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Santa Barbara

Bourgeois Like Me: Architecture, Literature, and the Making of the Middle Class in Post-

War London

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in English

by

Elizabeth Marly Floyd

Committee in charge:

Professor Maurizia Boscagli, Chair

Professor Enda Duffy

Professor Glyn Salton-Cox

June 2019

The dissertation of Elizabeth Floyd is approved.

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June 2019

Bourgeois Like Me: Architecture, Literature, and the Making of the Middle Class in Post-

War Britain

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I am so appreciative of the love my family has provided. You are too big to name you all (and you are well aware of it), but I especially want to thank my cousins Megan and Dave Poehler for opening their home to me so many times over the years. To my brother, Michael: I so appreciate that you have understood and sympathized with the many challenges over the years. You may be the first Dr. Floyd, but I still love you. Sarah, thank you for being a patient person and putting up with all the Floyd debates and debacles. To my brother, William: all our discussions over the years have challenged me to become a better teacher and communicator. Your unique perspective has been invaluable, and I love you for always being original. I always want to thank my grandmother, Eda Dazé, who has been a constant inspiration as a strong and capable woman.

I cannot even begin to express my gratitude to my parents, Anne Marie Dazé Floyd and Gary Floyd, who have always believed in my potential. They have encouraged and supported me day in and day out. Their love of new ideas and engaging discussions has been a constant source of inspiration and I would not be the intellectual I am without them. Their boundless love, optimism, and enjoyment of life is a constant reminder of what life should be.

To everyone, I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

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Department of English, Michigan State University   Fall 2012 – Spring 2014
  IAH 207: 'Race' and 'Culture' in U.S. Literature and Film 1776 to Present
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ACADEMIC AND ADMINISTRATIVE EXPERIENCE

University of California, Santa Barbara, Center for Science and Engineering Partnerships

Graduate Student Alumni Tracking Data Coordinator   July 2015 – June 2019

Collect and analyze undergraduates' post-graduation academic and work paths to better understand relationship between education and career outcomes. Develop and implement an accurate categorization system for collected data with project investigator. Research various companies and industries to create a more nuanced understanding of career paths for over 10,000 alumni. Manage data sets and work plan.

University of California, Santa Barbara, English Broadside Ballad Archive

Undergraduate Supervisor and Research Assistant   April 2015 – June 2018

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"Don't Put a Ring on It: the Reification of Desire and its Social Reproduction for Working Middle-Class Women." Modern Language Association Annual Convention. Chicago, IL. January 2019.

"The Devil and the Angel: English Masculinity Abroad in Elizabeth Von Arnim's *The Enchanted April* and E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India*." Elizabeth von Arnim and Katherine Mansfield: Literary Connections, Friendships and Influence. Pasadena, CA. July 2017.

"Humor and Theatrical Tradition in Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*." English 104B: British and Anglophone Literature and Culture, 1900 to the Present, Instructor: Maurizia Boscagli. UCSB. November 2016, November 2015.

"Distracted Reading." English 25: Literature and the Information, Media, and Communication Revolutions, Instructor: Alan Liu. UCSB. April 2016.

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RELATED PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

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Interviewer & Producer of Innovation & Entrepreneur Stories Videos June 2017 – June 2019
  Research backgrounds, develop questions, and interview entrepreneurs on camera regarding their careers and business success. Manage production timelines and consult on post-production content and style editing. Promote series and enlist alumni as volunteers for videos.

Communications Specialist June 2017 – June 2019
  Create content for UCSB Innovation & Entrepreneurship website (https://innovation.ucsb.edu/) to promote business innovation and technology at UCSB. Collaborate with program leadership to design and market website. Advise website developer on website design. Assist with data collection and interview participants in educational programs for CSEP program evaluation reports. Write and edit department reports analyzing the efficacy of student programs and education.

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ABSTRACT

Bourgeois Like Me: Architecture, Literature, and the Making of the Middle Class in Post-War Britain

by

Elizabeth Floyd

This dissertation examines the relationship between the rebuilding of London after WWII and how the material aspects of the city represent and complicate notions of British middle-class subjectivity in the period. With decolonization and the general recognition of the United States as the new international military and cultural force, the British Empire was rapidly declining and no longer relevant in the modern world. Thus, "Britishness" had to be redefined because it was directly tied to the pre-war structures of empire and cultural imperialism. While a new national British identity was supposed to represent the entire country, it was particularly important for the middle class. The Labour party saw the rebuilding of London to posit a new, completely modern Britain that could erase its imperial past. Alternatively, the Conservative party saw rebuilding as a way to perpetuate a past British identity that would compensate for Britain's loss of empire. Yet both parties were ultimately trying to create a utopian fantasy of Britain through rebuilding: this was a modernized and homogeneous society that celebrated traditional *grandeur* in the space of the city. However, the literary and cinematic narratives of the period demonstrate that the

complicated rebuilding of the British middle-class was not homogenous. Through the analysis of space in the literature, film, and architecture of the 1940s and 1950s, I argue that the reconstruction of London is instructional for the formation of the post-war British middle class during a period of political and international turmoil.

To discuss the tensions of reconstruction, I turn to realist novels and films of the 1940s and 1950s, which offer several competing narratives of the changing middleclass through their depiction of space. In particular, I discuss how novels such as Graham Greene's *The End of the Affair* (1951), Barbara Pym's *Excellent Women* (1952), Sam Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners* (1956), Colin MacInnes' *City of Spades* (1957), and Anthony Burgess' *The Doctor is Sick* (1960) and Carol Reed's film, *The Fallen Idol* (1948), use the city of London to demonstrate a shifting middle class and alternatives to the overarching conservative nationalist sentiment in the 1950s. I read these texts in conjunction with archival materials such as architectural designs and planning documents, advertisements from the Festival of Britain (1951), and the promotional film, *Proud City A Plan for London* (1946), to emphasize the competing narratives between official state planning and the ongoing evolution of individuals' use of space. Through the comparison of official documents to realist novels and films, complex versions of the British subjectivity emerge and counter narratives of a cohesive and collective British post-war middle class, particularly for younger generations. The comparison of these texts and documents reveal the disparate viewpoints and experiences of urban space. The government documents present the city as a homogeneous, contiguous space, whereas the realist literature and films instead describe the city dweller's experience in navigating the city at the street level, which typically contradicts the official narratives . As the novels and films of the period demonstrate, rebuilding London

and the middle-class was also gendered, and in restructuring the middle-class, notions of masculinity and femininity fundamentally changed with the shifting class structures. Part of the anxiety for the former middle class, particularly men, is the recognition that their old positions and status in British society are starting to disappear.

As much as the city planners promoted one cohesive, homogenous city, the history and social structures of London also complicated the plans to create a completely "modernized" city and society. Comprised of both the iconic historical markers of the past empire and the modernist architecture of Britain, the constant reinterpretation of the city undermines any utopian future outlined by official city planning. Although the city planners promoted the image of the city as a locus of social equality, this image was also quickly contradicted by the political events of the time. With the rise of the Conservative party and Churchill's return as Prime Minister in 1951, London was newly viewed as a neo-imperial city despite the slow dismantling of the British Empire. Despite this turn to conservatism, I argue that it is the specifically British use of architecture and urban design is what produces a new, and newly classed, British identity after the war. Coined "Festival Style," the new architecture and design combined International Modernist architecture with references to British history and traditional English building materials. It is through this project of design and official rhetoric that allows the British government to reshape and broaden how it envisioned the middle class and its constituents. As part of the project of modernization, the progressive design and politics, however historically referential, create more modern, and thus progressive, definitions of class and gender. The material details of architecture and city planning create a tangible example of a changing Britain.

My first chapter focuses on the initial plans to rebuild London as a modern and equal city by the government and the responses by the middle-class. I analyze the government film, *Proud City A Plan for London* (1946), to show the how the government believed that through modern urban planning and design, a new more equal British society would emerge. In direct contrast Graham Greene's novel, *The End of the Affair* (1951), and Carol Reed's film, *The Fallen Idol* (1948), reveal that as middle-class men see the world rapidly changing around them, including their material spaces, they ultimately reject those changes. I analyze the narratives' use of masculine middle-class subjectivity and its relationship to rebuilding. For these men, rebuilding the city then becomes both a process of forgetting the past and part of the unknown future after WWII where they feel they do not have a place. My second chapter explores how the planning and rebuilding of London creates a city that combines imperial nostalgia with a socially progressive utopia through the use of Festival Design and modern aesthetics. I compare archival materials such as architectural designs and exhibitions, letters from the Festival planners, and advertisements produced in conjunction with the 1951 Festival of Britain to Iris Murdoch's *Under the Net* (1956). In comparing these different objects, I will demonstrate that while the Festival architects, who were mostly under forty, presented a hopeful and modernized version of the British middle class and that perspective is reflected in the novels' characters and portrait of London.

My third chapter discusses the relationship between the traditional conservative politics of the middle class and how the new city space allows for individuals to reimagine middle-class masculinity and femininity. I discuss three novels, Jean Rhys' *A Voyage in the Dark* (1934), *Excellent Women* (1952) and *The Doctor is Sick* (1960) to show the failures of previous imperial gender norms were emerging immediately prior to World War II and

heightened following the war. The modernization of London allowed for the possibility for new definitions of class and gender to form for even the most unlikely individuals. My final chapter focuses on the rebuilding of London, its relationship to decolonization, and middle-class subjectivity. In considering the racial tensions that run through British national identity in the post-war period, I analyze two novels, Sam Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners* (1956) and Colin MacInnes' *City of Spades* (1957), which document the immigrant experience in London through their black protagonists' experiences and the novels' relationship to its middle-class readership. The modern city that began with rebuilding mirrors new forms of British hybridity, constantly exposing the variety of identities in the nation, the ever-shifting notion of the city, and what it means to be middle class.

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Introduction

You are now
In London, that great sea, whose ebb and flow
At once is deaf and loud, and on the shore
Vomits its wrecks, and still howls on for more.
Yet in its depth what treasures!
—Percy Bysshe Shelley (1820)

"I don't know what London's coming to — the higher the buildings the lower the morals." —Noel Coward, 'Law and Order', *Collected Sketches and Lyrics* (1931)

Any tourist's guide to London begins with its iconic landmarks situated upon the Thames: the Tower of London, St. Paul's Cathedral, Westminster, the London Eye. In these guidebooks, the buildings seem eternal, despite their storied history or recent construction (in the case of the Eye). Like many European cities' monuments, these markers live on in infamy and portray an idealized version of the nation and its inhabitants. What these narratives and tourist experiences omit is that every landmark has a hyper-local history which corresponds to the city's ever-changing inhabitants. Shelley's experience differed from Coward's, and yet both read the space of London as central to cultural experience. Their commentaries and narratives about London echo how the city is simultaneously personal and collective, ancient and new, reviled and celebrated, alienating and welcoming. From our contemporary vantage, we tend to forget that London's urban spaces are relatively new in their construction. Specific landmarks bely an older history, but large portions of the city were rebuilt or reconstructed after World War II because of the intense devastation of the Blitz. While much of the reconstruction recreated the historical architecture, the London we experience today is a modern city, one in which the old is a façade for the new and modern city.

This dissertation examines how the process of rebuilding London after World War II became a cultural project to reimagine British middle-class subjectivity in the 1950s and how the literature and film of the period reflects that. The need to rebuild London also coincided with the decline of the British Empire. While the events of World War II proved devastating for the British military and the general population and weakened Britain's global influence, decolonization began before World War II. Ireland and Egypt (except for the Suez Canal) became independent in 1922; by 1931, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the Union of South Africa had gained full legislative independence. Following World War II, India gained independence in 1947 and other colonies quickly followed suit. As scholars such as Anne McClintock, Ann Laura Stoler, Radhika Mohanram, and Ian Baucom discuss, in the 19th and early 20th centuries British subjectivity, particularly for the middle class, was defined through the space of the "here" of Britain versus the "there" of empire. This logic fashioned a middle class that perpetuated and regulated the structures of imperialism. The middle class were the model British citizens—they consumed the goods produced in the colonies and facilitated imperial management through their work as white-collar employees in Britain and as imperial bureaucrats throughout the empire. With the slow dissolution of the empire and with imperialism's increasing irrelevance in post-war Britain, the middle-class British subjectivities tied to those spaces were rendered meaningless. To reclaim a modern British subjectivity, the locus of identity had to shift from the geography of empire and the problems of imperialism to a modernized location. London was the perfect site for the creation of a modernized British subjectivity: it was familiar as the metropolitan heart of the empire, and yet maintained a cosmopolitan modernity independent of imperialism. Thus, the project of rebuilding London worked twofold: to physically reconstruct the devasted city after World

War II and to relocate British identity within the space of the United Kingdom removed from the empire.

1950s Britain is often associated with a hyper-conservativism, the image of the nuclear family, and the return of rigidly traditional gender roles. As social historians such as Richard Hornsey and Elizabeth Wilson reveal, this image was not without basis. The policing of gay men and socially "devious" behavior increased during the 1950s through legal and social regulation.[1] Women, who constituted a large amount of the labor force during the war, were forced out of their jobs by men returning from the battlefront. Prior to the war, many working and lower-middle class women worked in a variety of skilled and unskilled jobs, and yet this was discouraged after WWII.[2] The new housing of the 1950s enforced the "nuclear family" whether it was publicly or privately built and these structures placed women back in the home as mothers and housewives.[3] Yet these conservative narratives ignore the earlier history of post-war Britain in which the majority of the nation voted for the progressive Labour party and supported the welfare state. The Attlee Ministry (1945-1951) founded the National Health Service, built more social housing, and increased access to higher education for the working and middle classes. In 1951, this progressivism disappeared when Churchill's Conservative Party was reelected and Churchill began his third ministry.

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[1] Hornsey attributes this to the rising fears of crime in post-war Britain, however fictive or sensationalized, and describes the rhetoric of the period in which the "spivs," or "social degenerates" who did not conform to bourgeois values would disrupt homelife and the newfound stability of the post-war years (19-20).

[2] Elizabeth Wilson, Doreen Massey, and Elizabeth Darling discuss role of work for working- and middle-class women before and after the war. While encouraged to participate in roles traditionally barred to them during the war, these same women were unable to find work after the war as their previous jobs were given to returning soldiers. As many women participated in some form of labor in the early 20th century, the 1950s were unusual in that women were expected to stay within the confines of the home as either housewives or mothers, which ignored the long history of women's work within the home (i.e. cottage industry) and outside of it.

[3] As Richard Hornsey and Peter J. Kalliney argue, this housing continued to reinforce rigid gender roles. Hornsey describes the design of interior domestic spaces in terms of the nuclear family and insistence upon the continuation of the bourgeois values of the 19th century. Kalliney describes how the rising living standards and wages for formerly working-class families reinforced rigid gender roles as men reinforced their working-class patriarchal roles and tried to replicate the idealized versions of bourgeois living, in which women were subservient and maintained the domestic spaces and children (129-30).

The return of the Conservative Party demonstrates the reaction against the Attlee government

and social welfare. Like other extreme political swings, this reaction was based on campaign

rhetoric which promised an end to the still ongoing austerity in 1950s Britain and an end to

the general financial mismanagement of Attlee's projects. The British people did not fully

reject progressive politics: they wanted rationing to end and access to more material goods.

Importantly, Churchill's government did not dismantle the social programs his predecessor

had enacted, and although these programs have become weaker following Margaret

Thatcher's ministry and more recent post-recession austerity, Atlee's programs still exist and

are viewed by the British public as an important facet of British society.[4]

Despite conservative critiques, the social welfare programs had the dramatic effect of

increasing basic living standards throughout the United Kingdom. Similar to social initiatives

to alleviate poverty in the United States in the 1950s and 1960s but on a much broader scale,

the social welfare programs in the United Kingdom dramatically altered the material

conditions and housing of the working classes, which had been an ongoing social problem

since the 19th century.[5] City planners and social housing advocates, who had long argued for

the need to demolish the remaining slums and work houses of the 19th century, finally had

their opportunity when the post-war British government decided to rebuild the entirety of

London after 1945. The government officials, urban planners, and architects such as Herbert

Morrison, Patrick Abercrombie, and Frederick Gibbard were longtime proponents of

modernist design and worked on pre-war projects where they officially endorsed,

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[4] Owen Hatherley discusses the role of social welfare programs and the architecture associated with it extensively in *The Ministry of Nostalgia: Consuming Austerity* (2016). He shows how social welfare, despite conservative rhetoric about its inefficiency, is an important component of contemporary British culture and a nostalgia for it has emerged as the United Kingdom relies on its political counterpoint of austerity to manage the country.

[5] Kalliney (121).

conceptualized, or built modernized housing and urban design. The project of rebuilding London was not just a cosmetic endeavor but a social and political one in which they could use modern design and urban planning to create an equitable society.

The relationship between urban space and cultural experience has been central to 20th century literary studies, particularly in discussions of modernism and the joy and alienation felt by individuals in massive urban spaces. This can be traced to Walter Benjamin, who locates bourgeois subjectivity, the city, and individual experience in his canonical work on Baudelaire and the *flâneur* and his later project on the Parisian archives. Later 20th century scholars like Henri Lefebvre and Michel de Certeau consider the state's imposition in planning and how an individual can rewrite those government constraints in the everyday and mundane interactions of the city. More recently, cultural geographers, such as Doreen Massey, David Harney, and Edward Soja, examine how urban space is crucial to social constructs of gender, nationalism, and social justice. These cultural geographers discuss the convoluted ways the city both oppresses individuals through state-managed planning and allows those same individuals to reclaim and refashion the same space through their organic use. Soja argues for the radical potential in all spaces to become a "thirdspace" in which urban spaces become the true structures of individual and community experience, rather than imposed from above, and allow for the formation of subjectivities that are excluded from official rhetoric and discourse.

In relying on spatial studies' theoretical connections between urbanity and individual subjectivities, I consider how this relates to the specific of architecture and design in the mid-20th century. The relationship between modernist architectural, interior design, and the creation of a modernized society is well-noted. Kristin Ross in *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies*

describes this process in 1950s France: "Modernization promises a perfect reciliation of past and future in an endless present" (11). In this temporal conflation and practice of modernization, class difference is erased as social experience becomes homogenized or leveled. This can be seen in either the full erasure of buildings that are not "modern" enough, in which the old structures are bulldozed for the new or in the process in which the adaptation of previously bourgeois practices and structures are opened for a wider group of individuals. In the case of post-war London, the project of rebuilding did both—it erased the derelict buildings of the pre-war, fashioned spaces that were thoroughly "modernized," and offered modernist architecture and design to all Londoners regardless of class. Through the incorporation of all classes into the formerly bourgeois spaces, it can be read either as an equalization of resources and access to modernity for all, or, as an attempt to dismantle class difference and erase culture difference.

In this dissertation, I argue that London's modernization through new design and architecture becomes a project to dismantle the rigid class boundaries of pre-war society and an attempt to fashion a new universal British subjectivity that is tied to this new, modern city space. Government officials and architects believed that modernization was a progressive, and thus equitable, project. Their conceptualization of modernization was that it would level class through the creation of one, progressive middle class. To better understand how the middle class understood, reimagined, or rejected a modernized British subjectivity, I analyze "middlebrow," or fiction and films that were created for the middle class by the middle class. Often gendered as feminine, these middlebrow texts offer complicated and multi-variant

portraits of gender and class in their reliance on realism.[6] The texts I chose to analyze use

realism as a means to participate in the literary style of the 1950s and to affirm and critique

the status quo for their readership. While 1950s realism is typically associated with the

Angry Young Men (John Osborne, Kingsley Amis, etc.) and other working-class fiction of

the period such as Raymond Williams' novels, middlebrow realism is equally important in

how it focuses on the mundane or everyday to accurately portray the cultural and artistic

imperative of the bourgeoisie. In my first chapter, "A New Order and a New Dignity, or the

Ruins of What Once Was," I discuss the Ministry of Information's promotional film, *Proud*

City A Plan for London (1946), and the rhetoric used within it to convince Londoners that it

was their public duty to support socialized housing and better living standards for all

Londoners, regardless of class. The plans also present a London that is thoroughly

modernized and as the new site of British subjectivity, rather than the space of the empire. I

then contrast the film to the Graham Green novel, *The End of the Affair* (1951), and the Carol

Reed film, *The Fallen Idol* (1948), to show the resistance of certain middle-class men to

modernization and changing ideas of what constituted British subjectivity. The middle-aged

protagonists cannot imagine a new subjectivity that is not tied to imperial structures and

reject the erasure of the wartime ruins because it erases the past of empire and thus their

conceptualizations of themselves. Ruins and older architectural styles become the material

emblems of their imperial masculinities and inability to accept new forms of British

subjectivity.

  In my second chapter, "Youth Has Been Given Its Head": The Festival of Britain and

a New Generation," I examine the Festival of Britain (1951), a summertime event on the

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[6] Nicola Humble argues that these texts are "powerful force(s) in establishing and consolidating, but also in resisting, new class and gender identities, and that it is its paradoxical allegiance to both domesticity and a radical sophistication that makes this literary form so ideologically flexible" (3).

scale of a World's Fair or International Expo, that promoted the strength and culture of the

British people. The event, which was one of the first instances of large-scale post-war

architectural modernism in Britain, shows how the new "classless" British subjectivity is tied

to London and its material history, not the spaces of the empire. Through their combination

of pre-war and Scandinavian modernism, or "Festival Design," the festival architects and

designers projected a progressive hopefulness for Britain as a nation in their simultaneous

celebration British culture and forward-looking modernization. The Festival designers, who

were mostly under forty, represented a younger middle class, who wanted to move past the

nostalgia for a pre-war imperialism or wallow in self-annihilation of total war.[7] The

progressive attitude and celebration of the future counters the dominate discourses that

British society was inherently conservative in 1950s. I read this youthful celebration and

rejection of the "seriousness" of the older generations as fundamental to Iris Murdoch's

portrait of the younger middle class in *Under the Net* (1954). In Murdoch's novel, the

characters embark upon a picaresque *flâneurie* that reinvests London with futurity and hope.

In contrast to the hope and futurity projected by the Festival, my third chapter, "The

Doctor and the Secretary: Space and Gender," discusses the limitations imposed by

conservative gender roles for the middle-class women and men who do not fit into the typical

structures of the family. The chapter begins with Jean Rhys' *Voyage in the Dark* (1934)

which, although a much earlier novel, illuminates how the space of the city allows

individuals to refashion their gendered subjectivities despite social controls. *Voyage in the

Dark* also demonstrates that a need for a modernized middle-class subjectivity began before

World War II. The protagonist, Anna, is a white Caribbean woman and she illustrates the

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[7] See Paul Saint Amour and his discussion of total war in *Tense Future: Modernism, Total War, Encyclopedic Form* (2015) as culturally endemic in Britain following World War I and continuing in the Cold War period.

ever-shifting boundaries of who is considered British within the space of London. She confirms that London is the location of Britishness, not the empire. Next, I analyze Barbara Pym's *Excellent Women* (1951) to show how the figure of the single middle-class woman must reify her sexual desire and follow the rules of her class in public. Darkly comic, the novel critiques bourgeois society and its instance that coupledom and procreation are the fundamental answer to happiness. This critique allows Mildred, its protagonist, to assert a different form of middle-class femininity with the space of the city. I then compare *Excellent Women* to Anthony Burgess' *The Doctor is Sick* (1960) to illustrate how middle-class men also reject conservative gender roles when they are in London. *The Doctor is Sick* critiques the older imperial masculinities and illustrates how irrelevant they are for the post-war British man.

My last chapter, "The Untidy Sprawl: Post-Imperial London, Immigration, and Desire," examines post-war immigration, middle class desire, and the importance of the city to reconceive what constitues Britishness. With the arrival of the Windrush Generation and a rise in Carribbean and African migration in the mid 1950s, British subjectivity becomes quickly racialized and classed along new hierarchies. In Sam Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners* (1956), I argue that the text shows the racialized performativity of the middle class that harkens back to imperial structures and what Selvon's depiction of racial inequities within London offer a middle-class readership. As a Caribbean author, Selvon wrote the text for a multi-racial audience, but he also directly addresses his bourgeois readers and identitifies the fundamental issues within progressive politics and race. I compare Selvon's novel to Colin MacInnes' *The City of Spades* (1957), which was written by a white British middle-class author for his peers. In MacInnes' novel, the first person narratives of a recently arrived

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African immigrant and a white British government official reveal the fundamental bias toward black immigrants. The novel's portrait of 1950s London reveals the emergence of new cultural forms brought by the immigrants that are reappropriated as "cool" by middle-class Londoners. I also argue that the white women's desire for the immigrants becomes a means for them to reject traditional notions of British femininity and ultimately obscures them from the social narrative of post-war Britain.

What these realist novels emphasize is the fraught nature of middle-class subjectivity in post-war Britain and the middle class' complicated and contradictory position. The urban space of London is simultaneously a way to cling to and romanticize the past and yet is a space in which individuals and society can imagine an alternative and modern future. Although there are many examples of the entrenched conservatism in the period, these novels demonstrate that progressive politics continued to counter conservative ideology. Progressivism and the search for alternative modes of middle-class subjectivity becomes particularly apparent in younger generations, who while not the "youths" denigrated and celebrated for youth culture, also did not view the world in the same way as their parents and grandparents. These "middlebrow" texts illuminate the ever-evolving structures of bourgeois culture and its fraught politics.

Chapter 1: A New Order and a New Dignity, or the Ruins of What Once Was

"'I'm not a Red. But I'm damn well determined, when all this is over, that we're not going back to vacuum-cleaners and the dole. There'll be something better for us than that, or else.'" –*Of Love and Hunger* (1946)

"'Yes, we work, but we're not working class. We're just misfits.'" –*Ibid.*

"What made you go and have your future told? You had no future." –*The Ministry of Fear* (1943)

In George Orwell's novel, *1984*, London is described as filled with "vistas of rotting nineteenth-century houses," "bombed sites where the plaster dust swirled in the air and the willow herb straggled over heaps of rubble," and haphazard wooden shacks shoddily built in the gaping holes of the city (3). While the novel is often read as a dystopian warning against totalitarianism, it has a prescient accuracy and realism in its material depiction of post-World War II London. As Anthony Burgess claimed, *1984* is a novel about post-war austerity and reflects the social landscape of post-war Britain, rather than function solely as a political polemic.[8] Published in 1949, the novel's landscape would have been extremely recognizable to its contemporary readers as the London they knew as home, rather than some distant and unknown future place. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, London was filled with the remnants from the German bombings, with ruins, rubble, and vacant lots dotting the entire metropolitan area. Historians estimate that 50% of metropolitan London's structures were bombed or destroyed by Third Reich air raids, and in some boroughs, the percentage of destruction was much higher.[9] To further compound the sense of ruin, Britain was still under a period of austerity, making basic resources like food and lumber scarce and creating the

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[8] Burgess discusses this in his intro to his novella *1985* (1974), which he wrote as a comic sequel to *1984* to emphasize the "more likely scenarios" of future London. This reflects Burgess's views that *1984* was mostly a satirical portrait of London after WWII rather than warning about the modern nation-state.
[9] This also does not account for the entirety of the bombings across the country, which devastated much smaller cities and towns as well. Leo Mellor describes the scale of the Blitz in *Reading the Ruins* (1-3).

sense that despite the war's official end, the material effects of war were still ongoing. In addition to the ruins from the Blitz, London was filled with decaying nineteenth-century buildings that Orwell describes as akin to chicken coops, being "shored up with timber" and patched with cardboard and corrugated iron; these buildings created a bleak landscape that needed to be re-envisioned and rebuilt if London was to continue its legacy as one of the great European cities.[10] This was a stale and tired London, ill-equipped to be the modernized post-war cosmopolitan and urban force of the second half 20th century; it was a cityscape in which there was little differentiation between "decaying" buildings of the historical past and the rubble and ruin of the war.

In this chapter, I argue that the physical ruin and rubble act simultaneously as a material reminder of the potentiality for a renewed London and a quickly fading British imperial past. With the end of World War II, there was a need by the British government to fashion a new national discourse that was no longer tied to the space of the empire. London with its long history and potential as a modern and cosmopolitan city was the perfect site to locate a new British subjectivity. I analyze the government-issued film, *Proud City, a Plan for London* (1946), Graham Greene's novel, *The End of the Affair* (1951), and Carol Reed's film, *The Fallen Idol* (1948), to demonstrate the complex attitudes towards London's reconstruction and how the physical site of the city becomes pivotal to the formation and understanding of post-1945 British subjectivity, particularly for middle class. These works

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[10] Beginning in the 1930s with the rise of labor, there was also a national cry for the demolition of the slums and derelict housing and industrial structures that were leftover from the 19th century. Elizabeth Darling describes the formation of the voluntary housing associations and their influence on public policy as a part of a new philanthropy to create a basic standard of living for the poor. These voluntary housing associations began after WWI, but did not gain momentum until the mid 1930s (18-20). While some new housing was built in the 1930s, it was interrupted by the war, and the project of rebuilding was taken up again by socialist leaning politicians like Aneurin Bevan as part of the New Welfare State. Bevan, who was the Minister of Health, saw the project of new housing as part of a public health mandate that be the next step in government programming after the National Health Service (Hatherley 156-160).

underscore the tension between the official narratives promoted by the social welfare state as seen in *Proud City* and individuals' attitudes towards the modernization of the British middle class as documented in *The End of the Affair* and *The Fallen Idol*. Crucial to these discussions is the gendered roles that the new city rewrites and promotes as part of its process of rebuilding a new London. While the Labour government sought to promote social equality through its welfare state, middle-class men resisted their changing roles and positions. *The End of the Affair* and *The Fallen Idol* offer two portraits of men in post-WWII London and their resistance to modernization as the ruins of pre-war London fade away and suggest that without adaptation to a new Britain, middle-class individuals will become the antiquated relics of a pre-war time.

Recognizing the need for a new all-encompassing plan to rebuild London, government officials set forth to rebuild London as a city that would showcase a new Britain, free from the squalor of the 19th century and destruction of the Blitz. As with any project of reimagining a space that encompassed different histories and visions, the task of rebuilding London was a highly fraught political project. Progressives envisioned the reconstruction as a concrete means to address issues of inequality and social injustice through careful design and planning. Alternatively, conservatives viewed any attempt to modernize Britain as forsaking the past and older ideas of British culture, which translated into a rejection of traditionalism and the "glory" of the empire. Instead, they regarded the rebuilding as an opportunity to reassert traditional British values and culture through design and planning. Despite these different political objectives, the reconstruction could be its own utopian fantasy that upheld both perspectives: it would be a city that both celebrated the past and realized a completely modernized society. London would be cosmopolitan and cultured, while clearly influenced

by British traditions and values. It could be modern and traditional; local and global; quaint and urban. It could be the site in which the past was celebrated and the future was embraced. Before the war, government officials had argued there was a need for controlled planning and design to overcome the urban planning foibles of the past. As Frank Pick, the Managing Director of the London Transit said in the 1930s, "'the future of London cannot be an accident, like in the past... it must now be planned, designed, and organised."[11] With the end of World War II, Pick's sentiment could finally be realized and urban planning could solve the century long ills of the city.

Despite this unilateral call for systematic design and urban planning that would erase past architectural sins, there was an intense atmosphere of insecurity and fear of what the future held in the material project of rebuilding. Part of the anxiety surrounding this project resided in the general fear of an unknown future, however utopian, and the erasure of the bombsites at large. While there was a general recognition that rebuilding was needed, the bombsites signified a collective history that was imperative to the experience of mid-20th century Britons. To cover over the ruins would enact a form of cultural erasure. The post-war "afterlife" of these ruins was what was anxiety-producing: the further removed from the war, the greater the likelihood that the ruins would no longer be remembered as tangible sites of war. Instead, these ruins would generate new meanings and significance, rather than propagate a static cultural experience or history.[12]

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[11] Owen Hatherley describes Pick's influence on London and British government and design in *The Ministry of Nostalgia*, which details how many of the various government programs that were instituted in the 1930s were extremely influential in the rebuilding of London post-1945 had their initial starts in the 1930s. Officials like Frank Pick promoted design campaigns that merged modernity with tradition in a completely British fashion. Pick's celebration of modernist design alongside British traditionalism can be seen in the various posters from 1930s London transit (*Ministry of Nostalgia,* 82).

[12] Ruins are "both a frozen moment of destruction made permanent... yet they also act as a way of understanding a greater swathe of linear time previously hidden or buried" (Mellor 6). To cover over these

Compared to previous ruins or spaces of war (or even the monuments of WWI), the ruins caused by the Blitz were the first material sites in which the spaces of war and "home front" became entirely conflated for the British people.[13] Through these ruins, the city of London was a space filled with "juxtapositions, resurgent vegetation, horrific tableaux, and significant fragments" that were waiting to be put back together (Mellor 93).[14] However, rather than read these ruins simply as part of a modernist experiment as Ian Mellor suggests, the fragments and "horrific tableaux" demonstrate how these earlier modernist or *avant garde* techniques had not only become part of the status quo of art and literature, but a crucial aspect of "everyday" of post-war British life. Fragments and ruins were an intrinsic and tangible element of material depictions of London and essential to the everyday experience of Britons rather than function as artistic experimentation. The use of ruins, fragments, and other strange juxtapositions within literature and film of the period should be read as part of a new post-war realism, in which these formerly surrealist and *avant garde* techniques had merged with the lived and real experience of the everyday and become entirely accepted. Any kind of erasure of ruins creates anxiety because they are so integral to the quotidian. Although the ruins signify destruction, they possess the familiar known of the tangible and lived London of before and during World War II rather than a new city space and its unfamiliar future, however positive it may be.

