing theorization "as a continuous dialectic between the militant particularism of lived lives and a struggle to achieve sufficient critical distance and detachment to formulate global ambitions" (44). Through militant particularism, Harvey sees a way "to create a critical space from which to challenge hegemonic discourses" (101). Harvey distrusts viewing those who many label as "voices from the margins" as having more authentic and thus more revolutionary positions. In order to avoid turning the zombies, gangsters, and immigrants, the actors of my alternative communities into these romanticized marginalized voices, I must look at the particularity, especially spatially of their concerns. Harvey suggests a "theory of historical-geographical materialism" as the way to avoid romanticizing the marginalized, since space defines difference and otherness and is thus the locus of agency and the possibility of emancipatory politics.

Primarily, he argues that discursive activity is the activity of mapping space. His idea of

mapping allows a revision of ideas of power, social relations, and the imaginary (112),

thus providing a method for thinking about actors such as Agamben's exemplars of the

coming community. Both Harvey's and Lefebvre's theories of space allow us to question

how the spaces of the city and the country in these genres contain the various layers of

meaning that makes the imagining of alternatives possible. Perhaps better than any other

space, the city provides a contested space where the dominant hegemonic discourses and

the alternative communities must coexist.

London specifically is the exemplar of the alternative community because it can

never be simply mapped, labeled, or identified. Instead, it is always a place undergoing

constant imagination and reimagination. As Julian Wolfreys explains, "London thus only

reveals or gives itself, if it does this at all, through acts of self-disclosure and inscription

in the very appearance of resisting its own revelation. In its most apparently familiar

appearances, there remains nonetheless the invisible, the undecidable, self-disclosure

arriving, to paraphrase Heidegger, as that very aspect which conceals itself" (9).

Wolfreys shows that we cannot merely say London is a place, instead "it takes place" (4).

History is essential to an understanding of the complexity of London, but this is a history

composed of layers of meaning inscribed by the events, the inhabitants, and all other

traces that compose the city. The work of the alternative community is inherently tied to

not only a realization of London's incomprehensible totality but the simultaneous attempt

to imagine its singularities. The narratives that define each generic strand of the

alternative community understand that their creation and realization are always

momentary, are always traces of the historical and political understandings that constitute their existence and their place within the world.

Chapter 2 explores narratives of disaster and apocalypse. I begin by examining that ways Mary Shelley and H.G. Wells establish a specifically British tradition of critical apocalypses that is then developed by postwar writers like George Orwell and John Wyndham. The postwar writers emphasize the role of nature in understanding overwhelming oppressive political realities. This tradition is built upon in J.G. Ballard's depiction in *High-Rise* of a stagnated post-imperial Britain. By relating Ballard's depiction of the spatial organization of the residential skyscraper to Rem Koolhaas's idea of delirious social formations, I examine how identity categories, such as nationality, class, and gender, are spatially constructed and thus can be rethought and reformed through a new imagination of community. I then look at Ballard's recent novel, *Millennium People*, to more fully understand the influence of spatiality on identity.

In the next part of Chapter 2, I examine Martin Amis's critique of Thatcher's hierarchical Britain in *London Fields.* I argue that Amis, using a model much like Derrida's nuclear criticism, interrogates how the historical stages of capitalism, represented by the three main characters, create a class hierarchy that prevents all individuals, from high to low, from truly understanding their place in the postmodern world. Instead, Amis concludes that a collective, non-hierarchical organization of community, one that protects innocence, experience, and originality, is necessary.

In the final section of Chapter 2, I examine filmmaker Danny Boyle's portrayal of Blair's conservatism in *28 Days Later*. Boyle brings together images of Empire, historic disaster, and canonical Postwar British films to critique the nostalgia in Blair's rhetoric

and agenda. Boyle understands the political potential for British apocalyptic narratives, repeating the ontological interrogation of John Wyndham's *The Day of the Triffids*, the effects of violence in *A Clockwork Orange*, and the alienation characteristic of his previous film *Trainspotting*. Like Amis and Ballard before him, Boyle uses this heritage of images to question the ideal political and governmental organization for British society, ultimately concluding that a return to a rural landscape is needed for new social formations to emerge. Ultimately, the apocalypses in this narratives—created by urban development, imminent nuclear war, and biological warfare—lead to the destruction of reigning racial, class, and gender divides, and even more significantly, enable alternative communities to come into being.

Chapter 3 surveys the gangster film during the Postwar period. I trace the development of the ideas of Englishness and masculinity in the genre. I begin with the Ealing comedies, such as *The Lady Killers*, where a supposedly intelligent gang of criminals fail because of their inability to understand the devotion to Empire of their elderly victim; then, I look at bohemian culture in films such as *Performance*; finally, I compare the depiction of individuality and hypermasculinity, epitomized by the 1980 film *The Long Good Friday,* with the vision of collectivity in 1990s films such as Guy Ritchies's *Lock, Stock, and Two Smoking Barrels* and Jonathan Glazer's *Sexy Beast.* Both of these films respond to "New Laddism," which emerges from men's magazines and attempts to recoup an idea of masculinity after the women's movement. These more recent films explore popular culture's influence on national and gender identities and introduce a more flexible vision of masculinity, one that struggles to protect a new familial collective. In *Lock, Stock,* the gang of lads has to understand their cultural and

gender heritage in order to survive and prosper. Ultimately, this lesson is taught by the two literal fathers in the film, emphasizing that even in a hypermasculine underworld protection of innocence and education of youth is necessary for survival. Likewise, in *Sexy Beast*, violence is only acceptable for protection of the non-traditional family unit, creating a version of masculinity that fosters criminal success because of a more circumvent understanding of the traditional power structures of gender relationships. Both films use popular music to enter the critiques of masculinity and familial responsibility into the popular cultural milieu.

Each of the second generation immigrant novels in Chapter 4 is by and about Anglo-Indians attempting to find a balance between the Indian cultures their parents desperately hope to preserve and the English culture in which they have grown up. Hanif Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia* (1990) and Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* (2000) both follow young adult protagonists attempting to find a balance between their family's desires and their own identity. Each text is a specific type of *Bildungsroman*, paralleling the coming of age of the second-generation immigrants with the assimilation of Indian culture into mainstream English culture. The texts deal with issues of sexuality, marriage, and feminism to show the changing ideals from the conservative parents to the more progressive children. Each text addresses some of the most stereotypical aspects of English popular culture, such as pop music and football, highlighting the pervasiveness of a mass national culture. These texts all focus on the types of places under scrutiny in Baucom's work. Each of these texts integrate popular culture as a narrative technique, bringing an already specific and established narrative to the texts and also making the texts speak to an audience trying to come to terms with hybridity in a myriad of forms.

By contrasting the suburbs, where immigrants have been literally pushed to the margins, with London, where the desires for discovery are fostered, these novels see sexuality as a rhetoric for navigating the world. Once the protagonists understand the divide established by the built city environment, the mythic nature of the idea of homeland becomes apparent. These second-generation immigrant protagonists transform their lack of a home, their hybridity, into a constant ability to feel at home anywhere because they live within a global community defined by hybrid cultures. Making a global London overtly obvious, these protagonists show the benefits of cultural acceptance and collaboration. These texts emphasize that within a global society, culture, space, and community are entwined.

CHAPTER 2
APOCALYPTIC COMMUNITIES: THE DISASTER AND REEALATION OF CLASS
AND SPACE

> The apocalyptic types—empire, decadence and renovation, progress and
> catastrophe—are fed by history and underlie our ways of making sense of the world
> from where we stand, in the middest.
>
> —Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending*

> This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past.
> Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps
> piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would
> like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed.
>
> —Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History"

**A Genealogy of the Postwar Apocalyptic Narrative: The Influences and Examples of
John Wyndham and George Orwell**

As Bill Masen, the protagonist of John Wyndham's *The Day of the Triffids* (1951)

attempts to come to terms with the disaster that has left most of society blind and thus

easy prey for the triffids, mobile and poisonous plants, he describes his surroundings and

the feelings that they evoke: "To the left, through miles of suburban streets, lay the open

country; to the right, the West End of London, with the City beyond. I was feeling

somewhat restored, but curiously detached now, and rudderless" (38). Masen's ability to

see grants him an already privileged perspective that permits him to survey his world and

to decide how the spaces of the "open country" and "the City" will affect his psyche. His

reaction to the spaces epitomizes a trend throughout postwar British apocalyptic

narratives to view the country and nature as redemptive, especially in the face of

overwhelming and incomprehensible disaster. The influence of spatiality on the causes

of and responses to disasters reveals the political critique of apocalyptic narratives. In

this case, Masen yokes his left with the country and his right with the City, responding to

the first with feelings of restoration and the latter with feelings of detachment. The

political connotations of left and right emphasize that the redemptive country is not a

conservative space of nostalgia, but instead a progressive space; whereas, the City, the

literal space of business within London, represents the repressive ideological realities of

monopoly capital.   The novel critiques the oppressive reality of capitalism with the very

premise of the disaster—the insinuation that the greed for profits gained from the

production of triffid oil has propagated this disaster, or on a more aphoristic level that

greed will always lead to some sort of disaster.

 While coming to terms with the inevitability of disaster, Masen shows a realist

understanding of the spaces of redemption by mediating the country with the borders of

the suburbs. The suburbs of London emerge for several reasons, each related to class

status. For the lower classes, the suburbs represent a forced expulsion from the city as

the gentrification of previously working-class areas makes housing unaffordable or

unavailable. The council estates on the borders of the city, such as Keith's home in

London Fields, are offered to these displaced Londoners and become emblematic of the

forced expulsion of the poor. For the middle class, the suburbs present an easier

opportunity to become homeowners, as they cannot meet the standard of living required

of life in the city. Conversely, for the upper classes the suburbs present the opportunity

to enter into the city for work or leisure without the alienating realities of living in the

city, but they are left with the most access to mobility and the most choice. For all

classes, the suburbs present the merging of the rural and the urban or at least the borders

of these spaces. The working class are still blocked from nature because of the lack of leisure time offered in their work schedules; the middle classes and the upper classes become stagnated in their transient existence in between the two spaces, making both urban and rural incomprehensible. They can only understand the suburban existence—a distilled or false version of the urban and the rural. Masen acknowledges the spatial influence of the suburban, and then he furthers the radical potential of the country by calling the space "open." Masen suggests endless potential within the rural, a direct affront to the reality of the suburbs. Masen does not immediately discover absolute bliss and comfort once leaving the city; despite the reality he finds, the rural spaces foster his ability to maintain hope for progress and salvation through the authentic relationship he cultivates within the rural space. Within his initial labeling of the country as 'open,' he insinuates that the urban is closed, which in the aftermath of the disaster means a site of danger utterly lacking hope for its trapped inhabitants under constant and unforeseeable threat from the enemy.

As the feeling of constant threat characterizes the postwar milieu, Wyndham and his contemporary George Orwell epitomize a trend in postwar British literature of presenting apocalyptic situations as a means of imagining productive responses to the oppressive political realities that either cause or result from the disasters. These two authors imagine a way to escape from their historical reality, the aftermath of World War II and the Blitz on London, which had left enduring scars on the national psyche particularly for the inhabitants of London still living amongst the rubble and the developing Cold War paranoia. The War and the Blitz made the insecurity of London and the British Empire obvious, thus leaving the English subject fearful of fascist and

communist occupation. Wyndham and Orwell recognize the lingering fear over a threat

to British sovereignty and thus imagined situations where their characters deal with and

to varying degrees find protection from oppression, particularly in a collective

understanding of the redemptive principles of the natural and the country, epitomized by

the imaging of alternative communities that come into being within this protected space.

The focus on the natural permits me to elaborate Patrick Parrinder's argument that "the

rural sanctuary, a fortified island or valley serving as a last redoubt of 'Britishness', is

common to almost all the British disaster novels written in the post-war period of

imperial withdrawal" (212).   Parrinder focuses on the important theme of the rural

sanctuary, but he inevitably concludes that the futures imagined within these sanctuaries

are "deluded endgames" (233). I will carefully examine this repeated theme of the rural

sanctuary, but I will argue that these spaces permit a utopian imaging of identity and a

reassessment of the meaning of collectivity.

Overall, the alternative communities imagined by Wyndham and Orwell within the

spaces of the country reveal the postwar tradition of using the apocalyptic moment to

reveal the limits of oppressive politics and the potential of a progressive reorganization of

community. A close reading of the connections between the ideals of the country and the

natural and the imagination of alternative communities in *The Day of the Triffids* and

Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty Four* (1949) establishes a particular apocalyptic tradition to

which authors of the late twentieth century respond. Thus, examining Wyndham's and

Orwell's novels will help us to better understand J.G. Ballard's discomfort with the

stagnated politics of the late 1970s, Martin Amis's critique of Thatcher's neo-

conservative hierarchies of the 1980s, and Danny Boyle's interrogation of Tony Blair's nostalgic New Britain of the late 1990s.

The political dimension of British apocalyptic literature emerges in its earliest and most influential manifestations, primarily through the works of Mary Shelley and H.G Wells. Shelley's *Frankenstein* questions the costs and benefits of scientific experimentation. Shelley, like many of the apocalyptic writers who follow her, was primarily interested in the effects that technology would have on the individual and thus the family or the community, but because of her Romantic perspective, she was particularly interested in how nature contributes to the creation of social relationships. Through her frame narrative, Shelley juxtaposes two types of discoverers, Robert Walton, who can celebrate the beauty of the artic and natural and express this beauty to his sister while simultaneously going about his discovery, and Victor Frankenstein, who becomes so obsessed with his discovery that he looses contact with the world and, because of his isolation, ensures his failure. Frankenstein's monster inherits the fate of not being able to appreciate the beauty of the world and the love of others, and thus, the monster violently rebels against his creator because, unlike Frankenstein, the monster is a truly romantic man. The monster represents the danger of allowing science rather than nature to shape our worldview. Shelley's warning against technology as a way to elevate authentic experiences within the world becomes increasingly sentient in a twentieth-century world of Debordian spectacle and Baudrillardian simulation that insinuates that there is no content or meaning left as a result of commodity culture. Like Shelley, Ballard, Amis, and Boyle refuse the solipsistic philosophic trends of postmodern simulation and instead assert the primacy of the collective desires for genuine experiences and relational love.

Wells's view of the apotheosis of scientific rationality and thus his reconfiguration

of the natural as the scientific is not as clearly optimistic and redemptive as Shelley's, but

his scientific romances are the standard barer of the British disaster narrative, particularly

through their impetus to see disaster as the opportunity to envision the world through new

perspectives. Wells's critical apocalypses influence Wyndham, Orwell, and continue to

linger in the minds of all other apocalyptic writers. The specific historical event to which

The War of the Worlds (1898) most directly responds is the conflict that could arise from

African imperial expansion. As evidence that Wells's novels are not ahistorical or

fantastic, his stylistic choice of realism and scientific authenticity become the standard

for critical apocalypses. His alien invaders are not frightening because of their

appearance or size, in fact they are physically limited by Earth's atmosphere, but instead

they are terrifying because of their intelligence and ability, including their attack on the

whole of England, making both London and the countryside spaces of siege and danger

and suggesting that England and thus the ideal of Englishness is in danger. Wells's use

of shifting narrative view points in *Worlds* not only emphasizes the everyman nature of

his narrative but also places observers who have a variety of backgrounds and influences

in different perspectives to emphasize the potential commonality that a totality like

disaster could achieve. Through these varied narrative voices, Wells establishes the use

of apocalypse as a way to look inward and examine the workings of the society as a

collective, the people as individuals, and the relationships that define humanity when

under attack and thus rapidly changing.

Examining the critical impact of apocalypse in *The Sense of an Ending,* Frank

Kermode examines how narrative, which is driven by a need for an ending, allows us to

imagine and understand apocalyptic desires from our place in the middle, or in the historically determined categories of our existence. In other words, Kermode provides a narrative theory of apocalypse that attempts to understand the communal experiences of narrative. For Kermode, the radicalism of apocalypse makes it flexible and adaptable to the crisis filled art and time of modernity. Kermode notes that in literary plotting, the End has lost much of its momentum and significance because of our desire to "think in terms of crisis rather than temporal ends" (30). He goes on to note that despite this desire, "we can perceive duration only when it is organized," which for literature means plot (45). As narrative is apocalyptic in its need for an end and we can only understand temporality through narratives, on some level all narratives are narratives of apocalypse; this statement can be rephrased, all narratives are revelatory or all narratives break apart to reveal meaning, or it can be violently rephrased that all narrative is a state of crisis and destruction, particularly of the reigning order.

Kermode's theory of apocalypse responds to the meaning of the word, "revelation or disclosure," which necessitates an examination of apocalypse outside of the historically religious definition of the Christian tradition. The ideal of revelation applies directly to narrative, which itself is the act of revealing through words, plot, and character. When looking at narratives that are self-reflexively apocalyptic, the act of disclosure becomes multi-layered. Of all the layers of revelation and disclosure in apocalyptic narratives, I am interested in the connection between the urban disaster or threat and the potential for rural renewal, particularly how the hostile or nurturing spaces can image new formations for community. These alternative apocalyptic communities are my way of following Kermode's lessons on the End in modernism and

postmodernism. Kermode realizes that there must be "rediscoveries, fruitful revaluation" and "a new use for the past" (121), understanding that it is not apocalypse that takes place but that apocalyptic narrative does; apocalypse is thus a kind of angel of history gestalt experience written in order to produce catharsis from its audience.

Further developing the relationship between the apocalyptic narrative and its audience, Susan Sontag argues for a need to understand the potential for the historicity of apocalypse in "The Imagination of Disaster." Sontag reads the "typical science fiction film" (116) to explain how and why we are continually drawn to the imagination of disaster. She starts by establishing commonality and difference between the different manifestations of disaster: "From a psychological point of view, the imagination of disaster does not greatly differ from one period in history to another. But from a political and moral point of view, it does" (130). According to Sontag, we are all yoked together by a similar emotional response and fear toward disaster. Because of this collective response, the threat of disaster can make heterogeneous communities arise because the differences of race, class, and gender are forgotten in favor of this pressing mutual reaction. We must remember that the apocalyptic narrative is occasional, an event in which we cannot speak of the political as such because we do not have the language to communicate the direct representation of the apocalyptic situation. If we understand the postwar period as Sontag summarizes, "an age of extremity" (130), we must understand that the historical and political causes, conflicts, and uses of disaster matter greatly despite the verisimilitude of emotional responses. In this divide, Sontag explains the dangers of simply celebrating the science fiction film's depiction of disaster as spectacle and entertainment. She explains, "the imagery of disaster in science fiction is above all

the emblem of an *inadequate response*. I don't make to bear down on the films for this. They themselves are only a sampling, stripped of sophistication, of the inadequacy of most people's response to the unassimilable terrors that infect the consciousness" (130). Sontag establishes that the desire to imagine the disaster is to escape from the very real terrors and violence of the world. The disaster (violent battle, nuclear annihilation, or pandemic) is easier to deal with than the real terrors of global capitalism that cause not only these examples of disaster but the continual class conflict waged throughout the world. Each of the texts in the apocalyptic tradition under examination attempts to use these imagined disasters as the catalyst to reveal the ways the dangerous forces of global capitalism rule society. Then, like Kermode explains, from the midst of the disaster, these narratives attempt to make sense of or reveal the potential for our world, even when threatened by "unremitting banality and inconceivable terror" (Sontag 130). Wyndham's and Orwell's novels reveal the process of accepting terror as the norm and thus finding ways to adapt and reconfigure the self and the community, particularly through the spaces of redemption, such as the home that Bill and Josella cultivate in *Triffids* and the clandestine "natural" love den that Julia and Winston visit in *Nineteen Eighty Four*.

The Day of the Triffids presents repeated critiques of the effects of industrial capitalism and the imperial nation state on the status of the individual as a self-contained and self-sufficient ontological being, ultimately presenting the cottage home and the collective island society as models of socialist productivity. Wyndham's novel, like the contemporary adaptation *28 Days Later*, challenges the zombie genre by linking the monstrous to anti-social, non-egalitarian behavior. While the triffids are the immediate enemy, the zombie-like humans who retain their consciousness but lack even the ability

to provide for themselves or participate in the work required for the preservation of society present an equally dangerous situation. The sighted though do not necessarily flourish, as exemplified by the failed Christian community and the violent military communities, but can flourish by adapting a socialist agenda based on communal acceptance and respect, or by not becoming the monstrous, anti-social force fighting against collective salvation.

Even the main characters must understand the necessity of collectivity. Masen develops from a selfishly individualistic scientist before the disaster to a thoughtful and able caretaker of the land and the people who depend on him. Masen explains his own transformation as the journalistic, first person narrator of *Triffids*, which is essentially his path towards a non-traditional family and their decision to move to the community on the Isle of Wight. As he ends with an epilogue that starts, "*And there my personal story joins up with the rest. You will find it in Elspeth Cary's excellent history of the colony*" (228), he emphasizes that the path they have followed is the logical progression to a collective and redemptive organization for a successful community, and as Masen has discovered the workings of the natural world alongside the reader, he asks the reader to come to the same logical conclusion about the best path for the protection of humanity. He unselfishly ends his individual narrative once it has accomplished the collective agenda. As his metamorphosis begins shortly after the disaster, Masen critiques how segregated and useless individuals have become as a result of industrial capitalism. He says, "I knew practically nothing, for instance, of such ordinary things as how my food reached me, where the fresh water came from, how the clothes I wore were woven and made, how the drainage of cities kept them healthy. Our lives had become a complexity of specialists"

(12). Masen, unlike the parasitic neo-feudal fascist Torrence, understands the reality that

all humans have been left like the blind in terms of useful labor, and he does not wish to

manipulate the non-sighted based on fear.

In Wyndham's apocalypse, the privilege of vision is not based on sight but the need

to have foresight of the outcomes of our reliance on technology and our cultivation of the

unnatural. Masen explains, "I don't think it had ever before occurred to me that man's

supremacy is not primarily due to his brain, as most of the books would have one think.

It is due to the brain's capacity to make use of the information conveyed to it by a narrow

band of visible light rays" (93). Wyndham realizes the fragility of the visible and

correlates this tenable protection to the ever-present danger for corruption or destruction

that surrounds postwar society. By arguing for the supremacy of human visibility based

on its connection to ontological identity, Wyndham asks for a more complete and careful

understanding of the way English society works, the way Englishness influences the

subjects identity within the society, and the historical and political construction of

England and Englishness.[1]

The spaces of the farm and the colony represent a revitalization of authentic

collectivity and relationships instead of the isolation and specialization of individual

identity characteristic of pre-disaster England. Wyndham's critique cannot neatly be

summarized as John Clute does, explaining that Wyndham gave an "eloquently middle-

class English response to the theme of Disaster" (667). To do so would be to look at the

---

[1] Wyndham's critique of vision relates to James Joyce's famous phrase in the Proteus chapter of *Ulysses*, "ineluctable modality of the visible." Stephen Dedalus struggles to understand the influences of nationalism, class, and gender on his self-identity. The narrative of the bildungsroman functions similarly to the narrative of apocalypse by imagining new social relations, but the main difference is that the bildungsroman is based primarily n the imagination of the individual's place within the new, while the apocalyptic is based on collective imagination of new experiences.

superficially English icons, the pubs and the condemnation of those who hope that the Americans will come and save the survivors, as Wyndham's main critique. Instead, Edmund Morris argues that Wyndham uses social commentary to look at the aftermath of disaster. Morris's critique indicates that the novel requires an examination of the spaces that foster collective ideals. He says, "And when disaster happens, the worst is not what it does to such physical infrastructures as cities and transport systems, but to the precious intangibles that a democratic government is supposed to protect: the loyalty of lovers, the upbringing of children, the rule of law, the all-importance of free speech and privacy and good manners" (xiii). These democratic rights are overtly discussed in *Triffids*, thus making them obvious also in the adaptation, *28 Days Later*. On the most obvious level, the variety of communities in *Triffids*, Christian, military, subsistent, or socialist, thrive or fail contingent upon the degree to which they protect democratic rights.

The protection of these rights correlates to a vision of history based on Benjamin's angel of history, which stands amidst the turmoil of the past to piece together an authentic yet non-monumental version of history that protects human rights. This vision of history also appears in *London Fields* through the collective protection of childhood innocence. In *Triffids*, Masen's and Josella's union eptimozies this role of history. Masen explains their first intimate connection: "And we danced, on the brink of an unknown future, to an echo from a vanished past" (105). The echo means that the past is still haunting them, but that their union, an embodiment of the protection of love and collective agency, can bring them into the future. This future eventually leads them to the socialist community on the Isle of Wight, the ultimate triumph of natural collectivity.

Orwell configures the natural as both a literal and imagined space of respite for protagonist Winston Smith. As Winston begins to write in his journal and to choose other behavior that betrays the Party, he longingly recalls his family and a natural landscape that explains his feelings for his family, or more precisely, "a time when there were still privacy, love, and friendship, and when the members of a family stood by one another without needing to know the reason" (28). For Winston, authentic emotion is derived from the family, but under the Party these emotions would only lead to unbearable suffering, which for Winston is symbolized by the "large eyes of his mother and sister, looking up at him through the green water, hundreds of fathoms down and still sinking" (29). The acute stare of the only people who have truly loved Winston haunts his memory because of the suffering derived from their constant process of drowning, a feeling that Winston likewise equates with living under Party control.

Because Winston has begun a process of rebellion, he now has a memory of a natural space where his family once experienced "privacy, love, and friendship." He explains his dream: "Suddenly he was standing on short springy turf, on a summer evening when the slanting rays of the sun gilded the ground. The landscape that he was looking at recurred so often in his dreams that he was never fully certain whether or not he had seen it in the real world. In his waking thoughts he called to the Golden Country" (29). This reappearing image in Winston's dreams is his oneiric house.[2] When it manifests in his thoughts, moving from unconscious dream to conscious reflections, his name for it "Golden Country" reveals the value that Winston grants to the power of this

---

[2] The oneiric house is Gaston Bachelard's label of the atavistic dream world, or as he explains, "a house that comes forth from the earth, that lives rooted in its black earth" (111).

memory. His initial description of the turf and the summer light does not have any specificity but represents absolute pleasure through its soothing connotations. As he continues relating this dream turned memory, he becomes more precise with his description:

> It was an old, rabbit-bitten pasture, with a good track wandering across it and a molehole here and there. In the ragged hedge on the opposite side of the field the boughs of the elm trees were swaying very faintly in the breeze, their leaves stirring in dense masses like women's hair. Somewhere near at hand, though out of sight, there was a clear, slow-moving stream where dace were swimming in the pools under the willow trees. (29)

Winston's description develops because of the specific geographical features like the track, trees, and stream that make a mapping of the space possible. The development furthers the transfer of this oneiric house from his dreams to his thoughts. For Winston, this space represents the salvation of "privacy, love, and friendship," and thus his mother and sister. The simile describing the trees as "women's hair" reveals Winston's connection between the salvation of loving relationships and the feminine. The natural becomes related to the feminine for Winston, which means forbidden yet authentic relationships, as opposed to the violent reality of the Party. The calm, translucent water of the stream opposes the "green water" that drowns and separates Winston from his mother and sister. This water is life giving, as the fish and the peaceful sound of the flow reveals.

The redemptive power of the natural indicated by the water and the correlation between the natural and the feminine becomes synonymous with rebellion as Winston's experiences continue. This initial natural memory concludes with a dark-haired girl approaching him and tearing off her clothes (29). Winston does not respond with arousal; instead he channels his desire toward rebellion. He explains his interpretation of

her action: "With its grace and carelessness it seemed to annihilate a whole culture, a whole system of thought, as though Big Brother and the Party and the Thought Police could all be swept into nothingness by a single splendid movement of the arm" (29). The culture of violence and oppression characterized by the Party becomes replaced in Winston's memory by authentic emotional and natural responses.

When Winston and Julia first consummate their relationship, it must occur within the space of Winston's oneiric house. Julia arranges the meeting, but Winston recognizes the similarity to his memory. He describes the exact footpath, molehill, trees and stream, using the same language (102-3). The pure emotional bliss that Winston recognizes in this natural space derives from the layers of authentic relationships, from his mother to sister and now to Julia, that the space provides him. For Winston, again like Benjamin's angel, history is defined by the ability to withstand catastrophe, which in this case means to maintain loving relationships by understanding their past and then using this understanding to withstand the terror of the present and thus emphasize the necessity of authentic community for the future. But he explains that under the Party, "History has stopped. Nothing exists except an endless present in which the Party is always right" (128). The oneiric space contradicts the historical understanding allowed by the Party. Because his conception of history has expanded beyond the party definition, Winston starts proclaiming of himself and Julia or anyone living under Party rules, "We are the dead" (113, 145). Even though Winston and Julia cannot maintain the authentic relationship protected by their natural environment, they prove, much like Sam and Nicola in *London Fields*, a momentary community can reveal the oppressive politics of

the mainstream and image alternative social formations that suggest ways to resist oppressive realities.

Ballard, Amis, and Boyle each imagine new social formations based on the natural or the country that resist the political realities of their time. In *High-Rise*, Ballard critiques the stagnated class structure of 1970s' England by relating this stagnation to the space of the metropolitan skyscraper. The narrative structure mimics the spaces of the building by having three segregated male protagonists representing each of the classes battling for position within the isolated spaces. Most of the conflict arises over access to mobility within the spaces, revealing that a stagnated environment will lead to chaos. The novel offers an alternative to the chaotic struggles of the individual male protagonists through a collective feminine space within the garden. This natural space fosters a collective agenda of protection and nurture. Similarly, Amis critiques the hierarchical class structure required under Thatcher's neo-conservative government by revealing the oppression of each individual, irrespective of class, when attempting to understand emotional connections and collective social formations. Amis creates the imagined natural space, London Fields, to emphasize the collective need to protect innocence and thus avoid catastrophe. Finally, Boyle's film critiques the nostalgia of New Britain by following a non-traditional family as it moves from the urban and into different natural environments, which both attack and protect the collective agenda. Boyle's film acknowledges its historical and literary influences to emphasize the need to understand history not as a nostalgic celebration of previous grandeur, but instead as communal collection of multiple perspectives and traditions.

J.G. Ballard's Buildings and Neighborhoods

In a discussion with Martin Amis, J.G. Ballard explains his reaction to moving from China to England as an adolescent. He says, "The culture shock is still with me. . . . I wasn't prepared for the greyness, the harshness of the light, the small, exhausted, shattered community, the white faces, the closed nature of English life" (*Visiting* 79). Ballard relates the poor quality of light to the condition of English life in order to emphasize his position as an observer of post-imperial England. The imagery of both the light and the sterile faces shows that he recognizes the stagnation that characterizes the political and the cultural milieu of postwar English society. In his fiction, non-fiction, and interviews, Ballard addresses the stagnation within both culture and science fiction. In terms of the later, Ballard argues that the genre should not accept the conventions, plots, narrative styles, or standard characters continually borrowed from H.G. Wells, which have become common place for the genre ("Which Way to Inner Space?" 197). Instead he creates his narratives, particularly the "disaster novels," as a way to question the idea of history accepted by the conservative government of the 1960s and 1970s and the idea of a monolithic ideal of Englishness, which drives the conservative agenda and does not represent the reality of most of the English, including the foreign-born Ballard.

Because of Jean Baudrillard, Ballard's emphasis on the themes of history and of identity is often reduced to theoretical phrases like hyperreality. Perhaps as synonymous to Ballard as disaster, Jean Baudrillard brought Ballard into the postmodernism debate in 1976. In Baudrillard's definition of the three stages of simulacra, natural, productive, and simulation, he concludes that Ballard belongs to the last order because novels like *Crash* epitomize hyperreality and hyper-functionality. Where as the first two divisions of simulacra correspond to the imaginary of utopia and science fiction respectively, the third

category has no clear imaginary. It is, as Baudrillard explains, "A hallucination of the real, of the lived, of the everyday—but reconstituted, sometimes even unto its most disconcertingly unusual details, recreated like an animal park or a botanical garden, presented with transparent precision, but totally lacking substance, having been derealized and hyperrealized" (Baudrillard online). The third category of simulacra establishes the impossibility of any imaginary when the real has been negated. The nihilism and closure in Baudrillard's reading of Ballard permits academic critics to attack the novelist on moral grounds and over the tired debate about the categories of fiction and theory.[3]

The debate about the relationship between Baudrillard and Ballard typically focuses on theoretical terminology without closely reading Ballard's novels. However, Nicholas Ruddick suggests a productive way to rethink Ballard's conception of the real and its relation to the hyperreal, a reading that reveals Ballard's desires for the future of science fiction. Ruddick argues, "everywhere in Ballard's so-called disaster fiction . . . the real has not been nor is it in the process of being abolished. Far from it: catastrophe, whatever form it takes, actually signifies the liberation of a "deep" real (associated with the unconscious), that has been until then latent in a "shallow" manifest reality (held in place by mechanisms of repression)" (Ruddick). Ruddick understands that instead of reducing Ballard's disasters to the abolition of the real, the narratives that imagine disaster attempt to reveal the effects of oppression on society and individuals. As Ballard calls for science fiction that explores inner space instead of outer space ("Inner" 197), Ruddick attempts to understand Ballard's conception of inner space, based on

---

[3] I am talking specifically of the responses to Baudrillard published in *Science-Fiction Studies* 18.3 (1991).

psychoanalytical theory, as the unconscious. Ruddick's criticism turns to Ballard for guidance, a method I also follow, but instead of Ruddick's psychoanalytic method, I want to understand inner space as spatiality and narrative space. Since Ballard connects inner space to Earth, the biological, and "temporal perspectives of the personality" ("Inner" 198), understanding inner space requires looking at the relationship between technological spaces and natural spaces, which thus critiques the effects and influences of the environment on people.

With the environment in *High-Rise* (1975), Ballard contains the stagnated political climate of 1970s England within a forty-story luxury apartment building. Its seemingly homogeneous professional class becomes strictly segregated into three distinct groups because of the isolation forced on the inhabitants by the stagnation of the building's organization. As the building welcomes the final tenant and reaches capacity, it undergoes a disassociation from the outside environment, trapping the inhabitants within a revolutionary moment where a shattered and segregated community has been forced together and forced into action. As the protagonists from each social class participate in a futile battle for mobility within the building, a natural care-giving collective forms as a representative of the progressive community that could address the stagnation and alienation characteristic of the idea of England at the moment of the production of this narrative. This natural care-giving collective can be read as a libidinal utopia, a space where wild and unspeakable desires are unleashed in response to oppression, so that these desires can generate an understanding of historical and political stagnation. In this context, the stagnation derives from the decline of Britain's economy throughout the 1960s and culminating in the 1970s when the simultaneous rise of inflation and

unemployment led to a period popularly know as 'stagflation,' a situation that resulted in the monetarist and consensus policies of Thatcher.

My reading of Ballard's theorizing of the spaces of the metropolis corresponds to architectural theorist Rem Koolhaas as both attempt to imagine new delirious social formations. Koolhaas explores the utopian potential of the high-rise and its "Culture of Congestion" in *Delirious New York*. He explains the "true Skyscraper" as the product of "triple fusion" between the Tower, the metaphoric, and the grid (99). The triple fusion makes some of the weaknesses of the high-rise into its strengthens: 1) the tower is a metaphor of repeated virgin sights or a grid of space yet to be conquered; 2) the congested physical conditions of the high-rise mimics the urban environment outside of the building, creating hostility and competition; 3) the towers' conquest of the block reveals isolation within a collective environment. Overall, the difficulty in achieving the verisimilitude of the high-rise derives from the actuality of the metropolitan lot, what Koolhaas calls "an unforeseeable and unstable combination of simultaneous activities" (85). By labeling the lot a zone of simultaneity, Koolhaas emphasizes the link between grid and tower. Both can serve as the guise for the metropolitan lot since we can never escape the grid in some form or another, especially in a subdivided tower that is actually an inverted grid. But the act of separating the two (grid and tower) is only a matter of metaphoric multiplication. Therefore, the perfect "triple fusion" cannot occur because the individual parts exist within a feuding simultaneity, each attempting to exert prominence over the others, but failing because of their entwined nature.[4] Koolhaas is

---

[4]Koolhaas's attempt to imagine new social formations necessitates that the "true Skyscrapper," as he calls it, may not exist, but obviously the real spaces of these buildings are always ripe for the potential of delirious revolution. While developing the delirious logic of high-rise space, Koolhaas theorizes "the Skyscraper's conquest by other forms of culture" (87) by explaining the feuding simultaneity between the

interested in the way that the concentration of the fusion enables the production of new kinds of delirious social and cultural relationships. Similarly, the disaster in *High-Rise* results from the construction and fusion of the building, particularly its means of mobility and its relationship to London.

As the novel begins and the thousandth apartment of the London high-rise has been occupied, allowing the building to reach "critical-mass," so does the disassociation between the building and its actual existence within London. Through this continually fracturing relationship, Ballard explores how the isolation and stagnation created by government and economic policies effects the competition between the internal spaces of the building, the historical specificity of London, and the alienation and disassociation of the building and the inhabitants from the city. The narrator describes how Dr. Robert Laing, one of the three male protagonists, views London on the day when the building has been filled: "For all the proximity to the City two miles away to the west along the river, the office buildings of central London belonged to a different world, in time as well as space" (9). Laing's conception of London reveals the importance of the city's history for Londoners' conception of time. As Laing and the other male protagonists battle for individual superiority, London becomes "slightly more distant, the landscape of an abandoned planet receding slowly from [their] mind[s]" (10). This is because the alienation from the real city forces them to forget historical time and reinvent an inner time. As the journey to understand this inner time progresses through the battle over the

inside and outside of the Skyscraper. He explains, "Through volume alone, life inside the Skyscraper is involved in a hostile relationship with life outside: the lobby competes with the street, presenting a linear display of the building's pretensions and seductions, marked by those frequent points of ascent—the elevators—that will transport the visitor even further into the building's subjectivity" (88). Koolhaas's charged language, including words such as *hostile*, *competes*, and *seductions*, indicates that his conception of the feud is not only of interest to architectural design and designers, but instead highlights for "other forms of culture" how the Skyscraper profoundly influence our understanding of the world.

occupation of desirable spaces within the building, fewer and fewer people select to leave

the building because they base their understanding on the closure and chaos of the

building, replicating the stagnation characteristic of the novel's moment. The erasure of

historic specificity in favor of a new conception of inner time indicates the need to revise

the monumental ideal of historical agency; but as my reading will show, the call to

rethink time does not mean that the characters will understand this need in productive

ways.

Ballard proposes that the reinvention of a new sense of time within the building can

free the inhabitants from the oppression of historical time, including the stagnation of

their current moment, but he recognizes that this reinvention does not automatically occur

simply by closing the space from the real space. Ballard relates the ability to imagine a

new conception of time, using language similar to Koolhaas, by explaining the feud

between high-rise and city. The narrator relates the assessment of Dr. Robert Laing, one

of the three male protagonists, that in the building "the dimensions of his life were space,

light and the pleasures of a subtle kind of anonymity. . . . In effect, the apartment block

was a small vertical city, its two thousand inhabitants boxed up into the sky. The tenants

corporately owned the building, which they administered themselves through a resident

manager and his staff" (9). The sense of anonymity that Laing adores represents an

acceptance of the isolation forced by the verticality of the habitation.   The phrase "boxed

up into the sky" indicates an ungrounded, ubiquitous spatial dynamic to life within this

structure and the imagination of a city within the real city of London, inevitably

challenging the allegiance of the inhabitants. With the closing off of the structure from

the outside world, the seemingly homogeneous group of apartment owners (grouped by

the act of bourgeois ownership) fractures into a hierarchical spatial striation. The text

follows a protagonist from each level: Richard Wilder the documentary film maker and

father from the lowest levels, Laing the quintessential professional from the middle level,

and Royal the building designer and upper-class poster boy from the penthouse. The

three social classes eventually fracture into small collective clans, overtaking the

electrical system, garbage disposal, and most importantly the elevators and other

passageways through the building. This class confrontation ultimately leads to

apocalypse as "the old social sub-divisions, based on power, capital, and self-interest"

(62) become apparent to the oppressed people of the lower levels. The overthrow of class

structure leaves the three male protagonists each attempting to secure or protect authority,

particularly through the very logic of power that created the old social structures. The

shift in narrative perspectives between Laing, Wilder, and Royal permits the reader to see

different paths to the same closed and isolated conclusion, thus revealing the futility of

the old logic.

The feud develops emotionally and technologically, but both emphasize the need to

imagine new social organizations. The occasion for the start of the conflict between the

lower-level parents and the upper-level dog owners, the drowning of one of the stately

dogs by Wilder, emphasizes the continual evaluation of the value of life within the high-

rise. On an emotional level, Wilder represents the absolute destruction of emotion

because of his ability to both kill the animal and abandon his family. Wilder's

transformation from an intelligent, hardworking cultural critic and artist into an intensely

individualistic and hedonistic brute requires readers to identify that the building actually

causes this fragmentation within the individual psyche and the social structure. In *High-*

Rise, the fragmentation is linked to the anthropomorphism of the building, which explains the locus of violence. The narrator reveals, "Like a huge and aggressive malefactor, the high-rise was determined to inflict every conceivable hostility upon them" (68). The agency of the building invents within its bodily inhabitants delirious violence, which then makes the inhabitants rise-up against the very violence inflicted upon them—Wilder's assent of the building is the literal manifestation of the subjected body.

Explaining the anthropomorphic nature of high-rise buildings, Jameson elaborates on Koolhaas's emphasis of the internal logic of the structure: "In Koolhaas, however, if I understand him right, both elevator and grid stand as methods for dealing with the whole bulk of pipes and wiring that, taking up some 40 percent of the building's density, stands as a foreign body unassimilable to *praxis* or *poesis* but that must somehow be addressed and dealt with in new and original ways" ("The Uses of Apocalypse" 37). Jameson's explanation presents an analogy between elevator and grid and the veins and arteries of the human body. As ideals of mobility and organization, the elevator and grid cannot be simply identified and then ignored because they are the essence or life-giving aspects of the space. In Ballard's novel, the feud over these idealized spaces emphasizes the need to imagine a new understanding of the anthropomorphic building. Within the inner landscape of Ballard's high-rise, the notion of body becomes important as the individual's and the collective's changing relationship to the space of the building can be read through the marks and scars created during the confrontations. The accumulation of garbage in the building's lobby, literally blocking access to the building, the layers upon layers of graffiti on the walls, preventing any understanding or conveyance of information, and the war paint on Wilder's naked chest, revealing his primitive inner

psyche, represent the decline and destruction of the old power logic because of the breakdown of the technological.[5]

The access to and idea of unrestricted mobility becomes the central issue of the feud, but simply moving literally to a higher level does not accomplish the ideals of freedom foundational to mobility. The narrator explains this struggle over mobility: "Their real opponent was not the hierarchy of residents in the heights far above them, but the image of the building in their own minds, the multiplying layers of concrete that anchored them to the floor" (69). The narrator's statement emphasizes the misunderstanding of the conflict as a feud between warring clans. Instead, as the closing-off of the building from the surrounding London environment highlights, the battle is over the effects of the building, the enclosure of the conflict between the nation-state and technology that manifests through the violent fighting over the elevators and other means of movement throughout the seemingly perfect Koolhaasian grid of the high-rise, and the imaging of new social formations less based on individuality, success, and upward-mobility.

Each of the male protagonists shares a similar faulty logic about the effects of the building. Wilder feels suffocated because of "the 999 other apartments pressing on him through the walls and ceilings" (58), and Royal "felt crushed by the pressure of all the people above him, by the thousands or individual lives, each with its pent-up time and space" (104) when he ventured to floors beneath the penthouse. Both of them are overwhelmed because of their individualistic understanding of the relationship between

---

[5] The lingual aspects of these rebellions, particularly the graffiti, illustrates an understanding of *techne*, not simply as that which brings forth being insinuating a metaphysical totality, but instead as the productive qualities of language in the Derridian sense.

themselves and the others in the building; Wilder sees himself as the support beam for the structures of the building, leaving his chest, which comes to bare the marks of his primitive understanding, to withstand the pressure of all the others. Wilder becomes the worker that Laing and Royal had already stereotyped through his imagination of his own role within the building. Royal thinks completely about individuality in both time and space, viewing the building as his zoo and the inhabitants as his pets. Laing, as the more cerebral character, understands the effects of the building mentally but with the same ridiculous self-absorption as the other two. He wonders "if this huge building existed solely in his mind and would vanish if he stopped thinking about it" (51).   Because of the congestion and restricted mobility, the assent of the high-rise comes to represent power and domination over the internal organizational system of both the high-rise and the developing apocalyptic society. A majority of Wilder's narrative follows him as he attempts to climb, advancing his base upward as he infiltrates new clans. As time passes, the anthropomorphism of the building forces the inhabitants into a state of primitive animality. For example, Wilder believes he becomes animal as Royal thinks he becomes zookeeper. Wilder's accent causes the descent of his mental and human characteristics since he becomes more primitive, violent, and vulgar the higher he rises within the passages of the building; the text suggests that the highest level of intellect can only be possessed by one entity, and therefore as the building assumes this position, the humans must resort to a primitive state.

As each of the male protagonists retreats to a phallocentric understanding, Laing becoming obsessed with having weak women to protect and Wilder presenting himself not through language but through a literal presentation of his loins, the narrative

perspective becomes more and more circumspect, suggesting a position that only the building could provide as it is the only omniscient perspective presented. We are asked to identify the narrator with the building, but the building's omniscience should not be read in typical science fiction fashion as the enemy to human rationality. Instead, the building identities the truly brutal and animal within the human and asks what effect development will have on this inner nature. The narrator explains the philosophy behind this animal-state: "Even the run-down nature of the high-rise was a model of the world into which the future was carrying them, a landscape beyond technology where everything was either derelict or, more ambiguously, recombined in unexpected but more meaningful ways" (173). This future will most likely never become fully realized because of the dissociation from the historical real, a connection that is more firmly in place in Ballard's later novels because the historical real to which they respond is not characterized by the stagnation of the moment of *High-Rise*. The historical influence on the notion of the future necessitates thinking about Ballard's 'inner space' in terms of temporality.

If we read the time of *High-Rise* as simply a staging ground for the future, then the narrative episodes that constitute the novel specifically explain how the past and the future converge on the present. The present moment of the narrative indicates the realization of the utopian potential of the future but also with the understanding that the past makes this idealized time impossible. Instead, the narrative time attempts to understand what the present means for the future. When the narrator reveals Royal's belief that the building is "helping the two thousand residents towards their new Jerusalem" (84), the term 'new Jerusalem' explains the temporal relationship of the

narrative. 'New Jerusalem' celebrates the grandeur of English history and, through its

Blakeian connotation, prophesizes a return to this historical ideal. The idea of 'new

Jerusalem' directly conflicts with the alienated and isolated "new kind of twentieth-

century life" (42) accepted by the passive residents of the building. This passive life

celebrates the stagnation that conceives of a present without a past or a future and does

not threaten the repetition of middle-class life, the monotony of leaving the building

every day for a career that comes to define the individual. In conflict with the

monotonous present of the status quo, Ballard does suggest a future formation of

community beyond the reach of the technological alienation of the building's spaces.

In opposition to the developing misogynist logic of the male protagonist, Ballard

envisions a female collective that emphasizes protection and development based on the

redemptive power of the natural. The typical critical reading of this ending follows the

same logic ridiculed within the novel through the pathetic end of each male protagonist.

Epitomizing this faulty reading, Robert Caserio argues, "This denouement could suggest

a misogynistic fantasy of women's role in any new social order—but like all other

sociohistorical considerations in the novel, this one is ambiguously endorsed and

ridiculed" (304). Caserio's reading takes at face value the manipulative, patriarchal

narratives provided by Wilder and Royal. Since each of these protagonists descends

deeper and deeper into mental and physical despair—Wilder even views killing Royal as

a "game" (196)—their misogynistic fantasy should not be accepted as the only view.

Caserio's reading enacts a similar violence to the text as Royal's sexual games against his

wife and Wilder's rape, both epitomizing the misogynistic fantasy that Caserio wrongly

situates within the female collective.[6] The truly productive element of the female,

caregiver collective is that it combines women of each social division through maternal

acts and collective care. As the most ambiguous factor of this collective is an explanation

of how they came together, it is easy to dismiss them as fantasy, but such a reading does

not acknowledge the narrative perspective of the novel. As the building has been

manipulating the male protagonists, the readers only see the women's journey through

the eyes of the men. Instead, we must read the women through their own logic based on

the little evidence that the men do relate.

The masculine desire to rise through the high-rise represents the intensely

hierarchical class structure created by the power logic of capitalism; but the feminine idea

of mobility, marked as pathological by the men, is based on a logic of nomadism and

circuitous social structure. My understanding of Ballard's feminist imagining of

community develops from Meaghan Morris's "cramped space," which is an overtly

feminist understanding of Deleuze and Guattari's notion of minor literature. She explains

"cramped space" as "highly deterritorialized" and "political" (xviii) and may be more

useful for feminist analysis than minor because "the poverty of resources in the 'cramped

space' of the minor means that each individual intrigue connects immediately to politics,

and that the individual matters intensely. . . . So everything has collective value; there is

no room for a 'master' enunciation to develop that is separate from the collective" (xviii).

Morris's notion of individuality highlights an important connection to the collective

because the individual is only fully realized once he or she announces the collective

---

[6] W. Warren Wagar argues for a similar reading of Ballard's novels: "Although Ballard's utopias, one may contend are mystagogic and escapist and even decadent, they are utopias, and utopias of a post-capitalistic landscape in which technocrats and tycoons alike would be out of work" (67).

enunciation and thus leaves behind the selfishly isolated master narrative of power. In

Ballard's novel the master enunciation is the patriarchal battle for space, which the

women extinguish through their journey towards new beginnings within the pastoral

landscape of the sculpture garden.

We have already established that the masculine journey through the building is

based on violence and power, but the feminine journey is based on protection and

knowledge. The masculine perspective of the three main protagonists makes this

conclusion difficult to recognize, but the language of the narrator, representing the

omniscience of the building, indicates the reading I am suggesting. Early in the feud over

the elevators, Laing encounters a young woman, a masseuse, who has mastered the

mobility of the elevators. The narrator's explanation of this encounter highlights the

difference between Laing's perspective and the female one. The narrator explains,

"Laing immediately recognized her as one of the 'vagrants,' of whom there were many in

the high-rise, bored apartment-bound housewives and stay-at-home adult daughters who

spent a large part of their time riding the elevators and wandering the long corridors of

the vast building, migrating endlessly in search of change or excitement" (38). Laing's

knowledge is based on the old power logic, and thus he understands the women based on

their worth within that power. They do not embody the work and ingenuity that indicates

success under his logic. To him they are marked by idleness and boredom, worthless to

the economy of power because they are housewives relegated to the domestic realm. He

later comments that another woman, Eleanor Powell, also rides "the elevators up and

down in a fuddled attempt to find her way out of the building" (47). In his conception,

the elevators are utilitarian, so he views the women's rides as illogical because he does

not understand the philosophical journey that the elevators provide for the women.

Believing in a similar logic, Wilder dislikes Helen's "lack of spirit" and characteristic

"passivity" (56). For Wilder, Helen's lack of ambition is justification to leave her and

their sons when he endeavors to rise in the building. The narrator uses language to

establish that the masculine perspective is not the only one in the building. The quotation

marks around 'vagrant' indicate the narrator's effort to attach this diminutive label to

Laing, thus distancing the narrative from Laing's conclusions. The phrase 'migrating

endlessly' has a less clear attribution. In Laing's view the phrase embodies the futility

and failure of the women within the old power logic, but in terms of the narrator's

attempt to imaging new social formation based on mobility, the phrase summarizes a new

logic.

The nomadic movement of women like the masseuse and Eleanor Powell refutes

the stagnated masculine perspective of the three protagonists because, although it can be

viewed as endless, it is really only endless temporally. The constant movement through

the elevators and the building is the women working to establish a collective for the

future. Thus, it is endless in the sense that its accomplishments are not immediately

achieved like the narrow agenda of Wilder's rise to the top of the building. The female

agenda is pushed into the background by the narrative focus on the men. For example,

during Wilder's first journey away from his family and the lower levels, he again

encounters the young masseuse in the elevator. To him she appears "pallid and

undernourished" (76), a statement of the worth that he sees in her similar to Laing's

assessment of her vagrancy. The narrator's analogical statement of her reaction to him

refers to both the masculine and feminine logics. According to the narrator, "she watched

Wilder with interest, as if glad to welcome him to this private domain" (76). If we read this from Wilder's perspective, it emphasizes his cockiness and belief that women desperately need men, especially to support them as they stay in the private and domestic realm. As the feminine logic is based on collectivity, the masseuse's interest in Wilder shows a willingness to ingratiate him into the group as long as he will abandon his patriarchal identity. Calling the elevator private is a way to emphasize that understanding the anthropomorphic nature of the buildings structure will reveal the philosophical freedom provided by the feminist logic. When she says to him, "'We can travel anywhere'" (76), she is emphasizing this freedom; but he reads it as insanity because the elevators simply go up and down to him. As he continues, he "came across a commune composed exclusively of women" (78). The narrator labels the group as a commune to express the collective agenda of the women. Because of the women's distrust for the individuality that Wilder represents, he wrongly explains "their hostility to him, not only because he was a man, but because he was so obviously trying to climb to a level above their own" (78). Wilder views their distrust through the old logic, establishing a power hierarchy between male and female and between the structures of class. He cannot understand that their hostility is towards the patriarchal behavior and agenda that he embodies. Even labeling their reaction as hostility, instead of distrust or dislike, identifies the masculine obsession with violence and confrontation that drives the narratives of the male characters.

In opposition to the violence that characterizes the masculine experience within the high-rise, the narrator offers the more philosophical understanding and journey of the

women. The narrator explains Mrs. Steele's concept of the building:

> She referred to the high-rise as if it were some kind of huge animate presence, brooding over them and keeping a magisterial eye on the events taking place. There was something in this feeling—the elevators pumping up and down the long shafts resembled pistons in the chamber of a heart. The residents moving along the corridors were the cells in a network of arteries, the lights in their apartments the neurons of a brain. (47)

Mrs. Steele presents the anthropomorphic perspective of the building. Unlike Wilder and Royal, who characteristic of their self-centered attitudes, view the building as a mass of concrete weighing down upon them, Mrs. Steele comprehends the omniscient perspective of the building, proving that the women's ability to move throughout the building without opposition is due to their connection to it. The biological analogies that she explains concerning the elevators, the residents, and the lights indicate that a theoretical understanding of the spaces' delirious potential[7] aids in the establishment of the feminine collective. As Mrs. Steele's view is related to the reader through Laing's presence in their apartment, the obvious explanation of the biological language is simply to attribute it to Laing since he is a medical doctor. That reading does not hold up because of the non-clinical biological language, especially pistons, and also because immediately after this passage, Laing reveals his misunderstanding of Eleanor Powell's elevator journeys.

Further emphasizing that the deeper understanding of the building belongs to the women, Helen explains to Wilder, "'I think they only exist inside my head'" (53), referring to the swimming pool and the most coveted part of the building, the roof garden, also called the sculpture garden. The garden becomes the redemptive home of the female collective. As the narrative does not provide readers access to Helen's reason

---

[7] I am again referring to my reading of Koolhaas alongside Ballard, including Jameson's emphasis on the biological aspects of the passageways of the space.

for her journey into this space, we are left to assume that her journey is philosophical. She comprehends the existence of these spaces metaphysically, and this understanding, far from the lunacy that Wilder attaches to her statement, permits her to join the collective.

Even as the female collective grows and gains agency, the men still do not comprehend its importance. Royal believes that Mrs. Wilder lives in the penthouse apartments because she is "a valuable hostage" (158) against Wilder and that she can earn her keep by working as a house servant. He once again reveals that women are only understood through economic terms. Royal explains that she "had regained her strength and self-confidence" (158), which in his terms means a more valuable servant. He does not realize that this strength and self-confidence, like the excitement she feels after she joins forces with two young women from the 7th floor to reopen the classes for the children (137), derives from the collective agency of the women. The women are able to communicate in a new language, which the men do not understand. Royal notices the change in communication because Helen "spoke in a flat voice unlike the animated tone she used with Anne and the other women" (159). Dr. Pangbourne, Royal's upper-class rival, believes that he controls the women by giving them a primitive language based on birth-cries. What he does not realize is that the women, already gaining collective agency through communication, use their biological connection to the building to transform this naturally feminine language into their own, rebelling against his patriarchal control. The women who do not become a part of the garden collective are left, like Eleanor Powell, "wandering about the corridors in a vacant way as if she had lost the key to her mind" (114); or else the women remain submissive to the patriarchal power like the young

woman, "content to have Wilder's strong arm around her shoulders" (188). These women are blocked from their place with the others and thus remain oppressed under the old logic.

The ending reveals the masculine and feminine responses to the oppression caused by the violent power of the old logic. Wilder's killing of Royal is the stereotypical masculine response to the violent high-rise space because Royal embodies the elitism and social isolation that make the building possible. The female collective of caregivers similarly responds to the violent subjectivity of women under the old logic. The women's final location in the sculpture garden is essential for their agency. The garden had previously served as Royal's sanctuary, blocking all others from it because nobody equaled his social position. The narrator explains that "the doors, chained for so long to exclude them, were now wide open" (197). Royal represents the chains that have previously contained the lower classes. Now that they have access, the space becomes idyllic, "freshly painted" and "vibrant with light" (197). This garden serves to nurture the innocence of the children, the embodiment of a future that escapes the stagnated twentieth-century life epitomized by the masculine experience in the building. The women can never fully realize the historical revisionist aim of their garden collective because they are too influenced by the old logic. They still wear evening gowns and aprons, patriarchal symbols. The narrator explains the importance of their dress: "They seemed to belong to another century and another landscape, except for their sunglasses, whose dark shades stood out again the blood-notched concrete of the roof-terrace" (198). While they may seem to represent a return to nineteenth century values of work and gender, their anachronistic sunglasses indicate a coolness that permits them to withstand

the chaos of their moment. They are figures like Benjamin's angel of history, protecting the natural innocence of youth, nurturing youth's redemptive possibility, and aiding the growth of a future egalitarian society. Their primitiveness is a means to protect the children and thus the potential for a future. They control a fire and carry knives, showing that they absolutely refuse the passivity expected of them under the old logic. They will no longer serve the men, but they will nurture them, if like Wilder, they will become one of their children. Wilder always had a strain in his personality that desired to be looked after like a child by women, including his wife. When Wilder first approaches the women, the narrator describes how the "circle of women drew closer" (198). The circular formation of the women highlights the collective and egalitarian formation of the women since none occupies a position of authority in this formation.

The circuitousness of their society and their journey through the building reemphasizes the important understanding of the anthropomorphic building that they have been providing to readers. When Wilder calls them his "new mothers," he shows his willingness to become one of their innocent children. As a child, he can no longer use the women as sexual objects, but instead he must submit to their logic. Wilder's inclusion into the group emphasizes that this social formation presents a feminist logic that directly opposes the master narrative. Ballard does not indicate if the feminist logic will succeed or fail; he simply offers their ideals as a redemptive way to understand history and inner space. The novel's conclusion resorts back to the 'master' narrative of Laing, thus explaining that until this late twentieth-century space can come to terms with collectivity, the disaster will replicate and spread elsewhere.