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ruins, then becomes a cultural "forgetting" of both the recent past of the war and the rejection of the linear history of Britain.

[13] Historian Susan R. Grayzel argues that the spaces of war radically change after World War I and that war is brought into the everyday experience of individuals throughout Britain in the Inter-War period. However, despite government planning for the next war and the perceived threat of bombings, it is not until the actual bombings start in 1940 that the material effects of war infiltrate all spaces, regardless of the spaces of home versus battle fronts.

[14] Crucial to Mellor's argument is that these tangible ruins are what transform Surrealism experimentation into the lived everyday for the British. Surrealism, according to Mellor, then isn't fully realized in England until the Blitz and thus the 1940s are the period in which Modernism is truly fulfilled in Britain.

Adding to the cultural anxiety perpetuated by the ruins' replacement, the reconstruction uncovers and reveals other pasts in the process of excavation. What is lurking underneath the façade of the city is always a danger because it has the potential to undermine political narratives and histories. The nineteenth century vistas depicted amongst the ruins in *1984* are emblematic—it is in the decay and ruin that the past is uncovered, suggesting the lurking history of place. However, ruins also allow for the continued possibility of the new in rebuilding. Ian Baucom states that architecture "gestures towards the ruin it will become" and creates a cyclical process of building, ruin, and rebuilding. Additionally, the process of building and ruin allows for the individual to be enfolded into this ongoing history of space as they engage with the different periods of architecture around them (Baucom 179). All ruins contain a portion of the past, including the negative and positive connotations that are found within. In an always-ongoing process of negotiation to situate the past within the present, each successive generation engages with a place's past and rewrites those historical narratives to fit their own present and as a direct function of their engagement with space.

The process of ruin and rebuilding also emphasizes the political imperatives and anxiety inherent to any process of rebuilding and how reconstruction both confirms and undermines national spaces. The production of a national space is dependent on the inherent relationship between ascribing a national discourse and the static production and use of space.[15] As Henri LeFebvre writes, the state binds itself to space and uses the material structures of that space to reinforce certain values, which are communicated through a national language ("Space and the State" 224). For example, the cricket field is often cited as an important site, or *lieu de memoire*, because it maintains certain imperial constructs of

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[15] Benedict Anderson and Paul Gilroy have discussed this explicitly in terms of the "imagined communities" within Britain, what constitutes "Englishness" according to various nationalist discourses, and how the space of Britain, England, and other sub-divisions reinforce nationalist discourse.

British masculinity: the cricket field is a place in which the sport and cultural values inherent to British masculinity, particularly those enforced and replicated through public schools and colonial bureaucracy, are enacted through the ritual of the game.[16] Regardless of geographical or historic location, the cricket field upholds the imperial British values of gentlemanliness, rugged athleticism, and fraternalism through the rules and culture of the game. Thus, the field is an ideal site for replicating British masculinity across the empire and ensuring a prescribed ideal of Britishness. Despite the inherent cultural values perpetuated through the cricket field, it and other spaces that attempt to issue a specific national identity can always be reappropriated and reinterpreted. In the case of the cricket field, colonial subjects also played cricket and in doing so, were able to change who was included within the bounds of the cricket field and thus rewrite it to be more inclusive racially. The cricket field becomes a site in which the past history of British colonialism is acknowledged, but is also the site of the formation of a new "Britishness" that contains both the colonist and colonial subjects' variant masculinities.[17] The *lieus de memoire* simultaneously replicate and fail to uphold the ideas of national community and structures despite the designs and planning for space to continually produce a certain kind of national subjectivity. Every attempt to inscribe a specific kind of Britishness upon space ultimately results in a

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[16] Baucom uses the term coined by French historian Pierre Nora to discuss the relationship between a specific site and its cultural value across individuals and different spaces. A *lieu de memoire* is any kind of physical site, which "testifies to the national's essential continuity across time" (5). *Lieux de memoires* are particularly important because they occupy a physical space, not just a theoretical or conceptual one, in the creation of the nation and continually re-create the past for those interacting with the site in the present. However, the ongoing history of place (and thus nation) is one in which the repetitions will always "repeat with difference" as each generation changes and thus views the past in different terms.

[17] While Baucom reads British space in terms of the British Empire specifically and its aftermath, it's not difficult to see how these concepts continued to influence individual's negotiations in applying those national structures to their own subjectivity and experience after World War II, as discussed by critics like Benedict Anderson and Stuart Hall.

reinterpretation and rewriting by the inhabitants of that space that simultaneously reaffirms, rejects, or simply discards politics.

In addition to the continued national subjectivity ascribed to specific locales, each generation uses space to rewrite narratives of history to better fit their own experience and agenda. Owen Hatherley argues that individuals use space to ensure a narrative that is relevant to their own present, regardless of historic accuracy. This continued gesture of enfolding past, present, and future together demonstrates how London becomes central to the creation of a new British middle-class subjectivity in the second half of 20th century, whether through the official channels of the state or through individual experience. While Hatherley critiques contemporary perspectives on history and architecture, particularly those associated with neoliberalism and what he refers to as "retrochic" aestheticization, he points to an important personal connection that individuals have with architecture and design because it offers them a "haptic experience of the past" (6). The same haptic experience occurred during the post-war project of rebuilding the ruins to create a romanticized narrative of "what once was." The ruins offered an embodied experience in which the viewers could revisit the shared commonalities of bombing and the war and feel a tangible connection to a past pre-war Britain. While the haptic experience of the past transcends class, the emotional connection to architecture and the post-war project of rebuilding is crucial for understanding contemporary notions of the middle-class. Before World War II, the middle-class defined their subjectivity through individual spaces or the *lieux de memoire* encoded as "British," whether the country house or the cricket field, rather than the broader space of the city.[18] As

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[18] These iconic examples of Britishness, and more specifically a kind of Englishness, go back to Raymond Williams' discussion of the country house in *The Country and the City* as a symbol of a lost "England" that occurs during Industrialism and can be found in the remaining "natural" and romanticized spaces of the English

those sites were directly tied to the older imperial project, they could no longer be the

material placeholders for Britishness in an era of declining imperialism for British

progressives, however much some individuals clung to older representations of the past.

Although other cities and towns were rebuilt after World War II, what made London

central to the formation of post-war British subjectivity was that it was only site that could

connect an older imperial Britain to a progressive and modern future and maintain a

romanticized past. Through the space of the city, the British nation could be redefined and

rebuilt as a *lieu de memoire* and thus enfold both conservative and progressive ideologies.

London had long been the iconic capital city of the British Empire and the "heart" of the

empire, but it was not the specific locale that defined "Britishness." During the height of

imperialism, the nation was defined through the locus of the "there" of the empire versus the

"here" of the island of Britain.[19] This binary of there/here could no longer work to define the

structures of the British nation by the second half of the 20th century. With the slow

dismantling of the British Empire and the rise of colonial independence, there was no "there"

there any longer for the island nation to define itself against. [20] London suddenly became the

perfect site to rebuild a British subjectivity that was no longer tied to the geography of

countryside that goes back to English Romantic poets. Ian Baucom also discussed it extensively in his argument that architecture is crucial to maintaining and re-appropriating the structures of the empire (Baucom 37).

[19] One of the best examples of how the city of London is defined through the "there" of empire is in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899), in which the story is told from the vantage of London and yet the story is mostly located within spaces of empire. While the Belgian Congo was not a British colony, it still allows for the constant juxtaposition of geographic spaces that help formulate "there" of empire and the "here" of Britain. Although distant and impossibly impressionist, the Congo manages to infiltrate the spaces of the city in the opening and closing moments of the narrative.

[20] Older, pre-mid-20th century definitions of Britishness have been consistently tied to the ideas of British Imperialism. As Laura Ann Stoler, Anne McClintock, Stuart Hall, Benedict Anderson, Edward Said, and other cultural critics have consistently shown, it was the empire which consistently defined British national subjectivity for both the people at home and abroad regardless of class before decolonization. With the end of the empire approaching and the older constructs of British identity falling apart, new national constructs had to be rewritten.

empire and yet was still a recognizable cultural locus within and outside of Britain. [21]

Already in the late 1940s, the loss of a national-defining space was apparent. The city

becomes the ideal site of modern nation building because it is where the state can "regulate

and organize a disintegrating national space at the heart of a consolidating worldwide space"

(Lefebvre 225). Often the disintegrating national space is seen in the various discourses

surrounding the rise of American global power in the 1950-70s and other nations' attempts to

define themselves within or against Americanization. However, rather than define itself

according to the specific logic of Americanization, the United Kingdom turns to the city of

London as the ideal site for rewriting their own national structures and subjectivity in

completely British fashion.[22]

A New Hope: London, the Eternally Proud City

With hindsight, it is always apparent that the inherent struggle for the state to create a

cohesive nation space leads to the state's inability to manage the chaos that arises from the

attempt to create a single, cohesive idea of national space.[23] Yet it can also be argued that this

chaos is necessary for the generative rupture that occurs within spatial confines and allows

for a continual re-interpretation and formation of new subjects, ideas, and engagements

outside of government or official narratives. Spatial theorists like Miguel de Certeau, Edward

Soja, and Doreen Massey have argued that the fraught tensions between the official narrative

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[21] As Paul Gilroy has noted in *After Empire* (2004), the Blitz and war years were often invoked as the last moment before "the country lost its moral and cultural bearings." Gilroy specifically underscores that these were also the last years before the ultimate recognition of the end of the British Empire and often the political return to these years as a moment of great national solidarity becomes a form of cultural fetish that ignores the other aspects of British history.

[22] As Lefebvre describes, state space lacks the "chaos" of private space because it appears to manage space in a homogeneous and unified fashion and thus can control and watch through surveillance. Yet, this is a state fantasy because private interests and the actions of public powers "sometimes involve a collusion, sometimes a collision. This creates the paradox of space that is both homogenous and broken" ("Space and the State" 227).

[23] Henri LeFebvre discusses this process explicitly in "Space and the State"

of lived space and the embodied, individualistic space of the everyday as what allows for changing urban practices and progressive futures.[24] The problem is the tension between the State's narrative and rigorous attempts to control spatial production, its inability to ever be fully able to do so, and the reactionary measures used to reassert control. For the post-war Labour government, their ideas to create a city that represented all the various visions of modernity seemed less of a utopian dream and more of an actual possibility. An example of this can be found in the promotional film, *Proud City, A Plan for London* (1946), which was produced by the Ministry of Information and features the chief architects of the rebuilding scheme, Sir Patrick Abercrombie and J.H. Forshaw. The film offers a glimmering, almost fantastical narrative that promotes a fully modernized London.[25] As a government promotional piece, the film presents the initial government design plans for rebuilding London, in which the city is fully egalitarian, aesthetically pleasing, and incorporates the voice and needs of the people. To appeal to a broader and thus more conservative audience, the film emphasizes British national pride and rallies wartime patriotism. These feelings are evoked in order to elicit popular support for rebuilding; the narrator states in the very first lines: "London—the greatest city the world has known." This statement reflects the national pride for the capital and portrays London as the superlative city of the world, regardless of any recent devastation. Of course, this emotionally-laden statement can only warm the cockles of any brow-beaten Londoner, faced with years of bombings, austerity, and fear. Equally important, there is no mention of empire in the film; instead, any reference to history

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[24] *Postmetropolis* and *For Space*.

[25] The visual style of the film recalls both wartime government propaganda films, in which there is a clear "authority" offering an official mandate, and the American newsreels in the time, which showcased the innovation and cutting edge design of government and industry.

or British national pride is always grounded in the city itself with references to the great architecture of Christopher Wren or the pastoral spaces that once surrounded the city.

What makes *Proud City* unique as a piece of early post-war propaganda is its complete reliance on the city space for the formation of new modern, national subjectivity, rather than the war-time patriotism which relied on "the British people" or the traditional British locales, often within the countryside, to unite the country. The focus on urban space allows the film to simultaneously ignore the imperial past while not rejecting British history entirely. While the film celebrates of famous icons like the Tower of London and St. Paul's Cathedral as intrinsic to the city's landscape and aesthetic appeal, it also critiques earlier versions of London as being "unplanned" and "unruly." The film argues that this wanton development led to the creation of slums and wanton industrial spaces and promoted rampant industrialization over the needs of the people. In fact, at one point, the narrator calls for a new form of industrialization and business that better incorporates the individual, one that is planned and regulated by the state to ameliorate these issues. Throughout, *Proud City* continually insists that official state-run city planning is what will create an equitable city that can alleviate poverty, pollution, and general disorder and is the mechanism to alleviate social anxieties about the future.

While Abercrombie and Forshaw's plans for London were never fully realized, the film demonstrates the kind of unabashed enthusiasm for the potentiality of London to revive the British people and the British government. Importantly, Abercrombie and Forshaw's plans cover an area of London called Stepney, which had previously been the focal point for another widely dispersed government film produced in the 1930s that depicted the poverty

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and desperation of public housing.[26] In using the same neighborhood, *Proud City*

demonstrates that nothing has changed in a decade in regards to urban planning and design.[27]

The same slums and impoverished areas still stand despite the Blitz and continue to replicate

the poor living conditions of the pre-war era. The only difference for areas like Stepney is

that the derelict housing and poor living conditions have magnified because of the bombings.

The comparison between 1930s Stepney and 1946 Stepney underscores that the social issues

of the pre-war period have not changed post-war. London's urban spaces and architecture

reflect that stasis, in which the slums, ruins, and rubble merge to become permanently

ingrained within the landscape. As the various government officials in *Proud City* claim, this

physical and material stasis is all-encompassing and unchangeable until it can finally be

addressed and changed for the good through urban planning.

 In order to convince a potentially dismissive middle-class audience who might reject

a social program for the working classes, *Proud City* uses the physical continuity of pre- and

post-war London to suggest that the city can be both a beacon of a great past, while offering

a new and better space for all its inhabitants.[28] In the opening of the film, the camera pans

over the iconic landmarks of London like Big Ben, Parliament, the Tower of London and

Tower Bridge and includes archival footage of pre-war city of nightlife and theaters. After

the monuments are lauded as aesthetic goals for the future, the scenes from the roaring 20s

are interrupted by the noise of bombings and sirens and a quick cut to footage of firefights

and the bombed remnants of the same streets where the theaters once stood. Through this

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[26] British Film Institute, https://player.bfi.org.uk/free/film/watch-proud-city-a-plan-for-london-1946-online.
[27] This comparison of Stepney in the 1930s to the 1940s helps illustrate the need for new social programs and government planning and its general recognition after 1945. This is the impetus for the creation of social welfare in the late 1940s, according to Hatherley and other social historians.
[28] These two dueling positions of a modernizing social project and a return to traditional aesthetics and ideals for the space of the city uphold the "paradox" LeFebvre finds in all official narratives of space.

montage, the film prevents any kind of romanticization of "good old days." As the 1920s

dance music fades, the narrator gently suggests that people have always asked questions

about social inequities and a woman's voice asks, "Well was the old London all that it should

have been?" This question disrupts whatever lingering romanticization for a past London

remains and provokes the viewer to consider that this fictional past was never was an

actuality for the "average Brit." The inclusion of this question makes it clear that however

much the film acknowledges all British people, *Proud City* is specifically directed towards

the middle class. The working classes know that London was never what it should have been,

whereas the middle class must be convinced of the need for better social programs to create a

more "orderly" society and that social welfare benefits them as well. In using a variety of

working- and middle-class accents to discuss the slums and overcrowding of the pre-war

London, the film refuses the upper-class, educated authority often associated with other

official government films by only using more formal (i.e. BBC English) accents. Instead,

Proud City uses the voices of diverse Londoners to impress the importance of a "new order

and new dignity" for all the city's inhabitants. This new order and dignity, according to the

film, must factor in all aspects of everyday life: work, traffic, health, living conditions, and

most importantly, the use of space.

In one scene, Abercrombie and Forshaw compare the city to a plant, which it must

have the room to breathe and grow, suggesting the city is in fact a living entity that exists in

tandem with its inhabitants. The plant analogy underscores how the film views rebuilding as

a project for and by the people, rather than a government mandate that the people will be

forced to accept, regardless of their needs or wants.[29] The ruins, whether the bombsites or the

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[29] Of course, as Lefebvre argues, this is impossible because the government and the people are never one in the same. Whatever good intentions the government might have, there are always divisions and social ramifications

slums created by industrialization, are a blight upon the city and affect everyone, regardless of class. To appease the more conservative minded citizens, the rhetoric of the film continually comes back to traditional British aesthetics. The answer to fixing the "ugliness" of the city is to create a plan that makes everything about the city "good" like the "dignified works of Christopher Wren." Cutting between Georgian row houses to Victorian slums, the film draws the corollary between these two urban worlds and suggests that all of London can be replaced and beautified with better architecture and living conditions. Although somewhat clumsy in its heavy-handedness, the emphasis of the aesthetically "good" and "bad" is effective in eliciting a response from its audience. As the film reminds its viewers, they the people know what is good and bad for themselves and the government is not imposing their project without the people's consent. The way to make the city "good" then is to make the urban space reflect the British middle-class values of dignity, order, and the corresponding aesthetics of orderly row houses, well-maintained streets, and controlled industrial spaces. Equally importantly for Abercrombie and Forshaw, the answer does not reside in the suburbs. The suburbs, which the architects deride in their lack of order or design, are just as much a part of the unruly and "untidy sprawl" of housing parks and factories of the ugly, Victorian past.

Crucial to the film's critique of London is the lack of open spaces and the need to create more green spaces, particularly in lower-class neighborhoods like Stepney and Poplar. The focus on greenery and the great green spaces like Hampstead Heath are continual reminders of a British identity that is premised upon a romantic English countryside and the simplicity of an agrarian past. Tied into the idea of green spaces is also the idea of making

for the very individuals it is attempting to help. Additionally, in planning the city, the government enacts a form of control in which it can dictate the lives and experiences of the people within that space.

"life pleasanter" but also offer a "healthier" city, particularly for children, who need "light and air." Part of the traffic plan contains a cleaning up of the rail system with reductions in smoke and noise, furthering the idea of a London that will return to a simpler past that was not only healthier but less visibly industrialized. By tying together nature and industry as a harmonious entity, Abercrombie and Forshaw view modern urbanity as something that incorporates both conservative and progressive fantasies of place. Towards the final scenes of the film, the narrator demands: "Will London be recreated on modern lines worthy of her long history?" For any good Londoner, the only answer is an affirmative one. To answer in the negative would mean a simultaneous rejection of modernity and the greatness of the past.

Towards the end of *Proud City*, Lord Leithem, head of the London County Council, responds to various questions from locals in a form of call and response. Each Londoner asks a question regarding logistics, costs, and overall changes in the city to which Leithem responds. Most notably, Leithem gives a monologue that channels earlier wartime rhetoric: "In a way, you know, this is London's war... against London's war against decay and dirt and inefficiency... If we miss this chance to rebuild London, we shall have missed one of the great moments of history. We shall have shown ourselves unworthy of our victory..." He finishes his statement with the rational for why rebuilding should occur in the first place; he says the people need "A London where everyone can live with a healthy and happy life, a London her citizens can be proud of." Like the earlier question challenging viewers to consider a London that is both modern and traditional, Leithem's statement echoes across several national sentiments. First, he challenges the people to see rebuilding as the next front of war, one in which the dirt and despair of bad building plans is under attack. He also suggests that the dirt, decay, and inefficiency of the city are everyone's burden and

something to be ashamed of. However, without naming any specific social programs, Leithem's words emphasize equality, which includes access to necessities, as something that is analogous to freedom from an authoritarian government. He challenges Londoners to want a city they can be "proud of," suggesting that rebuilding constitutes an individual civic and national duty. Equally important is that he does not include any references to the empire or imperial glory, which underscores how the empire is no longer relevant to the inhabitants of Britain in how they structure their national rhetoric. The film emphasizes a new national subjectivity must be fashioned through the combination of modernity and historical reference located within the space of the city of London. Leithem's references to Britain's past indirectly conjure how the space of London and Great Britain are always directly connected to the British Empire and its economic gains.[30] Yet by never referring to the empire, the film reveals that a new British subjectivity must distant itself from those structures if it is to be fully modern.

Proud City and the Ministry of Information's perspective is that modernization is what is integral for any kind of rebuilding, physical or emotionally, for Britain. As Kristin Ross has discussed in her work on post-war France, "modernization promises a perfect reconciliation of past and future in an endless present" (11). Through the various statements in the film, the Ministry of Information clearly believes that modernization will help create this endless present in which an equal and aesthetically pleasing London will emerge. Ross also describes the modernization project in France as a mechanism to create a national middle class and any city planning in this period attempts to erase class difference by offering the same material and social services to all its citizens (11-12). While facing different social issues than France, Britain was equally invested in the creation of a

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[30] Edward Said and Homi Bhabha discuss this extensively in their work on British and postcolonial literature.

modernized and equitable society. *Proud City* underscores this sentiment towards

equalization through the space of the city, particularly in its discussion of former slums and

how they will be replaced with aesthetically pleasing housing. Lord Leithem also discusses

an "ideology of happiness" that is found in this new middle class, which seems to encompass

all Londoners. This reflects the government's mandate to create modernization through the

creation of one large middle class, rather than erase class difference entirely. While the film

does not specifically identify specific groups, the new middle class was often identified as

white-collar workers of pre-war London, former colonial bureaucrats who had returned to

Britain, and former lower classes who suddenly had larger incomes and buying power.

George Orwell also describes the new middle class, who he rails against, as being made of

clerks, women, those who were on the peripheries of the city (i.e. the suburbs), and

servicemen.[31] Social theorists like Arno Mayer stress the erosion of difference between

laborers and the lower middle class in this period and its importance in understanding class

identity. The new middle class is concentrated in cities; is neither upper nor lower class; is

conscious of their social position and aspires upward; and most importantly, is fearful of

sinking downward.[32] Mayer ascribes the shifting class boundaries and identifications to the

new social programs after World War II. In *Proud City,* the government views the social

programs and urban planning as a mechanism for modernization and what was much needed

to rebuild society. *Proud City* in its closing moments offers a hopeful analog to the fictional

narratives which depict a depressing future for post-war Britain. However much a piece of

propaganda, the film offers a vision for London that builds upon its socialist forbearers and

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[31] Orwell discusses the working and middle classes at length in "The Lion and the Unicorn: Socialism and the English Genius."
[32] Mayer 423-424.

channels the progressive politics in the hopes that Britain could somehow be different from its pre-war past.

The Anxieties of Total War and its Domestication

In Graham Greene's *The End of the Affair* (1951), the narrator and protagonist, Maurice Bendrix, proclaims: "If this book of mine fails to take a straight course, it is because I am lost in a strange region: I have no map. I sometimes wonder whether anything that I am putting down here is true" (39). Often lauded as one of the great 20th century novels about failed love, *The End of the Affair* describes Bendrix's attempts to reconcile the loss of his lover, Sarah, as he recounts their relationship. Graham Greene is often considered one of the great writers of the 20th century and yet because of his immense popularity is either ignored when considering more "literary" works or relegated to a middle-brow genre writer. Much Greene criticism has overly emphasized autobiographical readings, particularly in discussions of his religious themes, which ignore the texts' aesthetics or social and political implications.[33] This surface reading begs the question: what does one do with the recognition that a love affair is truly over? For *The End of the Affair*, many critics have read it as a direct commentary on Greene's relationship with his mistress and his Catholic faith rather than as a novel that reflects a fictional relationship during a specific historic moment. According to this framework, Bendrix's analogy between wandering without a map and narrating his story echo the popular genre of romance and questioning of faith after the loss of a loved one.

As much as *The End of the Affair* details the psychological effects of grief and the failure of a relationship, it also reveals the inherent anxiety that undergirds all aspects of British life during the immediate aftermath of World War II. In wandering without a map,

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[33] In *Graham Greene and the Politics of Popular Fiction and Film* (2009), Brian Lindsay Thomson points

Bendrix's opening statement can be read as an allegory of the existentialism and turmoil individuals faced during the physical and social rebuilding after the war, particularly for middle-class men like Bendrix and their relationship to the home front. As Raymond Williams wrote in his analysis of George Orwell, middle-class men of this period are "simultaneously [the] dominator and dominated," which describes the precarious position of limited power and alienation felt by middle-class men. This powerlessness is further augmented by the social revisions of gender roles and domestic spaces in the immediate post-war period. *The End of the Affair* and *The Fallen Idol* (1948), for which Greene wrote screenplay, underscore this feeling for middle-class men, who are unsure of their place in a rapidly modernizing and changing world. These men are unable to recognize a hopeful or even peaceful future for British society at large as portrayed in *Proud City* and other progressive narratives. If they acknowledged these narratives and the modernization of Britain, Greene's protagonists would lose their pre-war masculinity and become socially irrelevant.

The masculine anxiety surrounding cultural power and status, which is documented through Bendrix's affair in *The End of the Affair*, is a consistent theme in Greene's work. While many of Greene's works such as the novel, *The Heart of the Matter* (1948), and the film, *The Third Man* (1949), are notable in their portraits of the complex inner-workings of politics and individuality particularly for government bureaucrats abroad, *The End of the Affair* and *The Fallen Idol* are unusual in that they turn to the domestic sphere of London to relay the anxiety and fears which undercut the seemingly banal or everyday world of middle-class British men. *The Fallen Idol*, which was directed by Carol Reed and co-written with Greene, tells the story of an embassy butler, Baines, who is accused of murdering his wife

and loses his already liminal social standing and position because of the accusation. Shot from the perspective of the ambassador's child who idolizes Baines, the film reveals the inherent disappointment of the child (and thus the audience) as the butler is unable to defend himself, his lover, or his reputation. The film subtly reveals the complex notions of British masculinity and the failed masculine role model as indicated by the title of the film through the figure of Baines. Equally important, the majority of scenes occur within the embassy either in the bedrooms and servants' quarters, emphasizing that anxiety and violence are rife for all everyone in post-war London, including within the space of the domestic. While the film's noir aesthetic augments that sense of insecurity and danger, it is also makes it clear that men like Baines are trapped trying to uphold pre-war middle class values while the world and society changes around them. In their use of the domestic space in London, *The Fallen Idol* and *The End of the Affair* demonstrate that for all the promised "hope" for a new society after the end of WWII, there is nostalgia undercuts the process of rebuilding a modern Britain and the progressive values endorsed and enacted by the new welfare state.

While Greene is known for his international political thrillers and dramas, by returning to London and focusing on men within a domestic space, these two works help show how the space of the city and the everyday are an integral part of masculine identity. The concerns about masculinity, particularly in the domestic sphere, are emphasized by the return of realism as a dominant genre in the late 1940s and 1950s. This version of realism draws upon its modernist forbearers both stylistically and thematically in documenting cultural attitudes, particularly in the incorporation, however subtle, of total war and its effects on the everyday. Paul K. Saint-Amour has described this phenomenon in *Tense Future: Modernism, Total War, Encyclopedic Form* (2015) and argues that total war was essential in

creating an over-arching cultural anxiety and sense of temporal foreclosure that occurred

during the interwar years (1919-1939). This incorporation of total war into culture was

particularly important for modernism and its formal innovations. While others have claimed

modernism was an escape from war, in his analysis of modernist novels, speculative fiction,

and historic documents Saint Amour demonstrates the pervasive nature of total war as a

social experience: "these [interwar] works continue to fascinate us not because they offer a

refuge from anxiety and history but because they are compounded of both, because their

formal innovations bear the marks of past and possible wars as well as of perennial forms of

violence, and because they are thoroughgoing vandals of their *own* totality-claims" (emphasis

in the original, 10). Rather than ignore or reject the lasting effects of World War I and the

cultural recognition of "the next war," inter-war writers, particularly high modernists, fully

embraced the concept of total war through their focus on the everyday. Total war acts as a

collective psychosis that permeates everything during this period, and however inexplicit it

may be in the texts, the past and the imminent future simultaneously infiltrate the everyday.

Once the war ended, the cultural influence of total war did not simply disappear, particularly

for the individuals who lived through the interwar period like Greene's middle-aged male

protagonists.

For these narratives, the subsumption of total war into the everyday allows for the

recognition of the loss of the future. Temporally, total war ensures that the future becomes

foreclosed because anticipation and the event become one and the same; what comes after is

inconceivable because what was conceived of as a future event is now a force in the present,

disrupting whatever notions of the future might have previously been held. This concept of

future temporality (or lack thereof) is incredibly important in the immediate post-war period

because it describes the moment after total war as either the next frontier and the moment

that either should have never arrived (if one assumes true peace and the end of war); or a

continuation of total war, peace being a temporary stasis until the "next" (or continued) war

arrives. In fact, Paul Saint-Amour claims that World War II is not the end point of war or

earlier 20th century attitudes towards war, but an interruption in the inter-war period.

According to this logic, V-E Day is not the conclusion to World War II in Europe, but rather

the beginning of the next war and the continuation of the total war that began with World

War I. Within Britain, V-E Day can be read as a temporary marker of peace while waiting for

the next "the war," whether it is the Imperialist fight against decolonization; the war against

Communism and the beginning of the Cold War; or something entirely unknown in that

moment. Additionally, total war and its temporal stasis was not confined to political and

military spaces. Susan Grayzel has been quick to note that total war infiltrated the domestic,

often in the most banal ways. She argues that the air raids and bombings during WWI

shattered the distinctly gendered spaces of war, where the battlefront was always masculine

and home front feminine, and that the home front and the domestic were equally militarized,

rewriting the relationship between space and war.[34] Grayzel, like Saint Amour, insists that

the mobilization for World War II was an ongoing project that began with the end of the

Great War and infiltrated all aspects of culture and society, particularly the home front of

Britain. In narratives like *The End of the Affair* and *The Fallen Idol*, total war is no longer a

thing of experimental fiction and interwar modernism. Total war has so thoroughly infiltrated

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[34] One example that is particularly striking from Grayzel's book, *At Home and Under Fire: Air Raids and Culture in Britain from the Great War to the Blitz* (2012), is the development and testing of suitable gas masks and related devices for infants and young children. Grayzel quickly notes the disconnect between the initial ideas of how to protect the young children and notions of class and that most assumptions made by the male inventors and government officials were proved inadequate by Mass Observation studies. However, projects like these were in response to the government's recognition that war was no longer relegated to the front; with modern technology, it could be achieved in all spaces, regardless of military status, as was finally realized during the Blitz.

the everyday that it has become a crucial structuring element for post-war realism and the

domestic post-war project of rebuilding London physically and socially. To move past and

imagine some kind of future outside of this cultural totality becomes a form of cognitive

dissonance, particularly for the British men who are tied to the prior notions of masculinity

and class, or "decency." The decent man is an evolution of the pre-war gentleman, who

"emerges to stand for the new nation when the hegemonic ideal of the onward-looking

detached gentleman alters and devolves to fit the post-war nation" (Gopinath 8). While

decency could denote a positive version of masculinity, it's important to note how

intertwined decency was with the project of imperialism and intrinsic for conventional

gender roles and stereotypes. The decent man replicates older forms of masculinity in his

decidedly middle-class values and social standing as a form of "trickling down" of the pre-

war gentleman who is no longer useful or relevant.[35]

The use of realism in *The End of the Affair* and *The Fallen Idol* emphasizes the

experiences and politics of middle-class men in the post-war moment through their

exploration of the domestic and its banal horrors. While Greene draws from modernist

narrative techniques in his work, in relying on realism he can employ the banal and quotidian

as a means of social and political commentary. In discussing the realist spy novels of the

1940s, Phyllis Lassner writes that they "assess the risks of modernism's mythic desires, self-

fashioned elitism and the function of narrative experiment... [and] exposes the drive for

mythic wholeness as evading the era's lacerating political dangers" (121). While Lassner is

keen to prove that intrigue and spy novels should be read outside of the lens of genre fiction

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[35] Praseeda Gopinath derives the concept of post-war "decency" from George Orwell's lists of traits that he
views as replicating the public-school English masculinity amongst the middle-class. No longer relegated to
only the upper-class, the "decent man" can fit into any permutation of middle-class workers including clerks,
salesmen, and the formerly working class (Gopinath 3).

and seen as important intermodernist narratives, she also underscores the inherent separation

between modernism and the narrative forms outside of it. Lassner believes high modernism

failed to address or even acknowledge the various political dangers that enshrouded the

events of the late 1930s and 1940s and that the use of realism is one of the few ways to

reclaim politics. While not necessarily espousing a particular style or canon as a political

remedy, this argument reclaims the necessity for art that rejects the ideology of high

modernism and its privileging of myth, elitism, and narrative experimentation. Intermodern

novels and films of the 1930s-1950s more acutely address the ongoing social issues and

acknowledge the various political positions and social conflicts of the period.[36]

Intermodernism acts as a shifting parameter for what texts should be read in conjunction with

canonical modernist narratives and reinvigorates texts that give a broader view into the social

aspects of the years during and directly after World War II, making them worth

reinvestigating. In *The End of the Affair* and *The Fallen Idol*, it becomes clear that reading

these works as a form of intermodernism reveals the entrenchment of total war that lasted

beyond the end of World War II and directly affected attitudes towards the future of the

British middle class. These works offer a counter-point to the overly-optimistic narratives

found in political propaganda after the war that emphasized a collective victory and

overarching positivity in rebuilding, as seen in *The Proud City A Plan for London*.[37] While

these progressive and positive narratives identify the domestic spaces of London as the site of

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[36] Intermodernism is an aesthetic ideology that allows for the potentiality of a space that exists between modernism and its structuring oppositions and "reshap[es] the ways we think about relations between elite and common, experimental and popular, urban and rural, masculine and feminine, abstract and realistic, colonial and colonized" (Bluemel 3).