The narrator ends by telling how the revolution has spread to an adjacent high-rise; through Laing's evaluation, the narrator reveals, "Laing watched them contentedly, ready to welcome them to their new world order" (204). The conception of this "new world order" supports Wagar's argument that "in Ballard's transvaluation of the traditional Western wisdom, even dystopias are utopian" (54). The ideas apocalypse and dystopia connect to Jameson's discussions of these very concepts and also his reading of Ballard's understanding of the historical and the present. He argues that apocalypse "and its weaker embodiments in the various dystopias . . . are seemingly historical visions—if not of the very end of history—that have in fact more modest expository functions as ways of articulating a social structure in full evolution" ("The Use of Apocalypse" 38). As Ballard's careful explication of the spaces of the metropolis continues throughout his fiction, obviously he views these spaces and their effects as a changing structure and attempts to understand the evolution through a variety of revolutions.

By looking briefly at *Millennium People* (2003), we will see how Ballard addresses the cultural ideals of the moment in order to explore how a conception of history influence the understanding and existence of space. The conception of millennium has two poles for the novel. On one side it represents the apocalyptic and the revelatory as they pertain to Ballard's project; but it also refers to the nostalgic Millennium Project conceived by the Blair government, particularly because the most visible icon of the Project, the Millennium Wheel, also known as the London Eye, a carnival ride that supposedly provides the guest with a transcendent perspective of the metropolis, plays a pivotal role in the narrative. The centrality of this space indicates that while the middle

class revolution in Chelsea Marine, a gated-community,[8] is on the surface a revolt against

the pacification of the middle class by the responsibility to property taxes, school fees,

maintenance charges, parking fines, and the institutions of culture that instill social

responsibility and make for a docile citizen, the actual revolution that Ballard calls for is

a more complete, less carnivalesque, notion of the historical present.

The historical passivity of the Millennium Project assumes that the Millennium

Wheel provides the transcendence needed in a meaningless world. The narrator, a

psychologist named David Markham, provides the running commentary on the status of

ideas in the twenty-first century. He joins with a group of revolutionaries, Kay Churchill

who leads the dissatisfied homeowners in their plight against the management company,

tourism, and the film industry and Richard Gould, who carries out so-called "meaningless

violence" by bombing Heathrow and the Tate Modern and killing a television star; for

Gould, only the meaningless could provide meaning in a meaningless world; Gould is the

spokesperson for Baudrillard. Markham is the foil to Gould's philosophy, looking for

meaning through relationships with others. Before Markham can realize his role as foil,

he has to go through a philosophical journey with Gould. After hearing the news of the

Tate bombing, David comments, "The city was a vast and stationary carousel, forever

boarded by millions of would-be passengers who took their seats, waited and then

---

[8] The gated community is the embodiment of the New Urbanist movement, which Andrew Ross defines as "mixed-housing, mixed-use, walkable town with small lots, interconnected streets, and an identifiable center and edge" (73). Ross's analysis develops from his experiences living in the infamous planned community at Disney World, Celebration. While the cultural and historical specificity of Celebration does not relate to Chelsea Marina, the historical background for the development of such New Urbanist communities does. Ross explains that these communities emerge out of the blurring of lines between private and public. He explains that in the aftermath of the Cold War, "[m]ore and more of what has been public sector was being turned over to private and corporate interests" (311). As the threat of communism and nuclear annihilation dissipated with the end of the Cold War, the economic forces found a way to control the middle classes through privatization of urban space.

dismounted. I thought of the bomb cutting through another temple of enlightenment,

silencing the endless murmur of cafeteria conversations. Despite myself, I felt a surge of

excitement and complicity" (159). David notices that the tourism and perspective

promised by a spin on the Millennium Wheel is the commonplace position of the

inhabitant of the postmodern city, a passive, undeveloped acceptance of a cultural

understanding based on nostalgia and chatter. The attack on the National Film Theater

leaves the Millennium Wheel carrousels covered with black soot, blocking this false

transcendence and asking the revolutionaries to understand their positions without the aid

or control of cultural and governmental influences. In addition, the attack on the Tate

was meant for the Millennium Bridge, hoping to return the wobble that caused its

repeated closure after its first opening and made it a symbol of the failure of the Project.

David's admission of the uncertainty of perspective parallels Joseph Conrad's

anonymous frame narrator in *Heart of Darkness*. Reviewer John Gray notices the

relationship between Ballard and Conrad, saying, "this mesmerising novel about a world

on the brink of despair could be read as a Conradian fable of loss and dereliction set on

the banks of the Thames" (Gray). Gray dismisses this relationship because he wrongly

says that Ballard's world "lacks the social structures that Conrad's characters took for

granted" (Gray). Gray gets at the root of Conrad and Ballard's projects, which is an

attempt to explain the inner workings of individuals and communities under the

tumultuous conditions of modernity and postmodernity, respectively.

　　　Overall, Ballard attempts to counteract the stagnated and nostalgic historical

agenda of the moment of each text. For Ballard the crisis is not the middle class

revolution of *High-Rise* and *Millennium People*, which at most may temporarily shut

down the economy, but instead a society where the hyperreal provides the only

understanding of the individuals' relationship to the community. Reconsidering the

Ballard-Baudrillard connection, Bradley Butterfield explains that both agree with Donna

Harraway that to be human is to be part machine, but these technologies are controlled by

multinational capitalism (74). He concludes, "In a world dominated by immeasurable

simulacra despite the continued existence of the body, Ballard's and Baudrillard's

aestheticism claims social relevance by demonstrating in guerrilla fashion interventions

whereby one fiction is played against another as a means of challenging the darkest

secrets and silent hopes of the social imaginary" (74). In *Millennium People* the fictions

that play out against each other are Gould's dangers obsession with "meaningless acts"

and Markham's questioning need for answers. Markham literally needs to know who

was responsible for the death of his ex-wife, but through his immersion into Gould's

world and the revolution within Chelsea Marina, Markham realizes that he needed to

understand how the historical and political influence the technology of the body.

Markham transitions from thinking of women as sexual objects and relating to men

through their mutual sexual experiences with women to having compassion and

connection with others. Like Markham, Wilder undergoes a similar transformation about

the idea of power. Through both of these men, Ballard offers a new social imaginary

based on collectivity, authenticity, and redemption.

Martin Amis's Millennarian Fears and Hopes

Like *Millennium People*, Martin Amis's *London Fields* (1989) deals with the shift

from the twentieth to the twenty first century. In a 1995 interview with Graham Fuller,

Martin Amis explains his interest in setting the novel on the precipice of the coming

millennium. He says, "You do feel that history is approaching a climax and that all over

the world one is seeing the classical symptoms of millennarian anxiety and fever:

fundamentalism, strange weather, et cetera. I think 1999 will be the year of people

behaving strangely" ("The Prose"). The majority of Amis criticism responds to the

strange behavior of postmodern narrative, questioning the status of authorial intention,

accuracy, and control. While Amis certainly does address these metafictional topics, and

critics like Brian Finney, who analyzes Amis's depiction of the sadistic aims and desires

of writers and readers, and Peter Stokes, who explains how Amis's postmodernism

relates literary discourses and social discourses to problematize the power of the authorial

voice, have successfully explicated how the games that Amis plays challenge narrative

conventions, often there is not much attention given to the historical climax that Amis

sees causing this strange behavior of writers, characters, and perhaps most importantly

society. Instead of reading Amis as a stylist who includes some satirical elements, I wish

to reverse the emphasis and read Amis as a satirist who uses style to reinforce his critique

of the "strange behavior" of late-twentieth-century Britain, particularly the Thatcher

Government's destruction of the welfare state.

The obvious climatic historical events surrounding the novel are the end of the

Thatcher government and the impending collapse of the Soviet Union, but the historical

climax most notably haunting *London Fields* is the potential of a nuclear holocaust. As

the themes in *Einstein's Monsters*, *Time's Arrow*, and *London Fields* show, Amis views

himself and other writers of his generation as part of the nuclear age. Amis embraces his

position within the nuclear age[9] and creates a nuclear rhetoric that goes beyond the Cold

War terms of superpowers, armaments, disarmaments, and deterrence, a rhetoric he titles

---

[9] In "Apocalyptic London in the Fiction of Martin Amis," Magdalena Maczynska labels Amis's relationship between nuclear crisis and the spaces of the city as Amis's "insidious apocalypse."

"Thinkability" in the introduction to *Einstein's Monsters*. A nuclear apocalypse provides a potential destruction of narrative. In "No Apocalypse, Not Now," Derrida explains that literature, which he labels as a stockpile, has always belonged to the nuclear epoche. Because of the possible and absolute destruction of the archive, Derrida argues we are forced to see literature's "radical precariousness and the radical form of its historicity" (27). To get at this radicality, Derrida calls for "nuclear criticism" which goes to the limit through its self-destruction and bursting apart. In *London Fields*, Amis conducts an experiment in Derrida's "nuclear criticism" by looking at the radical potential for the novel to burst apart the controlling narratives of class and gender. The bursting apart occurs through the creation of a community that embraces the utopian destruction of hegemonic narratives within the lived environment of London.

By setting *London Fields* in an imagined future, Amis focuses on the apocalyptic promise of revelation, reaching a higher state of existence and understanding, or in other words the absolute completion of narrative, which could be disaster or salvation: disaster leading to salvation, or salvation revealing the real cause of disaster. He creates a rhetorical space, named confusingly also London Fields, which, by existing within the real London, shows the inability for individuals to escape the spatial reality of class and state control. The rhetorical gesture supports James Diedrick's claim that "at the allegorical level the novel is an apocalyptic jeremiad about the world's decadence and exhaustion at the end of the century" (157). Following through on the complaint, the novel offers London Fields as the space that permits and necessitates the utopian possibility of the destruction of narratives based on hierarchical power. The novel's title and the space described in the novel folds the pastoral simplicity of a pre-capitalist time

onto the collapse of the welfare state and the disappearance of socialist sympathies, hoping to reveal the need for the creation of a community that can burst apart the controlling class system. Through this community, Amis attempts to recoup the socialist goals destroyed by Thatcher's assault on the welfare state.

In the novel, Samson Young writes the story of Nicola Six, a self-professed murderee[10] as she identifies, manipulates, and completes her own murder. Samson and Nicola meet Guy Clinch, the foil, and Keith Talent, the cheat, in a pub called the Black Cross. Guy an Oxford educated, extremely wealthy and attractive man has everything but feels like he is nothing, and Keith an uneducated criminal has nothing but feels like he deserves everything he desires. Nicola manipulates each of these men to behave as she wishes and thus manipulates Samson who continually cannot prevent himself from becoming part of the narrative he claims to transcribe. As the backdrop to the murder story, the millennium quickly approaches. The millennium has several dramatic situations: the Crisis, a global conflict that could lead to the detonation of nuclear bombs over Warsaw and Marble Arch (394), the illness of the First Lady of the United States, Faith, a total eclipse, and the unexplainable torrents of horrendous weather around the world.

John Dern argues that each of the main characters of *London Fields*, the murderee, the cheat, and the foil, are genre characters representing the postmodern, the modern, and the Romantic. He bases his argument on James Diedrick's reading of Nicola's ability to manipulate parody—parody of love with Guy, parody of sex with Keith, and parody of postmodern narrative habits with Samson (Diedrick 148). By extending Diedrick's

---

[10] This term is an example of Amis's devotion to wordplay. The term attempts to revise the idea of the femme fatale from film noir by giving the temptress more control of the violence that surrounds her.

argument of parody onto literary periodization, Dern reveals "Amis' way of illustrating

that the great forms of the past have been exhausted and need to be redeployed" (7).

Dern's focus on the periodization of form address one of the central questions of the

novel—the ability for narrative to create meaning out of chaos and use this materiality to

accomplish "nuclear criticism." Frederick Holmes explains Amis's dissatisfaction with

the construction of culture; he says, "In the *fin de siècle* climate of Amis's London

(which seems as much a satiric comment on present day London as an admonitory

prophecy of its future), the only available narrative for constructing the self and

interacting socially are either debased and shallow or hopelessly anachronistic. They are

the product of mass consumerist culture" (55). As Holmes indicates, Amis critiques how

capitalism has effected the social relationships essential for the understanding of identity

and collectivity. Since Amis sees the spectacle of consumerist culture altering the social

fabric, instead of reading each character as representing a literary form, we should look at

how each epitomizes the three stages of capitalism that Frederic Jameson defines through

his spatial analysis of culture.[11]

The correlation between the stages of capitalism and the characters in the novel

emphasizes London Fields as a critique of hierarchical economics. The grid indicative of

market capitalism concentrates power in a central location, which epitomizes Guy who

---

[11] Jameson describes "the first kind of space of classical or market capitalism in terms of a logic of the grid" (*Jameson Reader* 277). The analogy of the grid reveals the hierarchical structure clearly on display in this stage. The second stage that Jameson describes is "the passage from market to monopoly capital, or what Lenin called the 'stage of imperialism'" (278). During this stage the distance between individual experience and the conceptualization of experience move further and further apart. Jameson describes the limit of individual experience as "a tiny corner of the social world, a fixed-camera view of a certain section of London" (278). From this small section of London the individual cannot possibly fathom his or her position within the colonial system of the British Empire. The third stage of Jameson's formation, "the moment of the multinational network, or what Mandel calls 'late capitalism'" (280), has abandoned the older city and the nation-state, leaving behind the modes of production of the first two stages in ruins. Under the third stage, spatial conception occurs through "cognitive mapping," which provides a way to understand "the totality of class relations on a global scale" (283).

"still had all the money, and all the strength" (464) according to Samson. Guy's home, Lansdowne Crescent, represents the power of wealth and the history of bourgeois rule. Guy controls the space of the City, the financial district of London, which is represented as "£1000 suits and platinum wrist-watches and sported uranium credit cards" (91). The true testament to Guy's power and the space of the City is that he never actually has to work; a grid keeps everything in order for him even if he is oblivious to the organization. His wealth propagates the hierarchical structure.

Opposed to Guy, Keith's failures and closed worldview epitomize the second stage. His Council flat, Windsor House, is his specific tiny corner, and his fixed-camera view is mediated by popular television. His understanding of self derives from an understanding of English nationality as the stereotype of pub culture, darts, and football. Samson explains Keith's Englishness through Keith's pride "to represent his country in an England shirt" (67) and Keith's view of a football match through clichés (97-98). Keith does not conceptualize his limitations and reliance on stereotype and cliché because he does not have the ability to place himself within the narrative of empire. Raymond Williams coins the term 'knowable communities' (165) to label the difficulty of comprehending community during the rise of industrial capitalism and the expanse of the metropolis. Williams sees the circulation of narratives as essential to the creation of a community since the face-to-face encounter is no longer possible. The circulation of narrative occurs explicitly in *London Fields* as each character shares their writing with Samson and thus with the readers, but circulation also implicitly shows how Amis merges the different spaces of capitalism, mostly within the Black Cross, to highlight the limitations placed on individuals by the organization of capitalism. For example, as Guy

merges into Keith's space, through the pub, the darts, and the women, Guy maintains the power granted by his capital; but he encounters alienation like Keith because he cannot comprehend his position, as epitomized by his inability to understand the historical allusion of Enola Gay and Little Boy. In other words, he does not know the narrative and thus does not have access to the community.

The final stage has two representatives in the novel, both Samson and Nicola. As a "citizen of the world," Samson occupies an omnipresent spatial reality. He is never at home and therefore never not at home, protecting himself from the alienation that hinders the other male characters. Similarly, Nicola enacts a "nomad progress through the city. Chelsea, Blackfriars, Regent's Park, Bloomsbury Hampstead, and so on. And now the dead-end street" (*London Fields* 60). Nicola, more so than any character, comprehends her place within the narratives that construct her reality, and she manipulates these narratives to point out their construction and potentially propose change. Her nomadism ironically charts nineteenth century moneyed locations, some of which have been gentrified with various degrees of success. She not only surveys the city, but she surveys its economic and cultural heritage, the later emphasized by the inclusion of Bloomsbury. Including her "home" as the last entry on her list proves that she understands the misogyny of society and uses that energy against men; she understands the stagnation caused by the class system and so she confronts it with her own brand of socialism, redistributing wealth between Guy and Keith. Because of her ability to comprehend and manipulate hegemony or to circulate narratives and create her own community, Nicola represents the century.

The space of London that Samson and Nicola occupy is not a place on the actual map; their space is London Fields, which represents the totality of the imagining of London and of the narratives of our historical moment. London Fields is living narrative, "communal fantasy and sorrow" (391), technological discovery and catastrophe, pastoral innocence, and utopia simultaneously. The utopian achievements of the space, London Fields, epitomizes Jameson's description of utopia as it emerges from Ursula Le Guinn's writing.[12] Jameson's description overcomes the naivety of a utopia free from disaster, but instead looks at the potential for interpersonal relationships when freed from the domination of the economic, political, and social. Gavin Keulks explains a similar relationship with Amis's use of feminist rhetoric. He says, "In later works such as *Einstein's Monsters* and *London Fields*, for instance, feminist rhetoric is couched in the language of nuclear war, which threatens to obliterate authentic emotive relationships" (182). Samson creates London Fields as the space that permits these interpersonal relationships to thrive.

Samson's naming of London Fields takes into account the violence and destruction of history; London Fields was the place where Samson's father worked on "High Explosives Research" (182) and the place where Samson was exposed to the radiation that now slowly kills him. As we are all actually slowly dying, the novel questions why we obsess over the sins of the past. Samson responds to the question of inheritance, freeing London Fields from this historical origin by transforming it into a utopian space. He explains, "If I shut my eyes or even if I keep them open I can see the parkland and the

---

[12] Jameson explains: "Utopia is, in other words not a place in which humanity is freed from violence, but rather one in which it is released for the multiple determinisms (economic, political, social) of history itself: in which it settles its accounts with its ancient collective fatalisms, precisely in order to be free to do whatever it wants with its interpersonal relationships" (*Jameson Reader* 376).

sloped bank of the railway line. The foliage is tropical and innocuous, the sky is

crystalline and innocuous. It fact the entire vista has a kiddie-book feel. . . . It is all

outside history" (323). London Fields is a pastoral playground that protects and

preserves childhood innocence; Nicola and Sam witness the children playing with boats

in London fields (95), and Sam remembers playing with his now dead brother, David.

London Fields has the redemptive power to absorb disaster, the Crisis or Sam's radiation

poisoning, and return to a state of innocence.

London Fields presents love, Amis' figure of the interpersonal relationship, as the

only way to survive the end of the twentieth century. With innocence and love preserved,

the predators who thrive off of the corrupted narratives of capitalist accumulation and

sexual perversity no longer have the materials to succeed. Amis figures love as the

narrative that can overcome class conflict, destroying the uneven development of capital

accumulation, and providing the possibility of a truly working welfare state, namely

through Kim Talent, Keith's innocent baby daughter. For this welfare state to work, all

must take responsibility for the preservation of innocence by realizing the self through

the community, not through the libidinal desires of consumerism and individual

preservation and accomplishment. Interestingly, Amis suggests a similar hope in *The

Information* through Marco, the only innocent character who thus resists the corrupted

popular assumptions about information. Amis's continual return to these narratives of

progress through the innocent reinforces my argument that his work needs to be read as

social satire.

In *London Fields*, the preservation of innocence needs to be the work of

community, which can confront hegemony and permit love, or actual concern for others,

to create change. The community arises pragmatically from the Black Cross, the place

where all four characters, representing the four points of the cross, meet, mingle, and

collaborate. The Black Cross makes explicit the connection between the novel and the

biblical Apocalypse through the reference to Christian iconography; but it also merges

the scientific black hole with the Apocalypse. As Hope is Guy's wife and Faith is the

First Lady, we need to look outside of religion for salvation from the historical

determinism that prevents progress; we need to look to community.

The Black Cross, as the space of community within both London and London

Fields, represents the need to overthrow the class system in order to protect and fulfill the

individual, a goal directly opposed to Thatcher's ideology of individual responsibility.

Amis's critique alludes to Karl Marx's idea of community as he presents it in *The

German Ideology.*   In the community of the Black Cross, all characters become

"anachronistic kinds of characters" (134), as Samson labels Keith. In other words, they

escape the spatial realities of the divisions of labor that limit them, suggesting alternative

narratives and alternative communities that burst apart the dominant narrative of

alienation. For example, Guy experiences a version of love and desire outside of the

narrative of marriage that demanded he marry to enhance his power and wealth. Keith

experiences a version of love through the respect and support given to him by the others,

but especially Nicola who provides him with knowledge that permits him entrance to the

knowable. The problem though for all of these characters is that they cannot escape

determinism. Samson and Nicola are already "the dead" throughout the novel. Their

deaths at the literal end of the novel emphasizes the teleological requirements of

hierarchical narratives; as Samson represents the global and Nicola the century, both of

which will come to an end, neither is outside history nor outside of the determinisms that block the utopian vision.

Understanding Samson and Nicola as "the dead" helps explains the responsibility of the community. We have already seen the importance of love, and Samson explains that "[t]he act of love takes place in a community of death" (282). Samson makes clear that we must understand death to fully understand this community of love. On one level death means Jameson's sense of the end as it dominates the postmodern. Samson explains that Nicola sees this sense of the end dominating her time, remember that she represents the century, and thus she finds community in the narratives of the end. Samson says:

> She welcomed and applauded the death of just about anything. It was company. It meant you weren't quite alone. A dead flower, the disobliging turbidity of dead water, slow to leave the jug. A dead car half-stripped at the side of the street, shot, busted, annulled, abashed. A dead cloud. The Death of the Novel. The Death of Animism, the Death of Naïve Reality, the Death of the Argument from Design, and (especially) the Death of the Principle of Least jAstonishment. The Death of the Planet. The Death of God. The death of love. It was company. (296)

Amis satirizes the postmodern obsession with this sense of the end; the absence of Roland Barthes' "Death of the Author" from the list proves that Amis's continual assertion of the authorial presence, through himself as character, as ghost, or as puppetmaster[13] is a critique of the obsessive adherence to these narratives. Instead of accepting the sense of the end, Amis looks at how it creates community. Nicola finds comfort in existing simultaneously with these metanarratives. Whenever Samson identifies the dead, he does so as a collective grouping of himself and Nicola—"We're

---

[13] In *Money*, Martin Amis the character meets and influences the everyman protagonist John Self. In *The Information*, a narrative voice labeled as M.A. and having biographical features that identify Martin Amis, appears intermittently. Also, Amis is an anagram of I Sam, the narrator of *London Fields*.

the dead" (260, 391). In one passage he repeats the phrase three times (391). These

reiterations establish that with each utterance, it takes on new meanings. Samson's and

Nicola's literal manifestation as the dead counteracts the uncritical acceptance of the

postmodern metanarratives of the end. In a way, their deaths free the living from this

sense of the end.

As we have already established that the characters reveal the historical and spatial

development of capitalism, it makes sense to look at the association of the dead in Marx.

In *Captial,* Marx explains, "Capital is dead labour, that, vampire-like, only lives by

sucking living labour, and lives the more, the more labour it sucks. The time during

which the labourer works, is the time during which the capitalist consumes the labour

power he has purchased of him" (362-63). Samson repeatedly refers to himself as a

vampire; he says, "I'm like a vampire. I can't enter unless I'm asked in over the

threshold. Once there, though, I stick around" (42). His identification bares more

similarity to Marx then the mere parallels in the wording *vampire-like* and *like a vampire.*

Samson and Nicola literally suck the evils out of the future for the community of love.

Their deaths end the conservative narratives of the postmodern sense of the end,

suggesting a bursting apart of all conservative, controlling narratives by the community

of love that has resulted from such sacrifice and labor. Their deaths do not guarantee that

such a community or future will materialize, but their deaths reveal its possibility.

Kenneth Asher reaches a similar conclusion through his Lawrentian reading of *London

Fields*. He argues, "Nicola's death becomes a matter of cosmic readjustment, the order

of things being set right. . . . At the most abstract level Nicola's elimination is a necessary

condition of Kim's survival" (21). Asher rightly identifies the manifestation of this

loving, innocent future in Kim Talent. Through the relationship between the dead—

Nicola and Samson—and Kim, we see Marx's famous understanding of history: "The

tradition of the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living"

(595). Amis asks how the nightmare can be revelatory instead of disastrous through Kim

Talent.

Kim Talent, Keith's innocent daughter, suggests the possibility for a future outside

of the corrupted narratives haunting the rest of the novel. Samson posses the question:

"Now I know the British Empire isn't in the shape it once was. But you wonder: what

will the *babies'* babies look like?" (283). The obvious answer is Marmaduke, the

hyperactive, monstrous child of Guy and Hope. He is the consumer *par excellance*,

destroying all in his path in order to complete his consumption. But by merely asking

about the future, Samson indicates hope for an alternative; he repeatedly says "I must do

something for the child" (120), referring to Kim. Samson sees Kim as an exemplar of

Walter Benjamin's angel of history. Samson directly references the messianic quality of

his death (*London Fields* 182), similar to the angel who will "awaken the dead"

(Benjamin 257). As we have established that his death is the revelatory act, this parallel

seems warranted. Further supporting this connection with Benjamin's angel, storms,

similar to those threatening the angel, literally threaten throughout the novel, at one point

killing "nineteen people, and thirty-three million trees" (43). The storm for Benjamin is

the essence of his philosophy of history. He says, "This storm irresistibly propels him

[the angel] into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him

grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress" (258).Malcolm Bull explains the

historical conception epitomized by the angel:

> Against the conception of the future as a 'progression through a homogeneous,
> empty time' in which progress and catastrophe, civilization and barbarism, are
> forever perpetuated in the ineradicable suffering of the toiling masses, Benjamin
> juxtaposes another conception of history—not an eschatology in which the future is
> foreclosed by eternity, but a political messianism in which the revolutionary classes
> make the continuum of history explode. (150)

Through Kim, London Fields makes the historical spaces of capitalism explained through

the other characters reach its explosion. The novel ends right at this moment, leaving

only traces of what may result. This novel is not about saving Kim, but instead proposing

how to save all through her model.

The storm, or danger, that most threatens Kim is the inheritance of abuse, passed

from the world to Keith, from Keith to Kath and finally from Kath to innocent Kim. In

Kim, Samson proposes the monumental figure, like the angel of history, who may

withstand the eschatological narratives of history, to show the need for a revolutionary,

apocalyptic history. Kim is still at the stage where she will not remember the historical

narrative and instead could have access to the narrative of progress and change. Because

of her lack of consciousness, she is protected, but also she has no ability or knowledge of

her role. Samson locates the responsibility for protecting Kim in the community, and

thus sees his narrative as a warning of what will happen when and if innocence

disappears. Discussing the emergence of science fiction themes in Amis's word, David

Moyle concludes that Amis took up the project "because he had to, because it suddenly

seemed necessary to break earth-bound rules in order to express adequately his

perception of the world: a world in which horror has moved beyond the black hole, but a

world in which salvation—as end, a new beginning—is up to us, only us" (315). Moyle

sees a promise of salvation similar to my conclusions. Thus, when Samson says to Mark

Asprey in his suicide note, "Be my literary executor: throw everything out" (468), he

does not want, as the most obivious connotation would suggest, his work to be trashed,

that would be an end like the metanarratives he has so completely critiqued. Instead, he

wishes for the less obvious meaning of his narrative spreading and creating knowable

communities that can help the angel resist the debris and follow the storm forward. He

leaves the choice to Asprey because the understanding of the second meaning of his wish

proves that his end has accomplished the historical revolution necessary.

From Disaster to Community only *28 Days Later*

In the introduction to the collection *British Horror Cinema*, Steve Chibnall and

Julian Petley lament both the status of the horror genre in British popular culture and the

lack of academic critical attention paid to the genre. They hope for a horror film that can

set off a genre cycle like Guy Ritchie's *Lock, Stock, and Two Smoking Barrels* did for the

crime film (8). Ritchie's film earned critical attention and commercial success because it

addresses issues of masculinity, violence, class, and family by looking comically at the

status of Englishness in a post-Thatcher Britain. Ritchie's film is as much about the high

jinks of inept criminals, the inclusion of rhyming slang into everyday language, and the

system of power in the London underworld, as it is about the status of English cultural

identity. Danny Boyle's *28 Days Later,* released in 2002, has the potential to garner

attention for the horror genre like Ritchie's film did for the crime genre. *28 Days Later*

looks at the aftermath of a biological disaster that has turned almost all of England into

flesh eating, rage infected zombies. Both directors appeal aesthetically to the Cool

Britannia idea of popular culture that appreciates energetic pop music, club culture, and a

fashion sense all distinctly British, suggesting that commercial success for the British

film industry requires packaging British culture in a way that can reaffirm an independent

cultural identity for the British audience while still appealing to the foreign Anglophile.

Both directors acknowledge the influences of their genre's forbearers, making *28 Days*

Later a postmodern pastiche of several different novels, novelistic styles, horror films,

and historical events. The film looks at how disaster, real and imagined, affects the

individual and the individual's relationship to others. The understanding of identity and

community that results merges the imagery of disaster through allusions and references to

other texts to prove that understanding must come from a critical examination of

influence, change, and connectivity.

The postmodern character of *28 Days Later* combines derivative and adapted

narratives and styles with a critical examination of Great Britain's place within the global

circulation of economic and cultural capital. Screenwriter Alex Garland, best known for

his novel *The Beach*, cites the work of Wells and Wyndham, particularly *The Day of the*

Triffids, and Ballard's "disaster novels" as influences for his screenplay (Osmond 38,

Macaulay 40). The most obvious filmic influences are George Romero's films. Finally,

although the film was completed during the anthrax scare and distributed as the SARS

outbreak and monkeypox created media hysteria, Boyle explains, "We actually had a

lower level of paranoia in mind—a very British one—which was the continued scare over

mad cow disease and the sudden foot-and-mouth outbreak. For months, the U.K. was full

of fields of burning animals—biblical images of pyres on the horizon, smoke filling the

sky" (qtd. in Lim 48). The British paranoia that sparked Boyle and Garland's interest in

epidemic disaster in the film was a destruction of the British live stock industry, but

beyond this economic destruction, mad cow, like dementia and Alzheimer, means that

rational and reasonably healthy individuals can be mentally debilitated by exposure to

contaminates encountered everyday. The film pays homage to the imagery of the burning

animal carcasses in a chilling shot from the empty M602 of Manchester entirely reduced

to blazing pyre and a smoke filled sky. An industrial center, Manchester's destruction

marks the historical end of Britain's industrial empire, a factor that the government has

aggressively attempted to preserve. *28 Days Later* critiques the aggressive attempt to

maintain an ideal of British statehood and identity by equating the institutions of control,

especially the church and the military, with the rage that has infected society. The small

community of survivors eventually abandons their individual class and racial categories

as they attempt to find an "answer to infection,"[14] what the radio broadcast from the

military encampment offers survivors. The answer is not a return to the system of

inequality and hierarchical power advocated by the military community, but instead the

protection of a cooperative community based on equality and concern for the other.

　　28 Days Later examines how rage and violence are dangerous and destructive

forces in our world. The film begins with a montage of images of riots, public hangings,

and protests, images systemic of the rage, particularly towards the other, which haunt our

political reality. The images contain police, labeled in several different languages,

violently and futilely attempting to contain the riotous masses, showing a culture of

violence. These masses occupy developed cities and underdeveloped locations; they are

of Middle Eastern, European, and Asian decent. As these images repeat, the viewer

notices that they are broadcasted on several television sets for the chimpanzee viewer in a

lab. The animal looks helplessly into the camera, victimized by the media rhetoric of fear

---

[14] All film quotes are my transcriptions.

that attempts to contain the masses. The animal is the helpless victim and witness to violence just like the film's audience. The media images of violent rebellion are meant to control the fearful observer, replacing the spectacle of public execution, which as Foucault argues ensured the power of the sovereign. He explains, "Not only must the people know, they must see with their own eyes. Because they must be made to be afraid; but also because they must be the witnesses, the guarantors, of the punishment, and because they must to a certain extent take part in it" (58). While the images of violence broadcasted are simulacra of violence, they represent both a threat to an ordered, civilized way of life, a stereotype of Englishness, and also the potential for violence within each of us that must be contained.

The scene of the animal forced to watch images of violence alludes to Stanley Kubrick's filmic adaptation of *A Clockwork Orange*. The wording of the title contains two references that apply to *28 Days Later*; first, orange connotes orangutan, which could mean any ape-like creature (even humans taken of their free will), and second, the Cockney phrase "as queer as a clockwork orange," meaning that despite appearance something is not right internally. The chimp in the research facility that watches the violent images seems passive and sweet, despite the violence that we see from others. When young hooligan Alex de Large exchanges his murder sentence to become a subject in an experiment to cure violent tendencies, he is repeatedly forced to watch different images of violence, rape, and historical atrocities such as the Holocaust. The experiment requires that his eyes be wired open, creating another parallel to the second beginning of *28 Days Later* and the very close up shot of Jim's eye, the digital video permitting the viewer to see every eyelash, another connection to *A Clockwork Orange* because of

Alex's false eyelashes. Throughout the experiments and during the scenes of violence

cheery or classical music accompanies the images. The conflict between the effect of the

violent imagery and the response to the music forces viewers to understand the images as

negative consciously instead of physically. Like *A Clockwork Orange*, *28 Days Later*

questions the meaning of violence, its function within society, and its attack on the

family.

In *28 Days Later*, the lab, called the Cambridge Primate Research Center, functions

allegorically. Much like Manchester represents the industrial center of England,

Cambridge represents the intellectual history of England, reinforced by the password to

enter the facility, "Think." The activists, who release the rage virus, encounter a

scientist, a hackneyed horror stereotype of the mad scientist. The scientist justifies the

experiments, proclaiming, "In order to cure, you must first understand." While the easily

transferable virus is an extreme example of the dangers of biological weapons and

misguided scientific experiments, the montage of images and the name rage indicate that

violence is a pathology already in us. The virus transforms anyone who comes into

contact with the infected into zombie-like creatures only concerned with devouring the

flesh of the non-infected and spreading the infection, very easy since the infected vomit

torrents of blood. The infected, characterized by red eyes and an infectious red skin

condition, move very, very fast and twitch, which Boyle modeled after an epileptic fit; he

also borrowed physical imagery from rabies and the Ebola virus (Osmond 39). The use

of a variety of real pathological conditions suggests rage as the ultimate pathology for

society.

The infected are a new breed of zombie, their speed representative of absolute efficiency. Their speed, uncommon for horror film zombies, and their efficiency directly relate to the etymology of the term from the African and Caribbean legends of witchcraft resurrecting corpses so that the zombies could be unconscious, willing laborers of the land. If the work of the infected is to spread infection, then they succeed, and in a global environment where circulation is essential for productivity, the worker must be quick and thus efficient. Ironically, the infected enact a perverse version of Thatcher's agenda that supported individual productivity and accomplishments at the cost of society's collective welfare. Conversely, the infected oppose Tony Blair's vision of a 'New Britain,' the slogan revealed at Blair's first party conference as leader in 1994. He clearly summarized his vision of 'New Britain' at the party conference in 1997, his first after being elected to government, which I previously cited. While the infected are a direct opponent to Blair's 'New Britain' because they lack the consciousness to create, care, and consider, the protagonist of *28 Days Later*, Jim, embodies the protection of old British values at a time when a 'New Britain' has been brought about by apocalypse. His journey begins as he awakens completely unaware in the hospital, continues with a tour of evacuated London, then unites him with other survivors, and finally takes the group to countryside communities of first a military dictatorship and then a utopian collectivity. The journey shows that the "creative," "compassionate," and "outward-looking" values that Blair validates cannot be found in a nostalgic attempt to return to British traditions—Jim's initial perspective—but instead can only be realized once the alienating categories of class, gender, and race are destroyed.

The violence of destruction caused by the rage virus has subsided once Jim, who

has been in a comma, awakens twenty-eight days after the initial infection. The first shot

of this second beginning to the film focuses on Jim's eye, privileging his vision and

perspective. The shot firmly establishes the connection to John Wyndham's postwar

novel, *The Day of the Triffids*. Wyndham's novel likewise begins with the protagonist,

Bill Masen, in the hospital recovering from temporary blindness caused by the sting of a

triffid. The strongest ideological connection between the novel and the updated film is

that Boyle and Garland, like Wyndham, attempt to establish an ontology that responds to

disaster. In *28 Days* as Jim wanders from the hospital and into the empty streets of

London, his tourism reveals the film's distinctly British political and cultural responses.

Jim's wandering takes him to many of the landmarks of London: St. Paul's, Big

Ben, Westminster Abbey, Westminster Bridge, the Embankment, and the London Eye.

As Jim walks on Westminster Bridge he steps on souvenir replicas of Big Ben, the

scattered, discarded location of these mass-produced toys ironically epitomizing the

status of the once grand metropolis. Jim's rest on Westminster Bridge recalls

Wordsworth's famous sonnet "Composed Upon Westminster Bridge," which captures an

equally still view of the city. In the poem, the only motion in the early morning

metropolis is the Thames.[15] Wyndham makes a similar statement in *Triffids*: "The

Thames flowed imperturbably on. So it would flow until the day the Embankments

crumble and the water spread out and Westminster became once more an island in a

---

[15] Occupying a space so famously explained in canonical literature in a fantastic postmodern film explains the relationship defined by de Certeau in "Walking in the City" between the concept of the city and the contradictions arising from urban agglomeration. De Certeau explains, "Perspective vision and prospective vision constitute the twofold projection of an opaque past and an uncertain future onto a surface that can be dealt with" (93-4).

marsh" (128). In the film the only motion we see is Jim's walking, but through these literary connections we can attach Jim's movement to the lifeblood of the city, the Thames.[16] The Thames is not displayed as a figure of opposition like one would find in William Blake or Iain Sinclair.

Explaining the choice of locations and images in the DVD commentary, Boyle notes that he was attracted to iconic images. All of the places Jim views, with the exception of the London Eye, also known as the Millennium Wheel, record the iconic history of the city. By merging the new Eye sore, with these majestic landmarks, the film enacts a perverse version of 'New Britain,' similar to Ballard's critique in *Millennium People*. The London Eye is part of the Blair government's Millennium Project, an effort to celebrate the cultural legacy and influence of the past in the present and for the future. The Millennium Dome, the most famous part of this failed development project was to be a center for culture, unironically located in Greenwich, a symbol of the dominance of the British Empire and the belief the England was the center of the world. The London Eye, which repeatedly reappears in Jim's view, merges with these iconic structures, mocking the thought of resurrecting the old British values Blair valorizes because, as de Certeau explains, the city makes clear that the past is unintelligible and the future unseen, especially when the vision of that future depends on a carnival ride.

The excessive accumulation of the city is also marked by the toppled red double-decker bus, the end of transportation or the circulation of people, and the scattered £20 notes, the end of the circulation of capital. The critique of the symbolic value of capital continues in Boyle's 2005 *Millions*, as the UK switches over to the Euro, leaving unspent

---

[16] Although not on Westminster Bridge, Alex, in *A Clockwork Orange*, takes a similar self-reflexive walk alongside the river when he has been cast aside by his family.

and unconverted pound notes worthless, except as wallpaper. The status of the circulation of capital is a direct critique of globalization. Neither film makes a conclusive statement about globalization, but both look at how the increasingly global circulation of narrative and capital affects individual and national identity. Similarly commenting on the globalization of the image, Jim's tour stops as he ventures into Piccadilly Circus to find the giant advertisements supplanted by a message board of notes to missing family members. The disaster necessitates the substitution of messages of human relationship and emotion for the messages of consumer desires, the advertisements. The scene of the message board, based on photos from the Kobe earthquake in 1995 and prophesizing 9/11 New York City, emphasizes that the initial response to disaster is an attempt to reclaim relationships and thus a connection to the community. The historical and global repetitions of these images of people's grief proves that the imagination of disaster always returns the consciousness to the interpersonal relationships that can remain and protect the individual throughout unintelligible events, even with very different political and historical causes, from natural disaster, to terrorist attack, to technological mistake. There is always the danger that such repetitions erase difference and enact a traumatic forgetting of singularity that is its own apocalyptic violence. To avoid such a result, the trauma must be internalized on both an individual and historical level, bringing logic to emotional extremism.

The more local concern for identity plays out in *28 Days Later* through the small community of non-infected. It comprises Jim, Selena, a chemist, Frank, a cab driver, and his daughter, Hannah. Jim first encounters Selena after turning to a church for sanctuary from his confusion; he has to attack an infected Anglican priest to save himself, Jim's

first reluctant refusal of institutions. Selena then saves Jim from the pursuing infected, taking him to her hideout in a mini-mart in the underground. She explains the situation to Jim, and he immediately asks what the government is doing about it; he cannot imagine that the leaders could become infected like everyone else. At this moment, Jim still believes "there is always a government." Conversely, Selena has completely abandoned all conventions of relationships and emotions as a defense to the confusion caused by disaster. Similarly, her race and gender do not matter remotely as survival rules their consciousness. She is so focused on survival that later she brutally kills another companion before he can become infected and then tells Jim she would do the same to him. She says that "plans are pointless" and attempts to persuade Jim to the same position, sarcastically attacking his nostalgia by asking him, "Do you want to save the world or just fall in love and fuck?" In this statement, Selena makes her first vulgar connection to Jim, but it does start to break down her survival instincts so that she can return to the interpersonal relationships that actually will assure her survival. This exchange takes place amongst pristine countryside ruins. The scene recalls the trip to the Scottish Highlands by the gang in Boyle's *Trainspotting*. Tommy believes that a return to nature will help the group identify with their cultural heritage and identity, saving them from the relationship problems they all encountered the previous night. Renton, instead, lambastes the Scottish identity and colonial history. His pessimism is much like Selena's.

Selena's initial outlook epitomizes Susan Sontag's argument that the imagery of disaster "is above all the emblem of an *inadequate response*" (130). Sontag's argument explains that as we can never actually extend our narrative beyond a disastrous end, we

are not equipped to deal with the very forces that could cause this end. Selena, who now

has to live beyond the end, can only propose these two clichéd solutions that satisfy the

two destinies of "unremitting banality and inconceivable terror" (130) that Sontag says

define our age of extremes, which are a fascist return to the previous mode of history or a

reestablishment of patriarchy. Ironically, both of Selena's propositions could lead to

terror. To avoid this terror, Jim and Selena unite with Frank and Hannah to form a

postmodern family unit that reworks power relationships and ultimately refuses

patriarchy. As they leave London, they go through a gradual withdrawal from the

capitalist system of labor and consumption and thus redefine their collective identity

through interpersonal relationships.

The path toward the utopian community requires them to refuse the labels,

especially consumer and class, which define their location and perspective in the city.

Just as Jim's understanding of the disaster requires a visit to his parent's suburban home,

the tower block occupied by Hannah and Frank permits a shift in the group's focus.

Brought to the block by flashing lights, another reference to *The Day of the Triffids*, Jim

and Selena encounter a barricade of shopping trolleys. The trolleys, previously used to

increase and aid consumption, now stand as a barricade between the preservation of

civilized life and the rampant infection. The tools of capitalism have been made useless,

but they can be reinvented in a new formation. The imagery of the building, the

barricades and the battle in the hallway, resonates with Ballard's novels, especially *High

Rise*. Frank has dealt with the apocalypse by redefining these tools in hopes of protecting

himself and his daughter. The excess of the shopping carts is repeated in the myriad of

buckets of all different sizes and colors, which Frank has placed on the roof to collect

water.   The lack of water shows that even the tower building, a symbol of modernity, no longer functions, and thus the community must leave behind the skeleton of the metropolis.   As they leave the building in Frank's black cab, another iconic image of London, Frank turns on the meter and jokingly says, "Just so you know, I don't take checks or credit cards." Despite the horrors around, they find solace in their freedom from labor and money. This solace continues as they stop for a "supermarket sweep."[17] The supermarket looks serene in comparison to the chaos outside. All four take immense pleasure in their free shopping. Copying the comparison of bread loaves by Stephen and Peter in Romero's film, Jim and Frank look for the best scotch. Whereas Romero's men allude to phallic imagery, Jim and Frank's decision to take the quality scotch shows that they have embraced the destruction of their working class status. They now have the freedom to acquire products that previously would have been unavailable. The characters' choices in consumption emphasize that they still have their consciousness and thus responsibility. In a symbolic leaving behind of capitalism, Frank places his credit card on the check out counter.

Now that the community has left behind the alienation of capitalism, they can construct a community based on equality. Just as class categories no longer matter, race never factors into the narrative of the film. Instead of basing respect for difference on historically or genetically based markers, respect for difference should lead to respect for everyone's difference from each other. As their communal bonds strengthen, Selena realizes that love for another is a reason to live, and Jim realizes that the infected must be violently destroyed to preserve the love that remains.

---

[17] This event is almost directly repeated from Romero's *Dawn of the Dead.* The repetition of this scene more firmly connects *28 Days Later* to the zombie genre.

However, the members of the military community attempt to preserve the system of patriarchy and capitalism crumbling around them. They have occupied a mansion, collected stockpiles of electronic equipment, and cannot contain their sexual urges. Thinking they have killed Jim, the military men make Hannah and Selena dress in ball gowns, constricting costumes of patriarchy.[18] In anger, Jim returns, unleashes the chained infected held on the grounds, and kills the remaining military men. Jim's release of the infected into the corrupt, or infected, house reaffirms that rage has always been a part of patriarchy. The most aggressive sexual predator, Corporal Mitchell, dies by Jim's hands. Jim has become so enraged by the attack on his community that he proves that rage can also be a productive human emotion. He has become covered in blood, looking like an infected, but his goal is always to reunite with Hannah and Selena.

When he pokes out the eyes of Corporal Mitchell, he proves that oppressive patriarchy has always been a form of blindness and unconscionable societal organization. This image evokes the Surrealism of Luis Bunel's and Salvador Dali's famous image from *Un Chien Andalou* of an eyeball being cut open by a razor. The use of Surrealist techniques parallels Ballard. As Colin Greenwood explains, "The Surrealist techniques that Ballard has used involve deliberate dissociations and mystifications. The object is taken from its usual context and dismantled, or put in a new context, or confused with other objects. But the result of the process is not mere nonsense, but a revaluation" (104). In the image of the eyes from *28 Days Later* takes on such a variety of meanings and connections: from the blindness of *The Day of the Triffids*, to the Surrealist desires of

---

[18] The connection between femininity and costuming likewise occurs in Ballard's *High Rise*. By adorning these dresses in moments of crisis, both texts reveal the ridiculousness of the ornamental and non-functional female attire.

Un Chien Andalou, to violent retribution for the sins of patriarchy. On one level this destruction of the eyes instead of the cutting of the Surrealist image is a violent refusal of modernity, and the end of the movie then asks what visibility means for postmodernity. What results in *28 Days Later* is a revaluation of the meaning of vision, envisioning, and premonitions of the future and its potential.

To confirm a new notion of equality within the community of the remaining survivors, the women must now save Jim's life just as he has saved them. Selena's transformation from an aggressive malcontent to a protector proves that this film imagines a form of family that integrates traditional gender roles while still allowing for the transformative events of apocalypse. Selena can sew, but her sewing is an effort to include the family into the process of recivilization and not an effort to care for the family in the more traditional sense of clothing and feeding. Even the alternate ending projects the women as the new watchdogs of society—ending with the final image of them leaving behind Jim's body, a sign of the death of patriarchy, and walking forward into a new world where they will protect themselves and be just fine. The camera angle of this final shot of the alternate ending indicates the film's position as the remnants of patriarchy, but as they woman walk away they progress into a future beyond the gaze or imagination of the viewer.

The space that nurtures the alternative family is the country, a common theme of postwar apocalyptic narratives. The film does not insinuate that the natural will provide a utopian space. The military country-home proves that capitalist alienation extends to the spaces of the country. Eventually, the community's retreat to the modest cottage in the Lake District proves that a self-sufficient space can still provide, as Raymond Williams

explains, "an affirmation of vitality and of the possibility of rest in conscious contrast with the mechanical order, the artificial routines, of the cities" (252). As the last infected lays emaciated on the ground and the community is rescued, it becomes clear that the epidemic has been contained within Great Britain. This has been, as Boyle explained, a particularly British epidemic created by the violent need to uphold the iconic history of Britain. Discussing this view of history in terms of his most recent film, *Millions*, Boyle explains, "It's about saying goodbye, how important that can be particularly for the British. We love hanging on to the past here" (qtd. in Lim 50). *28 Days Later* proves that it is dangerous to hang on to the past with too strong of a grip, especially when that past is an epic fallacy that creates an unproductive nostalgia and propagates a violent patriarchy. Instead, the film imagines a feminist idea of family based on mutual protection and sufficiency.

Conclusions: The Nature of the Family in the Twenty-First Century

Throughout the postwar period, apocalyptic narratives continue to evoke disaster as a means to critique the political organizations of community and imagine new formations of community. In many of these cases, the new formations present revised visions of the family. From the female caregiver collective in *High Rise*, to *London Field's* nurturing of youth and innocence, through *28 Days Later's* rural feminist family, each vision unites different generations, classes, and races by freeing them from the oppressive politics of their moments. In extending this dialogue into the future, I am drawn to Ian McEwan's *Saturday* (2005) as an indication of the direction of the apocalyptic narrative. McEwan posits that the twenty-first century does not need to imagine disaster because the violent political climate of global politics in the Blair/Bush era makes everyday life open to disaster. He explains in an interview with Zadie Smith, "well, to go back to where we

started this converstation, to 9/11, and the sense of invasion, one can only do it on a

private scale. If you say the airliner hit the side of the building, a thousand people died,

nothing happens to your scalp. So I, in a sense, tried to find the private scale of that

feeling" (61). Following in the tradition of Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*, McEwan's

narrative follows Dr. Henry Perowne through a day that begins in the early morning by

witnessing a fire plane landing in the distance, proceeds to a street meeting with Baxter, a

violent thug, and ends by his upper-middle class family life being burst apart by the

intrusions of the criminality and the violence of the underclass that his privileged life and

family have ignored. Baxter's disruption forces Perowne to realize that "London, his

small part of it, lies wide open, impossible to defend, waiting for its bomb, like a hundred

other cities" (286). Perowne's assessment that London "wait[s] for its bomb" is not a

passive acceptance of inevitable destruction; his words indicate a shift in perspective

from isolated privilege to collective concern. He realizes, "He lives in different times—

because the newspapers say so doesn't mean it isn't true. But from the top of his day, this

is a future that's harder to read, a horizon indistinct with possibilities" (286). *Saturday*

concludes that ignoring the consequences of violence indicative of both the treatment of

the underclass in New Britain and the coalition war against Iraq will foreclose the utopian

imagination of collectivity by the disaster narrative. McEwan makes us understand

violence as the real material effects of life in the twenty-first century. Only through this

realization can Perowne return to his loving wife and family, and only through this

realization will all the bombs waiting for their cities be defused.

CHAPTER 3
GANGSTER COMMUNITIES: IMAGINING THE UNDERWORLD AND
UNDERSTANDING MASCULINITY

The underworld fantasy enables the professional criminal in times of crisis to conjure some order from the imaginary community and inject it into a life-world that is prone to chaotic, seemingly incoherent interludes. It is from the combination of these archaeological excursions and regular engagements with the enacted environments of contemporary serious criminality that professional criminal appropriate their identities.

—*Dick Hobbs*, Bad Business: Professional Crime in Modern Britain

Indeed, for those who were concerned to define such differences, what underlay the aesthetic difference between America and British cinema was an ideological one. While Hollywood was essentially individualist, British cinema was essentially communitarian.

—*Alistair Davies, "A cinema in between: Postwar British cinema"*

In his sociological study of criminality in Britain, Dick Hobbs uses evidence and anecdotes gleaned by interviewing criminals to explain how the professional criminal fits into the imaginary, the economics, and the history of Britain. Unlike the hierarchical Sicilian-American organized crime, Hobbs contends that British organized crime generates its own organizational structures, and these "coalitions" can "adapt to the exigencies of the contemporary market" (11). Continuing the theme of flexible collectivity instead of hierarchy, Hobbs points out that British organized crime does not have as clear an origin as American prohibition, and thus tend to be more entrepreneurial. This spirit of invention extends to the idea of the British gangster. Hobbs does not spend any time on narratives that depict British organized crime, but his analysis of the underworld, quoted above, does provide an interesting entry point for an analysis of the

gangster narrative. As Hobbs explains, the underworld is "[o]ne of the most powerful of these inductive inferences" (108). He labels the "inductive inference" as a way to describe the idea that emerges from past trends or experiences that helps individuals deal with the present. The idea of the underworld is part of "the codification of professional criminal culture" (108). The underworld is an imaginary that provides protection and commonality to the criminal by enabling access to a collective idea. In other words, the imaginary community of the underworld is essential for the identity of the British gangster.

When applied to the many and varied filmic representations of British criminality in the postwar period, the underworld is the metonymic substitution for the collectivity that defines British cinema generally and the gangster genre specifically. As Alistair Davies concludes that the main ideological difference between American and British cinema is that the former is individualistic and the later communitarian, this is especially telling for a gangster genre that has such deep roots and influences in American culture yet preoccupies British filmmakers. In presenting the underworld to a wide audience, the British gangster film is preoccupied with explaining how the political ideologies of their different moments influence the ideas of community, masculinity, and Englishness. In the immediate postwar years economic scarcity and end-of-empire anxiety made the gangster genre, comedies and realistic melodramas alike, particularly interested in upholding the gentleman gangster who protected his gang with rigor. As the feminist movement rapidly changed gender roles from 1960s and into the 1980s, the idea of masculinity became of central concern for the gangster genre. During this period, intensely individual and hypermasculine gangsters attempt to protect the fantasy of the

underworld from destruction. In the 1990s as gender issues become less polarized, a new version of the gangster emerges. By providing a genealogy that explains how the gangster genre adapts to political discourse and then comparing the individualist gangster of the late 1970s to the return to collectivity and a new version of masculinity in the 1990s, I will argue that these more recent films image the underworld as an alternative community that can contain dissidence while still allowing each individual member of the community to uphold the morality essential for national identity.

Reading the Underworld: A Genealogy of the Postwar Period

When discussing the postwar gangster film, a logical starting place is St. John Legh Clowes's 1948 adaptation of James Hadley Chases's novel *No Orchids for Miss Blandish* because this film created such a scandal that it influenced the censorship and content of films to follow. This film's depiction of violence and female sexuality was met with hostility primarily because it was seen as a Hollywood film. Presupposing this hostility, in 1944 George Orwell examined the developing cultural production of gangster literature in his essay "Raffles and Miss Blandish" (*Critical Essays* 161-178). Orwell compares the iconic existence of Raffles, a gentleman criminal exceedingly popular during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, to James Hadley Chase's 1939 novel *No Orchids for Miss Blandish*, which, due to widespread appeal, was turned into first a play and then a film. Orwell describes Raffles as an innocuous public-school man, cricketer, and charmer—the essence of Englishness. Despite Raffles' criminality, Orwell shows that the figure embodies the ethics of a gentleman because he refuses to abuse the hospitality of the host by robbing him, and he will only participate in the murders of the "deserving"—foreigners and criminals more violent than himself. Orwell sees an engagement with ethics and morals as the definitive feature in the development of the

popular gangster genre. In describing *No Orchids'* plot, which he details as the

kidnapping of Miss Blandish, a millionaire's daughter, the resulting feud between two

gangs over her, and her subsequent rape and relationship with her rapist, Orwell

condemns the text on moral grounds. He explains that *No Orchid's* popularity must owe

to its publication during a moment of national crisis, "during the Battle of Britain and the

blitz" (168). His focus on an extraordinary moment removes the novel's popularity from

the everyday existence and cultural identity of its readers and places its reception in terms

of the unexplainable and unrepeatable. He concludes that the criminality in *No Orchids*

is entirely American in character, tradition, and language, inscribing its moral depravity

as a result of its non-English identity. He predicts that the gangster genre will refuse

Americanization and return to the figure of the charming Raffles.

The Ealing comedies that arguably fit into the gangster genre, *The Lavender Hill

Mob* (1951) and *The Ladykillers* (1955), present an interesting revision of the Raffles

figure. While these comedies seem frivolous to some critics, Steve Chibnall and Robert

Murphy dismiss them as "whimsical comedies . . . rather than serious explorations of the

underworld" (8), they clearly illustrate how the genre responds to the politics of its

moment. Like most of the Ealing comedies produced in the immediate postwar years, a

time defined by rationing, bomb wreckage, and strict class structure, these films are

escapist fantasies that suggest an alternative reality and way of life while simultaneously

upholding the ethics and morality of Englishness as a utopian promise. John Ellis argues,

"Ealing's comedy does not deal with resentments or guilt so much as with aspirations and

Utopian desires. It is not primarily concerned with satire, which can be identified with

the playing out of class resentments. . . . Ealing's comedy style was new in that it dealt

with the Utopian desires of the lower middle class rather than its resentments" (154).

Explaining a similar outcome in her analysis of British national cinema, Sarah Street

concludes that these comedies derive "their ideological impetus from fears about state

power and a mistrust of bureaucratic structures in general plus the persistence of social

class and a preoccupation with sexual repression" (64).

　　The Lavender Hill Mob continually returns to issues of state power, bureaucratic

structures, and social class. The majority of the narrative of *The Lavender Hill Mob*

occurs in flashback as Henry "Dutch" Holland explains the sequence of events that have

led to his decadent and exotic life. The narrative structure makes classifying this film as

a gangster film possible because it represents a fantastic imagining of the heist by the

protagonist. Holland may not be a gangster in the denotative sense, but his desire for a

place in an imagined underworld necessitates the classification. The basic plot is that

Holland, a meek, dependable, and respectable bank transfer agent responsible for gold

bullion, dreams of wealth. Through Holland's dreams, the film critiques the assumption

that the working class is simply meant for poverty, showing images of the masses

commuting to work, as Holland explains that he, unlike most, was in a position to change

his status. He may not be a Raffles figure by birth, but he aspires to uphold the same

ideals. Holland represents ingenuity despite adversity. Furthering the critique of the

treatment of the working class, Holland's boss claims that he cannot promote Holland

because he does not have the creativity needed for advancement. This proves to be

ridiculous when Holland teams up with Alfred Pendlebury, the owner of a factory that

produces lead souvenirs, and concocts an elaborate plan to steal the bullion and transform

it into Eiffel Towers for exportation to France. Needing criminal help for their plan, the

two business men set a trap by talking loudly in public of an unsecured safe in

Pendlebury's factory. Holland and Pendlebury make the two men who arrive confirm

that they are "professional criminals"—an utterance that cements the group as a criminal

mob. The easy access to professional criminality for the two lower-middle-class

characters emphasizes the fantasy of rebellion against bureaucracy at the heart of this

film, which is typical of the Ealing comedies. The merging of respectability and

criminality transforms both pairs of men. While explaining the heist to the group, one of

the criminals questions Holland but then recants, saying "you're the boss." The

confirmation of his intelligence makes Holland increasingly more and more confident,

indicated to the audience by the change in his mannerisms, standing more upright,

looking straight into the camera, and expecting others to please him instead of always

pleasing others.

When the newspapers proclaim him a hero for supposedly attempting to thwart the

heist and aiding the police in capturing the criminals, he literally rises in social standing.

This is depicted by the scene where Holland visits in reversed hierarchical order the

offices of the top bank employees and ends by leading the others into the chancellor's

office. Holland becomes the epitome of respectability by both the bureaucracy of the

bank and the criminals who will permit Holland and Pendlebury to bring their share of

the haul back from France because they are "gentlemen." Their ingenuity permits them

to outsmart the police on several occasions; first, when they establish the gang in

Pendlebury's warehouse and more importantly when they escape from the police training

headquarters with the last of the gold towers. Through a classic allusion to the Keystone

Cops running around aimlessly, Holland and Pendlebury prove smarter than the system.