[37] One could also argue that this positivity is found in 1940s and 50s dramas that recalled British "splendor" and heritage as seen in the films of Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger.

a positive national future, Greene's work reveal what the project of rebuilding means for middle-class masculinity and its relationship to the nation.

Contrarian and Futureless: the Middle-Class Man

Set in London from 1942 to 1946, *The End of the Affair* describes a complicated love affair and its eventual dissolution. The first-person narrative of the protagonist, Maurice Bendrix, follows a complex and convoluted structure based upon his jagged and questionable memories and are narrated in a similarly unorderly fashion.[38] As Bendrix is a professional writer, he is always questioning the process of story-telling and its structure through the novel. For example, the novel's opening recounts Bendrix's memory of a rainy day in 1946:

> A story has no beginning or end: arbitrarily one chooses that moment of experience from which to look back or from which to look ahead. I say 'one chooses' with the inaccurate pride of a professional writer who—when he has been seriously noted at all—has been praised for his technical ability, but do I in fact of my own will *choose* that black wet January night on the Common, in 1946, the sight of Henry Miles slanting across the wide river of rain, or did these images choose me? (1)

Bendrix's conscious choice to begin the novel with that specific rainy January night works in several ways. First, this passage reveals the ongoing self-referentiality between the text, the writer, and the author, who are all conflated as Bendrix draws attention to his narrative, and signals to the reader that this is a constructed story told by a somewhat unreliable narrator.

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[38] Brian Thomas argues that the use of the first-person narration in *The End of the Affair* marks a shift from Greene's earlier texts (which Greene himself labeled either as comedies or "serious" novels) and follows the conventions of Northrop Frye's "romance," in which the protagonist (Bendrix) cannot die but must be a "survivor" (3). Brian Lindsay Thomson further suggests that this reading of *The End of the Affair* as a "romance" emphasizes the inherent "realist" nature of the text, rather than fall into the conventions of a specific genre (126-7).

Secondly, Bendrix's opening statement that "a story has no beginning or end" reflects the cyclical nature of time in the novel: narratives are always ongoing stories that are in the middle of being told. Lastly, the multiple layers of time in the narration suggest that Bendrix could be telling this story a few months after the final events or many years later. While the novel unfolds from this chance meeting of Henry and Bendrix in the rain in 1946, the narration continually jumps back and forth between Bendrix's various memories from 1942 to 1946. The constant references to non-linear time and memories create a circular dialogue between past and present, especially as Bendrix narrates from some an unknown and undefined future perspective. Bendrix also inserts Sarah's diary half-way through the narrative and as it is written from her first-person perspective, the reader both gets to hear Sarah's voice and learns of Sarah's motivation to end the affair, even though Bendrix ignores her wishes.

The jarring and non-linear temporal and narrative structure was directly influenced by Greene's re-readings of Ford Maddox Ford's *The Good Soldier* (1915), in which Ford's narrator also continually digresses and delays in order to fashion an untrustworthy narrative that also recounts a love affair (*The End of the Affair* xi).[39] The layering of time is also crucial for understanding Bendrix's motivation and perspective. Bendrix believes that the war creates a continual stasis that is mostly atemporal, which is only interrupted by the events involving Sarah. Although Bendrix is completely unable to fathom Sarah's own motivations and agency, he relies on memories involving her to demonstrate how formative that period was for his relationships and his ongoing anxiety about the future. At one point early in the novel, he states, "...for I never lose the consciousness of time: to me the present is

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[39] Damon Marcel DeCoste also argues in his analysis of Greene's works from the 1930s that Greene was incredibly influenced by literary modernism.

never here: it is always last year or next week" (40). The lack of the present signals that

despite Bendrix's "consciousness of time," there is no now or present. Even the peace of the

post-war years is a kind of fiction: "And yet there *was* this peace... That is how I think of

these first months of war—was it a phoney peace as well as a phoney war?" (36). The line

break between the actual peace ("there was this peace...") and the second line ("first months

of war") shows exactly how Bendrix conflates time: the peace of 1946 is the same thing as

the peace of the first months of war, or a false equivalence. Of course, Bendrix is also

alluding to the Phoney War, the relative "calm" months of 1939 before the Blitz began in

1940, and compares the bombings and the feelings of love. The "peaceful" infatuation

Bendrix initially felt quickly becomes a battleground of jealousy and suspicion because of

the anticipation of the affair's end.

Bendrix's notion of time as non-linear and almost atemporal operates according to the

same temporal framework that occurs during total war. As Bendrix states early in the novel,

"Eternity is said not to be an extension of time but an absence of time, and sometimes it

seemed to me that her abandonment touched a strange mathematical point of endlessness, a

point with no width, occupying no space" (*The End of the Affair*, 39). Bendrix's present is an

eternity in which time and space are absent and thus there is no future. Saint-Amour, in

analyzing the work of psychiatrist Eugène Minkowski, points to the problem of

foreknowledge that occurs during total war, in which the future and present become one,

which "impoverish[es] the future by afflicting it with conditions of the past—that is, the

condition of being subject to knowledge and memory because [sic] inert" (18). This process

pushes an individual to live outside of time. According to Saint-Amour, this futureless

temporality is part of post-traumatic stress, but it is also applies to how the collective

imagining of the future of society after a catastrophic event. As Bendrix demonstrates, his insistent questioning and emphasis on the "phoney" underscores his cynicism and undercuts any potential for a hopeful future. When atheist Richard Smythe is miraculously cured of his disfiguring urticaria, Bendrix initially wants to ask a doctor if a "faith cure is possible," but ultimately decides it is better not to know (160). The final words of the novel end with Bendrix's thoughts on Smythe's cure: "I wrote at the start that this was a record of hate, and walking there beside Henry towards the evening glass of beer, I found the one prayer that seemed to serve the winter mood: O God, You've done enough, You've robbed me of enough, I'm too tired and old to learn to love, leave me alone for ever" (160). Bendrix's rejection of religious and secular faith is also a rejection of the future and the possibility of change. Bendrix has never believed in God, but in asking to be left alone, he demonstrates his complete inability to regain any sense of hope. He cannot believe in the unknown, including the future, because there is no hope left in the world he inhabits either for himself or for others. By rejecting the possibility of a miraculous cure for Smythe, he forecloses himself to the future and change in the world.

Any hope Bendrix may have for the future is constantly thwarted by reminders of the pre-war past. The foreclosure of hope does not necessarily need to be entirely dire for society though. As Saint-Amour argues, it can produce new forms of what is socially acceptable such as celibacy and childlessness.[40] Total war allows for new forms of radicalism that do not have to rely on sexual procreation or a continued legacy. In fact, *The End of the Affair* in many ways is a story that is about the end of an extra-marital affair that can exist in the bounds of wartime but not during peace. Despite the guilt that Sarah feels in the second half

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[40] Saint-Amour states that new social forms "arise precisely when the future appears barred—radical defenses of childlessness and celibacy, for example, that took imminent war as the occasion for warding off the prospect of a politically and sexually retrograde peace" (8).

of the novel about the affair, she was entirely happy to simultaneously be Bendrix's mistress and Henry's wife. This love triangle only begins to fail when Bendrix pressures her to leave Henry and marry him instead. However, the novel is not entirely pessimistic in its perceptions of domestic relationships. In a somewhat strange twist towards the end of novel, Bendrix moves in with Henry, as Henry cannot live alone now that Sarah is dead. The two men then live a variant form of bachelordom: the husband and the lover of the dead wife. They replicate their own happy domesticity that includes separate careers, meals together, and nights at the pub without the fear of every truly being "alone." In this ending, the domestic becomes a masculine space in which men can continue enacting the past rather than embrace the future and the unknown. While the text states that the relationship is purely homosocial, the two men queer coupling and it becomes radical precisely because it is one that is non-reproductive. Two bachelors who embark on a domestic project together can only be read as a rejection of the traditional family structure.

By ending with his domestic "peace," Bendrix reveals that there is never a future that allows one to escape or rewrite the past. For someone like Bendrix, time acts as a circular event that offers no respite from the past, nor does it allow for hope of a different and positive future. He wants to maintain his status as a well-received and literary, albeit unpopular writer, because he recognizes the death sentence for a writer to be labeled "popular. He states that he "ha[s] not committed that crime—not yet, but always though I retain a little of the exclusiveness of unsuccess, the little reviews, like wise detectives, can scent it on its way" (*The End of the Affair* 122). While this comment emphasizes Greene's own writerly acknowledgement that it is impossible to be both a literary and popular novelist, it also reveals that the formerly up-and-coming novelist Bendrix holds no power or prestige

once he becomes a popular middle-aged and middlebrow author. As an intermodern text, the novel underscores that it will never be a great modernist or *avant garde* text and refuses to participate in what it views as literary games. Instead, *The End of the Affair* is much more interested in depicting what happens to men like Bendrix and their drive for realism. In this moment, Bendrix still has the power of the well-regarded writer when he allures the young fan, Sylvia, but even his plans to bed her are derailed by his "duties" as a middle-class British man. He embodies the Orwellian ideals that are ascribed to the middle-class gentleman of the interwar period, which include fair play, brotherhood, decency, honesty, forthrightness, and hardiness.[41] While these traits are further upheld and perpetuated by George Orwell's "classless" stylizations of British masculinity during and after WWII, *The End of the Affair* suggests that these characteristics, even when upheld, are futureless because they represent a past world that does not work within the framework of modernized Britain.

Bendrix as a middle-aged middle-class man is fully entrenched in the structures tied to imperial masculinity and Orwell's decent gentleman. This becomes one of his failures because it prevents him from consummating his relationship with Sylvia and robs him of desire when he engages with various prostitutes. His lack of desire is quickly linked to his decency, which has nothing to do with the women with whom he is about to sleep or with any kind of conflicted feelings toward them. Instead, Bendrix's loyalty to the past and his memories of Sarah rob him of physical desire. This portrait of masculinity suggests that men who uphold this older notion of masculinity lose their desire, physically and psychically, fail to reproduce, and, thus, self-annihilate. In a darkly comedic fashion, *The End of the Affair* interrupts the consummation of Bendrix's relationship with Sylvia through a complicated

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[41] Praseeda Gopinath discusses the Orwellian gentleman's stylizations in the post-war period and the traits essential to what constitutes a "decent" man after 1945 (3).

plot involving Sarah's aged mother. At the funeral, Sarah's mother insists to that Bendrix go to dinner with her afterwards and Bendrix, in his need to fulfill his domestic obligation (and thus masculine decency) goes, leaving Sylvia. During dinner, Sarah's mother reveals the meal is simply a pretense to borrow money, but it is too late for Bendrix to return to Sylvia and he never sees her again.

In addition to failed desire, the material details of London continually conjure memories of the past, which makes it impossible for Bendrix to move on from his relationship with Sarah or establish any kind of futurity for himself. As a realist detail, the air raids draw a comparison between Bendrix's interiority and the material stasis in the immediate aftermath of World War II. Rather than function as a form of surrealist fragmentation,[42] the bombsites and ruins physically ground Bendrix within London and connect Bendrix's thoughts and experiences. Without these material landmarks, the novel would quickly devolve into the thoughts of an ever-abstract writer pondering existential questions in his middle-age. Somewhat ironically, the ruins of London offer Bendrix a means of holding onto the past rather than destroy it. The bombed-out doorway of Bendrix's house acts as a bulwark for history rather than a symbol of erasure or fragmentation: "Then I closed the stained-glass doors behind me and made my way carefully down the steps that had been blasted in 1944 and never repaired. I had reason to remember the occasion and how the stained glass, tough and ugly and Victorian, stood up to the shock as our grandfathers themselves would have done" (*The End of the Affair* 2). The ruined stairs are not what is significant here; it is the Victorian stained glass that remains despite the bombing like its "tough and ugly" turn-of-the-century forbearers. The description clearly supports idea the purpose of ruins is to reveal the past that always lurks underneath the present. For Bendrix,

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[42] See Mellor's argument in *Reading the Ruins* (2011) in which he describes the Blitz as a lived surrealism.

what is timeless are his memories and conceptualization of the past with Sarah, rather than the emptiness of the present and future.

In fact, whenever Bendrix feels any kind of stability, it is always in the moorings of older, pre-war British architecture: the eighteenth-century church that stands like "a toy in an island of grass—the toy could be left outside in the dark, in the dry unbreakable weather" (18); the stained Victorian glass that is continually mentioned (2, 54); the glittering shops of Oxford Street that are compared to jewels (114); and the old hotels that used to stand next to Paddington Station at Eastborne Terrace, that while half-destroyed, conjure a material richness in Bendrix's memory that is absent from most of the narrative: "...there was a potted fern in the hall and we were shown the best room by a manageress with blue hair: a real Edwardian room with a great gilt double bed and red velvet curtains and a full length mirror" (34). In fact, it is because of the ruins that Bendrix can so vividly fashion the memory of the hotel: it impresses upon him what was once hidden behind the façade of the building and again harkens back to Edwardian society. Ruins for Bendrix are far from destructive symbols; they allow him to access the past, both his own personal past and the greater British cultural history in order to create a static and atemporal present. He denies that he is in the present, but in constantly returning to the ruins and refusing to allow for rebuilding he denies any kind of physical progression or a progressive temporality. The acknowledgement of the "sturdiness" of Victorian and Edwardian architecture and objects reveals Bendrix's implicit sympathy for a past sense of order and cultural stability.

Bendrix's denies any teleology or progressive temporality to preserve his own self, rather than lose it in the unknown future. Towards the end of the novel, when it is revealed

that Sarah has promised God to disavow Bendrix and their affair if he remains alive (the promise being her motivation for ending the affair), she writes to him to explain why:

> "You took away all my lies and self-deceptions like they clear a road of rubble for somebody to come along it, somebody of importance, and now he's come, but you cleared the way yourself. When you write you try to be exact and you taught me to want the truth, and you told me when I wasn't telling the truth." (*The End of the Affair* 121)

Sarah blames Bendrix for what has happened; he was the one to demand that she reveal the truth, and rather than embrace another lover, she turns to religion. What is striking in Sarah's use of metaphors is the comparison between rubble and truth. According to her, it is only when the metaphysic rubble is cleared from her soul and consciousness that she can both tell the truth and find happiness. Given the backdrop of 1946 London and the massive amounts of literal rubble yet to be removed from its streets, there is a striking parallel. For readers at the time of publication in 1951, it would be all too familiar an image of London, in which the gaping holes in the city were daily reminders of the Blitz. By clearing any rubble, a path is opened for the future and an unknown path. Removing the rubble and building over it, either metaphysically or materially, becomes a mechanism to forget the past and embrace the future, disrupting Bendrix's temporality and rejecting the totality of total war.

The motif of construction and Bendrix's focus on the past's physical iterations underscores the cultural discussion of re-building post-war Britain physically and metaphorically. *The End of the Affair* was published in September 1951, which was a month before Clement Attlee's Labour government lost control of Parliament to Churchill's Conservative party. Given that the novel is set five years prior, one can read Bendrix's

overall pessimism about the future as representative of the failure of Attlee's government to enact the promised change of a new and better society. The novel does not take a specific political position, but Bendrix's character is emblematic of middle-class, middle-aged men, who faced with changing social structures and order are ultimately pessimistic and can only envision the continuation of total war. The men's inability to adapt represents a portion of society who clung desperately to the past and could to envision any kind of positive social change.

The Failure of Romance and Imperial Masculinities in *The Fallen Idol*

Released three years prior to the publication of *The End of the Affair*, *The Fallen Idol* recounts a similar story of a defeated extramarital affair while using an unusual perspective to recount the plot. However, the film uses the perspective of a young boy, Philippe (Bobby Henrey), who thinks he witnesses the butler, Baines (Ralph Richardson), murder his wife after she discovers his lover. Philippe idolizes Baines, who has taken the child under his wing when Philippe's ambassador father and ill mother essentially abandon him to the embassy staff's care. Set over the course of a few days, the plot's momentum begins when Philippe, or Phile, discovers that Baines is having an affair with a young Francophone woman, Julie (Michèle Morgan), and accidentally reveals it to Baines' wife (Sonia Dresdel), who is the embassy housekeeper. With the revelation that Baines is planning to leave her, Mrs. Baines stages a Jacobean plot to entrap the lovers. Lurking in the shadows of the embassy, Mrs. Baines finally gets her chance to force Baines to reveal his secret; after threatening Phile, she climbs onto a second story window ledge, only to be surprised and fall backwards to her death. Phile who is watching the scene from one of his hiding spots immediately assumes

Baines has pushed his wife down the stairs. In his childish attempts to protect Baines from the police, Phile tells a series of convoluted lies that frame Baines for the murder of his wife instead of providing Baines with an alibi. The remainder of the film devolves into a psychological suspense as Phile further implicates Baines even when speaking honestly and highlights the misperceptions of children when embroiled in an adult world.

Based on a 1936 short story by Graham Greene titled "The Basement Room," the film makes substantial changes to the original plot, particularly its close, in order to fashion Baines into a "decent" everyman and to be more socially relevant for its 1947 audience. For example, in the short story, Baines murders his wife and Philip sees the murder. By making Baines innocent in the film, he immediately becomes a more sympathetic character, who is the victim of circumstance as the "decent" and self-restrained masculine figure in post-war representations of British culture. As the classic "decent" British man and a butler nonetheless, Baines' character is contrasted to his wife Mrs. Baines, who is easily made into the classic shrew of a woman through her cold and alienating actions. Not only is she strict and overbearing in her dealings with her husband, Mrs. Baines is constantly cruel to Phile, killing his beloved pet snake and hitting him when he doesn't obey. Because of her dislike of childish whimsy and fun, Mrs. Baines becomes the fairytale figure of the evil woman, invoking terror in Phile initially and later the adults. Most importantly for Baines, Mrs. Baines represents the emasculating wife who prevents him from living a full and happy life despite his attempts to "make things work." As Baines tells Phile, he had to give up his adventures in the colonies when he returned to England to marry Mrs. Baines and thus is robbed of his freedom and masculinity.

While the film later reveals that Baines' tales about the colonies are as fictitious as they sound, these stories still represent the male fantasies of adventure and homosociality that perpetuate imperial discourses of the "ideal English man" even in 1948. Baines tells Phile that in Africa, "You can make a fortune. Make anything you like. Make elephants and kings and castles" (*The Fallen Idol).* This continues a narrative thread within the short story, in which both Baines and Philip's father had positions in the colonies before returning to England. When Philip asks Baines why they lived in the colonies, Baines states: "It was his job same as this is mine now. And it was mine then too. It was a man's job. You wouldn't believe it now, but I've had forty niggers under me, doing what I told them to" ("A Basement Room" 107-108). Although this dialogue was cut from the film, it helps emphasize why the colonial narrative is so important to Baines' masculinity. The position of a colonial bureaucrat, real or imaginary, creates a sense of masculine purpose for him that cannot be found as a butler in mid-twentieth century Britain.[43] In the colonies, Baines is in a position of true authority in which he gets to control the colonial subjects rather than be a servant himself and can become financially independent. In this capacity, Baines also participates in the romanticized narrative of nation building that was so integral to British Imperialism. Although by 1948 the colonial adventurer was an increasingly anachronistic figure, the film demonstrates why middle-aged and lower middle-class men cling to these bygone fantasies. The one material item that connects Baines to this past is the revolver he keeps in a kitchen drawer, which as he tells Phile is both a form of protection and a remnant of his colonial past. The gun elevates Baines' masculinity for the child and helps concretize the fantasy. With a

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[43] The mid-20th century butler as the emasculated and "lost" figure of a previous social era is a major motif of Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day* (1988). While published much later than *The Fallen Idol*, it is strikingly similar in its depictions of a figure that is no longer suited for the "modern" world of Britain. Additionally, Ishiguro's butler, Stevens, is obsessed with the idea of portraying "dignity," which is easily synonymous with "decency."

past as a colonial adventurer, he can claim a higher, more authoritative position that is also crucial for the success empire in comparison to his current role in London as a servant for a foreign government. As middle-class masculinity was tied to the imperial project, Baines' statements help rewrite his own sense of self, given his current feelings of emasculation by his wife, and allow him a romanticized escape in "elephants and kings and castles." The only place in which Baines can recreate himself or have a "future" is in the colonial past because that is where he is always the adventurer called to action as there is no future for a butler and the social hierarchies it suggests in the rapidly modernizing Britain.

While few physical details of the city are shown, London and its post-war social structures are crucial to the implied backdrop of the narrative and imply the modernization and shifting world order of post-1945 Britain. Although the film does not include any direct references to the war nor does it include shots of ruined London, Carol Reed's directorial changes emphasize why the post-war setting is crucial to the narrative. The change of setting from that of a wealthy English home in the original short story to that of a post-war embassy helps underscore the international tensions of the film and the realistic nature of who would have still had a butler during the austerity after the war.[44] Additionally, the various snippets of dialogue in French between Phile and various staff members including Julie, who is a secretary at the embassy, continually remind viewers of the underlying politics of the post-war period that infiltrate the domestic space. Julie, who is from an unknown French-speaking European nation, represents one of the many migrants that were flocking to Britain and the ongoing political turmoil in reconstructing Europe. When Baines and Julie meet in the café, Julie tells Baines that not only will she leave him as he is "tied" and won't change, but she'll return home to continental Europe and her unnamed country. With this knowledge, Baines

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[44] See David Lodge, 279.

tells Julie her leaving is more complicated than she thinks: "Not just by going away, leaving

no trace, going home." Julie's return home to Europe not only signals the end of her and

Baines affair, but the impossible distance that will be between them and thus her ultimate

disappearance. Baines knows he will lose Julie, which gives him a stronger impetus to leave

his wife and be with Julie to "save her" from the unknowns of post-war Europe. This

conversation recounts all too familiar a story when people are separated, whether because of

war or distance, and the knowledge that loved ones will be lost forever. Post-war Europe is a

place where people easily disappear and often includes immediate danger and intrigue as

Greene and Reed explored in their subsequent film, *The Third Man*.[45] Despite the end of the

war, the anxieties of war still infiltrate everything, including Baines' thoughts and actions.

Julie's future disappearance into a nameless European country only further solidifies that the

effects of the war are far from over and that even the simplest action is done in anticipation

of the next war.

Given the implied background of rebuilding post-war Europe, the film's reliance on

Phile's perspective is crucial for understanding how politics and terror infiltrate even the

mundane and domestic spaces of post-war London. The war moves from the battle zones and

official fronts into the kitchen and parlor.[46] Julie's liminal position and the various embassy

staff who remind the police of "proper jurisdiction" help reinforce that even the indoor

spaces of the home and domestic work are dictated and structured by politics in their

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[45] As Brian L. Thomson has discussed, the production of Greene's films in the late 1940s were very multinational. Vincent Korda, a Hungarian artistic director, and Georges Périnal, a French cinematographer, who were important artists in their own right, collaborated on *The Fallen Idol* with Greene and Reed. In fact, Thomas describes the financial issues of producing films in the period if they wanted to reach an international audience; they had to appeal to American tastes to get American financial backing and as David O. Selznick remarked, the problem with British films was no one could understand British accents if they weren't Churchill's (87-88). While *The Fallen Idol* is not inherently "British" in its construction, Baines is a thoroughly British character and in changing details from the original short story, it not only makes it feel more contemporary for a post-war audience but makes it more "international" as well.
[46] O'Brien 136.

everyday forms. To further emphasize how total war has infiltrated the domestic space, the film relies heavily on spying within the home as a motif. Akin to other film noirs, voyeurism and less discreet spying become integral to the plot and the cinematography of the film; however, *The Fallen Idol* shifts this voyeurism from the detective figure to Phile to make him the "spy," which "turn[s] the embassy into a place of hideouts and potential ambushes" (O'Brien 135). Phile's constant voyeurism mirrors the actions of the adults; everyone is spying on everyone in this house, suggesting that intrigue is not exclusive to underworlds or political machinations. Phile's perspective melds truth and lies and childhood fancy and misunderstanding, which demonstrate that reality and fantasy are often one in the same for children.[47] Additionally, the use of a child to show the melding of truth and lies creates a different kind of realism that the audience can understand without having to rely on the conventions of the genre of intrigue. The blending of the realism and the everyday with intrigue underscores how politics are not simply something fantastical or external for the post-war British viewer. While initially portrayed as a child's fancy, the mundane, domestic terror of post-war London is a vivid and horrible reality for the adults. For example, Mrs. Baines changes from the childhood nightmare to the living monster through the figure of the vengeful wife. According to the logic of the film, the domestic is never a safe space, even for children, whom adults think should be oblivious to, and removed from, these adult machinations. Phile cannot be trusted or relied upon because he is part of this domestic intrigue and thus the motivation for the unraveling of order.[48]

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[47] Bobby Henrey, who played Phile, had never been in a film before and Carol Reed thought his naturalistic and unpolished acting created a more realistic portrait of childhood in the film. To create an even more heightened sense of awe or wonder when Phile gazes at Baines, Reed had a magician perform in the background to elicit an amazed reaction from Henrey. (O'Brien)

[48] As Geoffrey O'Brien observes, "The charming little boy has become someone who must be lied to, distracted, used as a prop for secret rendezvous; and there are moments when he begins to look quite odious, a little monster getting in the way of lovers desperate to be alone together" (135).

Phile as the spy figure suggests that even children are part of the political

machinations of adults and capable of their own devious actions in a world, in which just as

much is hidden in the home as outside of it. Multiple objects used throughout the film

replicate the motif of hiding: Phile's snake that he keeps hidden behind a loose brick, Baines'

revolver in the kitchen drawer, and the hidden animals at the zoo. In many ways, Phile has

more freedom than the adults because they think he is removed from their behavior. In a

striking and comedic scene at the zoo, Phile encounters a man in a dress suit behind bars.

These bars demarcate a bathroom turnstile, but Phile treats the man as a monkey, teasing

him, in a way that reminds the audience of the animalistic nature of humans. It nods to the

fact that the decent middle-class man in a suit is also trapped behind bars and references short

story's inherent critique of these men and their claim to decency. This also alludes to a scene

in "The Basement Room," which was cut from the film in which Baines tells Philip about his

colonial life while they ride a public bus. It is clear in both the short story and the film that

what Philip values is the decent, or "caged," Baines: "Baines had led a man's life; everyone

on top of the bus pricked his ears when he told Philip all about it... This was the Baines

whom Philip loved: not Baines singing and carefree, but Baines responsible, Baines behind

barriers, living his man's life" ("Basement" 118). The man behind bars at the zoo is an

obvious metaphor for the traditional decent men like Baines, who are trapped by the

structures of an anachronistic masculinity and their own inability to change. In Phile's

mockery of the man at the zoo, the contrast between the older man and the child shows the

inherent differences between the generations. Phile is free to do what he likes and is not

trapped by pre-war conventions. Baines (and his peer behind physical bars), however, must

perform the role of the decent man, which becomes hypocritical because of Baines' adultery,

the murder of his wife, and the brutality and racism of his colonial "adventures." While these

adventures are heavily edited in the film to be less shocking, they still inform Baines'

character. Neither version of Baines, the literary or filmic, is sympathetic by the end of the

narratives. In *The Fallen Idol*, Baines confesses to the police that his stories about the

colonies were simply fabrications to entertain Phile. The cinematic Baines elicits the pity of

the audience because he is caught in a past world and unable to adapt. The Baines of the

short story, on the other hand, is a much more sinister and reprehensible figure that haunts

Phil even on his deathbed.

It is this constant spying within the home between children and adults that makes

the film a "more insidious counterpart" to *The Third Man*, which relies entirely on political

intrigue and shadowy characters to describe post-war Europe.[49] That the two films are

thematically similar and read as companion pieces emphasizes that the total-war in which

anticipation and event still continues past the end of World War II in 1945. The anxiety of

war and its lasting influence infiltrates everything including domestic life.[50] The circles of

distrust in *The Fallen Idol* are vicious and ultimately worse for those seeking knowledge or

change. While both "The Basement Room" and *The Fallen Idol* recount the tragedy of a

child witnessing an adult's death and the trauma it enacts, the two narratives demand their

audiences recognize the failures of the adult men, who project a certain kind of imperial

masculinity, in two different historical moments. Rather than portray a masculinity worth

emulating, Baines becomes a pathetic and emasculated figure because of his entrenched ideas

of what constitutes "manliness." While the Baines of "The Basement Room" is a more

reprehensible figure than his later version in *The Fallen Idol*, both depictions of the character

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[49] O'Brien
[50] See Paul K. Saint-Amour and Susan Grayzel.

reveal the inherent damage and irrelevance of imperial masculinity. This form of masculinity is not only unsustainable as Baines becomes ensnared in his lies, it is ultimately what destroys the noir protagonist, whose social alienation and disorientation always results in death.[51]

The two narratives show the slow evolution of this masculinity: the dangerous and abhorrent qualities of the 1935 Baines have faded into the pitiable and impotent figure of the 1948 Baines. Middle-class men no longer have the domestic authority they once had at the height of the British Empire, making them yearn for older iterations of what it meant to be the decent English man and find a means to reclaim this version of English masculinity. Although it was produced ten years later, *The Fallen Idol* demonstrates that the attempts to hold onto an older, imperial masculinity continue to linger in the post-World War II period despite a modernizing social order. The film suggests that men like Baines return to this iteration of masculinity to order or stabilize their own social narratives in the chaos and turmoil of war. While *The Fallen Idol* does not show the material aspects of war or its material representations in the cityscape of London as Greene's other post-WWII works do, it reveals the horror that infiltrates domestic spaces once total war has taken over.[52] By pairing the realism of a child's perspective with the aesthetic stylization and tone of intrigue, the film demonstrates how terror is always lurking within the domestic space and part of that terror arises from the inability for these men to adapt to a changing world. By using Phile's perspective, the audience is lulled into the familiar nostalgia of the nursery only to reveal how treacherous a place that is and one that is inherently reflects the violence of the outside world. While the film offers some relief for Baines as he is exonerated of the murder of his

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[51] Bronfen, 71.

[52] For example, *The Third Man* (1949) and *The End of the Affair* (1951) rely on the backdrop of post-WWII Europe and its ruins to directly influence the narratives.

wife, it does not give a satisfying or happy ending. Phile's cries for someone to believe that he is finally telling the truth resound as the police exit the embassy. All the adults ignore him and Phile is left a pitiable creature in a world where there is no longer a clear demarcation between truth and lies. What would otherwise issue a satisfying ending instead becomes anti-climactic as the audience waits for the next disturbance in this domestic "fairytale."

As Maurice Bendrix echoes in *The End of the Affair*, whatever hope in the future exists will always be crushed by the burdens of the past. Phile is still a child, but his future is ambivalent. His hero, Baines, while absolved of murder, is stripped down to his true self: that of a liar and immoral man. The only positive aspect of this revelation is that the stereotypes of the colonizing bureaucrat have fallen apart to reveal them as pathetic liars. As *The End of the Affair* hints at and *The Fallen Idol* fully demonstrates, the old notions of masculinity that men like Bendrix and Baines relied upon are in tension with a nation that is restructuring itself. Pre-war imperial masculinity is not just irrelevant, but out of place in a Britain that must define itself for a modernizing future. Baines as the "man's man" is simply a façade of a past Britain now in ruins, and while he is rendered impotent, it is unclear what will happen to him or Phile, as neither narrative offers a satisfactory outside to this masculinity. Like other middle-class narratives, *The End of the Affair* and *The Fallen Idol* offer critiques of society, but still rely on the social structures they critique, making it impossible to offer a radical remedy.[53] Yet, by addressing the inherent issues with a masculinity that is defined solely by imperial structures and decency, Greene insists that this type of subjectivity and the bourgeois social structures that inform it will always be in conflict and result in an individual's alienation, if not death. While there is no outside or prescription for Greene's

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[53] Sinfield, 42.

characters, the narratives foreshadows the rise of the Angry Men and the need for other

reactionary forms of British masculinity in the second half of the 20th century.