The film, though, does not celebrate decadence or hedonism. The final image of Holland's arm shackled to the police officer who has just heard the tale confirms to the audience that there are repercussions for behavior. The film does not suggest that Holland should be punished for his heist. Rather, once Holland sets up his exotic life, he looses touch with the ingenuity and respectability that made him successful, he becomes completely individualist, and thus he must be punished.

The Ladykillers, the last Ealing comedy produced before the studio came under control of the BBC, also proves that those who no longer uphold the ideals of Englishness, even if the ideals seem absurd in the postwar moment, will eventually be punished. Set mostly in an old Victorian home, lopsided because of the war, the film focuses on a gang led by Professor Marcus pulls a heist and uses an elderly widow, Mrs. Wilberforce to secure the money. The setting merges the house as a symbol of the scars of war with the London neighborhoods surrounding St. Pancras Station, a space that symbolizes mobility and acceleration, and thus promise through the railroads. Importantly, this is still a space of familiarity: as Mrs. Wilberforce walks down the street, she greets all the shop owners by name. Within the combination of these spaces, the film indicates a need to move forward; but the incongruence of the ideological meaning of the house and the train makes that difficult. The cul-de-sac, the literal location of the house, metaphorically connotes both end and circularity. Emphasizing the difficulty of progress, the audience has no clear model within the film to lead them forward. The gang is destined for failure as they only act the part of refined gentlemen, disguising themselves as a string quartet—they show that one cannot become a gentleman simply through outward appearance. Professor Marcus's deformed teeth serve as comic fodder

especially to viewers who have seen Alec Guinness in a variety of roles in other Ealing

comedies. The teeth are also as an ever-present reminder of his lack of refinement.

Overall each member of the gang contributes to the stereotypes of criminality: the

mastermind, the teddy boy, the trickster, the moronic muscle, and the ruthless enforcer.

Charles Barr carefully details the allegorical parallels within the film.

> The gang are the post-war Labour Government; taking over 'the House', they
> gratify the Conservative incumbent by their civilized behaviour (that nice music)
> and decide to use at least the façade of respectability for their radical programme of
> redistributing wealth . . . Their success is undermined by two factors, interaction:
> their own internecine quarrels, and the startling, paralyzing charisma of the
> 'natural' governing class, which effortlessly takes over from them again in time to
> exploit their gains (like the Conservative taking over power in 1951, just as the
> austerity years came to an end). (171-2)

Barr views *The Ladykillers* as a political allegory critiquing government policies and

party ideologies. The film though does not clearly valorize one party or way. The gang

has a noble purpose, but their means of serving that purpose are absurd. Mrs.

Wilberforce is well intentioned but completely oblivious of the workings of the postwar

world in which she now lives. Exaggerating the faults of both sides, when Mrs.

Wilberforce discovers the crime and scolds the men, they decide to kill her. What

inevitably saves Mrs. Wilberforce, though, is that she represents devotion to empire; her

war hero husband watches over her from his portrait on the wall, his sacrifice living on

through her. She is protected from violence by her devotion to the nation, and as the men

of the gang cannot understand this, they each meet their deaths. The men's discomfort in

the scene when they are forced to have tea with Mrs. Wiberforce's friends proves that

they cannot even relate to the most typical activity associated with Englishness. In the

end, Mrs. Wilberforce keeps the money because the police, tired of hearing her fantastic

stories, do not believe that she actually has the money for which they have been

searching. As in *The Lavender Hill Mob*, the bureaucracy appears inept, and upholding

an imperial version of Englishness is rewarded.

The Ealing comedies directly address the postwar moment and examine issues of

national identity, but they do not provide obvious access to the imagining of realistic

criminal underworld. The dramatic gangster films of the postwar period, especially

Brighton Rock (1947), present a gritty and authentic look at the underworld. As a spiv

film,[1] *Brighton Rock*, an adaptation of Graham Greene's novel, deals with the economics

of postwar scarcity, particularly the criminality created by the culture of selling rationed

items on the black market. In a Brighton that harkens back to the intra-war years, it costs

six pence just to sit down with a date on the boardwalk. *Brighton Rock* shows Pinkie's

and Colleoni's gangs feuding for rights to collect protection money and for control of the

race track—two of the main economic basis for organized crime in Britain. The feud

between Pinkie's industrious gang and Colleoni's foreigners capitalizes on the

xenophobia created in times of war. Pinkie Brown, the young and driven leader of the

small gang, displays his confidence to the audience through several close-up shots of his

face, a foreshadowing of the scar of failure that will plague his later appearance. Pinkie's

confidence proves that while he may just be a spiv, he has the makings of a gangster.

Pinkie expects perfection from his subordinates; so when Spicer leaves a hole in Pinkie's

alibi for the time of Frank's murder, the gang unravels. Pinkie looses focus on his real

enemy, Colleoni, and is thus punished by a slash across the face. Pinkie becomes more

---

[1] The term spiv has origins in the 1930s; it is generally used as a term of differentiation from the gangster, who is part of organized criminality. Instead, the spiv is man who uses his wits to make a living rather than holding permanent employment. The spiv gets involved in any and all black-market ventures and typically is identifiable by flashy dress. In the gangster genre, the spiv is intimately connected to the rationing and scarcity after the war.

and more neurotic because Ida investigates Frank's death. She is the antithesis of the film noir femme fatale because she does not tempt him but instead taunts him. Ida's confused role, as the mother figure and the foil, mirrors Pinkie's confusion about love and women. Having married Rose to keep her quiet about the falsity of his alibi, Pinkie sinks further and further into irrationality. He proclaims his hatred for Rose on the phonograph record and then convinces Rose to kill herself, despite the warnings of Cubit, his fellow gang member to "never touch the girl." Once Cubit learns of Pinkie's plan, he turns his friend over to the police because Pinkie has sunk below the level of decency required of a gentleman, even one who is a criminal.

The ending of the film differs from the ending of the novel because in the latter Rose hears Pinkie proclaim his hatred. The censors' demand that the film reflect Pinkie's salvation instead of his hatred shows that the underworld in these films is a fantasy that orders and unifies the ethics of criminality. As evidence that *Brighton Rock* is an imagination of the underworld, the film begins with a disclaimer that explains Brighton is really the happy vacation destination that its name immediately evokes. The disclaimer removes the events of the film from the real world of the audience and reassures that their escapist fantasy of Brighton includes both leisure and danger. Brighton is thus a fantasy as both the commodified version of tourist escape and its ordering of the underworld.

As the gangster genre develops from these early representations, the classification of the gangster becomes more precise. The Raffles figure, the spiv, and the criminal mastermind are replaced by a professional criminal who works within a highly structured economic organization. Through the 1960s and 1970s, the gangster becomes associated with market capitalism, stylized wealth, calculated violence, and intense misogyny. The

Kray brothers' real life rise to power and popularity transforms the gangster into a

mythological figure, similar to Jack the Ripper. Known for their ruthless behavior, which

garnered media attention, the Krays brought the underworld more firmly into the

consciousness of the public. With the increased attention on criminality, the films

likewise became much more violent. Specifically, the violence towards women permits

the gangster to establish his power and virility in a moment when the feminist movement

has challenged both.

Performance (1970) and *Get Carter* (1971) present refined and stylized, but

extremely violent, gangsters who break the rules of the underworld and become entirely

individualist. In *Performance*, Chas does not understand that he works for the business,

which means he works for his boss. The scene where Chas's boss confronts him because

of his choices uses the same camera tricks associated with his later drug use. This

suggests that power is Chas's first drug of choice. Chas cannot exact revenge against a

bookie simply because he has personal problems, a fact his boss makes clear. Chas sees

his strength as absolute power and thus does not understand that within the organization

he is no more than an enforcer. In *Get Carter*, Jack Carter makes a similar mistake about

his position. When he learns of his brother's death, he leaves London to return home to

Newcastle. In the opening scene, his London colleague warns him that he is overstepping

barriers by reentering the gangland of Newcastle, but Carter selfishly needs revenge and

thus disregards the warnings.

Both men use sexuality as a way to control women, exhibiting their masculinity

through misogyny. Sexuality, like violence, creates a language of masculinity. Chas,

even after his exposure to the bohemian life that is ideologically opposed to the

underworld, still vehemently refuses to think of himself as anything but "all man."

Carter, even when interrupted during sex, can pull a gun, frighten away the opposition,

and remain in control. The image of him standing outside the bed-and-breakfast naked

yet holding the gun aloft is symbolic of his phallocentric vision of masculinity. Both men

may get to live out the violent fantasies they desire in and out of the bedroom, but

inevitably both are killed because of their violations of gangland ethics. Neither film

offers an image of an underworld community because the perspectives of the films'

protagonists do not understand their interconnectedness to the underworld. Chas

previously wished to proclaim his individuality, but when immersed within the drug use

and sexuality of the counter-culture, he attempts to reestablish the absolute categories that

order his world. Carter's misogyny becomes the filter through which he views the world,

depicted explicitly in the scene where he imagines the femme fatale's driving the get-a-

way car as an analogy for sex. He does not make an authentic connection to anyone in

the film. The last scene between Carter and his niece (who may be his daughter) is an

unplanned encounter where he gives her money, highlighting his belief that his sexual,

monetary, and violent potential defines him. When each of the protagonists dies in the

conclusions, there are no lasting effects caused by their murders because their

individuality has led to isolation. These endings emphasize the tragic nature of the realist

gangster, obsessed with an impossible ideal of masculinity that ultimately leads to his

downfall.

Beginning with a similar interest in the individuality and power of masculinity, the

1980s film directly engages with the economic policies of Thatcherism, identifying the

gangster as businessman. *The Long Good Friday* (1981) explores the internationalization

of the British economy, particularly the transatlantic bonds epitomized by the relationship between Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Regan. The gangster genre's characteristic interest in violence, morality, and success become intrinsically linked to an understanding of the changing economy. Exploring the relationship between morality and the economy, Anna Marie Smith argues, "For Thatcher, the welfare state's promotion of a dependency culture and the interference in the free market on the part of the nationalized industries and trade union movement constituted the most serious threats to moral standards. Economic renewal, therefore, entailed a moral revolution: a return to individual responsibility, free market entrepreneurialism and British nationalism" (3). In *The Long Good Friday*, Harold Shand aims to redevelop the Docklands with the investments of the American Mafia. The film critiques the Thatcherite emphasis on the entrepreneurial by showing Shand and Councilperson Harris pander to the American interests. Shand's nervousness before Charlie's, the American Mafioso, arrival and his repeated attempts to make Charlie more comfortable establishes an awkward power relationship between the two godfathers, indicating Shand's sense of inferiority. Shand's inability to secure the redevelopment deal indicates the failures of the individualist economic gangster and his absolute belief in neo-liberalism.

The film questions the relationship between criminality and business. Shand does not think of himself as a gangster but rather as a businessman, scoffing at any reference to the former term. His gang is organized like and labeled as a "corporation" or "the firm." Indicating his entrepreneurial philosophy, Shand speaks to the "trusted friends" gathered on his yacht. He begins, "I'm not a politician. I'm a businessman with a sense of history. And I'm also a Londoner. And today is a day of great historical significance

for London. Our country's not an island any more. We're a leading European state. And

I believe that this is the decade in which London will become Europe's capital." As his

speech indicates, Shand views the world through absolute categories—he's not a

politician because he gets things done as a businessman, meaning he does not pansy

around talking about ideas, but instead he acts aggressively and efficiently. He calls

himself a Londoner in the same fashion, suggesting the label as a monolithic identity and

acknowledging his inability to understand his world except through the rhetoric of

capitalist accumulation. The historical significance he refers to is economic development

actually detached from any vision of London. He foresees the European Union and

hopes for British centrality; after all, he believes "No other city has got . . . such an

opportunity for profitable progress." Shand's conservative utopian vision is similar to

Fukuyama's end of history since both view free-market capitalism as the utopian closure.

In more personal terms, his vision of the future proves that he can only comprehend

identity and meaning through contractual organizations.

His idea of history is a nostalgic vision of a return to Victorian identity hierarchies

and economic success. Following his speech, Shand laments to Charlie that London used

to be the busiest port in all of Europe. As he glances from the deck of his yacht sailing

along the Thames, he stares with contempt at the empty docks. To him this image is a

direct contradiction to the image of himself, an image which he connects to the Tower

Bridge. When he delivers his "hands across the ocean" pitch, he is framed by the bridge

in the background; it literally encompasses him, both visually and metaphorically.   Built

in 1894, the bridge's architecture, the iconic twin pillars and the functional bridge lifts,

symbolizes Victorian decadence and status but also utility. This is the vision he holds for

his corporation. The basis for his understanding is a stereotypical idea of Englishness—

he explains that "the Yanks love snobbery. They really feel they've arrived in England,"

he describes his pub as having "real old London character," and his lover's name,

Victoria, alludes to an ideal of feminine Englishness.   His stereotypical idea of

Englishness leads to the repeated reinforcements of outdated race, gender, sexual, and

nationalist hierarchies: Shand views Brixton as a racial wasteland filled with "scum;" he

beats his lover when she becomes the more instinctual business voice and goes against

him; he repeatedly lampoons his dead colleague and friend, Colin, because of his

homosexuality; and he uses racial epitaphs to describe the Irish.

His ignorance prevents him from understanding the threat posed by the IRA. The

violence that plagues Shand throughout the film, from the explosion of his mother's

chauffeur, the murder of his sidekick, and the bombing of his pub, challenges his

businessman façade. In the matter of seconds, Shand shifts from calling the car bombing

outside a church "the work of a maniac" to proclaiming "I'll have his carcass dripping

blood by midnight." The first statement represents the profit-driven businessman, but the

second indicates the opposition between neo-liberal rhetoric and underworld ethics. The

first sees profit as the only basis for action, but the latter sees protection and retribution as

equally powerful motivators. Shands is so intoxicated by capitalism that he cannot

occupy the imaginary space of the underworld essential to the identity formation of the

gangster. When he attempts to exert his authority through intense violence, we see Shand

as an irrational thug, not a strong leader. When he sends "the corporation" out to gather

all those who may have knowledge about his problems, he presents an arsenal of

weapons for the choosing, but then absurdly says, "Lads, try and be discreet." He then

hangs his rival gang bosses from meathooks without learning anything about who is behind the plot. When he eventually discovers that the IRA is culpable, he sets out on a course of "annihilation," as he calls it. Shand does not understand the political violence of the IRA because it is diametrically opposed to his brand of self-interested economic brutality. He will not allow Parky, the corrupt police officer he employs, to refer the case to the Special Branch, and he does not heed Parky's warning about the IRA: "They're not just gangsters. They run half of Londonderry on terror. It could be London next." While Shand wanted to become more than a gangster through a "legitimization of the corporation," the IRA succeeds at the task because of their political organization of the underworld.

The final sequence emphasizes the absolute need for a political imagination of the underworld by the gangster. Believing that he has "solved his problem" by killing two members of the IRA, Shand goes to the Americans ready to finalize the deal. He learns that they are returning to New York and begins to rant, criticizing the values and visions of the Americans. His irrational substitution of profit as the measuring stick of success makes him unable to protect his "corporation." Colin and Eric have already been murdered by the IRA, and Shand kills his second-in-command, Jeff, when he explains to Shand that the IRA cannot be handled like other business deals gone awry. The final lengthy shots of Shand's reaction after the IRA seizes him and Victoria emphasizes that he has not previously realized the reasons for his failure.

The camera focuses on Shand as he progresses from anger, denial, and then acceptance. This is Shand's conversion experience. Taking place on Good Friday, the film has an underlying theme of faith and salvation. Shand has placed his faith in free-

market capitalism and individuality. He now has to understand his errors. Shand's

conversion begins after he viciously attacks Jeff for his betrayal, calling him Judas.

Shand thus sees himself as the Christ figure. He returns home to cleanse himself, the

blood washing away as the audience wonders if he expresses remorse. When he quickly

returns to his businessman personae, we learn that he still sees himself as the martyr. The

true conversion occurs before the IRA assassinates him. In the car, the image shifts

several times away from Harold's emotionally descriptive facial responses and back to

the IRA gunman. The juxtaposition of these images further establishes the dichotomy

between the IRA's political and religious dedication and Harold Shand's capitalist

criminality. Until this point, he has not even thought that he has placed his faith in the

wrong ideology, Anglo-American capitalism. He realizes that he has blocked the

political potential of the imagined space of the underworld, which is amorphous and

flexible. For example, the IRA creates an underworld that unities its members through

the allegiance to the discourses of Catholicism and Irish nationalism. Shand now has to

mourn his own failures as a gangster and not as a businessman, and he accepts his

impending death.

Harold Shand, like Jack Carter, has lost touch with the collectivity embedded with

the imaginary space of the underworld. Their isolation prevents them from

understanding the epistemological shifts of postwar English culture, leaving them

obsolete and dispensable. In each of the films discussed, business repeatedly interferes

with a productive imaging of the underworld. These films emphasize the incompatibility

of Thatcherism, particularly the attempt at "forging new discursive articulations between

the liberal discourses of the 'free market' and economic man and the organic

conservative themes of tradition, family and nation, respectability, patriarchalism and

order" (Hall 2). In these films, the economic man has no access to tradition, except

through nostalgia, or the family and nation, except through overstated gender hierarchies

and clichés of Englishness. Their respect and order hinge on one fact, profit and

productivity. Stuart Hall argues that unless the left understands Thatcherism "it cannot

renew itself because it cannot understand the world it must live in if it is not to be

'disappeared' into permanent marginality" (272). Faced with the failures of Blarism for

understanding Thatcherism and renewing the left, the next generation of gangster films

are anti-Blairist fables that reveal the epistemological uncertainty of his "renewal"

ideologies. These films do forge a new discursive formation between economics and

family by connecting profit to the imagination of an underworld that nurtures the family

and expels the individual.

**New Laddism and a Return to the Underworld: Masculinity and Collectivity in
Films by Guy Ritchie and Jonathan Glazer**

Issues of masculinity are of central concern to the gangster films throughout the

1970s and 1980s, and this focus does not change in the 1990s. However, the idea of

masculinity does develop with the political and cultural policies of Blair's New Britain.

Using Blair's own words, we can summarize the ideals of New Britain, "Creative.

Compassionate. Outward-looking. Old British values, but a new British confidence."

These terms have become a sort of slogan because of Blair's rhetorical repetition of these

adjectives in speech after speech. The cultural manifestation of Blair's New Britain is

Cool Britannia, a reclamation of British cultural currency with an egalitarian bent. Geoff

Brown associates the rhetorical erasure of class hierarchies in Blair's vision of New

Britain with the government's endorsement of Cool Britannia. The main idea is to

reclaim the popular attention that the British music industry had established in the previous decades, to capitalize on the cultural currency of the Beatles British Invasion and the punk subculture. Brown explains how "Chris Smith, Secretary of State for Culture, Media, and Sport, was happy to tell readers that Noel Gallagher, of Oasis, and the contemporary classical composer George Benjamin are 'both musicians of the first rank'; nor could he acknowledge any distinction in value between Bob Dylan and John Keats. In the world of Cool Britannia they were all equal citizens" (31). The issue of confidence presents the biggest problem for the representation of masculinity in 1990s gangster films. Claire Monk explains how the political situations of the 90s affects the depiction of masculinity in British cinema: "the mainstream of British cinema at a moment when the fallout of post-industrialism and Thatcherism collided with the gains of feminism, produced a strand of male-focused films whose gender politics were more masculinist than feminist" (157). The reorganization of labor that occurred when women entered the workforce in great numbers made social divisions more obvious and problematic to the perceived power and authority of masculinity, especially the with the coterminous reduction of physical labor and middle management jobs predominately held by men and the expansion of the service sector employment more evenly distributed to women. From these changing times, a new idea of masculinity commonly labeled as "new laddism" emerges.

Claire Monk and Steve Chibnall both explain the culture surrounding new laddism in their analyses of British gangster films. The idea has an intrinsic connection to the creation of the post-feminist magazine culture characterized by *Loaded*, first published in 1994, and *Maxim*. Monk thus views this men's movement as a "media construction."

Her argument reveals a similarity between new laddism and New Labor's propagation of

the cultural movement of Cool Britannia, both are easily dismissed fantasies. Similarly,

Danny Leigh writes in *Sight and Sound*, "Given the rise of the new lad consumer with his

unashamed taste for testosterone-fuelled pleasures, the rise of the new Brit gangster film

can be seen as an inevitable counterpart to the success of such UK men's magazines as

Loaded and *FHM*" (23). Steve Chibnall does not view new laddism and the 1990s

gangster film with as much contempt as Monk. He differentiates between "gangster

heavy," characterized by *Get Carter* and *The Long Good Friday*, and "gangster light"

(282). The "heavy films" are realistic in style and substance, with a focus on the details

of period and place. "Gangster light" reflects an awareness of the artifice of film-making.

Chibnall explains:

> the most crucial characteristic of 'gangster light' is what we might call is 'faux-
> ness.' This is not used in the pejorative sense in which 'fake' is used, implying an
> attempt to fool the viewer with a counterfeit which purports to be authentic, but as
> a word to describe an idealized pastiche of the real which is willingly, and even
> enthusiastically, legitimated by the viewer. Faux-ness is a knowing theatrical
> distortion of real life, a mutually condoned simulacrum that, by a typically post-
> modern conceit, is something better than the real thing. (283)

Chibnall's reading indicates that the changes in the gangster film in the 1990s should not

be dismissed simply because they seem fake. His work attempts to read the 1990s

gangster film through not only the lens of the past, but also by reading these films on

their own terms. Following his approach, instead of dismissing new laddism as a

masculinist fantasy, I would argue that the 1990s' gangster film is embroiled within an

imagination of an underworld that no longer follows the obvious codes of the previous

decades. Instead, these films address the malleability of gender by returning to a

collective formation that valorizes protection of the family (a term applicable to any

organization that fosters protection of a group), and thus which reclaims creativity and compassion as masculine traits.

The gangsters in Guy Ritchie and Jonathan Glazer's films not only uphold the ideals of morality and nationalism validated by Blair's vision of New Britain, but it is their collective validation of these ideals that contributes to their successes. Despite their refusal of the individuality of early films in the genre, these gangsters are legitimated as criminals by their ability to manipulate and control the extreme violent potential in their idea of the underworld. The shift from *The Long Good Friday* to these films centers on the connection of morality to the responsibility of the individual for the earlier film to the desires of the group in the more recent. Guy Ritchie's *Lock, Stock, and Two Smoking Barrels* (1998) and Jonathan Glazer's *Sexy Beast* (2001) achieved widespread popularity and attention in both Britain and the United States. Therefore they fit nicely into the pattern of popularity detailed by Orwell and also they bring a stylized version of new laddism to the audience; these two films package the violent and vulgar lad culture of the British underworld within nationalist allegories that uphold the community and the family as moral institutions by suggesting alternative organizations that fit within the traditional ideology of masculinity. Ultimately, it is within these alternative organizations that the films posit collectivity, cooperation, and ingenuity as essential for an imaging of the 1990s underworld.

Both films have fairly straight-forward plots. *Lock, Stock* follows a gang of four lads (Ed, Bacon, Tom, and Soap) as they try to make a quick fortune at a game of cards; instead they find themselves in debt to "Harry the Hatchet" for a half million pounds. To pay back their debt, they concoct a plan to rob from a gang of hardened criminals who

have just pulled a job on a group of former public school boys who harvest top grade

marijuana for Rory Breaker, a caricature of the London yardie.   Throughout the film, the

lads survive as all the "real" criminals meet violent deaths; and in the end, they may even

have made a nice profit. *Sexy Beast* begins on the coast of Spain at the villa of Deedee

(a retired showgirl) and her husband Gal Dove (a retired gangster) as a boulder plummets

down the mountainside and smashes into their swimming pool. Gal and Deedee spend all

their time relaxing at the poolside, shopping, and dining with their British friends and

former coworkers, Aitch and Jackie. All four lead a peaceful existence until Don Logan

shows up from London to force Gal out of retirement. His psychotic and obsessive

presence threatens the way of life the four have built, and to survive, they must kill him

and send Gal back to London to cover up the crime. Gal goes back and participates in his

final job for Teddy Best before returning to his new life, which has been reconstructed

after the momentary intrusions.

Despite appearing on the surface as very different films, especially with the

generational gap between the two groups of protagonists and the spatial distance between

the two main locales, these films function pedagogically remarkably similar. Both

directors, Guy Ritchie and Jonathan Glazer, got their starts directing music videos.   Their

previous directing experience, along with their youthfulness, has earned them the label

"MTV directors."[2] Holding true to their backgrounds, each director includes a music

video within the films. These musical breaks from the dialogic narratives provide a

summary of the internal logic of each film. We can read the music videos as summaries

---

[2] Ritchie even won the 1999 MTV Movie Award for Best New Filmmaker.

of the utopian visions of the films. In the case of these internal music videos,[3] these

utopian visions show how individuals (character or audience) can position themselves

within the safe confines of alternative communities, marriages, and families, and thus

escape the destructive evils of the Darwinian capitalist underworld that more often than

not destroys individuals who lack capital and power. The packaging of this important

message within a music video directly responds to postmodern youth culture which has

been raised on information in thirty-second intervals—the sound bite and the

advertisement.

While the music used in *Lock, Stock* typically stereotypes the characters—such as

Greek music playing for Nick the Greek, Reggae for the public school marijuana

growers, and hard rock for the neighbor gang—in several of the cases the music

embodies the hybridity of Cool Britannia. In *Lock, Stock's* narrative the music video

displays the celebration of the four lads after they have successfully hijacked their

neighbors, a more brutal gang. The lads' techno/brit-pop theme song, heard several times

throughout the film, plays while they drink to excess and goof off at JD's Bar, owned by

Ed's father. The lads' theme song subsumes the libidinal urges of the Brixton garage and

house scene within the safe confines of Brit-pop popularity. The scene starts with the

four sitting around a table taking shots of liquor. The messy table is covered with glasses

---

[3] The uses of music in both films follow eight of fifteen functions of non-digetic music as illustrated by Jerrold Levinson. Levinson includes: "(1) the indicating or revealing of something about a character's psychological condition, including emotional states, personality traits, or specific cognitions; (2) the modifying or qualifying of some psychological attribution to a character independently grounded by other elements of the film; (5) the foreshadowing of a dramatic development in a situation being depicted on screen; (6) the projecting of a story-appropriate mood , attributable to a scene as a whole; (7) the imparting to the viewer of a sense that the happenings in the film are more important than those of ordinary life; (9) the suggesting to the viewer of how her or she is to regard or feel about some aspect of the story, for example, compassionately; (12) the lulling or memorizing of the viewer, so as to facilitate emotional involvement in the fictional world to which the viewer would otherwise prove resistant; (14) the expressing by the filmmaker of an attitude toward, or view on, the fictional story or aspect thereof" (492-3).

and liquor bottles along with playing cards. The disorder of the objects on the table

suggests a drunken condition to the audience, and the fast action and cuts of the scene

only confirm this condition. The combination of the cards and the drunkenness shows

the audience that life is a game to these four; the poker game summarizes the chance and

luck required in life, including how to manipulate the system—both criminal and legal—

for self-promotion. The game of life that they are playing includes much more than the

dangerous position in which they found themselves by gambling though. It includes the

criminal heist of their neighbors that they have accomplished by playing the part of

violent criminals.

Having planned and executed the heist smoothly, the lads base their success on

their intelligence, organization, and ability to manipulate the underworld system. In the

video they mock those who would lessen their abilities with marijuana by making Bacon

appear as a clown with two exaggerated joints coming out of each ear. Bacon must be

the one positioned as the clown because he samples their haul, but his submission to the

mockery proves that he has learned his lesson or at least acknowledges his mistake and

now only consumes legal drugs—cigars and alcohol. Ritchie's critique of drug culture

suggests that we read the film as a direct response to *Trainspotting*.[4] In an interview with

Joshua Klein, Ritchie acknowledges such, saying, "Even fucking *Trainspotting* was about

a bunch of smackheads and disaster, wasn't it? It was hardly a salubrious, uplifting topic

to pick. I don't know what it is with the Brits. I don't know why that happens, this

---

[4] It is interesting how *Trainspotting's* popularity follows a similar pattern to *No Orchids*. It was first an Irving Welsh novel, which despite its excesses, drug usage, and scatology found itself on the Booker Prize shortlist. It underwent a critical battering for its immorality at the same time that it found popular and critical support for its authentic renderings of youth culture and Scottish culture. Like *No Orchids* it was turned into a play and then quickly a movie. The film made millions of dollars domestically and internationally before spawning a marketing campaign of *Trainspotting* paraphernalia.

obsession with depressing fucking genres. I have no interest in it whatsoever" (online).

Ritchie's statement indicates that classifying *Lock, Stock* in the same model as *Get Carter*

or *The Long Good Friday* would be a mistake because his films do not examine the post-

industrial wasteland of England. Instead, I contend, we should see Ritchie as crafting a

comedy which owes more to the tradition of the Ealing films. Ritchie uses many of the

same narrative techniques of overstatement, irony, and flashback characteristic of the

Ealing films. Ritchie's indictment does not align his work with American cinema, which

requires a happy ending, but instead a more traditional form of English cinema. The lads

are "uplifting" in the same way as Mr. Holland from *The Lavender Hill Mob*: the

audience identifies with their desires to change the status quo existence and celebrates the

ingenuity that brings about such change.

The rest of the action in the music video scene shows the four goofing off,

attempting to light a fart, crawling on the piano, playing with chef uniforms, and dancing

around the bar. Although each of these actions seems arbitrary, they all refer to the

cultural politics of the film. The dancing and acrobatics prove that the young men have

able and trained bodies. The chef uniform appears earlier in the film when the others

visit Soap at work in a restaurant; the narrator tells the audience that he is proud of his job

and represents the sensible side of the four. In the music video the white uniform appears

at first like a straightjacket; but once they put it on properly its true nature becomes

obvious. These uniforms comment on the necessary manipulation of restrictive

employment in order to make the economic system fit the individual worker. The

juvenile practice of attempting to light farts jokingly calls attention to anal obsession and

the issue of homophobia within this film's entirely masculine world. For example, those

who are less stereotypically masculine, such as the public school boys who only have an air rifle as protection, are labeled as poofs. The inscription of a hierarchical understanding of sexuality is one of the departures from the utopian vision offered through its collectivity. The film does not fully realize its potential.

However, there is another way to read the homophobia. The film suggests homosexuality, but also heterosexuality as symptomatic of the immorality that these four lads must avoid. Sexuality is seen as a distraction from the communal organization required of a successful group; therefore women are absented from the underworld in this film. For example, the two stupid criminals that Harry hires to steal the antique rifles are too distracted by the strippers to pay full attention to their job offer. We could simply dismiss the film as homophobic and misogynistic but that would be too simple. When the four lads pass out at the end of the music video, their decadence has left them in a collective position that their portrayal of homophobia precludes them from realizing. Only in their drunkenness can they form a passive unity, essentially cuddling with each other along the benches. At this moment in the film, the lads do not understand the importance of their unity. But as the music video serves as a concentrated summary of the changing idea of masculinity presented through and realized by the lads, this final image has an ironic effect for viewers by giving them access to this important facet of underworld identity before the lads can verbalize such a conclusion. This music video functions more like an omniscient narrator than simply another scene in the film.

The alternative community imagined within the film permits the dissidence of youth culture and the individual realization to contribute to an eventual realization of the responsibility for upholding the morality of Englishness within the family. The

collectivity requires that each of the four create their individual identity based on their place within the group. Eddie, Bacon, Tom, and Soap are only fully realized as individuals and function as such because of their loyalty to the group. The voice-over narrator introduces each lad based on the primary characteristic that defines their predominate role in the group. Soap represents the sensible side; Tom is the entrepreneur; Bacon has savvy, style, and strength; and Eddie leadership. Instead of fully embodying the characteristic that introduces them, each group member exhibits all characteristics throughout the film; they form what Giles Deleuze and Felix Guattari call a body without organs. Their loyalty to each other legitimates these lads as a gang, and through this collectivity they imagine an underworld community.

Once the film establishes their loyalty within the local collective of the gang, then the gang can bare the real responsibility for upholding a national identity. The survival of the community, particularly in the face of the real violence of the capitalist underworld, depends upon nationalism. Upholding the principle characteristics lauded under Blair's New Britain—responsibility, ingenuity, strength, and morality—these lads figure nationalism as primary to their success. As evidence for their appreciation of Englishness, after the lads have broken into the neighbors apartment Eddie begins to make a cup of tea, explaining to Soap "if you think I'm going to war without one you're mistaken." The tea is synecdoche for the power of the state, and thus Eddie attaches the gang's power to their belief in nationalism. He explains, "The entire British Empire was built on cups of tea." This is not to say that they are brainwashed by nationalism, but instead have questioned these beliefs and still validate them. Although they admit that

the Empire has ended, they still see upholding tradition and honoring that Empire as a

necessary loyalty that the community has earned.

The film encourages the audience to embrace its ideological message by addressing

the audience as if they were a part of the community. The most immediate way that the

film accomplishes the inclusion of the audience is through the voice-over narrator who

carefully explains and introduces the characters to the audience. Then the film asks the

audience to pass on the message to others by figuring strong patriarchal figures as the

infallible and most desirable identity. Within the film there are two actual fathers—

Eddie's father JD and Big Chris, Harry the Hatchet's enforcer who brings his son and

protégé Little Chris on the job. It is important that the most famous celebrities in the film

play these roles; Sting is JD and notorious bad boy footballer Vinnie Jones plays Big

Chris. Their celebrity status makes it more likely that the audience will listen to their

message. JD owns the bar where the lads hangout. In fact he owns the bar outright,

without a mortgage or debts. He is testament to the rewards of hard work and

participation in the community. Harry reveals JD's place within the community by

identifying Eddie by his filial relation when he first meets him. Even Harry, the porn

king and embodiment of complete immorality and selfishness, valorizes the father figure.

When the lads get into debt to Harry, Chris visits JD to tell him of the boys' problems

and let him know that Harry finds the bar desirable as a trade for forgiveness of the debt.

Harry's interest in the bar proves JD's worth as a businessman and also gives him the

opportunity to help the lads correct their mistake. As the lads are adults themselves, JD

does not directly interfere. He voices his disapproval at the lad's actions, including a slap

to Eddie's face after he hears about the debt, but overall he lets the lads make their

choices and stands behind the bar to provide them his opinion on those choices.

As an international celebrity Sting's participation[5] in the movie encouraged

independent investors to support the film.[6] Such support suggests that the film's

audience already respects Sting's opinion since he is a rock star and has appeared in other

gangster films. Likewise the audience will likely recognize Vinnie Jones from his

football days. Ritchie originally only intended to give Jones a cameo appearance in an

attempt to validate his film's bad boy persona,[7] but then Jones's character grew. He

plays Big Chris. As Chris's son is only an adolescent, Chris directly reprimands his son

when he makes mistakes. He yells at criminals for swearing in front of his son, but yells

louder at his son when he swears. Despite his illegal employment as Harry's muscle, he

teaches his son morality and expects his son to obey. He repeatedly instructs his son to

put on his seatbelt, attempting to protect him from a form of violence over which he has

no control. In this statement Chris reveals a maternal caregiver side in addition to his

paternal instructions.

Instead of appearing like one of the hardened criminals who all die throughout the

film, Chris, the just and lawful enforcer, is a Christ figure. He exhibits grace by only

harming those who have harmed themselves by not repaying their debt. In fact, he does

not kill anyone for money as that would not serve a purpose; he does not kill until his

son's life is threatened. Having just deposited the cash and antique rifles at Harry's, he

---

[5] Reportedly, he was such a fan of the project that he worked for a salary of only one pound.

[6] Sting's wife Trudie Styler, a fan of Ritchie's short film *The Hard Case*, worked to get Ritchie's production company the funds needed to proceed with the film.

[7] Jones's antics include appearing in a video called *Soccer's Hard Men*, for which he received a £20,000 fine and a six-month suspension, and biting *Mirror* journalist Ted Oliver's nose in a Dublin bar.

returns to his car. He has parked blocks away from Harry's so as to not receive a ticket (a testament to his lawfulness). When he returns to find Paul, the leader of the lads' rival gang, with a knife held at his son's throat, he says that not getting a ticket, not obeying the law does not really matter now. As the sanctity of his family is now threatened, all codes of morality and honesty no longer matter to him. He crashes the car and brutally kills Paul by repeatedly slamming the car door on his head. By protecting his son, he ensures that the inheritance of his values and devotion to the family will continue for future generations. After the massacres of all the hardened criminals, Chris walks away with the cash as his reward.

At the film's end the two fathers, JD and Chris, conspire to teach the lads their final lesson about circumspection and value. Their similarities as fathers confirmed by the knowing nod that they exchange as Chris delivers the lads their final lesson. Fully knowing that the lads are in possession of the antique rifles worth at least a quarter of a million pounds, Chris returns the gym bag with evidence of their wealth. Finding the cash gone the lads experience loss instead of discovery. They do not suspect that the rifles are worth more than the few hundred pounds they spent on them. Despite all their lessons on heritage and tradition the lads still need their father figures in order to understand fully.

While still focusing on familial lineage, the alternative community introduced in *Sexy Beast's* music video addresses the idea of collectivity differently that *Lock, Stock.* Instead of locating individuality within a group dynamic, *Sexy Beast* reconfigures the institution of marriage and the conception of the nuclear family. The music video occurs very early within the film's narrative, making its pedagogical message only obvious in

retrospect. The film acknowledges the limits of the audience's interpretative capability by linking the video's message to the reoccurring semiotic image of hearts, most directly in the pool's tiling and Gal's smoke ring. The video asks the audience to see the ideal of love, evoked by the heart and the heat imagery, as redemptive. Gal and Deedee and their friends Aitch and Jackie are in need of redemption because they have previously participated in the underworld life in London. With romantic music playing and the four dancing and kissing, Gal provides narration on the difference between London and Spain. He first explains why he does not miss London, saying, "Fuckin' place . . . It's a dump . . . Don't make me laugh . . . Gray . . . Grimy . . . Sooty . . . What a shit hole . . . What a toilet . . . Every cunt with a long face shuffling about moaning or worried . . . No thanks. Not for me." Each of the terms used to describe London connote darkness, dirtiness, and vulgarity. Gal blames the character of the city for forcing people into depression and self-pity; neither of these pathologies permits the individual to uphold morality and nationalism.

Conversely, Spain's effect on the body is external and emotional. Gal says, "Spain. It's hot . . . Hot . . . Oh, it's fuckin' hot . . . Too hot? Not for me. I love it." The heat has been immediately conveyed to the audience in the film's opening scene of Gal sun bathing. His reddened exposed body looks painful and unnatural, but this pathology is only temporary and quickly fades to a smooth tan that makes Gal feel attractive. The heat that Gal refers to in his narration connects physical forms of heat, the sun and the fire of the grill, with the emotional heat that he has found in his marriage and unconventional family. Whereas in London he felt worried and could only moan, as he narrates, in Spain he finds an attractive identity through the relationships he forms. In the

video the love between Gal and Deedee allows them to transcend all place, as the

concluding scene of their entangled bodies floating over the village's skyline proves.

This transcendence of the worldly environment translates into protection from the evils of

the outside.

The transcendence also corresponds to their family structure, which proves the

redemptive capability of love. The young pool boy introduced in the opening scene of

the film at first seems only like an employee who cares for the pool. But when Gal

banishes the boy after Logan first appears, he proves that his new family structure is

completely outside of the British underworld. In an act of paternal education Gal and

Aitch take the boy hunting. The act of hunting removes the violent potential and

economic position of guns that we see in the London underworld and places them as

sport and recreation in Spain. The guns fail to work in the hunt though, proving that the

leisured life has no room for violence even if the violence is only in sport. The boy may

not have learned how to shoot from Gal and Aitch, but he has learned that he is part of

their patriarchal family. Thus, the boy returns to the villa with the gun at the film's

pivotal confrontation of the two worlds in order to protect his parental figures, Gal and

Deedee from Logan. Logan has brought a psychotic, destructive presence to the villa; his

insomniac rant in front of the mirror and violent intrusion into Gal and Deedee's marriage

bed epitomizes the irrationality of his violence. So when the boy returns to inflict

violence he is not revealing that Gal has corrupted his innocence; instead he is responding

to the irrationality that threatens his family existence. The boy first reveals the protective

power of familial love, but it is Deedee who actually protects the family from Logan.

Through Deedee, *Sexy Beast* creates a female character attractive sexually and

emotionally to the audience who also has the strength to confront the destruction of her environment. In this way Deedee acts similarly to Big Chris in *Lock, Stock*. Deedee saves Gal physically by shooting Logan and emotionally by saying his name over the long distance phone call. By figuring an alternative family structure as the protection of a leisured life, the film makes marriage and childrearing attractive goals for the audience.

Like *Lock, Stock*, *Sexy Beast* legitimates itself as a film through the celebrity personae in the film. I call them personae because, unlike *Lock, Stock* where the specific celebrity, Sting or Jones, is important because of their individual achievements outside of film making, *Sexy Beast* draws on the status of its celebrities to propagate its message; the status extends from the finesse and polish of the leading man to the gruff character actor. Ben Kingsley plays psychotic criminal Don Logan. Most notable for his role as Gandhi, Kingsley made a living acting in the heritage films that were so popular in the previous decades and had crossed over into Hollywood blockbusters. His Academy Award nomination for the aforementioned role shows that the international community recognizes Kingsley as a world-class actor. It is significant that he provides the commentary on the DVD version of the film because his film making experience legitimates *Sexy Beast* as much more than simply a gangster genre film.

While Kingsley ensures that *Sexy Beast* will attract a much broader audience than *Lock, Stock*, the former film does not betray gangster genre tradition. Casting Ray Winstone as Gal connects *Sexy Beast* to the genre tradition because Winstone's fame has come from playing gangsters, most recently and perhaps famously in Gary Oldman's *Nil by Mouth* (1997) and Antonia Bird's *Face* (1997). Like Kingsley, Winstone has received critical accolades for his performances but from BAFTA. Winstone's work does not fit

the formulae of Hollywood individualism typically lauded.   Instead, he plays character

parts essential for the imaging of the underworld and the creation of the gangster as a

version of Englishness or at least an Englishness only appreciated at home. Winstone

explains in the interview on the *Sexy Beast* DVD that he is known for punching the guy,

not kissing the girl as he does in this film. Thus he does not have to act violent in this

film in order for the lad audiences to see him as a potential violent presence since they

can remember his previous performances. Further supporting his prowess, he physically

towers over Kingsley's diminutive Logan in the verbal confrontations between the two.

Gal could obviously protect himself if he so chose, but his life is now about love and not

violence.

Gal's protection of himself and his family takes him to London for the film's

second half. It is important that his desire to protect his family should force him to return

to London because the first section of the film establishes that the family's escape to

Spain has protected them from the violence in London.   The overlap in the relationship

between the city (London) and the country (Spain) leads me to Raymond William's

seminal discussion of the importance of these spaces in English literature and culture.

Williams clearly establishes that the relationships between the two are constantly

changing historical realities. He eventually summarizes the twentieth century

relationships through "association with mobility and isolation" (290). By looking at how

both *Lock, Stock* and *Sexy Beast* relate mobility and isolation to space, we can see, as

William suggests how "the contrast of country and city is one of the major forms in

which we become conscious of a central part of our experience and of the crises of our

society" (289).   Depicting the narrative environment that Gal had detailed in the music

video, the first image of London presented to the viewer is covered over by a torrential

downpour—a direct opposition to the pristine light in the shots of Spain. For the most

part the identifiable scenes of London solely depict the stereotypical tourist survey of the

city—from hotel to restaurant to pub. Conversely, the most telling scenes of London

epitomize mobility because although they are not identifiable in an analogical fashion,

they are instead experience as Gal travels in automobiles.

The film figures such mobility as the intellectual realization of the traveler and

audience. Take for example the scene where Teddy Best's heist becomes apparent to the

audience. The camera travels as fast as if it were a vehicle from the street to the sauna

and into the bank vault. It is thus through these drives in the city that Gal final becomes

comfortable with his heist, burring Logan in his retiled swimming pool in order to protect

his family. Through his spatial understanding Gal becomes Benjamin's "city dweller."

This figure, "whose political supremacy over the provinces is demonstrated many times

in the course of the century, attempts to bring the countryside into town. In panoramas,

the city opens out to landscape—as it will do later, in subtler fashion, for the flaneurs"

(6). Gal's function as the city dweller responds to the global landscape of countryside,

which he has now managed to bring into the town.

Furthermore, the film's depiction of city and country extends beyond the British

borders. This suggests a global country to respond to the increasingly complex

multiracial London. In the past few decades the south of Spain has transformed into a

gathering place for the working classes to live out the fantasy of leisure. The south of

Spain has thus transformed into a satellite version of the English seaside resorts, complete

with fish and chip shops on every corner and the dreams of the working class on display.

The opening scene of Gal sunbathing suggests the English character of the south of Spain by playing The Strangler's "Peaches" (1977). The Strangler's began during the heyday of the British punk movement in 1975, and have continued to release albums and tour into the new millennium. The Strangler's song attaches the Cool Britannia ideals of cultural egalitarianism to owning a villa in the south of Spain, thus the alternative community located at the villa is accessible to all who work towards achieving it.

Lock, Stock's characters stay in London, but like Gal they experience the city through driving. The most obvious examples occur when the four lads return to Eddie's apartment after their night of celebration at JD's bar. The city is clearly visible to the audience outside the car's windows, locating the lads in the city even while they are in transit. While the specific locale is not accessible, the lads' ability to navigate the labyrinthine London reveals a complex understanding of spatial position. The other gangs who travel, Rory's and the neighbors never reveal their place to the audience because the windows are always blocked partially or completely. Their criminality prevents them from connecting to the transhistorical political space. The lad's collectivity is connected to their London existence by these driving scenes. While in the car they tell each other jokes and stories, which like the goofing off in the bar seem arbitrary but are not. The jokes and stories are only partially completed for the audience—the lack a punch line or a set up. The lads however receive the information completely because of their collective consciousness, because of their existence as the film's "wish image." Benjamin explains that these "are images in the collective consciousness in which the new is permeated with the old . . . in them the collective seeks both to overcome and to transfigure the immaturity of the social product and the

inadequacies in the social organization of production" (4). In a Benjaminian sense the lad's collectivity seeks to overcome and transfigure the social production of the underworld.

The film creates the underworld of London through a language of the East End. The London underworld traditionally worked within the East End; *Lock, Stock's* indirect allusions to the Kray brothers (such as having former gang member Lenny McLean play Barry the Baptist) acknowledges the reality of this tradition and the characters' discussions of other films in the gangster genre celebrates the tradition. Peter Ackroyd explains the historical image of the East End in his biography *London*, "The East End was in that sense the ultimate threat and the ultimate mystery. It represented the heart of darkness" (679). The cockney rhyming slang used by almost all the characters places the film within the East End. There is very little authentic cockney spoken though, as most of the characters represent a hybrid identity within this new lad underworld; the language reveals the opening out of the environment.

The critical assessment of the film's language responds to the varied types of cockney. Steve Chibnall celebrates Ritchie's dialogue: "Their speech, on the other hand, has achieved a remarkable level of vernacular sophistication, driven by metaphor, coded into colourful rhyming slang and decorated with ironic euphemism and gross obscenities. Ritchie takes great care to ensure that the colour, rhythm and humour of his dialogue suggests a believable milieu" (283). Chibnall labels this milieu as ladland, taking the film's national allegory out of the actual lived spaces of the city and placing it in the fantastical ladland where the young white male's fantasy of the underworld can thrive. The invention of a filmic version of gangland language is another reason that *Lock, Stock*

cannot be read like a realist gangster film. However, some critics, such as Danny Leigh, deride the film because of its language; he argues, "the mockney-accented gunplay of the *Lock, Stock* era begins to look like easy-on-the-eye bourgeois pornography, while the vast bulk of violent crime remains—as ever—perpetrated by and on the working class" (25). The language is part of the popular culture of the 1990s gangster film and new laddism.[8]

Like the inventive language, the building used as the exterior of the lads' apartment removes the film from the realism of the East End underworld because it is physically located in a different part of the city. The exterior can be found down a side street after crossing the newly built Millenium Bridge. The bridge makes tourist attractions of the South Bank, the Tate Modern, the rebuilt Globe Theater, the Royal Festival Hall, and the National Theater, easily accessible from the City. The façade is located on a street surrounded by council flats and other independent philanthropic housing projects. Stenciled on to the side of the *Lock, Stock* building is a warning to fans—"This is Not a Photo Opportunity." This neighborhood has nothing directly to do with the film, and as its warning reveals it does not want to have anything to do with the film. But by claiming that this building in the South looks more like the East End he imagines in the film, Ritchie's London acknowledges the history and heritage of the underworld while conceiving it as a space open to emendation. The images of the family offered introduce the true meaning of compassion and creativity, not the debased versions repeated as the foundation of New Britain.

These two films work within the gangster genre tradition and within the political climate of post-Thatcher Britain by configuring individual identity and community

---

[8] The popular rappers The Streets and Dizzy Rascal use a language similar to the Mockney of *Lock, Stock*.

organization along the lines of morality and nationalism. These films address their

audiences by creating attractive alternative communities that seem outside the

mainstream, while all along subverting the violent potential of laddism as a youth

movement. Through the films' paternal relationships they figure the passing of tradition

from fathers to sons as protection and empowerment of the worthy characters from the

evils of gangland business. The imagination of the underworld explains the spatial

realities of the city and the country and permits the characters to travel. This underworld

is the alternative community, suggesting change from within the dominant order.

Ritchie's and Glazer's films are departures from the genre because of their forward

looking familial communities. They indicate the potential for an alternative

understanding of masculinity even though they do not fully imagine how that potential

will play out. This is the first step towards the renewal of a leftist agenda. The

accomplishments of these films in presenting these familial collectives proves they are

departures from other contemporary films, like *Gangster Number One* and *Layer Cake*,

which revisit out-dated visions of the underworld. Both films refuse to name their

protagonists, emphasizing the discomfort with identity characteristic of the gangster

genre, *Lock, Stock* and *Sexy Beast* are able to address the shifting epistemological

meaning of Englishness under Thatcherism and Blarism because the engage the ways the

political discourse influence the idea of masculinity and the creation on an imagined

space that makes understanding identity possible.

CHAPTER 4
"WE'RE ALL ENGLISH NOW": TRANSFORMATION NARRATIVES AND THE
SECOND-GENERATION IMMIGRANT COMMUNITY IN HANIF KUREISHI AND
ZADIE SMITH

Kureishi belongs to a tradition of inquiry into the 'state of the nation' and the meanings of 'Englishness' which reaches back well into the nineteenth century. For example, his novels engage with 'condition of England writers as varied as Dickens and H.G Wells. More immediate forbearers whom his writing cites in this respect include J. B Priestly, T.S. Eliot and Orwell himself. In contrast to their various fears about the threats posed by fascism, mass unemployment or mass culture, for Kureishi the key issue is the unanticipated rapidity and scare of the unraveling of Britain's long history as an imperial power.

—Bart Moore-Gilbert, *Hanif Kureishi*

Hanif Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia* (1990) follows the first-person

protagonist, Karim Amir, as he grows from a teenager isolated from the world around

him by life in his parents' suburban home to a young man free to explore the city. As he

explains, "In the suburbs people rarely dreamed of striking out for happiness. It was all

familiarity and endurance: security and safety were the reward of dullness" (8). For

Karim's family this dullness means his Indian father, Haroon, commuting to his civil

service job on the exact same regimented schedule, his English mother, Margaret,

working in a shoe store and following a precise television viewing schedule, and Karim

and his brother, Allie, avoiding their parents and going to school. When Karim's father

does "strik[e] out for happiness" by having an affair, the dissolution of his parents'

marriage pushes Karim out into the world, into journeys to London and then New York.

The realization of his parents as individuals and sexual creatures begins his journey and

influences his transformation from one who had been living a stagnated existence,

defined by his love of tea, cycling, and listening to records and entering another world by

reading Norman Mailer (62), which repeated late into each and every night. As the

realization of his father's sexuality catalyzes his awaking, Karim's discovery of his own

identity and his relationships to others involves understanding his own transformation

from youth by coming to terms with his sexuality. In general, the journey to

understanding the self as one transforms from child to adult is complicated for the second

generation immigrant because it also means fully confronting racial and national

hybridity, a pattern foundational to *The Buddha of Suburbia* and influential to novels that

follow Kureishi's lead in constructing a new vision of the canon of English literature.[1]

Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* (2000), a novel that reworks many of the themes of *The

Buddha of Suburbia*, takes a transnational and transhistorical look at the creation of a

multicultural, millennial London. The four divisions of the narrative present a varied

perspective on the mapping of the family and the city. The structure, beginning with two

segments supposedly devoted to the fathers and concluding with two sections narrated

from the perspective of their children, would suggest a traditional, linear notion of history

and inheritance. Instead, the narrative voice is more of a postmodern free-indirect

discourse, voicing the plurality and hybridity of millennial London by providing as many

perspectives as available. The city, a space of ordered chaos and polyphony, stimulates a

bleeding together of individual voices in the voice of the city. The Jones family, Archie,

a quintessential Englishman, Clara, from a family of Jamaican Jehovah's Witnesses, and

Irie, their biracial daughter, embodies the merging of voices since they are a

---

[1] In *London Calling: How Black and Asian Writers Imagined a City*, Sukhdev Sandhu argues that Kureishi influences a wave of fictions about the city by women in the 1990s. She cites the themes of humor, mobility, and communal identity as those that overlap (271-3). Although Sandhu does not include Zadie Smith as one of the authors influence by Kurieishi, she easily could have. I will show how Smith responds to these same themes.

conglomerate of English and Jamaican. They are the inevitable offspring of the colonial

project, and thus, the youngest daughter discovers the meaning of a postcolonial

existence. She reaches this conclusion through her relationships with the Iqbal twins,

Magid and Millat, sons of Bengali parents Samad and Alsana, but they are born and

raised, until one is sent back home, in England. The twins do not face the same racial

identity crisis as Irie, but each youngster experiences cultural alienation because they

identify as English by birth but their families have other ideas of home. Figuring out the

self and the relationship between the self and the world is indicative of youth, but in the

immigrant condition, this identity crisis may not end. As Haroon, Karim's father

explains, "We're growing up together" (22).

Pragmatically, the second-generation immigrant novel should be concerned with

the idea of youth because the writers that fit into this category have recently come of age

as artists. This is not to say that there have not previously been second generation

immigrants or second generation novelist in Britain, but it is to say that the prevalence of

second generation novelists writing about second generation characters has been a

relatively recent phenomenon. Kureishi's 1990 novel is one of the foundational texts of

the genre.[2] To call it a genre requires offering a definition, and the difference between

the immigrant novel and the second generation immigrant novel clarifies the definition;

whereas, the immigrant novel constitutes a genre dealing with complex notions of

identity, history, and nation, as the writers and characters address the very real trauma of

transplanting one home with the other, the second generation novel deals with the

---

[2] Bart Moore-Gilbert asked participants at the 'Continental Drift: Asian Writers in Transit' conference in London in 1999 to comment on the relationship of Kureishi's work to their own. Atima Srivastava and Meera Syal both cited The Buddha for making it possible to write about black Britain particularly through the bildungsroman (191-2).

absence created by being born and raised in a country that the family does not identify as its own but with which the child does. This divide was crystallized by the 1962 Commonwealth Immigration Act that established the first distinction between passport holders based on place of birth. This was a way to control black immigration during decolonization, but it firmly plants a legal divide between the generations of immigrants. Certainly, we cannot lump together all immigrant or second generation immigrant novelists into one category, but those making up the group including Diran Adebayo, Hanif Kureishi, Andrea Levy, Zadie Smith, and Meera Syal do have more much more in common than the simple biographical fact of being born in England to immigrant parents.[3]

My aim is to examine the repetitions of key narrative conventions, particularly the transformation narrative and the idea of history, and thus repudiate the argument put forth by James Procter in his introduction to the anthology *Writing Black Britain* that there is "virtually no sense of a community (albeit imagined) or tradition (albeit invented) of black British writing" (6).   By looking specifically at how Hanif Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia* and Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* adapt the conventions of the bildungsroman to explore the transformation of history and identity by the second generations' realization of their collective agency, I will argue that the sense of an alternative community is essential in both the narratives and the traditions of black British writing,[4] in general, and second generation immigrants in particular.

---

[3] While this list is neither exhaustive nor representative of the scope of this study, it does include the most popular authors of this group. These are the author's whose narratives circulate the most widely and create the largest readership communities.

[4] Black generally refers to all non-white immigrants from the colonies. The homogenizing label of black British writing may not be ideal, but others, such as Mark Stein have looked at the problems of this label. It is, however, a valid label because it reflects the discourse on race in postwar Britain. As Anna Marie

Bildungsroman, Emergence, and Transformation

As novels of identity formation, the second generation bildungsroman is
preoccupied with defining the characteristics that contribute to the second generation
milieu. This constantly developing identity cannot simply rely on an established
stereotype or consensus because those would not acknowledge the transient and hybrid
ideas of history, heritage, nationality, and religion that preoccupy the second generation.
The second generation does not have access to the idyllic, imagined past that comforts
their parents in the face of bigotry and biases of life in England. Thus, where the
immigrant had the very real and very difficult trouble of adapting the ideals of a
homeland to a new space, the second generation does not have any preprogrammed ideals
and thus must come to understand their place afresh. They are educated in their parents'
ideals, but these do not compute or translate within the hybrid worldview that defines
their very existence.   Thus they cannot learn their parents' lessons, leaving them to
occupy an absence in need of an identity, which is thus an identity that is both limited in
the understanding it offers, and freed for an understanding it promises. The distance
between the absence and the potential freedom often disappears as the individual
overcomes the isolation caused by a youthful dislike for their own liminal ethnic, racial,
and religious identity and embrace the collectivity that their ephemeral heritage makes
possible.

The second generation immigrant novels' foci on education, realization, and
transformation call for an examination of these narratives as examples of bildungsroman.
The general idea of the term derives from a very specific set of late eighteenth-century

---

Smith argues, "The post-war official discourse on race in Britain has reproduced the colonial differentiation
of blackness in many forms" (96).

German novels of education, most famously Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*, and obviously not including the novels under examination here. Scholars from many geographic regions continue to debate the use and validity of this term, and looking at some of the influential critical voices on this genre permits us to rethink the idea of the bildungsroman as it relates to the postmodern immigrant novel.

Fritz Martini traces the etymology of the term to its early beginnings. He identifies two lectures by Karl (von) Morgenstern in 1819 and 1829 where Morgenstern expounds upon the label. Martini, through his analysis of Morgenstern, concludes that the term applies to the function of the novel as a form. Martini argues, "The source of his creation of the term lay in the perspective from which Morgenstern defended the novel as a moral means of education, as opposed to the conception of the novel as mere entertainment, pleasure, fantasy, and as an escape from reality" (24). As opposed to the epic, which shows the hero as he influences his surroundings, the novel explores how the surroundings influence the individual, particularly the inner self (17). For Morgenstern the novel has the capacity to not only reflect the morals of a society but also to influence these morals by educating the reader on the creation of the self. Morgenstern's early definition did not require that novels contain a narrative based on the formal education of the protagonist to be called a *Bildungsroman* because he saw the novel itself as education. Martini argues that the *Bildungsroman* "was to attribute to the novel an immediate practical and pedagogical responsibility for the individual and, in the "real" social fabric, to give it a connection to philosophy, to morality, to "life," which let it be understood less as "literature" and more as a direct expression of the author, as a confession and document of life, as a depiction of his own individuality and nation" (24).