"By the same token we realise from our knowledge of history, that the future can no more be separated from the past than the child from the mother... [and is] created both in the realm of the spiritual and of the material... these things can and be made used for the betterment and enrichment of human life. Well, Utopia is only as far away as mankind wishes to place it; we are raising up direction signs, clearing the road, and discouraging all obstruction to traffic." – Dr. Frank Monaghan, Director of Research of the New York World's Fair, 1939. Speech before the members of the Robert E. Lee Memorial Foundation at Stratford Hall, Virginia, on Oct 21, 1938

"But having subsisted for so long on dust and ashes, we are still shy of colour and sparkle and laughter, suspicious of young exhuberance [sic] and daring, too timid to welcome a dash of levity in place of dullness and pomposity. We cling to weight and are afraid to grow and use the wings that we must have if, we are ever to become fully adult and outgrow our infantile solemnity." – Sir Bertram Clough Williams-Ellis, "The South Bank, *Reflections*," *Building* June 1951

On June 3, 1951, after much anticipation and excitement, the Festival of Britain opened. The Festival, which was initially conceived in 1943, had a dual mission: to mark the centennial of the Crystal Palace Exhibition of 1851 and to celebrate ongoing British cultural achievement and advancement. Modeled after previous worlds' fairs and interwar modernist exhibitions, the event quickly evolved under the guidance of Labour minister Herbert Morrison to be a uniquely contemporary spectacle that promoted the continued progress of Britain after World War II.[54] Unlike past worlds' fairs which centered on international themes to promote imperialism and industrialization, the Festival of Britain turned inward and focused solely on the geographic space of the United Kingdom. With the end of the war, Morrison and Festival Director Gerald Barry saw the event as an opportunity to showcase the material culture and craftsmanship of the country and promote it as the site of renewed industrial power, innovative design, and scientific progress.[55] While these were the initial

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[54] John Grindrod points to the earlier Stockholm Exposition of 1930, the Chicago World's Fair of 1933, and the 1937 Paris Expo as major influences for the designers of the Festival of Britain (74).

[55] In addition to promoting national propaganda, Harriet Atkinson addresses how the geographic orientation of the Festival was part of the intense budget constraints that were ongoing during the Atlee ministry as the Labour

goals for the event, the Festival quickly became a symbol for a rejuvenated Britain that jointly celebrated its past accomplishments and envisioned the future as an opportunity to create a more equal and modern society.[56] As social historians Becky Conekin and Richard Hornsey have argued, the Festival's vision offered a socially liberal worldview removed from the recent past of war and empire, one in Britain could be "trans-historical, trans-class" and return to London's "timeless organic structures."[57] While the Festival was always intended to be ephemeral (as it ran for only its intended four months), the lasting impacts were implanted in the British collective consciousness through the event's attempts to refashion Britain and "Britishness" as future-oriented and progressive, rather than conservative and traditional.

In this chapter, I discuss how the Festival of Britain influenced changing cultural attitudes, particularly amongst the British middle class, through its use and adaptation of modernist architecture and design. In reinterpreting the previously "elitist" or avant-garde architectural styles of the pre-war year, the Festival of Britain demonstrated that modernism was appropriate for a large public project and in domestic spaces. I argue that through its designs, the Festival created a modern aesthetic that was sophisticated, innovative, and class-leveling and projected a new mode of conceptualizing and concretizing British subjectivity for a changing middle class. As the event was designed and implemented by a younger

government had no convertible currency in 1947, 1949, and 1951. By turning inward rather than internationally, the Festival could work better within its budget constraints (10-11).

[56] In her seminal text on the Festival of Britain, Becky Conekin argues that the events became the "fete" that celebrated the victorious end to World War II and a means to educate and to impose new cultural values upon the general public (31-47). Harriet Atkinson views the Festival as an ephemeral experience that allowed for the creation of a national identity through the memory of a more positive recent past than the prior war years (2). That imagination, both in the initial designs and later reminiscing, was what helped reinvigorate the idea that the physical land of Britain including the city-space, was integral to a national identity.

[57] See Conekin (45) and Hornsey (59). Although this was the goal of the Festival, Hornsey suggests the inherent fallacy of presenting an atemporal Britain, which erases the important differences that arise when acknowledging history: "Once again, the appeal to historicity worked to deny proper history; tradition and continuity became mere instruments within the projection of a social order impervious to the disruptive potential of unforeseen events."

generation of architects and designers, it promoted inclusive public spaces which used elements of pre-war and Scandinavian modernism alongside traditional British motifs and materials to create contemporary and approachable design. Offering a new voice to ongoing debates about the future of Britain, these professionals saw the opportunity to use space as a means to create a modernized society that rejected conservative, traditional values, and most importantly, envisioned a hopeful future that incorporated the nation's past rather than reject it outright.[58] Although the Festival promoted cutting-edge design, the event was created for the masses rather than the cultural elite and the Festival organizers insisted that modern design could be consumed by all socioeconomic groups, particularly those typically excluded from art and architecture exhibitions.

Although the buildings were eventually dismantled or destroyed by Churchill's government following his return to power in the fall of 1951, the Festival of Britain could not be completely erased from British consciousness because it represented more than a summer fair or temporary exhibit. (Sadly, the only Festival building still standing is the Royal Festival Hall.) It concretized the perspective of a younger generation, who rejected the notion that the world was in a continual state of total war and entrenched in an imperial past. [59] Rather, this younger generation saw the world, and Britain specifically, as a site that could be molded and shaped according to a new, progressive vision: the city could be the geographical force that would rewrote socioeconomics and politics to create social and material equality for all Britons.[60] Instead of interpreting the youthfulness of the architects and designers as

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[58] One of the critiques of other post-1945 modernist design is that it is entirely self-referential and tries to be completely atemporal and ahistorical. See Hatherley, p. 4-6.

[59] Paul K. Saint-Amour argues that the Cold War period was dominated by the same cultural anticipation of total war that dominated the 1920s and 1930s. World War II was simply an interruption in the middle of this state (37).

[60] This reinforces Michel de Certeau's point that the city becomes a "totalizing and almost mythical landmark for socioeconomic and political strategy" for urban planners and architects in the 20th century (96).

indicative of faddishness, inexperience, or a taste for popular culture, I argue that their

aesthetic and political goals to reimagine the city and thus British subjectivity show the

influence of a younger generation who had experienced the totality of World War II and

rejected the pessimism and continuation of total war during the Cold War.[61] Ironically, the

government endorsed the Festival and funded it because its members felt that as a cultural

event it would promote Britain and act as part of its cultural armory against its aggressors

(Atkinson 23). Yet in the newspaper publications at the time and in later discussions marking

the event's 25th and 60th anniversaries, what is remembered are the local and national effects

that sought to offer the public a reprieve from the lasting austerity of the war and the creation

of an event that was for the people themselves.[62] This rupture between the government's

intended goals and the architects and designers' projects demonstrates how space is

continually reinterpreted and rewritten by its users.

 While the success of the architecture's utopian mandate is debatable, those involved

in the Festival of Britain imagined a London (and thus the nation) which rejected the

structures of imperial Britain for more progressive cultural ideas and the formation of a new

middle class.[63] In this chapter, I demonstrate the influence of this younger generation of

artists and designers through the analysis of archival materials from newspapers and journals,

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[61] Harriet Atkinson acknowledges the rejection of total war in her discussion of the photographs and souvenirs taken during the event: "Memories rely on a common condition: on absence of opportunity experienced in the wake of war. They focus on the smell, the taste, the sound, and most often, the sight of the Festival... The Festival allowed people feelings and experiences that had long been missing" (4).

[62] Atkinson describes the general hazy quality of reminiscing about the Festival during its 60th anniversary in 2011 and that despite lack of specific details, "the memory loss was part of the occasion, which was about healing, 'a tonic to the nation', in the now well-known words of its organizers, about getting better and moving on' (5).

[63] Owen Hatherley argues that one of the reasons leftist modernisms are so harsh is "the need to assert a counter, to create another culture, something the left is at present utterly unwilling to do, endlessly harping on about 'resistance', without the slightest notion of victory, let alone what culture should exist afterwards" (71). While the Festival of Britain was not as reactive or harsh as other architectural modernisms, it did assert a view of culture "afterward" as part of its style and thus allowed for the creation of new subjectivities as part of that futurity.

documents and correspondence from Festival officials, and other ephemera created for the

Festival, particularly those taken from the personal files of the Director of Architecture Hugh

Casson and Festival architect, Misha Black. Additionally, I analyze two advertisements

placed in newspapers and magazines from August 1951, which reference the Festival and a

new generation. Last, I discuss how Iris Murdoch's novel, *Under the Net* (1954), reveals the

legacy of the Festival's aesthetics and politics after 1951. If New Brutalism was the

architectural analog to the Angry Young Men,[64] the Festival style's modernism reflects the

perspective of middle-class realist writers of the 1950s.[65] Although the Festival was a

temporary architectural event and structure, it demonstrates the hopeful outlook towards

space and a lasting cultural attitude amongst a new generation of middle-class British

subjects.

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[64] The term "New Brutalism" first appeared in an essay by Alison and Peter Smithson in January 1955, in which they compare their new architectural style to the *béton brut* of Le Corbusier and call for an aggressive minimalism, open air plans, and the use of "raw" materials such as concrete, wood, and metal (Bullock 95-98). The Angry Young Men were a group of male writers, mostly working and lower middle class, such as Philip Larkin, Kingsley Amis, and John Osborne, whose style is marked by a frustrated masculinity and the loss of status in post-WWII Britain.

[65] See Hatherley, p. 30.

Image 1: Colored Postcard of the Crossway at the Festival of Britain, George Backhouse Chief Executive Officer for the Festival of Britain: papers – Postcards, 1951.

"Color and Sparkle and Laughter": Architecture and a New Generation

When the Festival of Britain opened in June of 1951, everyone in the United Kingdom waited to see if the event was to be a spectacular disaster, as its critics surmised, or a promise of a better future for the nation as its planners had promised. When Sir Bertram Clough Williams-Ellis described the Festival of Britain in the June 1951 edition of *Building* magazine, it was clear that not only were the critics wrong, but the Festival was the opportunity to move past the "solemnity" that dominated British architecture and culture in the first half of the 20th century. Williams-Ellis, a well-known architect famous for his interwar historic preservation, viewed the event's architectural design as the aesthetic instigation needed to rejuvenate public architecture and assert a tone not often found in state-funded buildings: levity and joyfulness. Equally important in Williams-Ellis' commentary is his outcry against the ongoing austerity that inflected all aspects of British society long after

the war's end. When he writes that the British people have "subsisted for so long on dust and ashes" and calls for everyone to let go of their suspicions of "youthful exhuberance [sic]," he acknowledges how essentialized austerity had become in post-war urban planning and renewal. His insistence that dullness and pomposity should be rejected in favor of lightness and pleasure seems as relevant today in discussions of current urban planning as it did in 1951, particularly in the assertion that any architecture of merit must possess a certain grandness and solemnity to be taken seriously. Strikingly, Williams-Ellis' thoughts on architecture extended beyond the pages of architectural critique and captured the mood of the attendees of the Festival. The *New York Times* commented in their description of the Festival that "It is clear that Britons shouldering the heavy load of a vast rearmament budget and drab restriction will be stepping into another world as they enter the Exhibition. The emphasis on color, architectural contrast, and often futuristic design may well acquire a popularity with the people that will exceed best hopes" (Black). This combination of architectural contrast, "futuristic design," and popularity were everything the Festival of Britain organizers could hope for when they conceived of their plan.

Like previous urban planners, the Festival officials viewed their role and the goal of planning as part of the project to make utopia a tangible and lived experience through space.[66] Just as Abercrombie and Forshaw wished to erase the derelict and ruined buildings and slums of London through modernized city planning, the Festival architects sought to radically redesign the South Bank of London and eliminate the detritus of abandoned wharves and bombed industrial spaces. Festival Director Gerald Barry, the Director of Architecture Hugh Casson, and Head Architect Misha Black felt that new urban planning

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[66] See Chapter 1 and the discussion on Abercrombie and Forshaw's plans for London as detailed in *Proud City A Plan for London.*

should present a modernized city that was approachable, light-hearted, and "design-forward" rather than austere, grandiose, or coldly efficient as illustrated by other public buildings.[67] In his notes, Black wrote that "if the [Festival] architecture was less exciting than its progenitors, the planning produced as compact an urban development as one could wish for. A mere 29 acres became a city with a hundred vistas" (Festival of Britain, papers and schedules). Although Black undersells the importance of the event's aesthetics, he demonstrates how integral urban planning was for successful architecture for the Festival organizers. Although they used a small portion of the urban landscape, the Festival offered vistas in which different perspectives of the entire city could be seen. Nicholas Bullock specifically comments on the design of buildings like the Regatta Restaurant which mixed elevations and levels to offer different vantages of both the city and the building (73-75). In his descriptions of the individual's urban meandering, Michel de Certeau states that the constant intersections and multiplication of social experiences are what create an urban fabric and thus the entire concept of a city. He writes, "...there is only a pullulation of a passer-by, a network of residences temporarily appropriated by pedestrian traffic, a snuffling among pretenses of the proper, a universe of rented spaces haunted by a nowhere or by dreamed-of places" (102). Black's hundred vistas directly point to this constant unfolding of the city, in which the different vantages suddenly illuminate a new interpretation or interaction with the city. The goal of urban planning here was to simultaneously allow for "compact development" and an individual's fanciful or dreamed place.

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[67] Grindrod points to the fact that both the Festival of Britain and Abercrombie and Forshaw's *County of London Plan* were in development simultaneously and while they both tried to reconcile the "squalid" landscape of post-45 London, enacted their projects in radically different fashions (74-75). Most importantly, Abercrombie and Forshaw approached design as government officials, and fully encapsulated all the problems with Lefebvre's discussion on how the State imposes design upon the people, rather than vice versa. While Casson was essentially a planning official, the ephemerality of the project from its initial conception always makes it difficult to say it had the same long-term goals of imposing design upon the public.

Image 2: Aerial View of the Festival of Britain, Misha Black, Festival of Britain, plans, cuttings and photographs, ca. 1951.

Image 3: South Bank Exhibition Poster Sites (Architectural Plans) for the Festival of Britain, Misha Black, Festival of Britain, plans, cuttings and photographs, ca. 1951.

To achieve this "dreamed place," the architects and designers had to first present a compelling plan that would convince the government and the British people of their spatial vision.[68] As the Festival was conceived as a centennial celebration of the Crystal Palace Exhibition and was modelled after interwar modernist exhibitions,[69] the Festival organizers were not at liberty to take complete creative freedom and had to follow the structure of those events while they alluded to their economic and cultural examples in the exhibits. Despite these limitations, Gerald Barry and his team hoped their structures and design would result in a specific mode of urban planning and architecture, unlike the plans of Abercrombie and Forshaw which were never realized. By funding and using the Festival as a model for larger government urban planning, the Labour government demonstrated that good architecture and design was crucial to the success of progressive social programs. As Robert Elwall notes, the general sentiment amongst the politicians who promoted the welfare state was that the project of reconstruction "could not be tackled by the piecemeal efforts of the private sector" (12).[70] With this incentive, the Festival became more than a symbol of modernist design: it was an emblem of social progressivism and a modernized state, however apolitical the organizers claimed it was.

With the competing interests in mind, the Festival of Britain was divided into several different exhibitions in London and throughout the United Kingdom: the South Bank Exhibition; the Exhibition of Science at South Kensington; the Architectural Exhibition at

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[68] Conekin defines the "British people" according to the Labour party's definition, which was the nine-tenths of the population who worked in some capacity, rather than the elite or former gentry (48).
[69] Misha Black specifically references the 1930 Stockholm Exhibition, the 1935 Brussels International Exposition, and the 1939 New York World's Fair in his notes, in addition to trade expositions in Italy in the 1930s.
[70] Elwall also discusses the importance of the figure of the "public architect," who was employed by the government through town councils, larger government organizations or received contracts from the government directly. Until the mid-1950s, there were very few architects who designed and built private buildings (p.12).

Lansbury, Poplar; the 1951 Glasgow Exhibit; the 1951 Ulster Farm and Factory Exhibit; and

several traveling exhibits. In addition to these cultural events, the Festival Pleasure Gardens

at Battersea offered an open-air park that combined elements of amusement parks, carnivals,

and beer gardens on the bank of the Thames.[71] It is estimated that about half of the British

population attended the Festival at its various locations, with the South Bank Exhibition the

most popular event with about 8.5 million attendees in the four months it was open.[72] Built

on the south side of the Thames across from the Tower Bridge, the first structural

requirement for the South Bank Exhibition was to shore up the river's embankment and

create a structurally sound bankside (which is one of the few present-day elements that

remains from the Festival). The South Bank Exhibition would eventually hold 19 pavilions,

13 cafes and restaurants, the Royal Concert Hall, a cinema, and administrative offices on 27

acres.[73] As Clough Williams-Ellis commented, "In the Exhibition itself, the score of younger

avant-garde architects who have erected the dozen or so major pavilions for our delight, did

so against appalling odds in the way of shortage of time and space, the foulest spell of

weather in living memory, and all sorts of restrictions, including lack of needed materials and

skilled labour" (*Building* June 1951). The fact alone that the Festival planners were able to

complete the project on schedule given the material and labor shortages was a feat in of

itself.

    For the design of each structure, Hugh Casson appointed a different architect. The

architects chosen for the project were almost all under 50 and had not had major careers

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[71] While extremely popular, the Pleasure Gardens were regarded as not entirely in keeping with the Festival's design and planning goals, as they did not incorporate modernist design and were run by a private company rather than the British state. The most popular were the South Bank Exhibition and Pleasure Gardens. Festival architect Misha Black later criticized the Pleasure Gardens because he felt it muddied the Festival's modernist sensibilities and made the entire event a pastiche for its critics.

[72] See Richard Weight, p. 205.

[73] As Robert Elwall comments, this was an incredible engineering and construction feat in the relatively short time it took to build these structures (25).

before the war.[74] As Gerald Barry said, "My generation (what was left of it) were Angry Young Men. But we also believed in Utopia" (Conekin 33). Barry's comments underscore the different attitude he and his peers had compared to older generations: the Festival architects and designers were angry, but channeled their feeling of frustration and disillusionment into the political project of modernization, or "angry optimism." Barry's acknowledgement of the many casualties from World War II also reflect the physical and social loss his generation had experienced in the war. Most of these architects and designers came of age in a moment in which the only work they could pursue was related to the war effort rather than their own artistic pursuits. Unlike other forms of art, any non-military architecture and design were practically impossible to achieve in wartime because of limited resources and production capabilities. As John Grindrod discusses, this form of angry optimism was a reaction to the cultural cynicism that permeated post-45 Britain and offered a possible solution to post-war malaise, however fleeting.[75] As the Sydney Daily Telegraph reported in May 1951:

> There's been no hidebound, blue-nosed, ultra-conservative dead hand on this Festival
> planning. Youth has been given its head... and the results they will achieve will make
> the Festival visitors gasp... Despite those who clamour to have the whole affair
> scrapped; despite those who resent the Festival because it is happening while the
> Labour Government is in power; despite those people who believe the world is too

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[74] Architecture as a field suffers from the lasting image that it is still an "old boy's club," particularly in the United Kingdom. As one recent article in *The Guardian* lambasted the Royal Institute of British Architecture, "The name alone conjures bespectacled bow-tie wearing old men sitting around in their palatial Portland Place club, congratulating each other on their latest concrete carbuncles" (Wainwright).

[75] Grindrod goes further in his discussion of cynicism in relation to its production of art: "Of course cynicism can be a useful corrective, but it also can be a great inhibitor of new ideas. And after the destruction, pain and misery of the Second World War, Britain was in dire need of a new shot of optimism. Surely the key to the national recovery would be to turn the mighty organizational capacities of the armed forces to more positive peaceful purposes" (73).

unsettled for such an event; there seems little doubt that the Festival... should be a

roaring financial and prestige-building success.

Particularly noteworthy in the newspaper's description is its attribution of the Festival's

success to the "youth." In this account, the Festival was not an affair for those who were

"blue-nosed, ultra conservative dead hands," or who valued the dullness and pomposity

Williams-Ellis lambasts. As much as its organizers may have wanted to remain apolitical, by

supporting the artistic vision of this group of younger, lesser known architects and designers,

they made a fundamentally progressive statement. By turning to a different generation to

design the Festival rather than older, better established architects, the Festival organizers

rejected the traditional ideas of what constituted British architecture. This was recognized by

architectural journals at the time, who published profiles on the architects who contributed

and described their previous architectural credits (see Image 4). Although there were a few

men who were over 40 amongst the group, the group was exceedingly young and

unestablished for such a major public building project. The Festival architects also attended

the same architectural schools in the 1930s, were familiar with inter-war modernism, and had

previously made architectural contributions to the war effort such as factories, military bases,

or other wartime engineering projects. Their shared experiences and training are often

attributed to the overwhelmingly similar styles throughout the Festival, even though each

structure was designed by a different architectural team.[76]

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[76] See Bullock, p. 71.
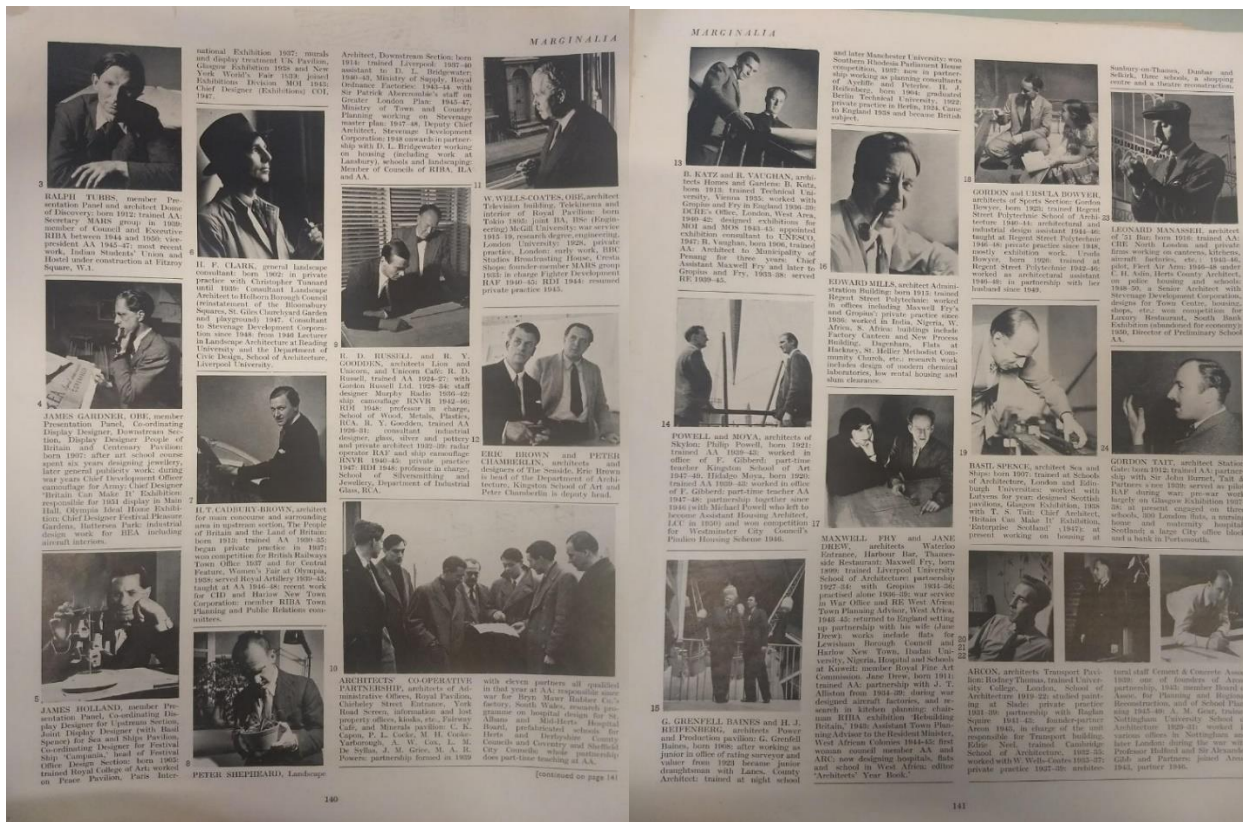
Image 4: Two pages from unnamed architectural journal featuring profiles on all the architects who contributed to the Festival of Britain, 1951. George Backhouse Newspapers.

As part of the South Bank's investment in a modern public space that projected a positive futurity, the event's designers wanted to move away from the typical layout of past world's fairs and international exhibitions, which emphasized individual exhibits and did not account for people's overall pedestrian experience. Instead, Casson and Black understood that the way to address the organization of the event was through guiding principles rather than through complete creative control to create a more organic and holistic flow for the Festival goers. Nicholas Bullock describes this approach as being more akin to "town planners... [who] were able to do little more than establish guiding principles for a layout which would only come to life when animated by the individual pavilions" (70). The main area featured an upstream and downstream circuit with different exhibitions, the focal point

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the Dome of Discovery, and included various other small buildings and art installations such as the renovated 1851 Shot Tower and the towering Skylon. Each circuit focused on a different theme: the Upstream Circuit, or "The Land," focused on natural resources and industry; the Downstream Circuit, or "The People," celebrated British history, arts, and craftmanship; and the Dome of Discovery, promoted British scientific and technological advancements. Yet in turning inwards and presenting specifically British achievements, the Festival organizers wanted to avoid presenting a "conservative, *volkisch* rendering of 'Deep England'" (Conekin 33).

Importantly, as the major exhibition was on the south side of the Thames, it offered various walkways, restaurants, and seating that looked across to the other side of the river where visitors could see the iconic London cityscape that included the Tower of London, St. Paul's Cathedral, and Parliament as they experienced the modernist architecture. As the "Letter from the Editor" in the May 24, 1951 edition of *The Architects' Journal* wrote, "Architects, visiting the South Bank Exhibition, have the benefit of being able to appreciate two worlds: the exhibition *per se*, and the architecture and townscape which contain it. The two worlds are so interrelated and integrated that they are well nigh impossible to separate. Which is, of course, how it should be." The journal insists that the privilege of viewing the city as an integration between architecture and townscape belonged to architects, who with their knowledge of spatial distinctions are at once inside and removed from a city space. This also confirms Bullock's statement that the Festival organizers viewed their role as urban or "town" planners rather than calculated architects, in which they saw the city from various scales.[77] However, in their designs, they ensured that the privilege of seeing architecture and

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[77] The Festival architects often viewed themselves as "town planners" as they wanted to incorporate the positive aspects of the small town into the metropolis (Atkinson 94).

townscape together from different vantages was given to the public, and not just architects and urban planners. This detail demonstrates that the Festival planners believed in design principles that created social equality rather than encourage elitism. Their urban planning philosophy suggests that an individual's engagement with space must always reimagine urbanity as somehow distant from mundane urban experiences and that this opportunity belonged to all inhabitants of the city.[78] To achieve their goals for an equitable urban experience, the Festival architects knew they must use a form of architecture and design that would create spaces removed from the everyday trauma of war and appeal to the public. Levity, whether through imparting a joyousness or the lightness of dreams and utopia, was a crucial component for Casson and his fellow Festival architects, who considered that it was missing in post-war urban planning. They saw the incorporation of this hopeful and populist tone as imperative for the creation of innovative and accessible design that would reinstate a positive future.

To create an appealing architectural design for the public, the Festival relied on architectural designs that were easily understood and consumed by the "average" Briton. In fashioning interconnected exterior and interior spaces, Barry's narrative approach to the Festival showed how design could connect every disparate part of British life. These were then incorporated into every exhibit through material objects and contiguous designs to emphasize the "flow" and continuity of the event, whether it was on modern healthcare or the legacy of Shakespeare and British literary history. The narrative that underpinned the Festival was that a new middle-class British subjectivity was needed to be more

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[78] One can track the relationship between the individual and their impressions of the city across the history of urbanization. Walter Benjamin's *flaneur* finds reverie in wandering in the 19th century; Guy Debord's society of the spectacle then loses themselves in order to escape the consumerism modes of everyday life and return to urban space with a new view; and Michel De Certeau defines wandering in the city as a mode of dreaming.

representative of a changing Britain, one that could no longer depend on its empire as the definition of its power and the increasingly different economics statuses of individuals in the 1950s. As inter-war middle-class subjectivities were entrenched in Victorian social structures (as I discussed in Chapter 1), the Festival became a way to imagine a new middle-class subjectivity that did not have to depend on the imperial past. In fact, as the creators of the Festival of Britain were solidly middle-class themselves, it has been suggested by historians such as Becky Conekin that they could only envision a middle-class audience for the Festival. But that assumption fails to recognize how the social hierarchies were changing in the post-war period. Peter J. Kalliney has argued that in this period class was a symbolic condition rather than a material one and became a "contentious, unstable point around which cultural texts are structured" (3). While Kalliney specifically addresses literary texts in his work, class politics infiltrates all cultural objects and the Festival of Britain can be read as one of those objects.[79] By acknowledging their middle-class status and appealing to the public writ large, the Festival planners sought to erase class difference rather than reinforce entrenched hierarchies.

While the Festival architects and designers' sensibilities may be bourgeois, they embraced the idea that everyone would have the same experience at the Festival. Sir Gerald Barry, Director General of the Festival of Britain, responded in kind in the *International Lighting Review* in 1951:

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[79] As Kalliney addresses, class is something that has to be recognized in 20th century British culture, however much it may seem to have been erased or negated: "Rather like the ghost that seems so out of place in Orwell's modern bungalow—a spectral presence no one cares to acknowledge much less address by name—class politics haunts contemporary analysis of English culture. Dead but not buried, class lingers mostly as a 'shadowy caste-system' of sorts in scholarly treatments of modern England, neglected by scholars who have probably grown weary of the subject [of class] after decades of debate" (3).

As well as giving the British people, who have taken quite a battering in the last ten

years, opportunity for a little innocent fun, the Festival has the serious underlying

purpose of encouraging civic and national pride, acting as a kind of national

reassessment, and doing something to demonstrate to our friend and neighbours in

other countries that we believe that the British are a people not only with a past but

also with a significant future.

Barry's emphasis on "lighthearted fun" as a means to create a new "national reassessment"

demands the formation of a new national identity; rather than reinscribe the seriousness of

the old logic of imperial values and tradition into the nation, it is in the celebratory aspects of

society that a new "Britishness" can be reborn. Jed Esty argues that during the late 1930s and

1940s, the rejection of imperial nationalism reinscribed universalism into the language of

English particularism and supports the anthropological turn towards nationalism that

occurred from 1930-1960 (*A Shrinking Island*, 14).[80] As Nicholas Bullock affirms, Barry and

Ian Cox used the trope of British people as what could cement the past and future together

and create a new Britain: "...it was the variety and resources of Britain and the mixed races of

the people, their 'innate curiosity', that led to British achievement and discovery in every

sphere" (69). The focus on "the people," particularly as it was not exclusively one "race" (i.e.

exclusively English), was another means to demonstrate to the Festival goers that these

exhibits applied directly to them and that the Festival's overarching vision of a social utopia

applied to anyone who viewed themselves as "British." This idealistic form of nationalism

seems naïve from our current vantage and after the criticism of the British New Left, [81]

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[80] Esty writes, "The afterlife of British hegemony is written in this new language of cultural exemplarity, so that Englishness represents not just a type, but the very archetype of modern nationalism, of deep and integral shared traditions emanating from within the prototypical industrial class society" (*A Shrinking Island,* 14).
[81] See the work of Terry Eagleton, Stuart Hall, and Raymond Williams.

particularly as this type of shared national identity renders all difference, including class, negligible. It is important to remember, though, that the shared cultural experience of the Second World War and austerity had already acted as a collective experience and thus a form of class-leveling for the Festival organizers. If the psychological phenomenon of total war was a form of psychic equalization, why couldn't a modern utopia and the rebuilding of London also be class-leveling through its design and spatial planning?

One of the tensions within the Festival was that the form of nation-building that the organizers proposed was created through the collapse of various class distinctions into one universal middle class. International exhibitions had long been considered a mode of promoting middle-class consumption, and the Festival organizers had to consider how the Festival of Britain reimagined the nature of middle-class consumerism, particularly in its relationship to middle-class subjectivity. As the concept of Britain and class subjectivity was reworked "as imperialism lost its teeth" (Kalliney 7) and with the catastrophic events of the Second World War, the economic and social structures that had previously defined British middle-class subjectivities fell apart. Additionally, as the economic structures of Britain changed, so did the buying power of the formerly working class; its members saw a rise in income and they benefitted most directly from the Welfare State's social programs. As Kalliney addresses, government benefits such as housing subsidies and unemployment insurance allowed for working class people to gain economic mobility and make monetary gains previously afforded only to the middle class. These economic shifts also changed who consumed material luxuries.[82]

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[82] Former working classes relied on material objects to demonstrate their economic gain and "the commodities most often cited as markers of increasing affluence were domestic accoutrements" (Kalliney 123).

The relationship between material consumption and class was equally apparent to the Festival organizers in 1951. Festival architect Misha Black directly commented on the relationship between international exhibitions and middle-class consumption in his notes:

> In between whole series of international and semi-international shows. All the same theme – the glory of the machine; the glory of capitalism; the glory of mass-production; the glory of human expansion measured in the terms of international capitalism and very real and vital were these glories for the middle classes who rule the world and sponsored these exhibitions.
>
> And now what – what is to be the theme of 1951. Production as an end in itself [is] no longer sufficient. The next great exhibition... will be a milestone in its own way – an evaluation of the position we have reached to-day and an indication of the road we propose to take to-morrow. (Festival of Britain, papers and schedules.)

Black recognizes that past international exhibitions promoted imperial forms of capitalism and politics, in which the middle class consumed the products and relied on these social structures to fashion individual subjectivity and political power. He also acknowledges that international exhibitions, which focused on capitalist production in the past, could no longer cater exclusively to the old British middle-class audience. What makes Black's notes particularly important is that he identifies that the success of the Festival, and thus the nation, relied upon a new kind of event for a new middle class, one that did not simply perpetuate the fantasies or romanticization of imperial subjectivities and old modes of capitalist consumption. When Black writes that "production is no longer a means in of itself," he acknowledges that the Festival must promote something beyond capitalist consumerism in

order to be successful and thus he turns to his utopia ideals and "the road we propose to take to-morrow" as what will create a broader, more equal society.

"Scandos" Versus Brutalists: the Influence of Modernist Architecture Schools

To begin their class-leveling project, the Festival architects and planners implemented a style of modern architecture that they believed would appeal to, rather than alienate, the public as interwar modernist architecture had.[83] Concerned about the marginalization and past rejection of government sponsored modernist architecture, Head Architect Hugh Casson sought a style that would project 20th century modernity and still reference British traditional building. Influenced by Scandinavian modernism's use of lightweight metal structures and natural materials and its attention to the physical landscape, "Festival Style" used these architectural details alongside traditional English building materials and motifs such as English oak and nautical references. [84] Harriet Atkinson argues that the traditional English design elements can be located within the explicit use of 18th century landscape design and that the new "Picturesque" impact of the Festival was "achieved through a kinetic relationship between displays and people," a direct a departure from Beaux Arts symmetry. The return to the traditional English garden could "awaken dreams" through its focus on the landscape (Atkinson 94-95). While the Festival did draw on these traditional motifs, particularly in the exhibitions' content, the overarching emphasis of modernity radically recontextualized any inclusion of the old as something that could and should be rewritten for a utopian future. Referred to as "The Festival of Fenestration" by one article from the 1951 *Architectural Review,* the use of large windows, steel frames, visible interior supports, and

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[83] See Elwall, p. 9.

[84] Atkinson discusses the British multi-decade love affair with Nordic design, particularly its ability to integrate modern design with the traditional townscape and its promotion by the socialist governments (49-52).

natural wood details emphasized the "open" and modern sensibilities of the structures. As the exterior and interior of the Dome of Discovery showed (See Image 6), Festival Style integrated exposed concrete and steel frames as part of the interior decoration and emphasized the modernist nature of the structure, even when they incorporated traditional building materials and landscape design.

The Lion and Unicorn Pavilion was a clear example of this aesthetic and use of "fenestration" with a floor to ceiling wall of glass at its front entrance (See Image 5). From the exterior, the building seems to reflect only modernist architecture, not English traditionalism. However the name directly references the heraldic symbols of the English crown and the exhibition within the focused on the realism and strength (the Lion) versus the eccentricity and fantasy (the Unicorn) of the British people and included exhibits on the English language and its writers, British craftsmanship, and the countryside.[85] In the entryway, there was a life-size plaster statue of Lewis Carroll's White Knight to indicate British eccentricity. The tongue-in-cheek nature of the statue, particularly its unpainted white plaster which appeared unfinished and childish, undercuts the seriousness of a romanticized traditionalism. Alongside the giant dueling unicorn and lion statues, these whimsical objects of British traditionalism add humor and levity to history, rather than suggest an anachronistic cultural belonging. The implied humor towards British history indicates the Festival organizers' rejection of conservative nostalgia for an imagined British past and their need to create a progressive historical narrative for the Festival that would support their utopian project, particularly in their explicit presentation of history.

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[85] See Conekin's thorough discussion of the symbolism of the two images for Britain in earlier decades, p. 94.

Image 5: Entrance to the Lion and the Unicorn Pavilion, Victoria and Albert Museum Archive.

Image 6: Interior of the Dome of Discovery, Victoria and Albert Museum Archive.

Although each building reflected the individual sensibilities of the architect responsible for its design, the larger exhibition and its overall presentation was what was commented on by architectural reviews in the period. What "caught the imagination of the

critics and the public alike was the opportunity to experience for the first time an urban

landscape that was self-consciously modern" (Bullock 72). This urban planning and its

unique architecture were in striking contrast to other British architectural movements in the

1950s such as New Brutalism, whose proponents viewed Festival Style (also referred to as

"Contemporary Style" in the United Kingdom) and Scandinavian modernism as a betrayal of

20th century architectural ideals. However, as Owen Hatherley argues, modernist architecture

often has two competing strains: one that erases all traces of the past and one that returns to

the past and reimagines it. This can be seen in the competing discussions on the role of

history in architecture in the works of Le Corbusier and Walter Benjamin. As Hatherley

writes, "It's the master-criminal, after all, who excels at erasing the traces, and this

conception of an outlaw aesthetics of modernism coexists alongside an obsession with

collecting the traces, the waste-products, the detritus... to blow open the historical continuum,

to reveal the latent utopia in the covered glass walkways of the recent past" (4). For

Hatherley, Le Corbusier advocated for the erasure of all traces of history and its influence in

design, whereas Benjamin returned to the archive, notably the Paris Arcades, to relocate and

reinscribe historical remnants into the present and future.

These competing goals for modernism were still ongoing debates for post-1945

British architecture. Some architects viewed the past and historic details as a means of

reclaiming utopia, while others felt all historical referents must be removed from architecture

and design. In addition to post-war modernism, there was a resurgence in the building of neo-

Georgian architecture, which implied a cultural dismissal of interwar modernist aesthetics

and a return to the overly traditional and "fussy" style both post-war modernist schools were

trying to avoid.[86] Notably, this style was also associated with the country manor, which

Raymond Williams famously identifies as the site of English identity.[87] Politically,

modernism (whether Festival Style or New Brutalism) became the official architecture of the

welfare state and offered a tangible space for those values to be concretized, although the

Festival of Britain purposely tried to remain apolitical and remove all direct political

references from its exhibits. In fact, the Festival was often criticized by Conservatives as a

means for the ruling Labour Party to endorse socialist values, particularly the programs that

were launched as part of the Welfare State around the same time.[88]

Yet as Robert Elwall and Owen Hatherley have acknowledged, the debates over what

constituted ideal modernist architecture after 1945 were highly fraught despite the reality that

the majority post-45 modernist architectural schools endorsed social welfare and

progressivism. Following Le Corbusier's influence and the idea that all historic reference be

removed from architecture, the New Brutalists (notably architects Alison and Peter

Smithson) insisted that the modernist architecture of the Festival of Britain was "infected

with the worst of English vices, compromise and sentimentality" in its populist "feminine

elegance" and allusions to Victorian design (Elwall 18). The Smithsons and other New

Brutalists believed that their work was grounded in the everyday and projected a true

continuation of interwar modernism rather than the "fantasies" of the Festival, which they

regarded as frivolous and unserious.[89] Despite New Brutalists' disparagements and claims

that the event appealed exclusively to bourgeois sensibilities, the Festival of Britain's utopian

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[86] See Bullock, pp. 40-45.

[87] See Williams' *The Country and the City*.

[88] The Festival included a lot of references to various social programs. In particular, the display on modern medicine and healthcare advocated the most recent public health science, which was a direct acknowledgement of the benefits of the National Health Service.

[89] Hatherley argues that the New Brutalists' attempts to create an extreme form of architectural minimalism participates in a long tradition of within the United Kingdom since the 18th century in which "roughness, barbarism and a Gradgrindian functionalism" have been prioritized in architecture (19).

vision attempted to promote a more populist design, which was integral for post-war

"situated modernism," or a design approach that had an "increased willingness to take

account of popular taste, the lives and lifestyles of those whom the architects sought to

house" (Whyte, 446). Architectural historian Robert Elwall has argued that Festival Style

used attributes from interwar modernist architecture, but took "a more flexible approach," in

which picturesque informality met a more practical modernist vernacular (14-15). Regardless

of the so-called fantastical elements of Festival Design, its architects believed that their

project could offer a form of utopia, even if "frivolous." Indeed, for Casson and the other

architects, part of the utopian vision was to focus on the hopeful potential of space and

greater accessibility rather than the prescriptive top-down approach taken by other post-1945

architectural movements and urban planners.[90] More recently, architecture critic Alan Powers

has argued that despite the New Brutalists' dismissal, the material details of Festival Style

architecture should be reconsidered as a worthy architectural style that influenced much of

later 20th century architecture, including New Brutalists later work.[91]

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[90] In the much later work, *Postmetropolis*, Edward Soja argues that all spaces have the potential to write a hopeful future that is outside of the controls of urban design.

[91] Powers writes, "Contemporary [Festival Style] was a mode of modernism whose maturing process was lost in the War years, its was a message that was heard again after the thunderstorms of New Brutalism had cleared, for the neo-modernism of the 1990s was essentially a revival of Contemporary, seldom possessing the wit and skill of the original. This does not of itself redeem Contemporary, although it suggests that we might be more cautious about throwing stones at it."

Image 7: Exterior and Interior Photos of Regatta Restaurant, Festival of Britain, George Backhouse, Chief Executive Officer for the Festival of Britain: papers – Photographs.

This vision of utopia, however fleeting, inspired the public to view the space of London, and thus Britain, as the tangible site to project a new future for the nation that could erase and move past the trauma of war and form new British subjectivities. Misha Black commented that the public's enthusiastic response to the event and attendance was what could ensure the success of their project beyond the constraints of the event: "Here was proof that architecture of a high standard was acceptable to the majority – at least for public buildings. It opened wide a sluice for contemporary design. If the expected flood waters proved to be a trickle, that was not the fault of the South Bank, but of its timid successors" (Festival of Britain, papers and schedules). Additionally, the "frivolity" so often used to minimize the importance of Festival design was an homage to the Crystal Palace exhibition, even if the architectural styles differed dramatically. In 1851, a German visitor described the Crystal Palace exhibition as "fairylike. It is a Midsummer Night's Dream seen in the clear light of midday," (Festival of Britain, papers and schedules). While the two events marked

two radically different periods in British history, Black, who designed the Upstream Circuit (including the Regatta Restaurant (See Image 7)), was clearly influenced by this description of the 1851 Exhibition and translated the "fairylike" Victorian atmosphere to the celestial, space-age whimsy found in mid-20th century design. The supposed dismissal of the Festival as light-hearted or frivolous missed the point that the 1951 Exhibition created a historical referent while also refusing to memorialize the destruction and cultural malaise of World War II. In connecting the Festival to the uniquely British Crystal Palace Exhibition, Black also helped reinforce the "Britishness" of the modernist design and contradict the interwar criticism that modernist architecture was "foreign" and could never represent England.[92]

After the event ended, Misha Black wrote, "But what had previously been commonplace only to the readers of the Architectural Review suddenly erupted into a public reality. 8,455,000 people experienced modern architecture, not one complained it was inappropriate." Far from being inappropriate, the consensus was that the Festival's use of modernist design was appealing to more than the cultural elite. In fact, this form of architecture could serve as a means of creating one cohesive British experience by helping visitors to navigate the Festival while all experienced the same design and narrative about what made an individual "British." This experience of a cohesive national subjectivity that erased class difference was exceedingly important for the Festival organizers and further underscored the social welfare state's goals to create a classless society by offering government-funded services, including modern architecture and design, to all. In the 1970s, Misha Black reflected on the Festival's influence on British construction:

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[92] William Whyte discusses the accusations of modernism as a foreign aesthetic, whether German, French, or American, in The Englishness of English Architecture: Modernism and the Making of a National International Style, 1927-1957" (449-451).

It suddenly proved that Modern Architecture with a capital M was, in fact,

acceptable... Before the Festival, all the developers and all the get-rich-on-the-

maximum-amount-of-land-which-you-could-afford-to-buy characters believed that

the only kind of architecture which was salable was pompous turn-of-the century

Town Hall style. And suddenly, after the South Bank, they realized, in fact, that this

kind of architecture was common currency, that people accepted the South Bank

without cavil. And it released a flood of the worst kind of bastardized modern

architecture which the country had ever seen.

Black recognized that with the popular appeal of Festival Style came some unfortunate

consequence of its use by developers. As much as he and Casson wished to appeal to the

public, they did not want their design or influence to become bastardized through developer's

cost-cutting measures because it was "common currency" and readily accepted by the public.

Black understood the sad fate of his architectural legacy: the original Festival buildings were

dismantled for scrap material by Churchill's government except for the Royal Festival.

Despite Black's commentary and the sad fate of many modernist buildings in Britain, the

Festival had lasting cultural ramifications that began with the project of design, the content of

the exhibitions, and the lasting influence these had on 1950s British society and beyond.

Making a New Middle Class Material: the Festival Exhibits and Advertisements

Although the Festival buildings did not survive, the attempts by the Festival organizers to

create a modern middle class had long-lasting effects. The individual content of each exhibit

was equally important to this project. The South Bank Exhibition's displays worked

specifically to create a collective narrative about a unique British past, present, and future.

Harriet Atkinson argues that what truly links each individual exhibition is the narrative approach to the circuits in which an "interwoven serial story" unfolds (25). This was because of Director Gerald Barry's unusual approach which he initiated with Ian Cox, the Director of Science and Technology: each project collaboration or exhibit had a script written by a professional scriptwriter to accompany the blueprints and design mockups, which created cohesive routes for the visitors as they wandered amongst the different parts of the South Bank Exhibition. Atkinson attributes the need for storytelling on Barry's previous job as the editor of the *News Chronicle* (27), but it's important to note the concept of a singular narrative for British experience, particularly as an overarching, often national, narrative was not a new concept. It was inherent to most urban planning in the 19th and 20th centuries, both in Hausmann's redesigns of Paris and in the bulldozing of Victorian slums in 1930s London. For the Festival visitors, the idea of a cohesive story in which the individual followed the script would have been familiar from the propaganda and rhetoric of World War II, in which British citizens were told to follow specific paths during blackouts, air raids, and other forms of wartime activities.[93] By offering a specific route and mechanism to engage with the city space of London, the Festival offered a new, albeit official, means to rewrite and evade the recent history of war and its dictation of individual's actions and movement in urban space.

The mechanism in which the recent history of war was rewritten was further exemplified by the content of the exhibits themselves. Through the exhibitions, the Festival organizers saw history and science as concrete examples to bolster the idea that Britain could be modern and progressive, rather than backward and celebratory of a romanticized past. The Victorian explorers celebrated in the Dome of Discovery had evolved by 1951 into the

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[93] See Laura Feigal's discussion of bodily actions and cultural behaviors that become enacted through the rhetoric of World War II and the need to create narrative in *The Love-charm of Bombs*.

scientists, doctors, and engineers of the 20th century. The scientific and technological professionals overshadowed their Victorian predecessors because they were integral to the everyday experience of the United Kingdom, rather than perpetuate the exotic geography of empire or reinforce commerce of imperialism as the explorers did. The constant conflation of past British achievement with the recent or potential discoveries of post-1945 meant that any romanticization of British history was progressively oriented and directed towards new discovery, rather fall into *volkisch* and conservative nationalism. In the display on outer space, Stonehenge and its construction were compared to the space age and its ongoing development as uniquely British achievements that were tied to the continued discovery of aspects of the solar system. Although Becky Conekin portrays the Festival and its projection of British history as atemporal, in which the ancient history of the British Isles became the anchor for all British achievement, she also insists that this form of historical erasure is what allows for the futurity in which the entire nation would be a "more educated and rational citizenry" (45). Where Richard Hornsey reads the Festival of promoting a positivism in which science became the mechanism for British social progress and its future (and thus ignores subjectivities that do not fit into this narrative), Conekin insists that the temporality of the Festival allows for a space in the present in which to "make sense of the past and the future" (45). The present of the Festival offered an atemporal space, however fleeting, in which the devastated cityscape of London and the recent past of WWII could not operate. This escapism denies historicity, as Hornsey has argued. Like all urban planning, the Festival offered a "prescribed circuit" in which the planner was the ultimate decider rather than the individual.[94] Yet, that erasure of the most recent past and return to an older one to move

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[94] Akin the Abercrombie and Forshaw's plan for London, Hornsey reads the Festival as another instant in which urban planning attempts to manage bodies and deny any practice outside of the prescribed actions inherent to

forward was one of the tangible ways the Festival could actively erase cultural cynicism, however temporary.

This form of historical reinterpretation was also rife in the media of the period. In the article, "The South Bank by Floodlight", in <u>The Outshining Light: The Mazda Lighting Journal</u> which was published as a souvenir of the event, the author describes this almost T.S. Eliot-style of myth making:

> The South Bank of the Thames, focal point of all Festival activities, is surrounded by
>
> the land-marks of old London and is richly endowed with historical associations.
>
> Here our forefathers made their way by rowing boat to the Shakespearian theatre, or
>
> the bear-pit; here Pepys retreated with a lady friend, and George III and his entourage
>
> listened to the music of Handel. The Exhibition structures, modern in the extreme,
>
> have emerged in the centre of this ancient part to delight or astonish the beholder.

The article romanticizes the history of the Thames through the images of the Globe, Pepys in a boat, and the music of Handel moving in time with the author's depictions of a past London. The South Bank Exhibition pops up unexpectedly, almost to disrupt the historical fantasy, except that it is integrated as part of the narrative of this atemporal moment. It delights and astonishes, which suggests that it is integral to the old story of London and part of its future. This portrait of history supports both Hornsey's and Conekin's arguments that the Festival rewrote history to serve the purpose of projecting a potentially false version of Britishness through London, rather than the empire, and yet sought to demonstrate how the historicity of the city, particularly the reconstructed South Bank, would become integral to formations of future British subjectivity.

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the urban planning itself: "Yet, in thereby serving in order visitors' feet, the story that the [South Bank] exhibition told became also a strategy of social and spacial management, foreclosing unexpected or unmanageable practices through its totalized deployment" (59).

What makes this passage also unusual is that the journal's focus was cutting-edge lighting design. The photographs in this edition show the Festival at night, covered in lights that showcased both the modern architecture and the iconic cityscape at night. If indeed the Festival was a "tonic to the nation," light and the use of electricity to celebrate the city at night is an incredible visual shift from the blackouts of the war, in which the city and its landmarks were hidden so they would not be given away to German bombers. While the piece celebrates a romanticized Thames, the journal itself shows how this past, now replaced with the brightly lit city, announces London as a beacon for the world and one that could expend its electricity.[95] Electricity, as a metonym for modernity, could link the ancient and historic London with the post-45 cosmopolitan metropolis, adapting to fit old and new buildings, and thus project a nation that could celebrate its past and embrace its futurity. As Sir Gerald Barry, the Festival's Director, wrote in *The International Lighting Review* in 1951, "We have tried also to introduce a lightheartedness and gaiety into this drab and menacing world by the illuminations in and around the Exhibition along the Thames waterfront" ("Notes"). The "lightheartedness" that Barry refers to echoes the same "lightness" that the event's critics used to mock its aesthetics. Yet, the physical light that emitted from the Festival was what connected the city and its architectural past and present as a celebratory beacon rather than as a solemn and dark shell. The image of light represented a nation that had fully moved past World War II and the psychic tolls of total war, including the cynicism of total war that is necessary for individuals' rejection of futurity.[96]

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[95] Atkinson also discusses the use of light in conjunction with bright colors to emphasize a joyous atmosphere. The colorful screens and murals in various places also had a practical purpose of "shielding visitors from the grey desolation of the industrial wasteland beyond the site. In this sense, colour performed a structural purpose, compensating for missing buildings and unwelcome empty spaces. But beyond this, color had a strong symbolic value, signifying modernity, vitality, and simple 'gaiety'" (97).

[96] See Saint-Amour, p. 31.

Image 8: Skylon and Dome of Discovery at night with the north bank of the Thames in the background. George Backhouse Photographs. c.1951.

Image 9: View from Regatta Restaurant Looking on Thames and North Bank, George Backhouse Photographs. c.1951.

With the need to emphasize the modern, the Festival reinterpreted the Crystal Palace Exhibition and its reliance on middle-class consumption for its "everyman" audience. One example was the Festival's emphasis on the infiltration of contemporary science in everyday objects and experiences, mirroring the 1851 antecedent of exploration and scientific discovery as a central component to middle-class subjectivity.[97] The scientific discoveries of the 20th century were equally important for the defining middle-class subjectivity in 1951. The widespread introduction of modern medicine through the National Health Service and the rise of jobs that required technical skills derived from new science and technology were some of the examples in which science infiltrated the everyday for all classes. The Festival of Britain's integration of modern science into the everyday can be clearly seen in the textile designs by crystallographer, Dr. Helen Megaw. Megaw, who determined the physical structures of atoms through X-ray crystallography, gave various drawings she had constructed of atomic molecules to designers who then rendered them into fabrics, wallpapers, and other design elements. These textiles and designs were used to decorate various exhibit spaces in the Festival, including the Regatta Restaurant which overlooked the Thames and offered diners food and alcohol previously limited during austerity (See Image 7). As crystallography was one of the sciences of which Britain was at the forefront in 1951 (Atkinson 177), the textile designs' incorporation of crystalline structures simultaneously promoted the British scientific breakthroughs and made them mundane by applying it to ordinary materials. The designs rendered the microscopic not only visible, but large and colorful, and were a playful acknowledgement that even the mundane is constructed of complex atoms. These patterns were also based on molecules crucial for biology and

[97] See Anne McClintock's *Imperial Leather* and her discussion of the relationship between colonization, consumerism, and Victorian middle-class subjectivity.

medicine such as hemoglobin (See Image 10) and insulin (See Image 11) or based on complex chemical structures needed for manufacturing such as afwillite (See Image 12), which is used in concrete and boric acid. As the post-war period was filled with increased manufacturing, building, and the rise of social programs based on medicine and health sciences, these patterns are subtle reminders of how Britain had changed to become more "modern" after World War II. The designs also covered curtains, carpets, and furniture in the Festival exhibits and were used for dish patterns, household objects, and clothing, which could be bought at various London stores during the Festival. That these items could be taken home and reproduce the Festival outside of the exhibition's confines suggest how much its organizers wanted to prove that their form of quotidian modernization was not just an event, but a lifestyle that could be replicated in every space through the nation.

Image 10: Haemoglobin 8.26, Woven Silk made for the Festival of Britain by Vanners & Fennel Ltd. based on the crystallography of Dr. Helen Megaw, Victoria and Albert Museum.
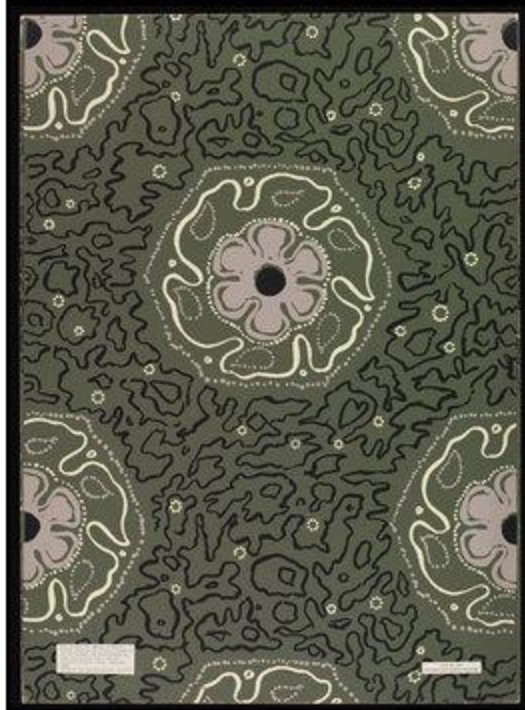
Image 11: Insulin 8.27, Wallpaper made for the Festival of Britain by William Odell of John Line & Son based on the crystallography of Dr. Helen Megaw, Victoria and Albert Museum.
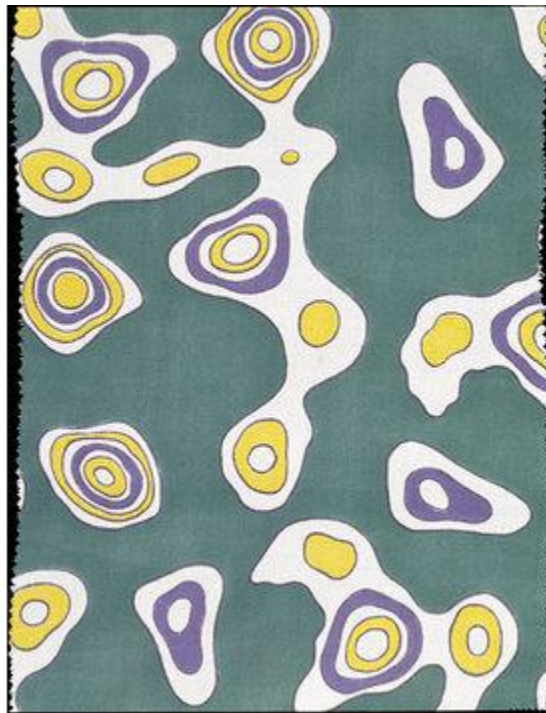
Image 12: Afwillite 8.45, Dress fabric (rayon) for the Festival of Britain designed by S.M. Slade for British Celanese Ltd. based on the crystallography of Dr. Helen Megaw, Victoria and Albert Museum.

These examples were also indicative of this new generation's attitude and celebration of the everyday as part of the positive class-leveling vision for the future. Science and technology were no longer abstract or removed disciplines; the airplane and the car that cause chaos in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* were thoroughly banal objects for 1951 Londoners. As previously discussed, the Festival's goal was to somehow link the past and future together in the present and in its extension to the everyday; yet this narrative of a reimagined historical future was not unique to the Festival alone and extended to other forms of rhetoric that located a positive modernity in a new generation. This is clear from the advertisements from 1951, which capitalized upon the promotion of this "youthful" generation and their vision of London and society, although youthful seems to be synonymous with those who were under 40. In an advertisement for Richard Costain Limited, a construction and engineering firm that specialized in housing, the South Bank Exhibition plays a major role. Illustrated from a bird's eye view, the advertisement shows the year "1951" in giant numerals as if it was the sun rising over the Thames and shedding light upon the city (See Image 13). The image is striking in its suggestion that this particular year and the Festival are the urban restorative for London after years of war and continued austerity. Equally important, the Thames is framed by the words "time and tide," which allows the 1951 viewer to fill in the remainder of the phrase (i.e. "Time and tide will wait for no man") and acknowledge the immediacy of the now for the future. Additionally, as the advertisement is for a construction company, the inclusion of the iconic Festival buildings solidifies the industry's support of the event and endorses the structures particularly the Dome of Discovery as feats of modern engineering. The focus on modern construction and British technological savvy through the

image of the South Bank helps to undercut the fear that Americans were at the forefront of engineering and building and offers a hopeful perspective that London can rise from its ashes. The 20th century was no longer a continuation of 19th century scientific innovation, but the century of engineering

Typical of advertisements of the period, the image also includes a long narrative description, which reads:

The "Festival of Britain" presented both problems to the organisers. Time – relentlessly passing, placed the authorities with the problem of how to fulfil the vast first quality constructional requirements demanded by the 1951 prestige year and, how best to deal with the vagaries of the Tide of the Thames as it lapped at the site of the proposed New South Embankment.

All points considered, resources – quality – reliability – speed – economy – a first-class Building and Civil Engineering Organisation completed the works on schedule...

The advertisement continues in its suggestion that British engineering and innovation made the Festival possible. Both the image and the narrative depend on the practical details that the Festival was a near-impossible challenge because of time, labor, and material constraints. Like the pastoral vision of the Mazda Lighting Journal, the emphasis on both the Thames and the Festival suggest that Britain is bound to Conekin's ahistorical time in which the river is the natural unifier. Yet with the feats of technology and engineering emerging on the horizon of the mid-20th century, a new moment had begun, one that rejected a static romantic vision or ahistorical time. Richard Costain Ltd. mostly built small housing projects during this period and the 1951 reader probably knew this, especially the ones reading the architectural

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magazines in which the ad was placed. The content suggests that the firm wanted their clients

to know that the engineering and construction feats of the Festival applied to their own

housing projects within the space of the city. With offices throughout the empire listed at the

bottom of the ad, the firm's advertisement ignores the empire and instead returns to the space

of the British Isles. The sun no longer rises on the empire, but the city of London. Richard

Costain Ltd.'s ad reinforces the Festival organizers' philosophy that a positive future was

grounded in the material space of London and promotes modernist structures as integral for

the modern everyday.
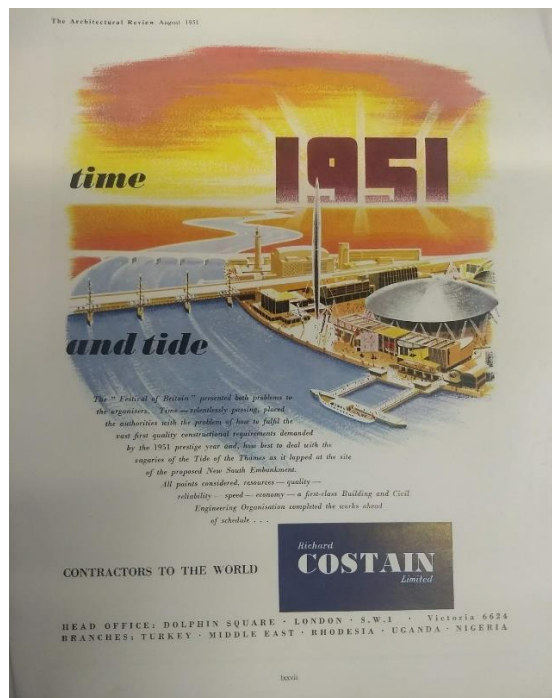
Image 13: Advertisement for Richard Costain Ltd., a construction firm published in The Architectural Review, *August 1951.*

Not all advertisements that supported the Festival's perspective relied on images of

the South Bank to reinforce a modern Britain. A 1951 advertisement for Westminster Bank

capitalizes upon the "younger generation" and their need to "think for themselves" (See

Image 14). The ad's illustration shows a young woman speaking to an older man, presumably

a bank executive at his desk. There are no references or images of the Festival of Britain, but like the Richard Costain advertisement, the narrative included with the illustration of the bank scene relies on the conflation of old and new to promote its services for the future. Addressing "The Younger Generation," which is enlarged and bolded, the texts states that this generation is "often... continuing a family tradition" by banking at Westminster Bank. Yet the advertisement quickly moves away from the idea of tradition as the incentive for their popularity and that the bank's customer service for all is what is important: the bank offers "personal attention and a friendly welcome, even though their accounts perhaps be small." It is because of the younger generations' original thoughts and expectations that Westminster Bank concludes: "it is all the more pleasant to record that so many of them decide to 'bank with the Westminster.'" What is particularly noteworthy about the bank's appeal to a younger generation is its confirmation of the influence of this new generational outlook that rejected tradition and the status quo. The bank's appeal to anyone regardless of their account size also suggests that they were catering to clients at a range of income levels: the former middle-classes whose incomes were gradually reducing and the former working-classes whose income and material buying power were increasing. With the rejection of tradition also comes the rejection of former class distinctions, however theoretical. Yet, this also supports and demonstrates that the Festival attitude toward creating one cohesive middle class. While the Festival organizers wanted to create an event that was class-leveling and form a new middle-class, it did not dismantle previous middle-class ideals or conservative institutions like banking. Instead as the advertisement shows, industries like banking plagiarized the rhetoric of the Festival and embraced the younger generation. However, unsuccessful the Festival was as a lasting architectural feat, its "class-leveling" project and

promotion of a positive futurity were widespread and successfully promoted a modern middle class, however fictive it might be.
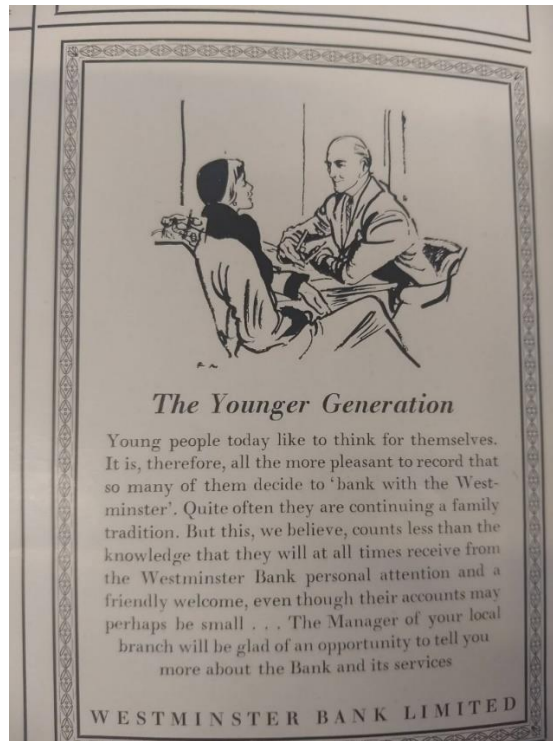
Image 14: 1951 Advertisement for Westminster Bank, Victoria and Albert Museum Archive.