While the notion of authorial intention in Martini's reading of Morgenstern is out dated, the argument that the novel, a means of education, is best suited for the depiction of "individuality and nation" is particularly interesting in the case of the second generation immigrant because the political and economic realities of the twenty-first century makes these terms much more flexible and indeterminable than during the eighteenth century. Overall, Martini's argument that the bildungsroman is focused on a depiction of individuality and nation applies to the texts under examination because these are the two ideas constantly attempting to be reconciled for the characters and the readers alike.[5]

Another prominent critical voice on the bildungsroman, M. M. Bakhtin, defines the genre based on the two facets of "the time-space and the image of man in the novel" (19). While the relationship between time and the individual is a constitute part of the genre, for Bakhtin the necessary trait is for texts "to single out specifically the aspects of man's essential becoming" (20). Like Martini's reading, Bakhtin's basic definition extends beyond the formal aspects of traditional education, typically meaning formal schooling or perhaps apprenticeships and an obvious aspect of the classical German examples. By focusing on becoming instead of education, Bakhtin opens the genre to more philosophical and less formal journeys towards knowledge. Bakhtin notes that the vast majority of novels know only the "*ready-made* hero." This hero is shifted in space up and down the social ladder as he approaches his goal, but he is personally and internally

---

[5] The attention to the relationship between individuality and nation emphasizes why much of the more recent scholarship on the bildungsroman addresses traditionally marginalized voices and voices created by the imperial project; these studies include: Pin-Chia Feng, *The Female Bildungsroman by Toni Morrison and Maxine Hong Kingston: A Postmodern Reading*; Julia Alexis Kushigian, *Reconstructing Childhood: Strategies for Reading for Culture and Gender in the Spanish American Bildungsroman*; Esther Kleinbord Labovitz, *The Myth of the Heroine: The Female Bildungsroman in the Twentieth Century: Dorothy Richardson, Simone De Beauvoir, Doris Lessing, Christa Wolf*; Gerta LeSeur, *Ten Is the Age of Darkness: The Black Bildungsroman*; Wangari Wa Nayatetu-Waigwa, *The Liminal Novel: Studies in the Francophone-African Novel*.

unchanged. Conversely, in the "novel of human *emergence*," Bahktin's term, "time is

introduced into man, enters into his very image, changing in a fundamental way the

significance of all aspects of his destiny and life" (21). Bahktin presents five temporal

schema for emergence: two based on cyclical time, one on biographical time, one on

pedagogical time, and the last, and most important for both Bahktin and for my argument,

one on historical time. He says that in this type "man's individual emergence is

inseparably linked to historical emergence" (23). In the previous types the world

remained immobile and in the background. Through the bildungsroman a new

understanding of the world emerges: "it presented a different side of the world to man, a

side that had previously been foreign to the novel. It led to radical reinterpretation of the

elements of the novel's plot and opened up for the novel new and realistically productive

points for viewing the world" (23). On the most general level, Bahktin indicates that the

bildungsroman must be read as a way to rethink the world. And more specifically,

consistent with his emphasis on emergence, Bahktin sees potential for the genre to

rethink radically both the idea and depiction of the self and the historical through texts.

While this is a potential reading of Bahktin, Franco Moretti explains the limits of

Bhaktin's historical argument. In *The Way of the World*, Moretti looks at the material

historiography of the bildungsroman. He explains that this new sphere of historical

existence celebrated by Bahktin actually meant "knowing how to keep history *at a safe*

distance, separating the destiny of the individual from the great collective waves of the

nineteenth century" (vii), such as the French revolution, the Napoleonic wars, and

Industrialization. Moretti argues that it is essential to view the bildungsroman as not just

a bridge between epochs as Bahktin does but as a mirror to social divisions, particularly

between bourgeoisie and aristocracy. He argues that the classical *Bildungsroman* comes into being because "Europe has to attach a meaning, not so much to youth, as to *modernity*" (5). Therefore, the bildungsroman is the symbolic form both created by the historical convergences of the events of the nineteenth century, and it is also most able to explain the difficult reality of a rapidly changing world. Because of this specific set of historical confluences, Moretti argues that while the genre may change with its movement from continental Europe to England and with its thematic development into an ideal of youth characterized by the products of the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, the genre as a symbolic form comes to an end by 1914 because of the changes in the historical moment. The *Bildungsroman*, as Moretti explains it, clearly follows the pattern he presents, but there is something that remains. I am interested in how the remnants of the genre reconfigure themselves, particularly through voices of races, classes, or genders that were not represented or permitted access to the genre's classical tradition.

When comparing the period in Britain from 1960 to 2000, it is obviously not as defined by distinctive historical events as the period of modernity, but for immigrants who faced hostilities in attitudes, employment, and laws during decolonization, the worst epitomized by the celebration of Enoch Powell's "River of Blood" speech and the National Front, this period presents a difficult environment for all to understand an ever changing idea of Englishness. Mark Stein argues that the bildungsroman becomes better thought of as the novel of transformation because it is "about the *formation* of its protagonists—but, importantly, it is also about the *transformation* of British society and cultural institutions" (xiii). Stein recognizes that looking at the formation of the

individual in black British literature provides a microscope to understand society and

cultural institutions, but I would particularly emphasize that it provides a way to

understand post-imperial Englishness. The main characteristics of the novel of

transformation are "[t]he feature of finding a voice and the relationship between the

individual and a larger group" (30). The act of voicing identity makes the

bildungsroman, the novel of transformation, particularly suited for texts dealing with

youth coming to terms with their own, their family's, their culture's, and their nation's

identities.

Naming, or Who is the Second Generation?

The introduction of *The Buddha of Suburbia* indicates this awareness of voicing

identity, particularly through a focus on the annunciation of the name. The first person

narrator begins, "My name is Karim Amir, and I am an Englishman born and bred,

almost. I am often considered to be a funny kind of Englishman, a new breed as it were,

having emerged from two old histories" (3). Significantly, the narrator-protagonist

begins with a powerful utterance of his name, expressing ownership of his individual

identity and establishing the confidence that epitomizes his freedom, which derives from

his status as a "new breed" able to put aside the "old histories" in preference for the new

one he contributes to, namely that of a multicultural England. Thus, an important part of

the creation of second-generation identity is contributing to a new history and a new

conception of the role of history and inheritance for the individual. But at the same time,

Karim realizes the limits of his freedom. He can proclaim his nationality as English, but

he must qualify it as "almost."   The word *almost* indicates a process of becoming at the

root of the identity formation of the second generation; it also introduces the

understanding that humor can be vital for dealing with the bigotry that some would pile against Karim for identifying himself as an Englishman.

Karim constructs a confused vision of race because of the acts of naming carried out by his white family members. His perspective on the influence of the utterance of the name is shaped by his Uncle Ted and Aunt Jean, who refuse to identify his father by his Indian name and instead prefer the anglicized version, Harry. Karim explains their motives: "It was bad enough his being an Indian in the first place, without having an awkward name too. They'd called Dad Harry from the first time they'd met him, and there was nothing Dad could do about it" (33). From within the supposedly comfortable surroundings of the family, Karim first sees the self being denied and assimilated. He recognizes the lack of power and control by his father, a feeling that he comes to realize is definitive for the black male. This is not to say that his own family hates him and his father because of their skin color; and in fact, Ted doesn't truly identify them as other. On one of Ted and Karim's journeys into London for a football match, Ted notices Karim's interest in the slums of Herne Hill. While Karim calls them "places so compelling and unlike anything I was used to seeing" (43), Ted dismisses Karim's interest with the simple explanation, "That's where the niggers live. Them blacks" (43). Ted reveals that racism is an institutional fact in Britain created by the class structure. Ted's inability to realize that some would label Karim with the same disgust proves that Ted's explanation is rote memory and not intrinsic belief. In fact, it fits the persona he occupies on these trips, that of soccer hooligan. He smashes the lightbulbs of the train with a knife and encourages Karim to shatter a lightbulb onto an elderly Indian man without any thought of the meaning of his thoughts or actions. While Karim cannot

internalize the meaning of this racist behavior at this time, it does shape his developing understanding of identity.

White Teeth includes a similar commentary on the connections between identity and naming. Citing names such as Isaac Leung, Danny Rahman, Quang O'Rourke, and Irie Jones (a main character), the narrator labels them, "Children with first and last names on a direct collision course. Names that secrete within them mass exodus, cramped boats and planes, cold arrivals, medical checkups" (271). The narrator's commentary on these names shows how labels can reflect the hybridity of a multiethnic Britain. Beyond representing the racial conflict in society, these names also serve as reminders of the difficult history surrounding colonization and decolonization. Saying that these names are on "a direct collision course" emphasizes the volatile condition of identity in post-imperial Britain; as the narrator goes on to conclude, "it is still hard to admit that there is no one more English than the Indian, no one more Indian than the English" (272). This conclusion directly summarizes the end product of the imperial project, the commingling of peoples, cultures, and history so much so that the original definitions cease to exist and what emerges is a new version of Englishness that must be aware of the effects of imperialism and immigration.

These novels express an acute awareness of Derrida's claim in "Sauf le nom (Post-Scriptum)" that "it is always necessary to be more than one in order to speak, several voices are necessary for that" (35). As he develops the idea of this multiplicity of voices, he reveals distrust for "community" "because of its connotation of participation, indeed fusion, identification" (46). Instead he speaks "of another being-together than this one here, of another gathering-together of singularities, of another friendship" (46) that make

this voicing possible.   The act of naming the second generation as an alternative

community cannot be based on participation or fusion because they do not assimilate into

the dominant tradition of Englishness, particularly not the inside/outside divide indicative

of Powellism. Their process of becoming a "being-together" or a "gathering-together" is

based on the singularities coming to terms with hybrid identities and thus realizing that

only through the voicing of an alternative community can the second generation be

realized as a voice. The idea of hybridity is complex and has varied definitions, but I am

particularly interested in Salman Rushdie's definition in defense of his famous novel:

> *The Satanic Versus* celebrates hybridity, impurity, intermingling, the
> transformation that comes of new and unexpected combinations of human beings,
> cultures, ideas, politics, movies, songs. It rejoices in mongrelization and fears the
> absolutism of the Pure. *Mélange*, hotchpotch, a bit of this and a bit of that is *how
> newness enters the world*. It is the great possibility that mass migration gives to the
> world, and I have tried to embrace it. *The Satanic Verses* is for change-by-fusion,
> change-by-conjoining. It is a love song to our mongrel selves. (40)

Rushdie's definition reveals that hybridity is not simply a label given to that which we do

not understand; it is essential for dealing with the changing world because from the

mixing of previously opposed or conflicting identities a new, a third revolutionary

identity can emerge. Hybridity is the essence of naming the second generation.

Mapping the Second Generation

The second generation experience is tied to the relationship between historical

understanding and identity construction. Both *White Teeth* and *The Buddha of Suburbia*

reveal the differences in experiences of first and second generation immigrants within the

spaces of London, particularly the difference between the spaces that cause suburban

stasis and permit urban mobility. Because of the focus on the city, the narrator of *White

Teeth* conceives of the second generation through ideas and images of circularity.

Discussing the status of the immigrant in England, the narrator explains, "Even when you

arrive, you're still going back and forth; your children are going round and round" (136).

The use of the second person by the narrator establishes a connection between the

narrative and the reader through the assumption that the statement resonates with a

general truth held by both. The general truth is that understanding the relationship

between the first and second generation perspectives requires spatial terms; the similar

construction of phrases "back and forth" and "round and round" ensures that the reader

understand these are not juxtaposed subject positions, but relational ones. The first

generation is characterized by the oppositional spatiality of back and forth, consistent

with the attempt to apply homeland ideals onto their new spaces and also to remember

the homeland through the developing sense of self created in England. The characters

attempt to live simultaneously in a past that no longer exists and a present that does not

match expectations. The "round and round" of the second generation reveals an

acceptance or willingness to construct identity within only the immediate world

surrounding, again restating the freedom yet limit of the second generation subject

position. Because they do not have the burden of obsessing over a memory of an origin

yoked to the homeland, they are not constrained by the nostalgic longing of their parents.

A similar spatial relationship emerges from the understanding of space and

mobility by Haroon and Karim in *The Buddha of Suburbia*. Karim, attracted to the

freedom promised by mobility from the suburbs, particularly by the promise of an

eventual journey from the suburbs to London (a journey that forces Karim from life on

the periphery of society and into life as part of society), understands how the city works.

He explains, "I knew all the streets and every bus route" (7). The bus routes are the

circulatory system for the urban youth, transporting Karim into what is only a dream

world that he desires but eventually becomes his experiences in London. Karim

memorizes these routes to give himself access to the circulation that surrounds him;

memorizing the bus system effectively is Karim's personal version of the test, commonly

referred to as the knowledge, that London taxi drivers must pass to ensure they know how

to move about the city. Through his knowledge, Karim expresses his connection to life

in this environment. He distances himself from his father's identity as an immigrant

through his understanding. Karim expresses dismay that Haroon "had been in Britain

since 1950—over twenty years—and for fifteen of those years he'd lived in the South

London suburbs. Yet still he stumbled around the place like an Indian just off the boat"

(7). Karim's analogy proves that he dislikes the naivety of the immigrant perspective. In

his immature stage, Karim belittles the immigrant as away to distance himself from his

Indian paternity. When Changez first arrives from India, Karim access their burgeoning

friendship, "And because he was slightly dim, or at least vulnerable and kind and easily

led, being one of the few people I could mock and dominate with impunity, we became

mates" (97). Karim focuses on the provincialism of the immigrants in his life to make

himself seem more cosmopolitan, a position that Karim strives for at any and all costs

because he believes it grants him access to the English culture that he celebrates.

Like Karim, the other second generation characters adamantly refuse the nostalgic

position of their parents through varied forms of rebellion, most obviously participation

in Western youth culture complete with drugs and sexual experimentation, a reality that is

announced by the varied rebellions of almost every offspring in the Begum/Iqbal clan

(182). The parental opinions of these rebellions epitomize the divide between the

generations. Where as Millat's mother, Alsana, can clearly state, "He is second

generation—he was born here—naturally he will do things differently" (Smith 240), his father responds, "And don't speak to me of second generation! One generation! Indivisible! Eternal!" (241). Alsana admits that her son's birth place creates a *natural* difference in his behaviors from her own, but Samad holds firm to his Muslim beliefs that all our connected based on their mutual faith, which does not account for the changes of culture or influences of his English educated son. Zadie Smith explains this divide in generational perspectives in an interview with Gretchen Holbroon Gerzina. Smith says, "You do write as a generation and you do write under the influence of some of the same things, and one of the main things we're influenced by is the idea of a network, so instead of centres and . . . roots—things . . . that Rushdie's generation was maybe more concerned with—my generation thinks of things as networks" (274). Here Smith elaborates on the spatial analogies that she attaches to each generation in the novel. The first generations' "back and forth" is conceived of as "centres and roots," supported adamantly by the almost foolish obsession over origins and inheritance by Samad in *White Teeth* and Anwar in *The Buddha of Suburbia*. Conversely, the circularity of the second generation is represented by networks, a figuration which acknowledges decentered origins and requires collaborative definition of concepts and self.

The decentering of origins causes Millat, Irie, and Karim to experience similar feelings of isolation. Millat and Karim both express feelings of racial confusion. Karim, after explaining the liberal continental education that Jamila exposes to him, concludes, "The thing was, we were suppose to be English, but to the English we were always wogs and nigs and Pakis and the rest of it" (53). Millat expresses a similar thought when asked if he had read one of the KEVIN pamphlets: "He knew that he, Millat, was a Paki no

matter where he came from; that he smelled of curry; had no sexual identity; took over

other people's jobs; or had no job and bummed off the state; or gave all the jobs to his

relative; . . . In short, he knew he had no face in this country, no voice in the country"

(194). Importantly, both young men are spurred to these conclusions by the written

word. Their reactions, while filled with emotional confusion, are the logical result of the

construction of knowledge and nation under Powellism. As Anna Marie Smith explains,

"By its very structure, the Powellian phantasmatic construction of the post-colonial

British nation displaces the cause of all disorder onto external sources: since Britain is an

essentially complete, independent and unified nation-space, any interruptions within that

space must be caused by foreign elements" (136). Millat's thought illustrates Smith's

argument by focusing on the problems of unemployment—jobs stolen by immigrants—

and welfare—immigrants refuse work—even though these are contradictory statements

that attempt to make the immigrant the absolute scapegoat. Drawing on Zizek's

conception of fantasy, Smith argues that this is not simply a scapegoat model that would

take the outsider status for granted. Instead, she claims that Powell was able to draw on

"organic racist traditions" to promote the idea of a "unified nation-space" and thus mask

the trauma of decolonization (136). The second generation immigrants present a problem

for this phantasmatic construction because they are a product of the failed colonial

project. While they may be made to feel as the outsider, they posses the passport of those

born in Britain or Ireland and thus are an interruption to the concept of unity, an

interruption that comes from within.

The Immigrant Condition: Historical Unity, Individual Ingenuity

To understand the disruption to unity caused by the coming together of the second

generation as a multiplicity of voices, we must take a step back and examine how the

older generation understands the idea of history and its effect on identity. The fathers in

White Teeth, Archie and Samad, the archetypes of the oblivious Englishman and the

proud immigrant, provide a complete picture of the blinders of both monumental English

history and nostalgic longing for colonial supremacy. Importantly, Samad and Archie

meet as soldiers during World War II. Assigned to the same tank command, the two men

were quickly homogenized despite their differing backgrounds by the assimilation of

military life and the erasure of individuality by regimentation, duty, and service. Archie

was immediately infatuated with the Bengali man sitting across from him, unable to

remove his stare. Unlike the racist attacks of the others in the tank, Archie identifies with

Samad because he saw that they were both subservient within the racial and class system

of England. Samad similarly understands the English class system, but unlike Archie, he

will not simply accept forced mediocrity. Samad asks one of the other enlisted soldiers

"Is it so complex, is it so impossible, that you and I, stuck in this British machine, could

find it in ourselves to fight together as British subjects?" (73). Samad and Archie both

understand that their subject positions, both in terms of service to the nation and in terms

of their subservient social status, make them more alike than different.

　　　Together, they try to understand the idea of Englishness that causes the feelings of

disconnect. They know that they will never represent the ideal of Englishness depicted

by their captain, Thomas Dickinson-Smith, and the meaning of his familial name. The

Dickinson-Smiths based their pride on the long history of family blood spilled on foreign

soil in service to England during wars or, in substitution, the Irish Situation. The family

name represents service and duty to country and monarchy. What Samad and Archie do

not seem to internalize is that Thomas, though, did not desire the same self-sacrifice that

his family name represents. In a way, this notion of the landed, aristocratic family represents a past that does not apply to the turmoil of the twentieth century. The name represents a sense of nostalgia, of English gentility, country houses, and public schools that facilitates the Powellian racist discourse. As their captain, Thomas, does not stand for the ideal of Englishness granted by his name, Samad and Archie should dismiss the myth of the Dickinson-Smith family, a myth that says they are inconsequential to history; but instead they obsess over access to the power they see based on status (a power that no longer exists but that still controls those who seek access to it).

Attempting to understand the connection to history, Samad fights against his marginalization at all times, particularly through telling his version of his family history. He does not realize that propagating an oppositional history contributes to his subservient position. Samad cements his relationship to Archie by telling him about his blood. The narrator explains, "And there was no stronger evocation of the blood that ran through him, and the ground which that blood has stained over the centuries, than the story of his great-grandfather. So Samad told Archie the much neglected, hundred-year-old, mildewed yarn of Mangal Pande" (84). To Samad, Mangal Pande is a revolutionary who stood up to English occupation. But Western history tells a different story of an inept coward. This divide in historical consensus epitomizes the plight of the immigrant unable to find a voice in the dominant culture. Samad presents this as evidence against Archie believing the negative judgments he hears about the East. He needs Archie to understand that "the land they call 'India' goes by a thousand names and is populated by millions, and if you think you have found two men the same among that multitude, then you are mistaken" (85). While Samad seems to uphold a revolutionary idea of historical

understanding and historiography, his life, particularly his troubled relationship to home,[6] undermines his message. He may say that India is indefinable, but once he has a life and family in England he has a steadfast idea of how a Muslim immigrant should live, an ideal he cannot even live up to himself.

Samad and Archie's war experiences create a troubled relationship with a complex idea of home. During the war, each realizes their lack of connection to the idea of home as haven, a typical reaction to the atrocities carried out in the name of the nation. The narrator explains, "They looked out on to stars that lit up unknown country, but neither man clung particularly to home" (82). The narrator uses the romantic cliché that by looking at the stars, the individual is gazing at the same scene available at home, thus creating a connection despite distance. Archie's alienation derives from the realization that Samad has a deeper commitment to service to England than he does. The narrator explains that Samad would "revenge the killing of men who would not have acknowledged him in a civilian street. Archie was amazed. It was his country; in his small, cold-blooded, average way he was one of the many essential vertebrae in its backbone, yet he could feel nothing comparable for it" (80-1). Archie may feel ownership, inclusion, and participation, but his overall feeling is apathy. His inability to kill Dr. Sick can be read as the translation of his apathy into incompetence, but he really does not understand the validity of murder even from supposed protection of England. Samad has the passion of patriotism, but he has no idea where to locate its roots or even where to attach the fervor. He complains to Archie: "What am I going to do, after this

---

[6] The resonance between Samad's label of India and E. M. Forster's observation that no story could ever capture the "many-headed monster" of India indicates Samad's assimilation to English intellectual culture, a contributing factory to his alienating vision of history.

war is over, this war is already over—what am I going to do? Go back to Bengal? Or to Delhi? Who would have such as Englishman there? To England? Who would have such an Indian?" (95). He will never have the chance to be a hero like Mangal Pande because of the world in which he lives, irrespective of the opinion of Pande as hero or cowards. Samad's experiences have acerbated the realties of the imperial project, and he thus no longer has a real place to call home. Instead, he attaches his passion to an India he remembers and an England he hopes for (one in which his family could regain its status); but neither is real.

After the war, as each man attempts to establish a home and family in London, their relationship to home changes with fatherhood. Neither develops the connection to home as haven that was destroyed for them during the war. Samad, feeling disrespected by his work as a waiter, wishes he could wear a sign that explains his identity. In this sign, he would explain, "I AM NOT A WAITER. I HAVE BEEN A STUDENT, A SCIENTIST, A SOLDIER, MY WIFE IS CALLED ALSANA, WE LIVE IN EAST LONDON BUT WE WOULD LIKE TO MOVE NORTH" (49). His identity crisis and feeling of purposelessness develops because he does not feel at home in East London. Archie, despite being a white Londoner, is so alienated by the immensity of the metropolis overpowering his feeling of individual worth, which he explains as "tiny and rootless" (10), that he would resort to suicide. He experiences home only through his second wife, Clara Bowden, because "Clara was from somewhere. She had roots. More specifically, she was from Lambeth (via Jamaica)" (23). Archie's feeling of rootlessness, and the assessment that Clara had roots, reveals the titular theme of *White Teeth*. The novel searches the biological (teeth, hair, genetics), horticultural, and historical idea of roots,

trying to understand how these change in the post-imperial moment of racial and national hybridity.

For Samad and Archie, the interest in roots supplants their feelings of homelessness as they become more concerned with the issue of inheritance. Samad first introduces Archie to this topic during the war, explaining "Our children will be born of our actions. *Our accidents will become their destinies*" (87). Samad first notes a direct connection between the lived history of the parents and their progeny, but then he emends this idea by adding in chance and fate. These mystical ideas come to dominate Samad and Archie negatively. Alsana, Samad's wife, explains the problem of Samad's obsession with inheritance and how it will affect the children. She says that "they will always have daddy-long-legs for fathers. One leg in the present, one in the past. No talking will change this. Their roots will always be tangled" (68). Because Samad and Archie have been so affected by the war, they can live the present only through the past, through the experience of war—a war that teaches them all they believe they need to know and thus ensures it is all they will know. These men married much younger women and became fathers relatively late in life, so such a blinded perspective only deepens the generational disconnect between them and their children. To their children, Samad and Archie deal with the contemporary world only through the filter of the war. The fathers seem isolated and outdated to children living in a very different postwar reality. The incompatibility of the fathers' worldview to the children's is best demonstrated by analyzing two collective environments, the space of O'Connell's Poolroom, "an Irish poolroom run by Arabs with no pool tables" (154), and the television watching of the fall of the Berlin Wall. The inability to see the present except through their wartime experiences prove that they

remain stagnate and withdrawn, without home, even when presented with the community

of family and friendship.

O'Connell's, a contradictory space by its very existence as a poolroom without

pool tables, is the closest semblance to a home for Archie and Samad because it

represents the obsession with the past that defines them. Everyday, at exactly the same

time, Archie and Samad meet at O'Connell's to eat the same food and ignore the same

fellow patrons. The narrator explains, "And that was what Archie loved about

O'Connell's. Everything was remembered, nothing was lost. History was never revised

or reinterpreted, adapted or whitewashed. It was as solid and as simple as the encrusted

egg on the clock" (160-1). The egg on the clock mirrors the earlier mention of the "yolk-

stained window" (154), putting a literal screen on the perspective from which Archie and

Samad view the world from within the restaurant. The egg and yolk are the embodiment

of the memory of war that similarly clouds their vision of the world. Like the yellowing

window, the war memories create a barricade between them and those who do not see the

world from the same perspective. O'Connell's is removed from time and thus removed

from reality: "It could be 1989 outside, or 1999, or 2009, and you could still be sitting at

the counter in the V-neck you wore to your wedding in 1975, 1945, 1935. Nothing

changes here, things are only retold, remembered. That's why old men love it" (204). As

O'Connell's represents the barricade that exists between Archie and Samad and the

present, it is fitting that in this space the men work out the plan to send one of the twins

back to Bengal. Forcefully removing Magid from his home and returning him to Bengal

attempts to take the twins out of the real time of multicultural Britain, which for Samad is

absolute corruption of moral and religious turpitude. Samad has a vision of Magid

returning from this educational experience as the intelligent, respected, and devout man that Samad wishes he were. In O'Connell's, Samad can remember the version of Bengal that he wants, irrespective of the dangers and poverty that are a very real part of everyday life. For example, Samad cannot understand when Alsana reacts emotionally over hearing of the assassination of Indira Ghandi because he does not remember that in the present moment their friends and family still live in Delhi (165).

As further evidence of the barricade created by Samad's and Archie's obsession with their wartime experiences, when the families gather to watch on television the fall of the Berlin Wall the men can only understand the event through their past experiences. This moment cements the wall between the fathers and their children, emphasizing to the younger generation the need for community instead of isolation, collectivity instead of individuality. The narrator begins, "A wall was coming down. It was something to do with history" (197), setting the tone for this event as a paradigmatic moment. Samad and Archie do not understand the relevance of this moment. Archie explains, "I'm not so sure that it's such a good thing. I mean, you've got to remember, me and Samad, *we were there*. And believe me, there's good reason to have it split in two. Divide and conquer, young lady" (198). Samad echoes Archie's opinion, adding "You younger people forget why certain things were done, you forget their significance. We were there" (198-9). Their responses indicate that they believe no history exists or matters after the War. They cannot understand the shift in political meaning marked by the fall of the Wall. Irie responds explosively: "He goes on like he knows everything. Everything's always about *him*—and *I'm* trying to talk about now, *today*, Germany" (199). Irie acknowledges the selfishness and isolation of the fathers' views. As an

adolescent, she cannot respond productively to the men because she is too emotional and passionate. They do, however, cause her to seek out the opposite approach, as she responds, "Fine! I'll take it to the streets with the rest of the proletariat" (200). Irie's proclamation indicates that the causes of her and Millat's rebellions are actually quests for the connections that are blocked by their fathers' isolated nostalgia. They need a new way to understand the world, and that way is through alternative forms of collectivity.

The collectivity of the second generation develops, in part, because of the absurd conservatism attached to the individual ingenuity celebrated by the older generations. There are two strong parallels on this topic in *White Teeth* and *The Buddha of Suburbia*. Both novels critique the philosophy of do-it-yourself renovations as a substitute for the narrative of English grandeur. Karim analyzes the meaning of DIY: "Kitchens had been extended, lofts converted, walls removed, garages inserted. This was the English passion, not for self-improvement or culture or wit, but for DIY, Do It Yourself, for bigger and better houses with more mod cons, the painstaking accumulation of comfort and, with it, status—the concrete display of earned cash" (75). Karim understands that the urge behind this philosophy is purely economic, or more precisely about displaying one's wealth. When Eva decides to move the makeshift family from the suburbs to London, she uses home renovations as a mask for her insecurities. As long as it appears that she has an endless stream of money and artistic eye, then it becomes her truth. The racist discourse of Powellism derives from similar usages of myths and lies. Also, Eva enlists Ted and Karim as her workers because Ted is looking for meaning, just like the other isolated, unhappy adults and because she needs to mold Karim as she transforms the house. Ted's and Eva's penchants for renovation put a superficial sheen on their mid-life

crises, making their lives seem purposeful despite the humdrum of their middle-class existence. Haroon's posing as the Buddha follows a similar logic—the self can feel important and connected to society simply because others believe in the wisdom and grant the status.

In *White Teeth*, Archie sees DIY as an affront to incompetence and bad luck. He is prepared to fix small appliances as they break or to shelter his family from a bad storm because these are "the practicalities" (186) that garner him "control over the elements" (188). The tree that falls through the kitchen despite his preparations symbolizes the absolute destruction of a myth of Englishness based on individual accomplishment and ingenuity.