Bohemian and British: Iris Murdoch's Middle-Class London in *Under the Net*

Published a year after her treatise on Jean-Paul Sartre, Iris Murdoch's first novel, *Under the Net* (1954), presents a fictional account of an unemployed translator and novelist who wanders around London in hopes of finding his next adventure and place to squat. Jake Donaghue, the first-person narrator, continues to fail in his writerly endeavors, never has enough money. He constantly relies on friends and acquaintances to give him a place to stay. Yet Jake never seems to care that he uses his friends' hospitality or that he does not have enough money; he will be able to get out of any scrape as he has done before. Jake acts as an alter-ego for Murdoch. Like her, he had recently published a philosophical dialogue,

although Jake's publication was greatly unsuccessful. The philosophical dialogue, *The Silencer*, relates the conversations between Jake and his then best friend, philosopher and filmmaker Hugo Belfounder. With the publication of the dialogue, Jake avoids Hugo, because he never told him about his book, in which he had plagiarized Hugo's ideas, and he "absconds" from their friendship. The plot of the novel takes a turn when Jake, ever on the hunt for a free room, becomes the bodyguard and house sitter for the actress Sadie Quentin, who needs protection from the unwanted advances of Hugo. The remainder of the novel devolves into a caper, or a philosophical quest-narrative in which the ultimate objective remains unknown (Nakagami 14), as Jake hunts for Hugo through attempts of blackmail, sleuthing, and pure chance to explain the circumstances of his book.[98] This motive seems farfetched at best; Jake's ultimate search is for meaning or purpose in life and follows the bohemian intellectual's philosophical prerogative. While *Under the Net* is often described as an existential picaresque, in which Murdoch mocks and explores her own philosophical ideas and writings. Yet it portrays a section of the solidly middle-class "youthful generation," who unlike other writers of the period such as John Osborne and Philip Larkin, embraced 1950s British society with lightness and reluctant optimism. While the Festival of Britain is not directly referenced within the novel, the use and reliance on 1950s London as a tangible place, and even character, demonstrates the lasting cultural effects of the Festival's utopian vision for the middle class and those under 40.[99]

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[98] Nakagami further comments: "The paradox that an absence of a motif, which is usually the driving force behind a narrative, itself becomes the motive that sets the story of *Under the Net* in motion doubtlessly constitutes a central theme of the novel. The same paradox can also be considered the novel's weakness." One issue that critiques like Nakagami and Richard Todd address is that rather than be situational or character driven but part of Murdoch's own philosophical compulsiveness.

[99] This is also illustrated by the novel's epigraph from John Dryden's *The Secular Masque* (1700):

    All, all, of a piece throughout;
    Thy Chase had a Beast in View;
    Thy Wars brought nothing about;

The novel opens with a dedication to Raymond Queneau, the French novelist and Oulipo founder, and again nods to him in the first chapter when Jake takes two novels, one by Queneau and one by Samuel Beckett, from his sometime lover Madge's house (Murdoch 15). What is ironic about Murdoch's incorporation of the French writers is that while she and her protagonist are extremely influenced by French fiction, *Under the Net* presents itself as in entirely realist language and refuses to participate in the unstable language called for by both Queneau and Beckett. Instead of questioning the (un)reproducibility of reality through language, the novel focuses on existentialism, individuals' determination of their own reality, and philosophy's influence on narrative (Nakagami 12). Murdoch's reaction against other realist writers of her period, such as the Angry Young Men, becomes clear through this lens. While she does not necessarily question the inherent nature of language itself, she does not accept that the realism of a text inherently mirrors the reality of the world or that the singular perspective of 1950s realism which is always driven by an individual's determinations is what constitutes a collective reality. While the Angry Young Men's portraits of post-war England in such works as *Saturday Nights and Sunday Mornings* (1958) or *Looking Back in Anger* (1956), may replicate reality for them, Murdoch quickly addresses in *Under the Net* that their vision is not true for many others. For her, one of the inherent failures of didactic realism is that it becomes too ideological rather than exploratory. If the novel's obsession with existentialism and the individual's perception of reality is the true imperative of the text, it soon becomes another means for understanding the social attitude of the "classless" characters of *Under the Net*.

Thy Lovers were all untrue.
'Tis well an Old Age is out,
And time to begin a New.

While much has been made of the existentialism within *Under the Net*, it can also be read as response to earlier novels like Patrick Hamilton's *Hangover Square* (1941), in which the protagonists wander around London, avoid work, and search for their next drink or social activity. Unlike the Hamilton's London of the 1940s in which the young middle-class characters dabble in Fascism, recoil at the increasing horror of war, and fall into economic depression which results in suicide attempts, Murdoch's characters' lack of work and money, but their various forms of "slumming it" result in continued optimism and opportunity. While Jake's education is never fully addressed in the novel, he clearly is highly educated for the time to work as a French-English translator and mingle with various intellectuals. Oxbridge is never mentioned, though, and the use of London as a setting disrupts any academic pretenses or commentary on established education, as is raised, for example, in other novels of the period such as Kingsley Amis' *Lucky Jim* (1954). The refusal to reference any form of established education makes Jake a difficult character to sort class-wise. His knowledge of French and past visits to Paris can be ascribed to the benefits of an educated middle-class British life. Or, as the novel is set relatively recently after World War II, his language skills and travel experience could be a direct result of wartime employment.[100] To complicate matters, Jake's pretenses fall into the stereotypes of 1950s bohemianism and the cultural obsession of the period with existentialism. When Jake does reference class, it further amplifies a cultural elitism that acknowledges class and yet refuses to participate in the ongoing class wars of the 1950s. After a scene in which he is locked into Sadie's luxurious flat (not unlike a scene in Anthony Burgess' *The Doctor is Sick* (1960)), Jake steals some

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[100] Jake states that he "something over thirty" and "What is more important for the purposes of this tale, I have shattered nerves. Never mind how I got them. That's another story, and I'm not telling you the whole story of my life. I have them; and one effect of this is that I can't bear being alone for long" (Murdoch 21). This makes is plausible and likely that he served in some capacity during World War II.

biscuits and says, "I asked myself if I belonged to a social class that would pinch two tins of *pâté de foie gras* from a woman guilty of making an illegal detention, and decided that I did" (Murdoch 88-89). Jake's questioning of his social class is more than ironic when his dilemma is whether he should steal *foie gras*. Yet, the grammatical structure suggests two readings: is he of a class that would steal, which suggests a middle-class snobbery towards the perceived notions of working-class life; or is he of a class that would steal a luxury item as a form of retribution against the wealthy?

Jake's refusal to offer a biographical reading of himself undercuts any clear notion of social birthright and instead, suggests that his class is whichever one he chooses to participate in. The only indication of any "background" is in his name, James Donaghue, which potentially has Irish roots. However, any Irish identity is quickly undercut by his assertion that he has been to "Dublin only once, on a whisky blind" and his commentary on the Irish arises once in his discussion of his sidekick, Finn, and Finn's lapsed Catholicism (21-22). This form of apparent class self-selection counters the Angry Men's rigid determinations of class and their anti-French intellectualism. For the Angry Young Men, class within domestic spaces such as the home (and Britain more broadly) became a "metaphor for national culture and the 'repatriation' of English literature with the assistance of the welfare state, which itself represented a political attempt to foster self-reliance" (Kalliney 116). Jake, as a stand-in for Murdoch and those seeking an existential bohemianism, rejects class distinctions as a form of endorsing the welfare state; instead, he represents a form of the modern middle-class that the Festival organizers attempted to create. He does not need to assert his former class identity because it does not matter in the modern spaces of London in which he participates. For him, class disappears in the pursuit of

existential meaning and the space of the modernized city. Yet like to the Angry Young Men, Jake needs the space of England to define his self. On the first page of the novel, he states, "I hate the journey back to England anyway; and until I have been able to bury my head so deep in dear London that I can forget I have ever been away I am inconsolable" (Murdoch 7).

Of course, Jake's search for existentialism can be read as symptomatic of middle-class leisure, bourgeois intellectualism, and youth pop culture. Yet the class politics of the novel are further complicated by the various characters that Jake meets as part of his picaresque *flâneurie* or meaningless quest. One interpretation of Murdoch's quest novel is that it attempts to portray the idea that existential meaning is found in other individuals, not in oneself or the social structures of the world. In its philosophical realism, the novel grapples with the strange intersections of London society in post-war Britain. This "light-hearted" realism once again rejects the notion of locked class boundaries perpetuated in other novels. The first so-called working-class character in the book is Madge's new boyfriend, the racecourse-bookie Sammy Starfield, who is only defined as working-class because of his profession and use of slang. Sammy attempts to pay Jake to compensate for moving out of Madge's flat, and Jake at first refuses with the statement, "...I really have no claims on Madge... And secondly because I don't belong to a social class that takes money in a situation like this." To which Sammy responds: "But what do chaps like you care about your social class? Chaps like you are always short of money" (Murdoch 72). Once again, it is unclear which class Jake is referring to as he seems to uphold Orwell's gentlemanly code of honor, although in an entirely mocking fashion. After drinking whisky together, Jake eventually agrees to take the money if Sammy places some bets for him and guarantee winners. The irony of Jake's mock gentlemanliness is found in Sammy's further

commentary: "Sammy looked at me with an interested *ad hominem* look. 'But I've done you an injury... I wouldn't feel straight with my conscience if you didn't take something" (72-73). Sammy's insistence on paying Jake for his "injury" reveals that Sammy possesses the true gentlemanly "honor" by compensating Jake for his losses, not Jake. Sammy's commentary that money trumps social class also adeptly reveals that class structures and identities are possibly irrelevant for someone like Jake who is always in need of money and dependent on others. His bohemian "slumming" may be a bourgeois act or a form of class erasure because Jake's dependency on others dismantles those boundaries. As both Kenneth Allsop and Richard Todd have pointed out, Jake is the "outsider figure" who can only be a product of his time and the social make-up of 1950s Britain.[101] Thus Jake's refusal to locate his identity within class becomes a realist moment of a certain subset of young men, who unlike the Angry Young Men, took solace in French philosophy.

The other exposé of overt class politics in the novel occurs in the various moments Jake interacts with the New Independent Socialist activist and journalist, Lefty Todd, who Jake meets in a Fleet Street pub. Lefty at first seems to be a caricature of 20th century British leftist politics as he is an insistently irritating conversationalist who constantly canvasses others for his cause. However, Lefty, along with Sammy, is one of the few characters who recognizes Jake's pseudo-intellectualism. When Lefty is asked what he knows about Jake upon their introduction, he replies, "...you are a talented man who is too lazy to work and that you hold left-wing opinions but take no active part in politics" (96). Jake eventually strikes up a friendship with Lefty through the camaraderie of drinking and bathing in the Thames. Lefty quickly offers a critique of Jake's existentialism as politically ineffective:

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[101] See Kenneth Allslop's *The Angry Decade* and Richard Todd' *Iris Murdoch.*

Why are we so impressed by the very high degree of consciousness which these people seem to have had of what they were up to? Because they succeeded. If they hadn't succeeded they'd look like a gang of crackpots. It's in retrospect that we see the whole thing as a machine of which they understood the workings... You call yourself socialist, but you were brought up on Britannia rules the waves like the rest of them. You want to belong to a big show. That's why you're sorry you can't be a communist. But you can't be – and neither have you enough imagination to pull out of the other thing. So you feel hopeless... Maybe we have lost one chance to be the leaders of Europe, but the point is to deserve it. Then perhaps we'll have another one" (101).

Jake's reaction to Lefty is one of bemused understanding. Instead of fully acknowledging Lefty's criticisms, he uses the opportunity to drink more and engage in a philosophical discussion. Yet Lefty's commentary addresses the inability for many liberal Britons to truly believe in a socialist possibility. That most of Britain was raised with the imperialist concept of "Britannia rules" illuminates how at odds British imperialism and the post-1945 welfare state were. Lefty's cynical take is that the British only want the spectacle of progressivism, not the inherent reality of leftist politics. Within Britain, "the big show" can easily be read as the Festival of Britain, in which the entirety of the United Kingdom participated as a celebration of progressive politics and design, and yet quickly forgot the progressive manifesto once the event was over.

Lefty's assertion about British politics is also astute in its recognition that individuals like Jake do not have enough "imagination" to "pull out of the other thing." While Lefty seems to indicate that the answer to any existential search for meaning is found in the

possibility of imagination, it also reinforces the idea that to envision or imagine a hopeful future is what is essential for individual success and happiness. Lefty even states that perhaps one day Britain will be the leader of Europe, which probably seemed impossible to a 1954 audience who still felt the ramifications of World War II. Yet this imagination is exactly what the Festival of Britain architects hoped to achieve in their whimsical, yet modernist design. The London that infiltrates the text takes on the dreamspace of a hopeful future, even if Jake does not fully recognize it:

> The evening was by now well advanced. The darkness hung in the air but spread out in a suspended powder which only made the vanishing colours more vivid. The zenith was a strong blue, the horizon a radiant amethyst. From the darkness and shade of St. Paul's Churchyard we came into Cheapside as into a bright arena, and saw framed in the gap of a ruin the pale neat rectangles of St. Nicolas Cole Abbey, standing alone away to the south of us on the other side of Cannon Street. In between the willow herb wave over what remained of the streets. In this desolation the coloured shells of houses still raised up filled and blank squares of wall and window. The declining sun struck on glowing bricks and flashing tiles and warmed the stone of an occasional fallen pillar. As we passed St Vedast the top of the sky was vibrating into a later blue, and turning into what used to be Freeman's Court we entered a Henekey's house. (Murdoch 95)

Although Jake describes the bombed buildings in Cheapside and feels the desolation of the night, the description of the individual ruins is positive and they become kaleidoscopic in their colors. The houses are not skeletons of the past but "coloured shells;" the sun warms them and causes them to catch fire and glow. The sky vibrates a brilliant blue. Jake lists all

the former landmarks, but whatever sadness lingers is overcome by the incredible pastoral beauty of the streets. Jake's use of color also suggests a positive portrait of the city, one in which is about to spring with life even in the evening twilight. London holds the continued potential of renewal, even if Jake does not quite recognize it yet.

The hopeful future that was imperative for their progressive utopia is continually perpetuated through Lefty. In one of the most disorienting scenes in *Under the Net*, Jake visits the Belfounder studios with a hostage, the dog Marvelous Mister Mars, in hopes that Hugo will finally meet with him. The film studio is filming a version of the conspiracy of Cataline, in which Sadie stars, and upon entering the studio, Jake sees what he thinks is one of the Roman scenes unfold:

> In the background, rising up in an explosion of colour and form, was a piece of ancient Rome. On brick walls and arches and marble pillars and columns there fell the brilliantly white radiance of the arc lamps, making the buildings stand out in a relief more violent than of nature and darkening by contrast the surrounding air into a haze of twilight... Most strange of all, in the open arena in front of the city stood a crowd of nearly a thousand men in perfectly motionless silence. Their backs were turned to me and they seemed to listen enthralled to the vibrating voice of a single figure who stood raised above them on a chariot, swaying and gesticulating in the focus of the blazing light. (Murdoch 141-142)

The set, which Jake recognizes as fictional, takes on a "strange" realism in its appearance in which the buildings "stand out in a relief more violent than nature." What makes the buildings appear to be true Roman structures are their realism, which is inherently fake. This conflation of reality and imagination endorses the existentialist view that it is always

impossible to know what constitutes a collective reality. Yet, both the reader and Jake

recognize that the goal of art is to use artifice to make language and fiction "real." As

Nakagami infers, there is no need for Jake to ever have a spiritual revelation or find an

answer to his quest because "any narrative is merely a possibility among many others, not

dictated by necessity but by mere chance. This awareness... is what the artist needs to dispel

the temptation of art, and it is what Jake finds in the end, instead of desire" (18). The

temptation of art, as Nakagami argues, is represented through Anna who Jake pines after

throughout the novel because she is the unobtainable woman and the figure of the pure,

unaffected artist. Yet, the temptation of art can also be read as the goal of the bohemian

lifestyle in which Jake performs the role of the artist without, as Lefty points out, ever

committing to an artistic or political framework. The goal of Murdoch's realism is to reject

any kind of essentialized or authoritative artistic stance because it reinforces a singular

narrative and only the experiential, rather than the imagined or potential reality of "real life."

 The strangeness of the set is further emphasized by the description of the thousand

silent men standing there, who are listening enthralled with a figure on a chariot. Jake's

description mimics the grandiosity of historical films of the 1950s, such as *Richard III* (1955)

and *Ben Hur* (1959). and the uncanny nature of the set relies on the impossibility of scale in

which a thousand men could be simultaneously silent. What appears to be a fictive narrative

quickly becomes reality when Jake realizes that the figure in the chariot is Lefty, who

addresses the crowd and demands that they reject capitalism. In seconds, the film set

becomes chaotic as the hyper-conservative "United Nationalists" arrive to disrupt the speech,

followed by the police. It is at this moment that Jake finds Hugo and the film scene

transforms into a riot:

The whole mass swayed to and fro like a vast Rugby scrum, into the midst of which

every now and then a man would leap from the scaffolding or from one of the camera

cranes scattering friend and foe alike. Out of this undulating pile of punching,

kicking, and wrestling humanity there arose a steady roar in which cries of pain and

anger were inextricably merged... In the distance we could see Lefty, still mounted on

his chariot, still gesticulating, his mouth opening and shutting, while round about him,

as about the body of Hector, the battle raged to and fro with particular ferocity.

Nearby the long banner which said SOCIALIST POSSIBILITY rose and fell upon the

surge. (146)

What was once the fantastical scene of a film set becomes a battleground, in which the

ancient Roman military merges with the political chaos of the moment. With Lefty directing

his "military" from his chariot, the banner of "Socialist Possibility" rises and falls, which

suggests that a full battle is underway and who will be victorious is unclear. Hugo and Jake

flee the scene by blasting a hole in a nearby wall and compare the debris and mass of figures,

including some on horseback, to an illustration of Waterloo (150). While Lefty's socialist

goals are still hard-fought, the scene demonstrates how reality and imagination, art and life

constantly merge to form some semblance of the world. However fictive it might seem, Lefty

believes in the political potential of his socialist vision, even if it is never fully actualized.

Thus, his struggle for politics and his vision of the world is another form "existential"

attempt to make an individual fantasy real. Politics act as a means to change the present and

future reality for Lefty, just as architecture and design acted as the hopeful potential for the

Festival of Britain. At the end of the novel, Lefty refers to his midnight swim with Jake as a

"midsummer's night dream" (245), further emphasizing that everything, including politics

and philosophy, are part of the quest to make fantasy reality. Although it may not have been intentional, this allusion to the midsummer night's dream recalls the same statement that influenced Misha Black's vision for his architecture and the promise represented by the space of London to realize a hopeful future for the modern world.

At the end of the novel, Jake is finally able to discuss his philosophical dialogue with Hugo at the hospital where Hugo has been admitted after a head injury during Lefty's next large political meeting. Jake, having visited Paris and found it to be an empty dream, returns to London and takes a job as an orderly at a hospital. He describes his change of heart towards work as part of the need to be productive:

> It occurred to me that to spend half the day doing manual work might be very calming to the nerves of one who was spending the other half of the day doing intellectual work, and I could not imagine why I had not thought before of this way of living, which would ensure that no day could pass without *something* having been done, and so keep that sense of uselessness which grows in prolonged periods of sterility, away from me for ever. (Murdoch 209)

This radical change in Jake's bohemian outlook also comes with the realization that he cannot take up Madge's offer of a sinecure. He must earn his own money however he may. Jake takes the job as the orderly because he knows he can get the job and it will allow him two cognitive spaces: that of the manual worker and that of the intellectual. While it is unclear whether Jake tried to find other work, intellectual or otherwise, Peter J. Kalliney has described what was a typical lower middle-class predicament of the 1950s in which "increased educational opportunities fostered a sense of entitlement and fueled aspirations but the real material gains were less forthcoming" (120). Jake fits into this classification, and

yet his job is a remedy to his feelings of "uselessness," and will supposedly allow him to become a successful writer. As Hugo later tells him about his own sense of work, money is what has caused him to fail to find philosophical understanding: "Anyhow, while I had the factory I just couldn't help but make money, and I don't want that. I want to travel light. Otherwise one can never understand anything" (Murdoch 223). Hugo, who has had money, sees it as a burden to his happiness and Jake recognizes this. While the novel's comedic scenarios fail to offer a prescriptive answer to the various characters' quests, Jake is finally able to recognize the hopeful potential of the future:

> There was no doubt we would meet again. But that was for the future. The future – it opened for a moment before me, a land of hills and far distances; and I closed my eyes... But I saw too, as it were straight through them, the possibility of doing better, the possibility was present to me as a strength which cast me lower and raised me higher than I had been before... It was the first day of the world. I was full of that strength which is better than happiness, better than the weak wish for happiness which women can awaken in a man to rot his fibres. It was the morning of the first day. (250-251)

Jake's recognition of the future acts as a spiritual rebirth in which the possible is what regenerates him and forces him to realize his potential. His attitude is even more hopeful than the "angry optimism" of Hugh Casson and Misha Black, who were tired of war and austerity. Jake realizes that Lefty was right all along and that he needs to see and believe in the imaginative future to make any gains in the present. The novel ends without any kind of resolution to Jake's quest. Yet, it shows that the optimism and shift in cultural attitude

presented by the Festival of Britain was no longer relegated to the space of a summer fair and embraced by a new generation of Britons.

While *Under the Net* never directly references the Festival of Britain, the novel and the event demonstrate the shifting cultural attitudes towards British culture, the space of the city, and British subjectivity. Both demonstrate the need to rewrite the total war and social stagnation that was ever-present in Britain immediately following World War II. Rather than continue to critique social ills, the Festival and *Under the Net* offer positive solutions that encourage futurity rather than perpetuate a crippling nostalgia. For the Festival, the remedy could be found in the creation modernized urban spaces which would homogenize class difference and create an overarching new national identity. Removed from the rhetoric of imperialism, the Festival viewed the younger generations and the celebration of British culture as essential to any progressive national project. Its use of contemporary design became a means for the Festival planners to show how urban space could project equality and offer renewal. *Under the Net* continues this narrative and reveals how the optimism continues in the space of the city. As Jake demonstrates, a new Britain will emerge with the younger generations. Any lambast of youth culture and its supposed naivety is nothing more than a refusal to embrace the future.

Chapter3: The Doctor and the Secretary: Space and Gender

"Society necessarily has a great many little rules, especially relating the behavior of women. One accepted them and life ran smoothly and without embarrassment, or as far as that is possible where there are two sexes. Without the little rules, everything became queer and unsafe... The root of the trouble was not ignorance at all, but the refusal to accept." –Elizabeth Taylor, *At Mrs. Lippincote's* (1945)

"She had not before realised her loneliness, her love of London." –*Ibid.*

In the beginning of author Elizabeth Taylor's novel, *At Mrs. Lippincote's* (1945), the young protagonist, Julia, goes to stay at a country cottage near the Royal Air Force base where her husband is stationed. Set during the middle of World War II, Julia's feels an ever-increasing alienation in the countryside and yearns to go back to London and her old life there. Not only does the city offer more entertainment and excitement than the small town, it is the place where Julia can be a fully realized individual rather than reduced to her status as an officer's wife. To make matters worse, she is not a very good at playing this role because she refuses to follow the unwritten social rules that dictate the lives of the officers and their spouses. To deviate from these social rules and expectations for men and women makes "everything queer and unsafe" for those who follow them. To be different from the status quo somehow upsets not only the small village, but the entire world and everything in it. While the novel is critical of these forced rules and regulations for women, it underscores how pervasive the conservative social expectations were for both women and men, particularly members of the middle class. The novel encapsulates the experience of women in country towns and suburbs during the war and demonstrates the inherent relationship between space and social expectations. The novel paints a realist portrait of life on the home front during World War II and foreshadows the further isolation and alienation middle-class women felt in the new spaces that were being built as part of the reconstruction of Britain, and how these

spaces simultaneously helped to enforce old social regulations and create new possibilities

for gender roles.

As a reaction to the relaxed social expectations and increased mobility of women that

occurred during WWII, conservative gender roles were increasingly valorized in the post-war

period in an attempt to "rein in" the increasingly progressive positions that British women

had achieved earlier in the 20th century. The increasing autonomy women had won during

World War II as they entered the work force, which allowed them to gain more social

mobility and economic power, seemed to disappear overnight in the popular representations

of British women after 1945.[102] Instead of the wartime image of the patriotic woman who

nobly supported her country through work, the ideal post-war British woman was a middle-

class housewife and mother, whose only labor was to raise children and keep a model

home.[103] This image of British femininity was not a new one; the return to the idealized

housewife was in part a way of celebrating the traditional family and the clearly demarcated

gender roles that were concretized during the height of British imperialism as Anne

McClintock and Laura Ann Stoler have addressed in their work.[104] Yet however much these

traditional roles were promoted in popular culture after the war, the gender expectation were

both anachronistic and obscured the limited victories of early 20th century British feminists.

What was unique about this "modernized" housewife in comparison to her imperial

forbearers was that her position (and thus the position of her binary opposition in the

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[102] Alan Sinfield states that women bore the biggest brunt of World War II and that "very few women can have
come out of it with a better footing on the career ladder or with enhanced personal prestige" (7). While this is
true, women's positions were only made worse when denied their previous jobs after the war.
[103] Wilson discusses the return to the Victorian ideal of the loving wife and mother in the 1950s to protect
traditional British values and cultural prestige.
[104] See McClintock's *Imperial Leather* and Stoler's *Race and the Education of Desire*, both of which describe
the importance of maintaining distinct gender roles for women at home and abroad to perpetuate the project of
empire. Radhika Mohanram also discusses how middle-class Victorian femininity becomes synonymous with
whiteness during the 19th century.

patriarchal husband) relied on the space of a completely modernized home that simultaneously wanted to project a modern Britain through modernist design, celebrate class equalization, and was situated in the city.[105]

When Julia realizes her "loneliness, love of London," she immediately points to urban space as being the physical site that will allow her to escape the alienation that has become concretized in her new home. Although it is set in a small village, *At Mrs. Lippincote's* demonstrates that the relationship between gender and space was not new. Place and space are foundational for how gender roles are perceived and performed. Julia's love of London is not simply a function of living in the suburbs or countryside, but part of a long literary history of women who believed in the cosmopolitan freedom of urbanity. Despite the overarching insistence that the social rules be followed to make "life run smoothly and without embarrassment" and the prevalence of traditional gender roles as portrayed in popular media, novels of the 1950s demonstrate an inherent, yet subtle refusal by some members of the middle-class to accept these conservative social norms and rules. They use representations of space and the modernized city to rewrite these expectations, however fleeting.

In this chapter, I will discuss the rupture between the rhetoric that promoted women's place in the home, gendered relationships to the space of the city, and the examples which contradict conservative values such as Jean Rhys' *Voyage in the Dark* (1934), Barbara Pym's *Excellent Women* (1955) and Anthony Burgess' *The Doctor is Sick* (1960). Although *Voyage in the Dark* (1934) was published much earlier than the two other novels, it acts as a prototype for the possibilities of a de-centered, de-masculinized metropolis and emphasizes a

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[105] Richard Hornsey discusses this in-depth in *The Spiv and the Architect: Unruly Life in Post-war London* (2010).

post-colonial world that allows for a rewriting of imperial British subjectivities, particularly

in relation to gender as it is mapped on to the urban space of London and thus the nation at

large. As *Voyage in the Dark* suggests, and is later supported in the post-war novels, the

male/female binaries of middle-class gender roles have always been unstable and arbitrary,

and physical space of the city is crucial for fashioning new iterations of gender and class.

Like *Voyage in the Dark, Excellent Women* and *The Doctor is Sick* use their middle-class

protagonists to reveal an outside to the stereotyped gender roles in the period. All three

novels rely on realism as a style and comedy to critique the prevalent expectations for

middle-class femininity and masculinity. Although *Voyage in the Dark* is typically read as a

modernist novel, it also incorporates stylistic elements of realism to explain the social fabric

of British society. While the protagonists in each text do not always find a successful answer

to the conservative expectations for gender, their narratives present various portraits of those

who do not fit into the confines of the expected middle-class roles and thus reveal exceptions

to the stereotypes of the period. In their portraits of the "queer and unsafe" (Taylor), the

novels contradict the dominant narratives of the housewife and middle-class bureaucrat[106]

and in popular depictions of who inhabited the modernized spaces of post-war Britain.[107]

What becomes crucial for these depictions is the space of the city of London itself and the

urban politics that constantly rewrite and reimagine static definitions of gender and class.

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[106] Paul Thompson describes the relationship between banking, white-collar jobs, and the middle class following WWII and discusses how the City, which is still the epicenter of British commerce and banking defined middle class masculinity: "The City in the late 1940s was a wholly white British male workplace, governed by unwritten rules of trust and good conduct, in which knowing people and exchanging inside information was one of the keys to success. This was why even dealers spent a lot of their time and energy not strictly working but joking, drinking, and socializing. The City in those days is nostalgically remembered as 'fun'" (231). Thompson describes the path to achieve in a job in the City occurred in two ways: through nepotism or meritocracy, the latter process involving climbing the administrative ladder (234-237).

[107] Hornsey discusses how the new housing developments after World War II continually reinforced the nuclear family, which consisted of the patriarch and the housewife, as the ideal British subjects. He describes the government rhetoric of the period addressing the "common Londoner" (43) who promoted civic order and bourgeois sobriety and restraint in contrast to the "spiv" who defies those values through urban spectacle (21).

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These novels view the space of the city as what Edward Soja would later call a "thirdspace,"

in which the protagonists reclaim London as a space to enact their own desires and push

against gendered binaries.[108] Despite any overarching plans to control and "sterilize" the city

as part of the urban planners' utopian project,[109] the novels insist that there is always an

unruly quality to any urban entity even within these new, modernized spaces, and that there

is a constant generation of new social parameters between old and new class definitions.

While *Voyage in the Dark, Excellent Women*, and *The Doctor is Sick* do not necessarily

demand a corrective or offer a hopeful alternative for the individual, each narrative shows the

limits of the traditional gender roles within the space of future London and the ability of

middle-class individuals to restructure their worlds and positions. While critics such as

Richard Hornsey and Peter J. Kalliney have argued that the homogeneity of the model

housing plans and designs enforced uniform gender roles regardless of class, this argument

denies Michel De Certeau's and Edward Soja's views that individuals always possess the

ability to reimagine their spaces and rewrite social relationships and expectations. As the

novels demonstrate, the space of London can both uphold and reject conservative gender

roles simultaneously. If the Festival of Britain could reinscribe a positive futurity within

London, so could middle-class individuals reimagine a new form of gendered subjectivity in

urban space.

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[108] Soja writes, "As urban form, spatial specificity... also in the mappable patternings of land use, economic wealth, cultural identity, class differences, and the whole range of individual and collective attributes, relations, thoughts, and practices of urban inhabitants. As urban process, it takes on more dynamic qualities that derive from its role in the formation of city space and the social construction of urbanism, a constantly evolving, intentionally planned, and politically charged *contextualization* and *spatialization* of social life in its broadest sense" (8).

[109] Elizabeth Wilson argues that with the arrival of the garden city in the 1930s, the need to restore a "healthy" urban space was integral to post-war urban planning. The urban planners removed all the "unhealthy" elements of the city to create "a sanitized utopia, with the obsessional, controlling perfectionism that characterized all utopias" (104).

<u>The Garden Returns to the City: the Suburban, Imperial Roots of Post-War London</u>

The relationship between space and gender in the late 19th and early 20th centuries is often

associated with the development of the suburbs. Prior to the end of World War II and the

postwar rebuilding of London, one popular plan to remedy the ills of the British city was to

create entirely new developments removed from the corrupting forces of urbanity. An

influential model was the 1930s "garden city," which promoted an ideal balance between the

comforts of urban living, natural space, and the romantic pastoralism of the English

countryside.[110] Part of a "narrative of modernity," these garden cities were initially seen by

government officials and early 20th century social theorists, such as Patrick Geddes and

Ebenezer Howard, as an amelioration to the poverty that was inseparable from the urban

space and its physical structures.[111] Akin to other utopias, the garden city model would

remove the inhabitants of the city to a new space, or a "sanitised utopia" in which the

working classes would be harmonized with, and reconciled to, the middle classes as they

became "a reduced copy of them" (Wilson 104). As part of this harmonization, the garden

cities romanticized the figure of the housewife, insisting that a women's ideal place was in

the home, and designed the houses and towns accordingly. Elizabeth Wilson is quick to note

that while these new buildings did promote better domestic working conditions for women,

their remote locations and lack of nearby shops and amenities isolated women from their

communities and thus created a gendered space of physical and emotional alienation, or

"lonelyville" (107). By 1945, the garden city was seen as an icon of a past era and lacked the

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[110] Elizabeth Darling describes the concept of the garden city and shows how the post-war urban theorists arrived at their idea that the city could also achieve "healthy" living: "Crucial and in keeping with their own modernity, the doctors [Innes Pearce and George Scott Williamson] did not believe it was possible to go back to the country like their garden city contemporaries advocated. Instead they believed it was possible to create a reformed space within the urban context through which members were able to achieve a state of mutual synthesis with their environment and thus achieve health" (56).
[111] Wilson (108).

forward thinking of the new modernity that city planners and architects felt the second half of

the 20th century would bring.[112] One of the reasons the garden city and suburbs were

disdained (besides their bourgeois connotations—the majority of people who moved to them

were middle class families wishing to escape the city) was that rather than fix the old

problems of the city, they had only created new social issues such as greater class division,

vandalism, and general boredom. According to British urban planners and government

officials in the second half of the 20th century, such as Frederic Osborn, Lewis Silkin, and

Patrick Abercrombie, this was one of the fundamental sins of the suburbs.[113]

Despite this general dismissal of pre-war suburbs, the influence of the garden-city can

be seen directly in professor of town planning Patrick Abercrombie's plans for the redesign

of London.[114] Abercrombie believed that the garden city could be refashioned into a new and

improved form of utopia (or, as Wilson suggests, authoritarianism) that could erase the

"amorphous sprawl" of London and in the process reform the city as a space that would be

ideal for the reproduction of the family and the continuation of Britain writ large.[115] The

reappropriation of the garden city for the urban environment is immediately apparent in the

film, *Proud City* (1946), in which Abercrombie explains in great detail the need for more

green spaces as a way to beautify the industrial sprawl and create a "healthier" city for all its

inhabitants regardless of class. He compares the space of the city to a living organism to

emphasize the organic needs of urbanity. If treated like a plant, he insists that the city has the

potential to blossom if green spaces are incorporated throughout. Additionally, in

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[112] Grindrod (43-44).

[113] Wilson describes the vandalism as being directly caused by bored teenagers and the lack of all forms of entertainment, including shopping (109).

[114] Wilson 108.

[115] The peak of post-war births in the United Kingdom occurred in 1947 at just over 1 million births. The numbers steadily declined and did not peak again until the 1960s. (Office of National Statistics)

Abercrombie's architectural plans for the new blocks of flats in London, families with

children would have access to their own private gardens, which further emphasized the direct

relationship between nature, the family, and the creation of a healthy, urban environment.[116]

According to Richard Hornsey, Abercrombie's designs offered the "nostalgic qualities of

pre-industrial village life, while also affecting a sly scalar confusion... that figured the

neighborhood as the microcosm of the integrated nation at the heart of welfare-state

ideologies" (45). The garden city and its reliance on greenery became a way to incorporate

the typically conservative romanticization of the countryside and the nation into the politics

of the welfare state, which promoted greater class equality and improved social conditions.[117]

The promotion of greenery and health in the city is one of the ways that post-war

British architects and city planners attempted to counter the old narratives that declared the

city as a space rife with dirt, disease, and wantonness. In the 18th and 19th centuries,

metropolitan life was "incompatible with the successful reproduction of society" and

controlled planning and the birth of modern city planning were an attempt to alleviate the

social ills that made it "incompatible" (Wilson 109). Urban planning was still viewed by city

officials in the 1950s as a moral endeavor. They continued to believe that better design and

urban planning would overcome all social ills. To reassert this moral authority in urban

space, Abercrombie designed plans he thought would "provide for a greater mingling of

London's society" and overcome the prior failures of pre-45 urban and suburban space

(Hornsey 45). Additionally, these new homes would dramatically improve living conditions

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[116] Hornsey 79.
[117] Yet as Richard Grindrod acknowledges, the quality in design between the inter-war garden cities and the post-war estates was radically different. The inter-war garden cities were designed in the Arts and Crafts style and with larger budgets for each home could incorporate more finishing details such as ornate chimneys, curving porches and roofs, and lush gardens. The post-45 housing estates could not include so many ornaments as the price of construction materials was extremely high after the war and there was a pressing need to build housing rapidly to meet the ever-growing demands (39-43).

and make the city "healthy." As of 1951, eight million homes were "unfit to live in" in

Britain, and of those, seven million had no hot water and six million lacked indoor plumbing.

Within London alone, one fifth of the housing was officially classified as a slum, making

better housing a social and political imperative (Grindrod 22).

In his new plans, Abercrombie also had to overcome the prior assumption that the

city was unfit for families. One reason that the city was incompatible with traditional notions

of the family was that urban life, beginning with 19th century industrialization, changed the

dynamics of work and gender. Many women were the breadwinners (or at least equal

economic contributors) for their working-class families in 19th century London and because

of this, Victorian social interventions revolved around finding ways to place the mother back

in the home so that she could better care for her children and husband. In doing so, the

mother would preserve both the "natural" hierarchy of the family, in which women and

children were subordinated to men and the mother would safeguard the production of

imperial subjects through her children. Anne McClintock and Radhika Mohanram describe

how imperialism's authority was located within the reproduction of the family and its social

function. As it becomes an integral for the perpetuation of the nation and colonial

institutions, patriarchal family structures (and the later nuclear family) become naturalized

and legitimized. The metaphor of the family allows for a "figuring of historical time," in

which social hierarchy and historical change could be "portrayed as natural and inevitable,

rather than historically constructed and subject to change" (McClintock 45). This bridging

between the individual family, the imperial state, and filial duty allowed for imperial

intervention to be constructed as an always ongoing project, in which the "paternal fathers

ruling benignly over immature children" became invaluable and "give state and imperial interventions the alibi of nature" (45).

 While McClintock explicitly describes the British Empire during its height in the 19th century, the lasting effects of the relationship between the paternalistic family and the state were still evident in the plans to rebuild London after World War II. Despite the claim that the rebuilding would create a modernized and equal society, the utopian plans did not fully dismiss or reject the nation-states' reliance on the paternalistic father figure, despite the building plans' incorporation of varied living options for childless couples and single people.[118] During World War II, there were many forms of non-familial living situations, including the mixed-gender hostel or boarding house, because of the short supply of housing and a progressive attitude towards non-married men and women living in the same spaces (Wilson 109). It must also be noted that the idealized form of the family as a single, paternalistic unit was that: idealized. Urban spaces and housing prior to and following World War II reflected the different needs of social groupings, such as communities of women and immigrants, whose lifestyles did not necessarily correspond to the stereotypical British Victorian family. Alan Sinfield argues that the fundamental nature of domesticity in this period was an issue because women were likely to resist it, if for nothing else because they were needed to work due to a national labor shortage (205). However, that the narrative of the paternalistic family continued to dominate the rhetoric of the period and national sentiment toward what would physically and psychically restore Britain indicates the power that this image of the family and the imperial state continued to hold over Britain.

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[118] Hornsey discusses the variety of design styles of modernist housing in the 1950s, including "bachelor" apartments designed for single men and women. The interior designs depended on the gender and presumed career of the individual (79).

In my first chapter, I discussed the ambivalence of certain middle-class men to rebuilding because they assumed it would attempt to erase their subjectivity and imperial masculine identities. Others, particularly government officials like Abercrombie and Forshaw, described the Blitz as "providential" because it erased the same Victorian industrialism that robbed the inhabitants of London of good health and living conditions and created extreme inequalities between the rich and the poor (Wilson 106-7). Equally important, the destruction caused by the Blitz gave the city planners employed by the City of London and its boroughs an opportunity to reimagine the space of the city in terms of the production of a specific kind of citizen: one who helped rebuild and produce a new Britain that everyone could celebrate, and prevent any kind of moral degeneracy that the British people associated with wartime deserters and others who refused to be "good" citizens.[119] What is ironic in the descriptions of the plans is that for all the attempts to solidify the family and encourage reproduction, the designs produced by the government officials created an intense homogeneity in their uniformity of design and minimalism.[120] One issue as John Grindrod discusses was the need to build quickly with limited building supplies for a massive numbers of people. Richard Hornsey argues that this uniformity of design was both a way to create a modern, undeviating aesthetic that could equalize society in the fashion Le Corbusier

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[119] Hornsey, *The Spiv and the Architect*, 11-12.

[120] In "cleaning up" the urban sprawl of Victorian London, the rhetoric of hygiene and scientific progress is always lurking. Kristin Ross discusses the use of the language of hygiene to "sanitize" France in the period of its colonial past and enforce a specific idea of who and what was French, but the English tradition of sanitization goes back earlier discussions of the British Empire (McClintock). While the rebuilding of London did not go to the same extremes in its promotion of sanitation, the reoccurring motif of the "unclean" Victorian city still infiltrated London in the 1950s. Historic events like the Great Smog of London in 1952 did not help matters much when an intense bout of pollution killed an estimated 6,000 people and sickened another 100,000 (Bell).

sought, but more importantly could enact the state control through designing every aspect of people's lives including their interior space (220).[121]

One reason the "total planning" of London was so uniform was that it attempted to erase class difference by "relegitimizing" the poor through the improvement of their living conditions and offered them a place in the national community.[122] With the elimination of the literal dirt and squalor of pre-war housing and council flats, the living conditions of the working classes were sanitized and they were cleansed of their previously lower status. If the formerly working class lived in similar buildings and flats as the middle-class, the difference wrought into physical space could be erased and thus the visible signs of class might disappear. Additionally, as Richard Hornsey has argued, the popularization of psychoanalysis in the post-war period decried the dangers of a mismanaged home while simultaneously insisting that the home be the "sole domain of legitimate sexual expression, made respectable as a site of moral training only by its privacy and impermeability to the unwarranted public gaze" (32). While the imperial paternalistic structures that McClintock describes arose before psychoanalysis, the popularity of psychoanalytic discourses of the late 1940s and 1950s only added to the entrenchment of the rigid gender roles and their relationship to the family as directly tied to the success of the nation. By bringing the working classes into the bourgeois home and thus elevating them to a new middle-class status, they would in turn replicate the same bourgeois structures of family and nation building in their own families.

However, despite the emphasis on the nuclear family during the post-war period, the design of the period, particularly later renditions of Festival Style, promoted a different

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[121] As LeFebvre discusses, this type of control is always impossible as the state never can fully control spaces. Individuals always push back and reinterpret the space as they need to. One can say the same for any kind of interior design that attempts to manage individuals.

[122] This was part of the utopian vision that the Attlee government strived for with their social programs. (Hornsey 41)

image that fell more in line with the grand ambitions of those who saw architecture as a vital force of modernization. In analyzing a popular satirical cartoon of the period in which an inverted Nelson's Column replaces the Skylon, the architectural emblem of the event, Richard Hornsey maintains that this cartoon represents the Festival's power in overturning conservative returns to the British Empire. He writes that "the Festival's social-democratic vision was literally turning the empire on its head" (61). Despite the design imperatives of the Festival, Hornsey argues that the 1950s home and its redesign continued to promote paternalism and regulate privacy, particularly the interior design which despite its modernization created a "programmed domain that could direct its inhabitants to routinely perform a set of predicted tasks" (220). He insists that the continued idolization and enforced interior design of the home as a conservative force is what pushes the non-conformists, particularly queer men, onto the street. However, Hornsey also notes that the paradox of the home is that it is fundamentally unmanageable by the state: in valorizing "codes of privacy and discretion," the home goes "beyond the reach of the administrative gaze" (101). This unmanageability is what allows for the urban home to be reimagined, particularly for women who do not necessarily fit into the role of the housewife and mother and who resist those bounds. The dual spaces of the private, enclosed home and the open, yet visible space of the street allow for new ideas of gender to be created, enacted, and then disseminated.

The New Modern Post-Modern: Rewriting Gendered Space in *Voyage in the Dark*

Although Jean Rhys' *Voyage in the Dark* was published in 1934 and has been described as a modernist text by Urmila Seshagiri, Kerry Johnson, and other modernist scholars, it offers a prototype for the gendered experiences of the city found in post-World War II realist

literature. An autobiographical novel, *Voyage in the Dark* tells the story of young Creole

Anna Morgan, who works as a chorus girl in England until she falls in love with a rich, older

man. While the novel is a tragic portrait of Anna's personal failures and disillusionment with

life, it also can be read as groundbreaking in its exploration of a white West Indian woman's

alienation in the metropolis. Unlike other novels set in 1930s England such as Patrick

Hamilton's *Hangover Square* (1941) and Julian McLaren Ross' *Of Love and Hunger* (1947)

which explore urban discontent, *Voyage in the Dark's* focus on Anna's inability as a woman

to reconcile her colonial past with her experiences in London is what makes it unique. As

Urmila Seshagiri argues, the novel challenges the structures of high modernism through the

embodied geopolitics of Anna Morgan as a white West Indian and "simultaneously,

inaugurates what would soon become the central goals of postcolonial literature" (487). Both

Seshagiri and Kerry Johnson rely on Fredric Jameson's argument that British modernism is

fundamentally defined by a gap or absence of the colonial and that in the modernist

representations of daily life, that gap or absence attempts to be fulfilled through artistic

representation. [123] What makes *Voyage in the Dark* different from other modernist texts is

that the gap or absence (or the lack of the colonies within Britain) does not exist because the

colonial is directly imposed upon and within the metropolis. In Rhys' novels, the "gap" is

literally filled by the bodies of postcolonial women.

 While Mary Lou Emery and Kerry Johnson have discussed the explicit postcolonial

(rather than modernist) form of *Voyage in the Dark*,[124] the novel asks its readers to consider

what is "modern" in terms of gender and nationality in 20th century London. As Johnson

argues, the binary of gender is applied to space and control: the feminized space of the city is

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[123] Jameson, 51.
[124] Emery, 423-425; Johnson, 47-50.

thus controlled by the masculine state. Even modernist texts by feminist modernist writers such as Virginia Woolf still assume the dichotomy of the feminized city that thus can and must be controlled by the masculine state. What makes Rhys' work different and thus a prototype for later post-war literature is that she foregrounds women's experience of the metropolitan center and that in doing so "resists the male gaze, and the projections of the female body onto the city, by relating one dispossessed women's experience of that city" (Johnson 48). Understanding women's experience as integral to the metropolitan experience rather than disruptive or illicit is crucial for urban space to be reworked as a non-gendered entity and a true "third-space," in which space can exist outside the implicit social hierarchies and controls enacted through planning. As British feminist geographer Doreen Massey writes, a consciousness of place "is precisely about movement and linkage and contradiction" (142), and it is this form of movement, linkage, and most importantly, contradiction that informs the urban experience in Rhys. What Rhys demonstrates in *Voyage in the Dark*, and which later post-war writers demand, is that the "disorder" (which is often feminized) is precisely what makes the city a space of boundless refiguring of subjectivity, however positive or negative.

In many ways, *Voyage in the Dark* inverts the adventure narrative formula by using the former colonial subject to address the simultaneous anxiety and possibility found within the metropolis in the twilight of the empire. The opening of *Voyage in the Dark* highlights the differences between the drab cold of England to the tropical landscape of the West Indies. Anna, the protagonist, describes the differences between the two places in embodied terms: she can't get used to the cold of England and yet can still smell the salt of Market Street to the Bay, frangipani, lime juice, and spices. She states: "It was as if a curtain had fallen,

hiding everything I had ever known. It was almost like being born again. The colours were different, the smells different, the feeling things gave you right down inside yourself was different... But a different in the way I was frightened and the way I was happy" (Rhys 7). This opening demonstrates the immediate comparison between the Caribbean and England that frames both the narrative and Anna's own subjectivity. The constant narrative drifts between the two places are what shape her metropolitan perception as "metrocolonial" and allow for the text to be considered a postcolonial narrative.[125] These moments also demonstrate how incredibly important space is for gender and the fashioning of subjectivity through it. Anna's comment that the difference makes her both frightened and happy shows that the urban spaces of England are part of the logic of adventure: they entice and scare in the same moment. Although adventure narratives are often coded in masculine terms, one can read *Voyage in the Dark* as a form of adventure novel, albeit with a female protagonist.[126] Equally important, in making its protagonist female, *Voyage in the Dark* demonstrates the ability for women to self-determine their position within the space of the city, rather than be dictated by social conventions. It is in the allure of adventure that the city temporarily becomes individualized and personal, rather than a space that imposes outside social structures upon a modern postcolonial subject such as Anna.

Anna's ability to read the space of the city as something embodied contrasts with her Caribbean subjectivity and is what allows her to discard the various social rules and codes that others are constantly trying to impose upon her. As a white West Indian, however much her whiteness is subject to speculation, she has a different cultural identity than other

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[125] Seshagiri 488.
[126] Stanley Orr has described the Late-Victorian adventure story as a genre in which the narratives could address the decolonizing colony for the white bodies that inhabit them. He notes that the "Late-Victorian adventure stories reflect and reinscribe profound anxieties within the western cultural imagination, doubts not only about the failure of the colonial enterprise but also about the integrity of the metropolis" (5).

Londoners. Anna is constantly reminded that she does not fit into the same class boundaries as native-born British, and yet she is obliged to perform the social rules and duties fitting her position as the daughter of a white plantation owner. While she is not explicitly middle class in British terms because she grew up in the colonies, she is also not working or upper class. In many ways, she cannot be categorized by London society because she is neither British or as a colonial subject. The city becomes a space of adventure rather than another place in which social conventions are upheld because she does not fit into a specific class. Of course, Anna's adventures are framed through double-consciousness. They are only possible because she is an outsider and labeled as such, and yet has the physical attributes as a white colonial to pass as British. She constantly repeats the line "I'm a real West Indian," which denotes an authentic identity that exists outside of Britain and its conventions and reminds those around her of the history of British colonialism.[127] When Anna and Ethel go to the cinema, Ethel mocks the young foreign actress she knows in the film for disregarding English social codes: "'Well an English girl wouldn't have done that. An English girl would have respected herself more than to let people laugh at her like that behind her back'" (Rhys 109). Ethel's commentary reveals the constant enforcement of British social rules, particularly in demarcating who is English versus who is an outsider. While Ethel's motivation to mock the actress was a minor costume choice, it is memorable because it illuminates how Anna's feelings of not being English are explicitly embodied and critiqued in another.[128] After this comment, Ethel invites Anna up to her flat for a drink and Anna comments: "Her room was

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[127] Urmila Seshagiri also comments that a "real West Indian" is an identity that has been robbed of history by the violent conquest of Dominica by various Europeans in its colonization as well as "could be an indigenous Caribbean Indian, an African slave, a European settler, or (and this is the possibility that haunts the text) a mixture of all three)" (489).
[128] In another scene, Anna is mocked by two American gentlemen for dressing like a British woman, which they find unflattering. Although the men mistake her for British, it is another moment in which she is always the outsider in her appearance and mannerism because she does not fit into their ideal image.

exactly like mine except that her wallpaper was green instead of brown" (109). Although a

minor detail, it demonstrates that despite the marked differences between the definitions of

English versus other as shown in the rest of the novel, their domestic spaces in London are

essentially the same. This is important because it shows that the space itself is not what

creates and manages the binary of insider/outsider. Richard Hornsey suggests that this binary

occurs and continues in the privacy of the home, but *Voyage in the Dark* shows that

individuals, particularly women, encode social hierarchies into their own domestic spaces

and use space to create or dissolve difference.

Anna is quick to note the hypocrisy of the English lady which arrives in the form of

her step-mother, Hester. When she visits Anna in London, she informs her that she will no

longer financially assist Anna, despite receiving the entirety of Anna's father's estate. When

Anna describes Hester physically, her dislike is immediately apparent:

> She had clear brown eyes which stuck out of her head if you looked at her sideways,
>
> and an English lady's voice with a sharp, cutting edge to it. Now that I've spoken to
>
> you can hear that I'm a lady. I have spoken and I suppose you now realize that I'm an
>
> English gentlewoman. I have my doubts about you. Speak up and I will place you at
>
> once. Speak up, for I fear the worst. That sort of voice. (Rhys 57)

Through Anna's impressions of Hester, it becomes clear that Hester places herself in the

category of a certain type of upper-middle class Englishwoman, who needs to impress her

status and gentility upon others. Like other middle-class women in the inter-war period,

Hester married Anna's father in order to ensure a livelihood and protect her "genteel" status.

Hester is like Ethel in her need to protect her own Englishness and subjectivity that is formed

through the gendered social expectations crucial to British imperialism. Voice becomes the

measure of class and a way to judge others as well as a mechanism to assert social

dominance as seen through Anna's mimicry: "Speak up and I will place you at once."

Additionally, Hester refers to the "unfortunate propensities" of the Morgan clan, by which as

becomes clear throughout the novel, she means the racial mixing, both socially and

physically, of the family. She tells Anna, "I tried to teach you to talk like a lady and behave

like a lady and not like a nigger and of course I couldn't do it... But I did think when I

brought you to England that I was giving you a real chance" (65). Hester's use of the n-word

belies a slippage of her own class-based linguistic register and further emphasizes her intense

racism and hatred of Anna's origins. In Hester's mind, the physical space of England can

white-wash Anna of her colonial identity and reform her into an English lady, one that fits

into the conventions of the traditional femininity and preserves the English family and

imperial order, unlike Anna's unruly West Indian femininity. Hester's views on the figure of

the gentleman are those that act as the imperial patriarch: "My idea of a gentleman an

English gentleman doesn't have illegitimate children and if he does he doesn't flaunt them"

(64). In other words, the image and model of the pure English family must be preserved on

the surface even if it is contrary to reality.

What Hester does not realize is that the urban spaces of London are what offer Anna

an escape from the confines of class and gender roles, despite the city's function as the center

or locus of the empire. Anna Snaith has referred to Anna's experiences in London as part of

the psychology of the colonial *flâneuse* that is grounded in the material details of the city

(133). Although Anna's interactions in the city are often negative and she does not revel in

the city in the same fashion as Walter Benjamin's *flâneur*, her depictions of London reveal

how the urban continuously fashions an individual's self-narrative and subjectivity. When

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Anna initially falls in love with Walter, she considers her emotions and immediately contrasts them to the streets of London: "I am hopeless, resigned, utterly happy. Is that me? I am bad, not good any longer, bad. That has no meaning, absolutely none. Just words. But something about the darkness of the streets has a meaning" (57). Anna's inability to state exactly what the streets and their darkness means mirrors her emotional fluctuations. The streets and London hold all those emotions, whether they be hopelessness, resignation, or happiness, and it is only through the material details of the city that those emotions can be concretized or interpreted. In this quotation, it is not London that imposes a definition or role upon Anna; she is the one to impose meaning unto it. After Anna's final encounter with Walter, she abandons her rented room and goes out into London: "I got out into the street. A man passed. I thought he looked at me funny and I wanted to run, but I stopped myself. I walked straight ahead. I thought, 'Anywhere will do, so long as it's somewhere that nobody knows'" (100). In this moment, Anna recognizes the male gaze that Anne McClintock argues is what labels women as out of place in the city; however, rather than acknowledge and fully internalize that gaze, Anna does the opposite. She continues to engage with the city and becomes a form of adventurer, wanting to find a place that she can fully control and determine its significance, rather than let others impose their own meanings. This scene corresponds to what Kerry Johnson has argued is crucial for understanding the role of landscape in the novel. Whenever Anna confronts the gendered roles and gazes of men in the city, she "wrests control of a process that has historically contained land, women, and native peoples. She does this by giving agency to the landscape, by calling attention to the marking and naming of the city through class and racial hierarchies and to the enclosures that insure English national identity" (52). While Johnson also acknowledges the importance of the

temporal fluidity Anna employs as part of her Afro-Caribbean experience, Anna's ability to reconstruct the urban narrative according to her own logic shows the inherent power of women who refuse to follow the social expectations and norms that other "proper" women, in the terms expected of them as seen with Hester and Ethel. Anna's refusal to participate in middle-class social expectations and her calling attention to the implicit racialized and classed hierarchies explicitly demonstrates that the landscape can be refashioned regardless of dominant social narratives.

The end of *Voyage of the Dark* can be read as either as Anna's ultimate decline or a moment of rebirth. She states, "I lay and watched it and thought about starting all over again. And about being new and fresh. And about mornings, and misty days, when anything might happen. And about starting all over again, all over again..." (ellipses in original, 188). The circularity of the ellipses allows for the slippage of meaning; either Anna will start all over again and be reborn or this represents the endless repetition of her mistakes. The space of London holds both possibilities. It can be the place in which Anna can reject social expectations and shows the limits of doing so. However, rather than read this as a morality tale or as a story of the constant rejection of women in the space of the city, in telling Anna's story *Voyage in the Dark* allows for the acknowledgement of different experiences within London. By engaging with these different histories and stories, the novel turns away from the "wonton sacredness of literary form and registers the urgency of engaging an 'immediate historical context'" (Seshagiri 488). Although the novel does not privilege a return to social realism, Urmila Seshagiri argues that it anticipates and elucidates the dark consequences of what György Lukács described as the aestheticization of everyday experience. While Seshagiri goes on to state that this is what makes *Voyage in the Dark* a prototype for

postcolonial literature, it also foreshadows the realist literature of the 1950s by using the space of the city to underscore social issues that occur within it, while not entirely rejecting the structures of the city itself.

Excellent Women: Single in the City

As the cover of the 1978 edition of Pym's novel, *Excellent Women* (1952)*,* states, the novel is "written with the wit and style of a twentieth century Jane Austen." However, far from being a comedy of errors around the question of marriage and the search for suitable husbands, Pym's novels delve into a darker terrain, exploring the foibles of the middle-class single woman and the social stigma of that position in 1950s Britain. Instead of reading Pym as a writer whose work can be reduced to lowbrow "women's fiction," I argue that her work probes the problems surrounding the single woman and her displacement from a world in which the position of mother and housewife are the ideal for British women. Pym embraces the challenge Rhys put forth in exploring the limits of the modernist form to capture postcolonial worldview by using realism and comedy. While Pym is neither a postcolonial nor a modernist writer, it is significant that she relies on realism, which in the 1950s was "the chosen form of anti-establishmentarianism" by writers like the Angry Young Men and other novelists who wished to revolt against the "snobbery, decadence and imperial cosmopolitanism" of modernism and their literary forbearers (Gopinath 122). Although not associated with the social radicalism of the Angry Young Men and other British writers of the period, Pym projects her own version of radicalism in her portraits of single women. Philip Larkin highly praised her work and commented that what stays with the reader after the satire and amusement has dissipated is the "loneliness of life... the absence of self-pity,

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the scrupulousness of one's relations with others, the small blameless comforts" (260). Like

Larkin, Pym relies on the everyday to depict a version of London often left out of the

narratives of modernization—one in which there are multiple modes of femininity that go

beyond that of the idealized housewife.

While Pym's social critique may be subtle, she demonstrates how women who do not

fit within the proscribed ideals of mother and housewife will never be fully included by

conservative society and offers other modes of Britishness outside of that identity. The single

middle-class women, or the "excellent women" of her novels, are denied a sexual identity

within the conservative gender roles of the day because of their class and gender. In the

process, *Excellent Women* shows how desire becomes reified for the excellent women as it

becomes a self-regulatory mechanism, demanding that sexual desire be removed from their

bodies and displaced or ignored. While the novel highlights that the only way to remove the

label of "excellent woman" is to marry, the text also reveals that marriage does not suddenly

allow a woman to reclaim desire. Thus, for the single women and those who are not the ideal

of traditional British femininity, the reification of desire becomes a means of showing the

incredibly precarious position of asserting any form of sexual desire in the socially encoded

and regulated world of post-war Britain. It creates a category of individuals excluded from

society because of their liminal status as single women. For these single women, any kind of

satisfaction is ultimately unobtainable, and yet like *Voyage in the Dark*, *Excellent Women*

reveals that there will always be multiple modes of middle-class femininity regardless of

what is idealized, particularly in the space of the city.[129] Through their refusal however

subconscious to conform to conservative middle-class social expectations, the women of the

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[129] Alan Sinfield discusses a similar phenomenon in Elizabeth Bowen's *The Heat of the Day*, in which he argues that a feminized middle-class (and thus women who fit outside of their proscribed roles) thwart masculinity (18).

novels reveal the inherent issues within those structures. *Excellent Women* does not try to offer a social remedy or polemic, but in its presentation of the limits of idealized middle-class British femininity, the novel demonstrate the potential for different futures for British women through the space of the city.

Excellent Women is set a few years after the end of World War II and is narrated by Mildred Lathbury, an "excellent woman," who is the unmarried, orphaned daughter of a vicar, and lacks in marriage prospects. She positions herself as a middle-class church-going woman, who while plain "is no Jane Eyre" (Pym 7) and has some kind of financial means. She fits into the iconic picture of a middle-class English woman, who has the "gentility" and ladylike qualities admired by women like Hester Morgan. Mildred is educated, from a religious background, and traditional in her world view; she does not espouse any kind of radicalism or adopt any version of bohemian culture. Rather than be a "career woman," Mildred works part-time for the Care of Aged Gentlewomen, a charitable organization, and spends the rest of her time volunteering with various church groups. Of course, Mildred's life and descriptions of herself make her seem like the typical elderly spinster.[130] However, she notes with irony on the opening pages: "I suppose an unmarried woman just over thirty, who lives alone and has no apparent ties, must expect to find herself involved or interested in other people's business, and if she is also a clergyman's daughter then one might really say that there is no hope for her" (5). Of course, this statement, while pertaining to the gossipy stereotypes of spinster, also seems completely outlandish in the case of Mildred. Yet, at thirty

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[130] The figure of the clergyman's daughter is a reoccurring motif, one of the most notable being Jane Austen's Fanny Prince in *Mansfield Park.* Mildred is very similar to the figure of Dorothy Hare in George Orwell's *A Clergyman's Daughter* (1935), although not as naïve or uncapable. Pym rewrites the figure of the clergyman's daughter and gives Mildred agency and makes her fully independent to counter Orwell's characterizations.

and tied to a set of moral stipulations because of her class and background, Mildred is a spinster and she knows it.

Although she does not believe in the gender roles that define the imperial patriarchal family as is revealed through her abhorrence of bad marriages and housewives through the novel, Mildred recognizes that social expectations determine her position as a middle-class woman. In her reading of the novel, Estella Tincknell reduces Mildred's inability to marry to Mildred's attitude towards desire and believes she "is torn between her desire to be loved and the intolerable amount of effort romance seems to involve" (37). Yet, this reading fundamentally misunderstands the dark humor of the novel, which revolves around the fact that Mildred does not yearn for love, reciprocated or unrequited, as is typical for protagonists of women's novels. Instead, it is that lack of longing which causes problems and makes Mildred atypical. Rather, Mildred understands and constantly defines herself as an "excellent woman" because she recognizes how others stereotype her, and thus how she is relegated to a space where she cannot have sexual desire without being seen as absurd. It is not that she is torn about desire, but that it simply cannot exist in her milieu and is placed elsewhere. Mildred fears the ridicule of her acquaintances, and as the narration constantly slips into the comments of her peers, it becomes clear that others view Mildred as having no prospects for marriage because of the stereotypes of prudishness, respectability, and lack of money that accompany her position as a clergyman's daughter. Although "admired" for her manners and moral character, Mildred lacks the social capital that would make her an ideal wife for a traditional marriage unless it is to the vicar, who in a sly aside Mildred suggests is a "confirmed bachelor."

Mildred's complacency and acceptance of her position is upset in the opening pages of the novel with the arrival of new neighbors: Helena and Rocky Napier. Helena is a flighty and disorganized anthropologist, making her a terrible housekeeper, and in many ways the "modern" woman. Rocky, in comparison, is a dashing naval officer, who is fastidious and cultured. Mildred immediately gravitates toward Rocky and develops a friendship with him, while simultaneously disliking Helena for her cool attitude and overt discussion of things such as toilet paper. The couple shares a communal bathroom with Mildred, which was not uncommon at the time and comments upon the lack of individual housing after 1945, which made the sharing a bathroom amongst strangers of all classes relatively common.[131] Mildred's dislike of discussing things like toilet paper illustrates how at times she performs the role of an "excellent woman." Helena's overt discussion of toilet paper is improper according to Mildred's notions of respectability because it refers to a bodily function and money. Yet the shared bathroom and resources would have been a common issue both before and after 1945 for the many individuals, who lived in boarding houses, bedsits, or older flats. As in other communal living situations, the Napiers excel at disrupting Mildred's world and impose increasingly inappropriate personal tasks, which add to the comedy of errors and the eventual pairing off of everyone in the novel except Mildred.

The marriage plot begins when Mildred is asked to assist Helena's colleague, Everard Bone, with whom Helena is in love. When Everard reveals he is not in love with Helena, Mildred is expected to be an intermediary for Everard Bone and tell Helena that she has been rejected. Later, Mildred is asked to be a go-between when Helena and Rocky separate,

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[131] Mildred also comments that their neighborhood is in the "shabby part of London" and on the wrong side of Victoria Station, an area that "did not usually attract people who looked like Mrs. Napier" (Pym 7). Rocky Napier's full name is Rockingham Napier, a name that "would hate sharing a bathroom!" (7), which demonstrates both the higher class of the Napiers compared to Mildred as well as the class mixing that occurred during and after the war because of housing demands.

writing letters from each spouse to the other. As the Napiers' relationship is unraveling (as it is also confirmed that Rocky has had many affairs), the local vicar, Julian Mallory, a friend of Mildred's and a previous bachelor, becomes engaged to the widowed Mrs. Allegra Gray. This causes some turmoil within the church community as it has been assumed that Mildred would marry Julian, and with his upcoming marriage, his "spinster" sister who has kept house for him hopes to relocate to Mildred's house much to Mildred's horror. However, despite the different forms of coupling that surround her, Mildred still remains removed from the fray of desire.

This removal from the fray of desire and constant insistence that she is nothing more than an "excellent woman" reveals how Mildred enacts a form of the reification of desire. While the novel clearly focuses on the themes of marriage and desire, it emphasizes how removed desire is in post-1945 London from the single woman's body. Mildred demonstrates the process of reification, which Kevin Floyd describes as a move in which knowledge that classifies bodies becomes one that partitions bodies, making them "epistemologically disembodied" (41). Any moment in which Mildred realizes a form of sexual desire, potential or actual, she must displace it and remove it from her own body. Otherwise, she compromises herself and risks the loss of her good social standing amongst the middle-class women in 1950s London. While the novel does not identify an outside to Mildred's "condition" as an excellent woman, this state of "excellent womanhood" is firmly grounded in a reified desire and is the only possible way for Mildred to operate amongst her peers. This reification of desire is precisely controlled by the fact that capital is unstable and becomes negotiated through the process of social regulation (Floyd 35). The position of the single woman is exclusionary to the dynamics of the nuclear family. The single woman's body is

removed from the family structure because she does not reproduce children within marriage and she cannot participate in the conservative value structure that locates the proper and thus "moral" place for women in the family home. Of course, this proves ironic in the case of the novel because the excellent women are precisely those whose self-worth relies on their ability to be good housekeepers and aid those who are unable to properly care for themselves, whether it is aged gentlewomen, bachelor vicars, or other charitable causes.