The second conservative absurdity that appears in both novels is the caricature of the nostalgic immigrant who attempts to carry out masculinist fantasies about his families. Both Samad and Anwar manipulate their families by making life-altering decisions fabricated on ideals of religion and culture that have slipped from their grasps. Anwar conducts a hunger strike until his militant, feminist daughter Jamila agrees to an arranged marriage with a Muslim from India. Karim explains the transformations of both Anwar and his father:

> Maybe there were similarities between what was happening with Dad, with his discovery of Eastern philosophy, and Anwar's last stand. Perhaps it was the immigrant condition living itself out through them. For years they were both happy to live like Englishmen. Anwar even scoffed pork pies as long as Jeeta wasn't looking. . . Now, as they aged and seemed settled here, Anwar and Dad appeared to be returning to India, or at least to be resisting the English here. (64)

Karim's assessment that the two men's behavior indicates "the immigrant condition" is further supported by Samad's equally nostalgic decision to send one of his twin sons back to Bengal. "The immigrant condition" means adapting to the behaviors and ways of

English culture, even eating a pork pie, but at the expense of retaining the cultural

identity of India. These men are in difficult positions because they do not want to return

physically to India. Rather they want to return to an idea of their culture that never truly

existed. They need an imagined home to counter the feelings of failure and corruption

that plague them. Samad believes his son needs to be a good Muslim because Samad has

failed, resorting to gambling and infidelities. Anwar does not feel that he has lived up to

the class status that his wife and daughter deserves and thus believes that a son-in-law

will bless the family with success. Both are ridiculously wrong; Magid returns from

Bengal more English and secular than his brother, and Changez is lazy, incapable of

work, and eventually open to the liberal lifestyles and sexualities that Anwar so feared.

The comic outcomes of their decisions prove that such an opinion should be laughed at.

The mistakes these men make explain what Karim means when he says that they "seemed

settled here." The immigrant is an actor pretending to fit in and assimilate but really

becoming disjointed and isolated. The second generation has to find ways to navigate

this same terrain, but ultimately they must construct relationships that permit not only

settlement but also definition of racial and national identity.

Realizing the Alternative Community: Discovery, Sexuality, and Collectivity

To combat these feelings of isolation, the second generation characters seek out

collective relationships that facilitate an understanding of how racial diversity constructs

a new idea of Englishness. Their understanding, their education, though, cannot take

place within the formal school system because the school is a space of control and

homogenization, much like the military was for Samad and Archie. Glenard Oak, the

school in *White Teeth*, is literarily a panoptic space. As the narrator explains, "Glenard

Oak had a complex geography. Not that it was particularly labyrinthine in design. It had

been built in two simple stages, first in 1886 as a workhouse (result: large red

monstrosity, Victorian asylum) and then added to in 1963 when it became a school

(result: gray monolith, Brave New Council Estate)" (241). The school is a palimpsest of

imperial history, first a space to enclose poverty and then a space to satiate class

upheaval. The history of the school's namesake reveals the same problem of historical

consensus as Mangal Pande as the namesake, Sir Edmund Flecker Glenard can be viewed

as either an educational philanthropist or a colonial villain (252-55). In *The Buddha of

Suburbia*, Karim's school is a microcosm of the violence that derives from racism. He

explains that he had enough of it:

> I was sick of being affectionately called Shitface and Curryface, and of coming
> home covered in spit and snot and chalk and woodshaving. We did a lot of
> woodwork at our school, and the other kids liked to lock me and my friends in the
> store room and have us chant 'Manchester United, Manchester United, we are the
> boot boys' as they held chisels to our throats and cut off our shoelaces. We did a
> lot of woodwork because they didn't think we could deal with books. (63)

Karim does not learn book knowledge at school, which forecloses his father's dream that

his sacrifices (leaving the homeland) will ensure his son reaches a higher social standing.

Instead, Karim learns to deal with the demands and dangers of a racist society. It is easy

to understand why Karim does not value school, why he concludes "I didn't want to be

educated. It wasn't the right time of my life for concentration, it really wasn't" (94). The

education that these students learn at school is the language of hatred.

Bored and disgusted by this language, the second generation attempts to find other

educational spaces, other collective environments that nurture their discovery of the

changing ideas of history and nation. The school yard in *White Teeth* fits the

requirements. The narrator explains, "Despite every attempt to suppress it, the school

contained and sustained patches, hangouts, disputed territories, satellite states, states of

emergency, ghettos, enclaves, islands. There were no maps, but commons sense told

you, for example, not to fuck with the area between the garbage cans and the craft

department" (241). Within the school, the real education takes place as the youth learn to

navigate the multiple spaces for which we learn there is no map. They must construct the

map, just like they must construct the meaning of their hybrid identity within the spaces

of London. Navigating this terrain takes "common sense," an epistemology that the

second generation immigrant is suited to because the duality of their existence is always

already about navigating a "disputed territory" of being both English and other.

Fittingly, within the school yard Millat and Irie are entwined with Joshua Chalfen and his

middle class family. The Chalfens initially appear to be the quintessential English

family, a fact that attracts Irie because of "[t]he *purity* of it," but "It didn't occur to her

that the Chalfens were, after a fashion, immigrants too (third generation, by way of

Germany and Poland, née Chalfenovsky" (273). Uncomfortable with her biracial

appearance, Irie finds in the Chalfens "an illicit thrill, like a Jew munching a sausage or a

Hindu grabbing a Big Mac. She was crossing borders, sneaking into England" (273).

Through the Chalfens, Irie earns the confidence to overcome her discomfort with her

physical appearance; they expose her to the fantasy of Englishness that she desires, but

once Irie realizes both their immigrant history and their personal flaws, she debunks the

fantasy of the Chalfens as the embodiment of Englishness. Once Irie realizes that nobody

is "more English than the English" (273), she can interrogate the identity and meaning of

homeland for the second generation.

    Similar to Irie, all the other main adolescent characters enter into collective

educational spaces that force them to discovery new meanings and constructions of

identity; Millat thinks of his friends as a gang and then participates in the Muslim group,

Keepers of the Eternal and Victorious Islamic Nation (KEVIN); Joshua aligns with an

animal rights group that demonizes his father's research; Karim learns from his theater

groups; Jamila moves into a commune. Early on Millat's friends become Millat's Crew,

"joining the ranks of the other street crews: Becks, B-boys, Indie kids, wide-boys, ravers,

rudeboys, Acidheads, Sharons, Tracies, Kevs, Nation Brothers, Raggis, and Pakis;

manifesting itself as a kind of cultural mongrel of the last three categories" (192).

Despite their adolescent urges, such as priding themselves on "the number of

euphemisms they could offer for homosexuality" (192), they draw on a range of gangs

from different historical moments and of diverse races (they do not discriminate).

Through KEVIN, Millat seeks the religion that his father proclaims and that his

brother is suppose to learn by growing up in Bangladesh. His participation in this group

reveals the limits of fundamentalism. Interpreting Millat's Crew's participation in a

violent protest against Rushdie, Dominic Head argues, "Smith is also anxious to

demonstrate how the ugliness that is dismissed as 'fundamentalism' is produced by an

exclusive English ethnicity" (185). Head is correct to connect Smith's critique of

fundamentalism to the racist discourse that causes inevitable rebellion. Millat's religious

fundamentalism cannot last because he is part of the liberal world of popular culture,

particularly the American gangster film, and sexual experimentation. The teachings of

KEVIN inevitably show him the ridiculousness in believing that traditional beliefs will

work in the contemporary moment. As the Chalfens' religion in science, Joshua's

participation in the animal rights group, FATE, is a direct rebellion against his family's

beliefs. But like Millat, his sexual obsession with the head of the group becomes more of

a focus than the political cause. Sexuality becomes the real vehicle for transformation,

proving that inheritance has alternative meanings when traditional ideas of gender and

race are redefined.

In *The Buddha of Suburbia*, Karim and Jamila both refuse traditional ideas of

sexuality, openly exploring relationships. While still living in the suburbs under his

parents' roof, Karim confesses to his mother that he'll never be getting married (18).

Karim's bisexuality makes this refusal a rebellion against the institution of marriage, an

institution he has seen cause pain and isolation for his parents. Instead, he explores all

relationships, which become increasingly nontraditional as he moves from the suburbs to

London. Jamila, introduced to the power of philosophic thought by a generous

Francophile librarian, immerses herself in black arts and race politics. Her revolutionary

spirit, though, shifts when she is forced into marriage by her father's desperation. After

Jamila explains her dilemma to Karim, their reaction shows the unity of the second

generation. Karim explains, "We must have stood there outside Paradise Stores for at

least half an hour, just holding each other and thinking about our respective futures" (61).

While the immediate decisions each must address is individual, their unity shows that

they understand that their tradition and history unities them. Eventually, she succumbs to

Anwar's wishes because "[m]arrying Changez would be, in her mind, a rebellion against

rebellion, creative novelty itself" (82). Thus, Changez becomes her husband, but her

sexual relationships follow the revolutionary path laid out by her philosophical readings

on gender and race. She still has sex with Karim because they are united, and finally she

moves, with Changez, into a commune where she has a child with another man before

having a lesbian relationship. Changez explains the role of communal life: "The family

atmosphere is here without the nagging aunties. Except for the meetings, *yaar*. They

have them every five minutes. We have to sit time after time and discuss this thing and

that thing, the garden, the cooking, the condition of England, the condition of Chile, the

condition of Czechoslovakia" (222). The commune is a revised version of family that

puts to rest the unreal history of the older generation, "the nagging aunties." And while

Changez is annoyed by the democratic process of communal life, it permits a voice to

those who would be denied such a voice in the aunties' history. To live in the commune,

Jamila must leave the static suburbs for the city, and while we do not see the affects of

this journey through her, we see Karim explain this journey.

Karim's exposure to collectivity occurs through his acting jobs in different theater

troupes. First, he is forced to deal with racism as he plays Mowgli in *The Jungle Book*,

dressing in a loin cloth and putting on an Indian accent. During this role, he has a

relationship with Helen, whose father, named Hairy Back by Karim, threatens Karim and

proclaims, "However many niggers there are, we don't like it. We're with Enoch. It you

put one of you black 'ands near my daughter I'll smash it with a 'ammer! With a

'ammer!" (40). This moment cements the rebellious potential of sex for Karim. During

this first production, Karim also meets Terry who introduces him to class in a way that

his suburban stasis never permitted. When he moves onto the second play and the second

relationship with Eleanor, he further expands his understanding of race and class

particularly because now he lives in the city. Karim explains his reaction: "The city blew

the windows of my brain wide open. But being in a place so bring, fast and brilliant

made you vertiginous with possibility" (126). The imagery of Karim's description,

particularly the phrase "blew the windows of my brain wide open," establishes an

analogy between the self and the city as home. The window, as the divide between inside

and outside and as a visual portal to the world, signifies his openness to the city. Karim

continues this analogy: "London seemed like a house with five thousand rooms, all

different; the kick was to work out how they connected, and eventually to walk through

all of them" (126). To Karim, London becomes the house that he left when he moved

away from his parents; but London becomes his home by becoming a part of it. Thus, he

navigates these five thousand rooms through the relationships, particularly sexual ones.

Eleanor's grief over her dead African boyfriend forces Karim to realize his racial

hybridity. Similarly, Tracey, the other black member of the second theater troupe, forces

him to acknowledge racism when she critiques his caricature of Anwar.

When he travels to New York and lives with the first object of his sexual obsession,

Charlie (Eva's son who has become a punk icon), he has internalized the lessons of the

city and can finally see how identity has been commodified. He explains that Charlie's

music "had lost its drama and attack when transported from England with its

unemployment, strikes, and class antagonism" (247). He concludes that Charlie "was

selling Englishness, and getting a lot of money for it" (247). This statement shows that

Karim understands the ubiquitous idea of Englishness. He can accept his mother's

proclamation that he's not an Indian because he's never been to India but instead he is an

Englishman because he knows that this label no longer embodies the conservative ideas

of language, culture, and sexuality that traditionally defined it.

Like Karim's realization of the mutability of Englishness, Irie seeks a redefinition

of homeland. She goes back to her grandmother's house, finding pictures that explain the

colonial legacy of her family and her parentage and feeling as if she had reclaimed her

birthright. She is seeking a narrative that satisfies her,that fills gaps she believes exist

within her because she is biracial. The historiography she constructs, however, forces her

to realize that "*homeland* is one of the magical fantasy words like *unicorn* and *soul* and

infinity that have now passed into the language. And the particular magic of *homeland*,

its particular spell over Irie, was that it sounded like a beginning. The beginningest of

beginnings. Like the first morning of Eden and the day after apocalypse. A blank page"

(332). As her identity makes her feel out of place in all places, she seeks out origins.

What she fails to realize at this moment is that she cannot look to Jamaica or any other

place for this beginning—that is the fantasy, the mystical idea. Instead homeland means

a new beginning that is truly multicultural so much so that there could be no attempt to

trace it to a historical homeland.

Thus, her child creates the beginning she desires. Having slept with both Magid

and Millat hours apart, she finds herself pregnant with a child whose origins will never be

identifiable because "whichever brother it was, it was the other one too. She would never

know" (426). Already multiracial, the uncertain paternity at first depresses Irie, forcing

her to ask "if it was not somebody's child, could it be that it was nobody's child?" (426).

By being "nobody's child," this baby becomes everybody's child. It is the essence of

Rushdie's definition of hybridity. It is a magical hope of the eventuality of

multiculturalism, where origins can no longer be traced. The final image of this family is

"a snapshot seven years hence of Irie, Joshua, and Hortense sitting by a Caribbean sea

(for Irie and Joshua become lovers in the end; you can only avoid your fate for so long),

while Irie's fatherless little girl writes postcards to *Bad Uncle Millat* and *Good Uncle*

Magid and feels free as Pinocchio" (448). By imagining this as a snapshot, Smith reveals

that it is a fantasy; however, it still reveals the eventuality of the erasure of the traditional ideas of history and how history indicates and constructs identity.

What we see in both of these novels is that because most immigrants come from a background with a conservative religious underpinning, one of the primary ways that the second generation immigrant attempts to understand his or her individual identity is through sexual experimentation and thus rebellion from religious teachings. Through sexuality the second generation reveals the inability to accommodate the traditional teachings of the parent's religion within the postmodern London environment. Sexuality becomes a language that second generation immigrants acquire as they attempt to make a place in their hybrid worlds. Comprehension of this language permits the immigrants to communicate with others about their alienation, which manifests specifically as a sense of a loss of place, or more importantly, a loss of love. Through the development of their sexuality and thus communication, they are able to form untraditional connections that cement the second generation label as the hope for a flexible identity that exists within a multicultural and post-imperial London.

Conclusions: The Next Direction for Hybridity

If we weigh critical attention, Kureishi has become the voice of the second generation. In fact, perhaps only Rushdie receives more attention. But with the arrival of equally strong female voices, the second generation immigrant narrative has taken another step in its development. Meera Syal, like Kureishi, is as much a pop culture mainstay as a novelist. Her work continually returns to the themes of second generation immigrants navigating the hybrid world of their parents' traditions and their own English identities. In Life Isn't All Ha, Ha, Hee, Hee, she shows four young Indian woman navigating life, sexuality, and family in London. In her popular television show, The

Kumars at Number 42, she plays the elderly matriarch scandalously debunking the

traditions of India and playing a foil to her hybrid grandson. In Anita and Me, young

Meena finds her place within rural Wolverhampton without sacrificing the intelligence,

history, and family that she initially feels blocks her access to an ideal of Englishness.

She realizes that she can represent both traditions, Indian and English, because she comes

to occupy a third identity that removes the limits of the previous two. Meena's

transformation takes place within the rural English town, with each inhabitant

contributing to her developing understanding of gender, class, and history. Syal's novel

proves that the path started by Kureishi's groundbreaking novel continues to grow and

develop the genre of the second generation bildungsroman.

LIST OF REFERENCES

Ackroyd, Peter. *London: The Biography*. London: Chatto & Windus, 2000.

Agamben, Giorgio. *The Coming Community*. Trans. Michael Hardt. Minneapolis: U of
     Minnesota P, 1993.

Amis, Martin. *Einstein's Monsters*. New York: Vintage, 1987.

—. *London Fields*. New York: Vintage, 1989.

—. "The Prose and Cons of Martin Amis." Interview by Graham Fuller. *Interview* 25.5
     (1995). *The Martin Amis Web*. Ed. James Diedrick. 4 May 2005.
     <http://martinamis.albion.edu/fuller.htm>.

—. *Visiting Mrs. Nabokov and Other Excursions*. New York: Vintage, 1993.

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of
     Nationalism*. New York: Verso, 1991.

Asher, Kenneth. "The Lawrentian Vision of Martin Amis' London Fields." *Journal of
     Comparative Literature and Aesthetics* 24.1-2 (2001): 15-25.

Bachelard, Gaston. "The Oneiric House." Trans. Joan Ockman. *Architecture Culture
     1943–1968: A Documentary Anthology*.   Eds. Joan Ockman with Edward Eigen.
     New York: Rizzoli, 1993.

Bakhtin, M.M. *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*. Trans. Vern W. McGee. Eds.
     Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin: U of Texas P, 1986.

Ballard, J.G. *High-Rise*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1975.

—. *Millennium People*. London: Harper Perennial, 2003.

Barr, Charles. *Ealing Studios*. London: Cameron & Tayleur, 1977.

Baucom, Ian. *Out of Place: Englishness, Empire, and the Location of Identity*.
     Princeton: Princeton UP, 1999.

Baudrillard, Jean. "Two Essays." *Science Fiction Studies* 18.3 (1991). 21 Feb. 2005
     <http://www.depauw.edu/sfs/backissues/55/baudrillard55art.htm>.

Benjamin, Walter. *The Arcades Project*. Trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1999.

—. *Illuminations*. Trans. Harry Zohn. New York: Schocken Books, 1968.

Blair, Tony. *Speech to the 1997 Labour Party Conference*. London: Labour Party, 1997.

Boyle, Danny, dir. *Trainspotting*. By Irvine Welsh. Perf. Ewan McGregor, Ewen Bremner, Kevin McKidd, Jonny Lee Miller, and Robert Carlyle. 1996. VHS. Miramax.

—. *28 Days Later*. By Alex Garland. Perf. Cillian Murphy, Naomie Harris, Christopher Eccleston, Megan Burns, and Brendan Gleason. 2002. DVD. Twentieth Century Fox, 2003.

Bradbury, Malcolm. *The Modern British Novel*. London: Penguin, 1993.

Brighton Rock. Dir. John Boulting. By Graham Green. VHS. 1947.

Brown, Geoff. "Something for Everyone: British Film Culture in the 1990s." *British Cinema of the 90s*. Ed. Robert Murphy. London: BFI, 2000. 27-36.

Bull, Malcolm. *Seeing Things Hidden: Apocalypse, Vision and Totality*. London: Verso, 1999.

Butterfield, Bradley. "Ethical Value and Negative Aesthetics: Reconsidering the Baudrillard-Ballard Connection." *PMLA* 114.1 (1999): 64-77.

Caserio, Robert L. "Mobility and Masochism: Christine Brooke-Rose and J.G. Ballard." *Novel* 21.23 (1988): 292-310.

Chibnall, Steve. "Travels in Ladland: The British Gangster Film Cycle 1998-2001." Chibnall and Murphy 281-291.

Chibnall, Steve and Robert Murphy, eds. *British Crime Cinema*. London and New York: Routledge, 1999.

Chibnall, Steve and Julian Petley. "The Return of the Repressed? British Horror's Heritage and Future." *British Horror Cinema*. Eds. Steve Chibnall and Julia Petley. London: Routledge, 2002.

Davies, Alistair. "A cinema in between: Postwar British cinema." *British Culture of the Postwar: An Introduction to Literature and Society 1945-1999*. Eds. Alistair Davies and Alan Sinfield. London and New York: Routledge, 2000. 110-124.

de Certeau, Michel. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Trans. Steven Rendall. Berkeley: U of California P, 1984.

Dern, John A. *Martians, Monsters and Madonna: Fiction and Form in the World of Martin Amis.* New York: Peter Lang, 2000.

Derrida, Jacques. "No Apocalypse, Not Now (full speed ahead, seven missiles, seven missives)." *Diacritics* 14.2 (1984): 20-31.

—. "Sauf le nom (Post-Scriptum." *On the Name*. Trans. John P. Leavey. Ed. Thomas Dutoit. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1995.

Diedrick, James. *Understanding Martin Amis*. Columbia: U of South Carolina P, 1995.

Ellis, John. "Made in Ealing." *Screen* 16 (1975).

Finney, Brian. "Narrative and Narrated Homicides in Martin Amis's *Other People* and *London Fields*." *Critique* 37.1 (1995). *Academic Search Premier*. EBSCO. Marshall Univ. Library. 18 Nov. 1998 <http://www.epnet.com/>.

Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Trans. Alan Sheridan. New York: Vintage, 1977.

Franklin, H. Bruce. "What Are We to Make of J.G. Ballard's Apocalypse?" *Voices for The Future: Essays of Major Science Fiction Writers*. Ed. Thomas D. Clareson. Vol. 2. Bowling Green: Bowling Green U Popular P, 1979.

Get Carter. Dir. Mike Hodges. DVD. Warner, 1971.

Glazer, Jonathan, dir. *Sexy Beast*. DVD. Fox, 2001.

Gray, John. "The Search for Meaning." Rev. of *Millennium People* by J.G. Ballard. *New Statesman* 8 Sept. 2003. *Academic Search Premier*. EBSCO. U of F Smathers Library. 31 March 2005 <http://www.epnet.com/>.

Hardt, Michael and Antonio Negri. *Empire*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2000.

Harvey, David. *Justice, Nature, and the Geography of Difference*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1996.

—. *The Urban Experience*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1989.

Head, Dominic. *The Cambridge Introduction to Modern British Fiction, 1950-2000*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002.

Hobbs, Dick. *Bad Business: Professional Crime in Modern Britain*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1995.

Holmes, Frederick. "The Death of the Author as Cultural Critique in London Fields." *Powerless Fictions? Ethics, Cultural Critique, and American Fiction in the Age of Postmodernism*. Ed. Ricardo Miguel Alfonso. Postmodern Studies 17. Eds. Theo D'haen and Hans Bertens. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1996. 53-62.

Jameson, Fredric. *The Jameson Reader*. Eds. Michael Hardt and Kathi Weeks. Oxford: Blackwell, 2000.

—. *The Political Unconscious*. Cornell UP, 1982.

—. "Progress Versus Utopia; or, Can We Imagine the Future?" *Science-Fiction Studies* 9.2 (1982): 147-58.

—. "The Uses of Apocalypse." *Anyway*. Ed. Cynthia C. Davidson. New York: Rizzoli, 1994.

Kermode, Frank. *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction*. New York: Oxford UP, 1966.

Keulks, Gavin. *Father and Son: Kingsley Amis, Martin Amis, and the British Novel since 1950*. Madison: The U of Wisconsin P, 2003.

Koolhass, Rem. *Delirious New York: A Retroactive Manifesto for Manhattan*. New York: Monacelli, 1994.

Kubrick, Stanley, dir and adapt. *A Clockwork Orange*. By Anthony Burgess. Perf. Malcolm McDowell. 1971. VHS. Warner Brothers, 1999.

Kureishi, Hanif. *The Buddha of Suburbia*. New York: Penguin, 1990.

The Ladykillers. Dir. Alexander Mckendrick. VHS. EMI Films, 1955.

The Lavender Hill Mob. Dir. Charles Crichton. VHS. EMI Films, 1951.

Lefebvre, Henri. *The Production of Space*. Trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith. Oxford: Blackwell, 1991.

Leigh, Danny. "Get Smarter." *Sight and Sound* 10.6 (June 2000): 22-25.

Levinson, Jerrold. "Film Music and Narrative Agency." *Film Theory and Criticism*. 6th Ed. Eds. Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen. New York: Oxford UP, 2004. 482-512.

Lim, Dennis. "Unchained Malady: With 28 Days Later, Danny Boyle and Alex Garland Step into the Hot Zone." *The Village Voice* 48.25 (2003): 48, 50.

The Long Good Friday. Dir. John Mackenzie. DVD. Criterion, 1998.

Macaulay, Scott. "Apocalypse Fiction Redux." *Filmmaker* 11.4 (2003): 40.

Maczynska, Magdalena. "Apocalyptic London in the Fiction of Martin Amis." *The Image of the City in Literature, Media, and Society*. Eds. Will Wright and Steven Kaplan. Pueblo, CO: Society for the Interdisciplinary Study of Social Imagery, U of Southern Colorado, 2003. 189-193.

Martini, Fritz. "Bildungsroman: Term and Theory." Trans. Claire Baldwin and James Hardin. *Reflection and Action: Essays on the Bildungsroman*. Ed. James Hardin. Columbia: U of South Carolina P, 1991. 1-25.

Marx, Karl. *The Marx-Engels Reader*. 2nd Ed. Ed. Robert C. Tucker. New York: Norton, 1978.

McEwan, Ian. *Saturday*. New York: Doubleday, 2005.

—.. "Zadie Smith Talks with Ian McEwan." *The Believer* Aug 2005: 47-63.

Monk, Claire. "Men in the 90s." *British Cinema of the 90s*. Ed. Robert Murphy. London: BFI, 2000. 156-166.

Moore-Gilbert, Bart. *Hanif Kureishi*. Manchester: Manchester UP, 2001.

Moretti, Franco. *The Way of the World: The* Bildungsroman *in European Culture*. New Ed. Trans. Albert Sbragia. New York: Verso, 2000.

Morris, Edmund. Introduction. *The Day of the Triffids.* By John Wyndham. New York: Modern Library, 2003.

Morris, Meaghan. *Too Soon Too Later: History in Popular Culture*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1998.

Moyle, David. "Beyond the Black Hole: The Emergence of Science Fiction Themes in the Recent Work of Martin Amis. *Extrapolation* 36.4 (1995): 304-15.

Nancy, Jean-Luc. *The Inoperative Community*. U of Minnesota P, 1991.

Orwell, George. *Nineteen Eighty Four*. New York: New American Library, 1981.

---. "Raffles and Miss Blandish." *Critical Essays*. London: Secker and Warburg, 1951. 163-178.

Osmond, Andrew. "In The Hot Zone." *Cinfantastique* 35.3 (2003): 38-40.

Parrinder, Patrick. "The Ruined Futures of British Science Fiction." *On Modern British Fiction*. Ed. Zachary Leader. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002. 209-233.

Performance. Dir. Donald Cammell. VHS. Goodtime Enterprises, 1970

Proctor, James. *Writing Black Britain 1948-1998: An Interdisciplinary Anthology*. Manchester: Manchester UP, 2000.

Ritchie, Guy. Interview. "The Smoking Man." *The Onion*. Dir. Joshua Klein. 11 March 1999. Online. http://theavclub.com/avclub3509/bonusfeature13509.html. 8 April 2003.

—, dir. *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels*. DVD. Polygram,1998.

Ross, Andrew. *The Celebration Chronicles: Life, Liberty, and The Pursuit of Property Value in Disney's New Town*. New York: Ballantine, 1999.

Ruddick, Nicholas. "Ballard/Crash/Baudrillard." *Science-Fiction Studies* 19.3 (1992). 2 May 2005 < http://www.depauw.edu/sfs/backissues/58/ruddick58art.htm>.

Rushdie, Salman. "Minority Literatures in a Multi-Cultural Society." *Displaced Persons*. Eds. Kirsten Holst Petersen and Anna Rutherford. Aarhus, Denmark: Seklos, 1987. 33-42.

Sandhu, Sukhdev. *London Calling: How Black and Asian Writers Imagined a City*. London: Harper Collins, 2003.

Sinfield, Alan. *Literature, Politics, and Culture in Postwar Britain*. London: Anthlone P, 1997.

Smith, Anna Marie. *New Right Discourse on Race and Sexuality: Britain 1968-1990*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994.

Smith, Zadie. *White Teeth.* New York: Random House, 2000.

— . "Zadie Smith with Gretchen Holbrook Gerzina." *Writing Across Worlds: Contemporary Writers Talk*. Ed. Susheila Nasta. London: Routledge, 2004. 266-78.

Sontag, Susan. "The Imagination of Disaster." *Science Fiction: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Ed. Mark Rose. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1976.

Stein, Mark. *Black British Literature: Novels of Transformation*. Columbus: The Ohio State UP, 2004.

Stokes, Peter. "Martin Amis and the Postmodern Suicide: Tracing the Postnuclear Narrative at the Fin De Millennium." *Critique* 38.4 (1997). *Academic Search Premier*. EBSCO. 7 Nov. 1998 <http://www.epnet.com/>.

Street, Sarah. *British National Cinema*. New York: Routledge, 1997.

Wagar, W. Warren. "J.G. Ballard and the Transvaluation of Utopia." *Science-Fiction Studies* 18.1 (1991): 53-69.

Wegner, Phillip E. *Imaginary Communities: Utopia, The Nation, and The Spatial Histories of Modernity*. Berkeley: U of California P, 2002.

Williams, Raymond. "Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory." *New Left Review* 82 (1973): 3-16.

—. *The Country and The City*. New York: Oxford UP, 1973.

Wolfreys, Julian. *Writing London Volume 2: Materiality, Memory, Spectrality*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004.

Wyndham, John. *The Day of the Triffids*. New York: Modern Library, 2003.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Nicole LaRose received her B.A. in history and English from Marshall University in 2000. She was a member of the prestigious Society of Yeager Scholars. She received her M.A. in English from the University of Florida in 2002. Her first publication on Martin Amis's *The Information* developed from her master's thesis. She has also published an article on William Wordsworth. Starting in the fall semester, she will be an Assistant Professor of English at the University of Houston-Downtown.