The figure of the excellent woman and those with whom she interacts are all those who do not fit into the prototypical family unit and thus form their own communities. Estella Tincknor argues that the excellent women are outside the 1950s binary positions of women as housewife/career woman. The excellent women are not involved in careers because they belong to a previous class of women who participate in charity rather than paid work. Rather than project a third position, the novel shows through Helena that any woman who does not follow the proscribed duties of housewife and mother is socially aberrant. She is a career woman, but is childless and a bad housekeeper, in addition to being potentially unfaithful to her husband. Mildred's dislike of Helena and constant dismissal of her slovenliness reveals the policing of women by their middle-class peers, which further demonstrates that even amongst those who do not follow norms that there is only one socially acceptable version of femininity for middle-class women of the 1950s. When Helena says her husband does most of the cooking, Mildred's immediate reaction is, "Surely wives shouldn't be too busy to cook for their husbands?" (Pym 9). Yet she is also quick to add that Rocky probably only cooks because he enjoyed it, not because he is a progressive husband: "for I had observed that men did not usually do things unless they enjoyed doing them" (Pym 9). Despite her instinct to judge Helena for her inability to be a good housekeeper, Mildred offers a quick corrective

and suggests that the gendered divisions of labor typically occur because men enjoy and want to do something, not because of women's inherent abilities. Later, Mildred reveals that she does not bother with cooking either, because "on the whole women don't make such a business of living as men do" and she would rather subsist on cans of cold baked beans (32).

These social regulations are what dictate Mildred's self-policing of her own subjectivity. As the events of the novel are framed through Mildred's voice, the various social interactions call attention to Mildred's actions in navigating society and how it affects her subjectivity. Mildred follows the critic Kevin Floyd's definition of subjectivity, which is not a personal or collective process of identification but rather a mode of seeing social relations and ones place within them.[132] Mildred, while constantly positioning herself as an excellent woman, albeit in an often self-deprecating fashion, recognizes that she is stuck in the position of the excellent woman and comments on the overall depressing nature of her life: "It was depressing the way the same old things turned up every week. Just the kind of underclothes a person like me might wear, I thought dejectedly, so there is no need to describe them" (Pym 85). While Mildred is wry in her humor comparing her life to her underwear, her statement helps demonstrate her resolute pragmatism in terms of her own desires. Any moment of desire is construed as somehow improper and not worth acknowledging because of her age and her position as the daughter of a clergyman. As she realizes, a secret love "with no hope of encouragement, which can be very enjoyable for the young or inexperienced" (92) is something in which she cannot indulge. Rather, Mildred must uphold a certain moral correctness that quickly makes her appear old-fashioned. These old-fashioned qualities are augmented by her defense of Victorian architecture and design and by her love of 19th century poets like Christina Rossetti and Matthew Arnold, rather than

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[132] Floyd 14.

upholding modern tastes and sensibilities. Although the text reads these tastes as old-fashioned especially in the context of the novel being written at the height of architectural modernization in Britain, Mildred may also be rejecting the masculine associations of contemporary architecture. Victorian architecture and design were often read as fussy and overly feminine. Bauhaus functionalism was preferred by the middle class in the 1950s than "cottage teapots and fussy cretonnes," which were seen negatively because of overly feminine aspects of the Victorian home and its creation of women's spaces (Wilson 112).

However, instead of proclaiming herself the eccentric like Helena, who "almost proudly" proclaims herself a slut due to her bad housekeeping and embeds herself in African tribes for research purposes,[133] Mildred tells herself that she belongs to a past world, one in which the Church of England and Victorian ideals dictate British life (Pym 8). [134] The comedy that occurs in the novel is one in which there is a jarring rupture between the modern world and the odd old-fashioned characters who still inhabit it. These characters along with Pym's detached writing style can be read as what Praseeda Gopinath refers to as an ethnography of men and women in a transitioning community in post-1945 Britain.[135] This transitioning community is trying to redefine who is British and what that means in terms of gender roles if they are to be independent of empire and the patriarchal family. Yet, many of these social "misfits" are also characters from a forgotten Britain that does not fully function in terms of a romanticized past. Sister Blatt, the lay sister, is socially irrelevant and archaic in her religiosity even in the conservative atmosphere of the 1950s. That Mildred begins to

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[133] A slut can mean both an untidy and slovenly woman (or a "foul slattern") or a woman of loose morals. Both definitions have been used consistently since the 15th century (Oxford English Dictionary).
[134] A fascinating sub-plot of the story revolves around Helena and Everard Bone's profession as anthropologists. The novel is quite critical of the emerging fads of anthropology that render foreign cultures as objects of study. Both Helena and Everard are portrayed as lacking human empathy and socially eccentric, suggesting they are perfect for this work.
[135] Gopinath 202.

consider herself amongst these anachronisms is where the absurdism lies. However, critics often claim that Mildred's acceptance of her social status (and other similar examples found in Pym's work at large) is what makes the novels conservative and promote a romanticized England that endorses the patriarchal family and marriage as the ultimate goal for women. Ellen M. Tsagaris, Alexander Smith, Charles Burkhart and Jane Nardin have all claimed that Pym's novels are cozy and mundane stories without any commentary on social issues.[136] These readings and their emphasis on the "middlebrow" nature of the work suggest that Pym's novels are simply conservative fluff and promote the single, chaste woman of a prior era.

Similar to *Voyage in the Dark*, the novel offers the perspective of a woman who does not fit into the idealized form of the typical middle-class woman, however she may appear to do so on the surface. The use of the city in *Voyage in the Dark* heightens the possibilities for women in the city and allows Anna to reframe and rewrite her urban experience as independent from the male gaze and the imposition of the masculinized forms of urban planning. While *Excellent Women* is much subtler in its use of London, it is equally important in how it shapes Mildred's experience and exposes the inherent issues with conservative gender roles for women. In the first chapter, Mildred describes her life in London as being similar to her childhood at the country rectory and points to London's parochialism: "But then so many parts of London have a peculiarly village or parochial atmosphere that perhaps it is only a question of choosing one's parish and fitting into it" (11). Mildred's statement critiques Abercrombie and Forshaw's plan for London in *Proud City* and

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[136] In his 2016 article, Ryan Francis Murphy argues that Pym's later novels are more serious and socially discontent than the "lighthearted" early one. While h defends Pym's work, he still participates in the scholarly conversations that view fiction written by and for women as somehow unable to produce any kind of cultural commentary or critique.

dismisses the urban "villages" and homes that were built following the war. While Mildred uses the analogy of the church to describe the geography of London, she also points to the varied nature of city life and the distinct neighborhoods that offer a variety of social experiences and types of people. Although Mildred views herself as an excellent woman, in many ways, she chooses her lifestyle because of the freedom her single position offers over marriage. After her roommate moves out, she celebrates the freedom of living alone: "Now that Dora had gone I looked forward to being alone one more, to living a civilised life with a bedroom and a sitting-room and a spare room for friends... I felt that I was old enough to become fussy and spinsterish if I wanted to" (12). In both her fantasies and her actual living situation, Mildred rejects the image of the ideal housewife and the type of home that was associated with it. She prefers the freedom and flexibility of her own flat, a space where she can reject both the old form of the vicar's wife and the new modern housewife by being a single woman. While she depends on the parochial community to define her life, she also chooses to be a part of the church world of misfits, who are also more often than not a community of unmarried people. London allows her the flexibility to determine her neighborhood and lifestyle in a way that the country village or suburb never can, and that contrast becomes heightened when she returns to her country school and she says, "My heart sank as I recognised the familiar landmarks" (110). Mildred sees her past in these landmarks, whereas London, despite its bleakness, contains the possibility of the future in a way that the countryside never can.

While it's important to note that while *Excellent Women* underscores the politically conservative climate of post-war Britain, the text is also critical of those structures through its use of comedy and realism. The comedy arrives through the tension of those who are

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forced into a world in which past and present ideals collide. Unlike Maurice Bendrix in

Graham Greene's *The End of the Affair* who after the end of World War II cannot reconcile

colliding world views, the excellent women make do and soldier on rather than falling into an

existential crisis. Another example is Helena, who as a married anthropologist, does not fit

into the ideals of the housewife and mother either. While Helena is notably a bad

housekeeper, her pursuit of men also makes her a woman who lacks "moral fiber" according

to the gossips around her. Clearly, Helena does not displace her desire in the same way as

Mildred, but middle-class women, regardless of marital status, cannot find satisfaction to

their desires. Helena is rejected by Everard Bone because he fears her future status as a

divorcee will make her more morally repulsive socially and thus taint his name. While the

question of divorce is not fully discussed in the novel, it makes an interesting comparison to

the "excellent woman" as both have failed to uphold or participate in the family structure of

marriage. Helena, however much Mildred dislikes her, demonstrates that there is not a binary

of career woman versus housewife; instead, the real binary of feminine roles in post-war

Britain is the binary of housewife/non-housewife that was institutionalized through the

welfare state's programs for mothers and married women. This binary becomes increasingly

apparent in women's critiques of one another in the novel as seen with the gossip about

Helena and Mildred.[137]

Despite her attempts to reject or displace her own feelings, Mildred has moments of

desire that infiltrate the text. The most obvious is her desire for Rocky Napier and whenever

she begins to acknowledge this desire, she knows must remove it from her own body. When

Julian Malory suggests she might have fallen in love with Rocky, she dismisses it as being

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[137] Praseeda Gopinath discusses how the welfare state programs helped women by easing the burdens of mothers and married women, but in doing so also made explicit the gendered nation-state of post-war Britain (177).

"quite impossible" and comments on her inability to fall in love (Pym 44). After a dream in which Rocky proposes to her, Mildred wakes up "feeling ashamed and disappointed and made a resolution that I would take Winifred her breakfast in bed" (212). While throughout the text, Mildred constantly refuses to acknowledge her own desire, the most telling example of reified desire is when Rocky tells her he is getting back together with Helena because of a letter Mildred sent him on Helena's behalf. Mildred says:

> Now I felt flat and disappointed, as if he had failed to come up to my expectations. And yet, what had I really hoped for? Dull, solid friendship without charm? No, there was enough of that between women and women and even between men and women. Of course, if he had not been married... but this suggested a situation altogether too unreal to contemplate. (226)

In the moment where Mildred finally recognizes she might have desired Rocky, she immediately refutes it as being nothing more than unrealistic. Even the possibility in which she could have openly desired him if he was not married is something she must reject and refuse to contemplate. As Kevin Floyd notes, the reification of desire "compels an experience of privatization and isolation, an experience of exchange relations as impermeable to human intervention" (17). In constantly having to disavow her bodily desire, Mildred becomes more and more isolated. As she tells her friend Dora, "Perhaps it's better to be unhappy than not to feel anything at all" (Pym 115). This unhappiness is part of Mildred's recognition of the loss of desire, rather than never actually having desired.

In *Excellent Women,* the reification of desire occurs when sexual desire becomes displaced upon other objects. The novel is set during an "era of consumerism" that enforces Fordist modes of regulation which operate through mechanisms of consumption and

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production.[138] In *Excellent Women*, the framework for production is obscured as Mildred is not necessarily dependent upon paid work. What becomes clear though is that in any moment in which Mildred begins to recognize a sexual desire, she must quickly displace it. After a discussion with Allegra Gray in which Gray asks Mildred what women do if they don't marry and then comments on how dreary single women's lives are, Mildred suddenly rushes to the department store and compulsively buys a new lipstick called Hawaiian Fire (Pym 129-131).[139] This is triggered by the assumption others make that Mildred must love Julian Mallory, Allegra Gray's fiancé. The desire not to be a dreary single woman who lives "in a bed-sitting-room or a hostel and be dependent on parish life" (129) is what pushes Mildred to find something to counteract that status and reclaim desire. Mildred realizes the fallacy of her desire for this other life when she observes the women in the Ladies' Room:

> *All flesh is but as grass*...I thought, watching the women working at their faces with
> savage concentration, opening their mouths wide, biting and licking their lips,
> stabbing at their noses and chins with powder-puffs. Some, who had abandoned the
> struggle to keep up, sat in chairs, their bodies slumped down, their hands resting on
> their parcels. One woman lay on a couch, her hat and shoes off, her eyes closed. (131)

Mildred's attempt to replace her desire and to remove herself from her position as an excellent woman is met with the recognition that all these women have also failed to find a suitable replacement for their desire, regardless of their marital status. Ultimately, because women's desire is invariably objectified, they are left dissatisfied and empty regardless of

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[138] Rachel Bowlby describes British consumption and its relationship to the individual in-depth in *Carried Away: the Invention of Modern Shopping*. She argues that by the 20th century, shopping had shifted from an activity that was born out of necessity to an experience that was "open-ended, pleasurable, and perhaps transgressive" and even at times "insidious" for the consumer (8-10).

[139] Bowlby comments that the department store is a uniquely European site of consumption that brought "the glamour of fashion to the middle classes" (9).

their status as single or married. Even in their attempts to use the department store as a site in which they can express their desire, shopping and consumption destroys the women's bodies. The text frames the slumped women are repulsive as their bodies betray them and the ones who are still active are almost machine-like in their consumption as they mirror a factory line of make-up application. This is not a place in which Mildred sees desire being reclaimed, and while there is an assumption that shopping is the means in which women purchase agency through commodities, it is clearly shown to betray them by refusing any kind of satisfaction.

The few times Mildred is successfully able to displace her desire is when she indulges in eating and drinking. In fact, it is only in moments in which she begins to recognize a sexual desire and it is displaced that she finds some satisfaction in food. As the text is set a few years after the end of World War II, rationing is still an important aspect of British life. While the text does not mention rations or the effects of the war upon Mildred or other characters, earlier readers would have been aware of the continued regulation and lack of access to food. The luxurious food then takes on an even more heightened quality because it is so rare and unobtainable. Mildred's experiences with food offer an intense fulfillment because of that lack and because of the denial of her own sexual fulfillment. In her first encounter with Rocky, they share a bottle of wine and when she returns home, she suggests that the wine has given her evening a "fantastic air," rather than suggest this great evening is because of Rocky. When she visits the vicarage the following day, Mildred states, "Tea at the vicarage was a safer meal than most" (Pym 43), suggesting that there is an intrinsic relationship between food and sexual desire. Clearly, the vicarage is an asexual space in which food is not a substitute for sex. Later in the novel, when Mildred has lunch with a former love interest, William Caldicote, the meal becomes a way for Mildred to indulge.

While neither person desires the other, it is through the intervention of food and expensive wine that Mildred can excuse herself for saying that Rocky Napier is the "kind of person [she] should have liked for [herself]" (69). As William tells Mildred, this is absurd because they are "the observers of life. Let other people get married by all means" (70). This moment in which eating and drinking becomes the substitute for desire is further augmented when Mildred and William visit to his office, where they can see another government office across the way. William tells Mildred that this is the Ministry of Desire: "They always look so far away, so not-of-this world, those wonderful people" (73). Of course, this department is completely inaccessible to William or Mildred, a place where the reification of desire does not exist as these strangers are able to fully enact desire as part of their bodily experience and subjectivity. Yet, it is also a place that is never obtainable for those outside of it. Rather than transcend the reification of desire, the single characters must displace sexual desire onto an object or means of fulfillment that is socially encoded as proper for their unmarried status.

The novel ends with the question of whether any desire can ever truly be fulfilled, especially within the social bounds of 1950s London. While the constant discourse of excellent woman and the suggestion of marriage as the ideal state frame the novel, *Excellent Women* is highly skeptical of this position. While Mildred suggests there is no outside her position (and in fact, that there is no past or future (Pym 101)), it is also unclear that becoming a married woman will allow her to either disrupt this reification of desire or find satisfaction in the social hierarchies. As Helena and Rocky Napier demonstrate, their marriage is one built upon the romance of wartime rather than being a continuously fulfilling relationship. When Julian Mallory ends his engagement to Allegra Gray, everyone recognizes that he has escaped from an unfulfilling future life. In the final words of the novel,

Mildred says she will have a "full life" (256), but these are bleakly ironic words: her life will only be full because she will have a full work schedule, working for Everard Bone as his secretary and "protecting" Julian Mallory from "preying widows." Even though Mildred has become a "career woman" rather than an excellent woman, desire is still ever elusive. At no point is any desire fulfilled or fully recognized; even the last scene, in which Mildred has dinner at Everard Bone's house, is described as "pleasant and cosy," but it does not have the excitement or fulfillment of previous meals. With the ending of *Excellent Women*, it is understood that a single woman like Mildred is excluded from having desire and even if she finds a career or a husband, she and the others who do not fit into an idealized version of the patriarchal family and marriage will be constrained by the bounds of 1950s society. Their desire can only be estranged from their bodies and construed as excess; the recognizable forms of desire can only be those deemed as socially acceptable such as eating and drinking. The novel hints at a world outside of this when Mildred was working in Censorship during the war and even then, the texts suggests that her pre-war labor in censorship has now infiltrated the domestic and mundane where she must censor her own self and desire. If there was a before or alternative mode of existence and desire for Mildred, that is a time that cannot infiltrate the completely encompassing systems of excellent women of the novel.

If desire is ultimately unfulfilled in 1950s London, it is also because the utopian project of rebuilding has not affected the day-to-day lives of the characters of *Excellent Women*. The spaces Mildred and her acquaintances inhabit are pre-war buildings that still need repairs and reflect the "quaint nostalgia" for a bygone time. The church Mildred attends receives a donation to fix the bombed out stained glass (Pym 12); Mildred and the Napiers share a bathroom between their two flats because there is no other option; and the hotel Mrs.

Caldicote stays in is described as one of those "garishly decorated hotels, which used to be, and perhaps still are, the Mecca of provincial visitors" (191). This London is unglamorous and dated, reflecting Mildred's sentiments about herself, and it is in these mundane details that another city appears to counter the narratives of the cosmopolitan London of the future projected by the official city plans. It is a London where William Caldicote feeds pigeons every afternoon and there are bus queues and cafeteria lines (190). However, it's also in this unfashionable and prosaic version of London that the overarching the idealized garden city and conservative gender ideals are dismissed as unable to fix Britain or reform anyone socially aberrant because these same plans ignore the variety of individuals who do not fit within the structures of the traditional family. Although Abercrombie's Plan for London included flats designed for the single bachelor and career woman, they adhered to the same modernist design plans as the flats for the ideal family and were eventually dismissed because they encouraged "male vice" (Hornsey 204-5). What *Excellent Women* then offers is a corrective to the widespread panic that surrounded the uncoupled individual and relies on a similar method as *Voyage in the Dark* in its use of its protagonist's experiences, however unhappy, to show the variety of perspectives than can never be fully repressed within the ever-fluid space of the city. While Mildred chooses a relatively conservative neighborhood and lifestyle, she will never be an idealized housewife even if she marries.[140] Additionally, while some of the minor characters are critical of the bad housewife in the novel and seem to support the conservative mindset of the 1950s, Helena's inability to care about household chores and her focus on her career is celebrated and what she ultimately takes pleasure in. Mildred is jealous of her because Helena is able to be a successful anthropologist and remain

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[140] In one of Pym's later novels, it is mentioned that Mildred is married to Everard Bone. Pym often liked to create a miniature world across her novels where the various characters often knew one another.

a desirable and stylish woman. Although *Excellent Women* does not provide a remedy to the

constraints both Helena and Mildred face as women in the 1950s, it foreshadows the

increasing presence of different forms of middle-class femininity in Britain. In 1959,

architectural critic and Independent Group member Lawrence Alloway called for "the

contingent fluidity of the unplannable metropolis" and cited the independent office woman as

a major influence in forging meaningful, profound, and more autonomous modes of everyday

urban life (Hornsey 253). While *Excellent Women* predates Alloway's work by four years, it

demonstrates the multiplicity of gender roles that were already occurring within the space of

the city and how individuals were using London to shape their own narratives rather than rely

on overarching popular sentiment or mandates.

The Madman in the City: Anthony Burgess' *The Doctor is Sick*

Anthony Burgess' *The Doctor is Sick* was published in 1960, a year after Alloway's call for

"an unplannable" and thus unruly metropolis. While the main character, Dr. Edwin Spindrift,

as a male, English-born professor radically differs from Anna Morgan in *Voyage in the Dark*

and Mildred Lathbury in *Excellent Women*, his narrative reveals the continuous fluidity that

Alloway proscribes as a means to escape the ever-encroaching regulatory nature of the

British society in the mid to late 1950s. The unruly city portrayed in *The Doctor is Sick*

builds upon the claims that Rhys and Pym make that modern London is the potential site to

rewrite oneself in contrast to the conservative social demands and the inherent self-policing

of the middle-class. The novel furthers the idea that post-war London not only allows for the

possibility of an escape, but becomes the physical site to reject conservative politics and

social regulations, particularly those tied to imperialism. The physical spaces of 1950s

London continually enforce the conservative politics and, on the surface,, it appears that they do not allow for alternative subjectivities.[141] Rather *The Doctor is Sick* demonstrates why later 20th century urban theorists and geographers such as Edward Soja, David Harvey, and Doreen Massey could claim that the redevelopment and modernization of London in the early 1950s was crucial for the development of a truly pluralist and equitable city space.

Burgess' novel opens with the unlikely protagonist, Dr. Edwin Spindrift, laying in a hospital bed in London and contemplating his fate. He has been sent to London from Burma, where he is a professor of linguistics, because of a mysterious and undiagnosable neurological malady. After being poked and prodded by numerous torturous procedures, Spindrift learns he is to have brain surgery to remove a tumor and that his wife has consented to this without his knowledge. Spindrift's wife, Sheila, accompanied him from Burma in the official capacity as his nurse, but as it is quickly revealed, once in London is more interested in the various entertainments and company of newfound admirers. Sheila has little interest in Edwin or his condition and leaves him alone in the hospital for days on end while she drinks in a local pub. Instead of visiting her husband herself, she sends the motley assortment of pub-goers in her stead. When Edwin is told he is to have brain surgery by the surgeon, he decides to abscond from the hospital and seek out his wife, who he is sure will recognize his plight and agree that surgery is unnecessary. Edwin embarks upon a journey across London to find Sheila, who is ever allusive. This results in a convoluted picaresque adventure in which he meets various characters who populate the fringes of London.

The plot of *The Doctor is Sick* follows a familiar style of 20th century novels about wandering the modernist city, in which Burgess rewrites the figure of Benjamin's *flaneur*

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[141] Richard Hornsey discusses this at length in *The Spiv and the Architect* and show how these spaces deny the visibility of alternative forms of subjectivity outside of the patriarchal family for gay men.

through the unreliable narration of a semi-mad professor. Burgess, a lifetime admirer of James Joyce, took inspiration from *Ulysses* and there are references to Joyce's work throughout. When Edwin dials the payphone, he remembers his Joyce and dials "EDEnville 0000, and asked for Adam. He gave nobody a chance to speak" (Burgess 132). Another example is the character of 'Ippo, who wears a sandwich board around London advertising various things, and like Ulysses, Edwin starts to see his thoughts reflected upon the advertisements. Although Burgess was directly influenced by Joyce and other modernist writers, his use of realism creates a more contemporary narrative style for its 1960 audience. Similar to Rhys' and Pym's novels, *The Doctor is Sick* emphasizes the problems within class and gender structures that are often elided in modernist texts. One way the novel does this is through Edwin's profession—he is a professor of linguistics—to constantly showcase the importance of words, their etymology, and the many puns that arise in the process. Rather than act as a modernist form of obscuring meaning or demonstrating alienation, this narrative's focus on language illuminates how language becomes an inherent part of identity and the embodied markings of place. Ever the scholar and philologist, Edwin points out the variants of dialect and idiosyncrasies of regional speech, which underscores the different class dynamics and ethnic groups within London. While Edwin is ever-fascinated by these differences, the novel includes the variety of languages, dialects, and classes-based linguistic differences that occur within the space of London. The physicians at the hospital are mocked for their upper middle-class public schoolboy language and boy's club mentalities. Edwin points out the etymologies of medical discourse to the disapproving nurses and technicians and he even gives a lecture on the folk etymology of Cockney for a ramshackle group of working-class alcoholics at a pub.

The emphasis on language acts as more than a narrative device to ground the text in a realism situated in 1950s London. The constant hyper-awareness of language demonstrates the material power of language to fragment bodies and relationships and well as become a mechanism for policing others. Edwin's obsession with linguistics is one of the reasons Sheila proclaims their marriage has failed and that she has lost interest in him. In this case, language has physically stripped Edwin of his desire and desirability. The focus on language also reveals the power structures inherent in the differences between accents and thus immediately identifies an individual's educational and class status. This is most apparent with the medical doctors who treat Edwin and in their use of language to assert their authority and status at the hospital. They question the verity of Edwin's title as a "doctor," and their interactions with the nurses, orderlies, medical technicians demonstrate that these workers are beneath them as doctors because of the hierarchies of accent and job status. Most of the staff under the doctors are also foreign-born, adding to the further linguistic variety captured within the hospital, and emphasizing that only posh accents offer a kind of social importance. Outside of the hospital, language becomes a mechanism both to police the various characters in terms of class and race, and ironically, as a means of avoiding the police. In a comic turn of events, the lecture that Edwin gives to the various lowlife pub goers is a set-up to hide the illicit racket that the owners of the pub, the Jewish émigré twins Leo and Harry Stone, run in the basement. When the police ask what the lecture is, Edwin replies it is on philology, to which the sergeant responds that "...there's something very fishy going on here. It's a very queer lot to want an education of this sort" (Burgess 119). When Edwin explains how the Cockney for "arse" becomes bottle and glass in order to be "an apocope intended to mystify," the sergeant declares Edwin's lecture to be "dirt and

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obscenity," (119). In this scene, the irony of the academic lecture as something that is dirty and obscene is not lost, especially when it is the supposed cover for the actual "dirt and obscenity" already occurring in the basement. The sergeant recognizes the "dirtiness" of the word "arse" without understanding how it's become devoid of that significance through the linguistic analytic framework.

The novel's situational irony adds a comic element to Edwin's *flâneurie* and demonstrates the power of language (and thus culture) to control and to rewrite social structures. Edwin's obsession with language has made him lose his physical desire and is what destroys his marriage. Unlike Mildred in *Excellent Women*, Edwin lacks any kind of sexual desire because he privileges his work over his relationships, which is what his wife claims has created irreparable differences. While Edwin rebuts this claim and blames his lack of desire on his neurological decay instead, it is important to note that this decay and loss of desire began while Edwin was acting as a type of colonial bureaucrat in Burma where he was working as a professor of English linguistics. Edwin's work in the colony as teacher specializing in the colonizer's language upholds cultural imperialism and its bureaucracy, when these structures are becoming increasing irrelevant. In fact, the novel never mentions any political trouble in Burma, nor the rising resentment across Asia of foreign involvement during the French-Indochina War in Vietnam. As discussed in Chapter 1, this version of middle-class British masculinity was seen as outdated and impossible to uphold after World War II. However much the decent man is seen as a function of imperialism and colonial education, Edwin's condition shows how impotent that figure has become.[142] Yet, Edwin is

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[142] Praseeda Gopinath discusses the evolution of the imperial gentleman to the decent man in the post-war period and how that reflects a new post-war masculinity that no longer is directly tied to the empire or its bureaucracy. In her discussion of Philip Larkin, Gopinath explicitly points out the relationship between this form of masculinity, nostalgia, and alienation that occurs for middle-class men. Rather than become one of

able to reclaim his desire by wandering through London and regains himself both emotionally and physically. London and its motley assortment of characters are what cure him and offer him multiple ways to satisfy his desire and he realizes: "What an easy world it was to live in this big innocent trusting London. Back to nature, with fruit growing anywhere for the plucking. Only a fool really would return to the hard graft of teaching linguistics under a Burma sun" (Burgess 191). London, despite its chaos and sprawling streets, is a more "natural" fit for Edwin and there he can bloom. In using the metaphor of grafting to describe the imposition of British culture onto Burma, Edwin subconsciously acknowledges how forced the colonial project is.

Although London is the initial opening for Edwin to begin the process of discarding imperial masculinity, he still needs a physical force to make him recognize his desire. In an uncomfortable scene, Edwin is forced to reclaim his sexuality by the prostitute Coral, who refuses to let him wallow in words and the ethereal nature of linguistics and forces him to engage with her sexually. The scene is vague regarding what unfolds, but the following morning Edwin realizes he has been cured of his asexuality. This moment of reckoning with Coral is not the first time Edwin has been acknowledge that the true problem was his obsession with words and that the real issue is his inability to determine a plan of action: "He had lived too much with words and not what the words stood for... Apart from its accidents of sound, etymology and lexical definition, did he really know the meaning of any one word?... Let him loose in the real world, where words are glued to things" (153). Turning away from words and his scholarly obsession, Edwin is forced to engage with the real world around him. That is when he really can see the generative possibilities of urban space and

those men, Edwin Spindrift shows how the city can reinvigorate masculinity without falling back into the trappings of the past.

those who are grounded in the materiality of the street. Burgess' *A Clockwork Orange* (1962) demonstrates the opposite: the power language can give those who know how to use it and the control that comes with language. In both texts, the narratives are fascinated by the way in which people succumb to language as if it is a material force.

By finding his desire in the streets of London, Edwin demonstrates that the urban space of London is not only messy and convoluted, but a place of possibility where one can rewrite their own position and identity to be more modern. Rather than return to the figure of the imperial professor in Burma, Edwin rejects his imperial bourgeois past and chooses the space of London, which reflects the inherent multiplicity of a metropolitan environment. Despite his cultural power in Burma, he holds little in London because his former status and prestige does not translate into this new world. In addition to the various people Edwin meets at the pub, the novel also includes a variety of characters to show the changing demographics of the city and make the portrait of London realistic. While the references to various ethnicities are usually stereotyped at best (the Jewish pub owners as miser; the bawdy and illiterate "Latin" opera singer; the German alcoholic prostitute; the browbeating Caribbean nurses) to being often offensive in their portrait of black immigrant and the Irish, it reveals that London is not simply a white-washed space that only one group inhabits. This makes a stark contrast to *Voyage in the Dark*, in which Anna Morgan is the only non-British character and shows the changes to London and its portraits in literature over 20 years. Although brief, the novel references the 1958 race riots when Edwin observes in typical *flaneur* fashion Teddy Boys and Caribbean immigrants:

> Edwin looked with interest at a lounging group of youths, simian-browed with horror-
> waxwork faces, their clothes and coiffures most, by contrast civilized... This was

collective dandyism, though Edwin, a crazy synthesis of conformity and rebellion...

Edwin saw three negroes – smart men in raincoats and trillbies – advance on Leo

Stone. They had had enough of white derision; they had learned that to ignore it was

but to fan it. (Burgess 205)

This description portrays both groups with a kind of fascination, mingled with Edwin's

apparent horror. These two factions, who were both described negatively in the press at the

time, are portrayed as part of the appeal of the city. The Caribbean immigrants in the novel

constantly provide a remedy to the ills of British culture, whether it is the hospital staff who

mock the doctors' pretentious poshness or the "dandies" who reveal the uncouth racism and

lack of style of British working-class culture. Although the narration clearly prefers the

smartness of the Caribbean immigrants to the "simian-brows" of the Teddy Boys (which is

an old colonist trope of racial insult), the detached language helps cement these individuals

as part of the fixtures of urbanity that give "words meaning." They are what ground Edwin in

the city and show the new possibilities for London, regardless of the outcome. Instead of

focusing on only the middle-class, the novel shows that the constant overlay of classes and

ethnicities within the metropolitan space is what is more real, rather than bourgeois fantasies

of class isolation in other British literature. Although one might want to criticize Pym's

novels as fitting into this mode of middle-class isolation because they have been used to

romanticize an English past, this is a fundamental misreading of the issues presented in the

text. While the mention of non-English Londoners is rare, the novel describes several recent

immigrants. When Mildred takes tea with a local church member at a cafeteria, they sit next

to some Indian university students. When the church lady tells Mildred that the cafeteria isn't

safe for women alone, referring to the Indian men, Mildred bristles at the idea and describes the kind and genteel manners of the men.

What allows *The Doctor is Sick* to revel in the possibilities of future London and the implicit joy of the unruly city is how much it breaks apart the social barriers Edwin has previously felt. While he is emasculated by his neurological decay, this decay can also be read as a symbol of the decline of imperial masculinity and the need to reject it in order to find a sustainable desire. Burma and his work there literally make him impotent and fail to have desire, whereas the cosmopolitan metropolis restores his vitality and offers him new modes of living. Edwin subconsciously recognizes that the old social demarcations of class and gender no longer work in his contemporary moment. Those with the most freedom and power are those who flout conservative conventions, whether it is his wife Sheila, who has multiple lovers as part of their "open marriage," or Bob, the mobster who declares that Edwin is also kinky and tries to get him to engage in flagellation. Despite the idea that the rebuilt London would solidify the patriarchal family, the novel insists on the opposite. Burma and the colonies (as long as they remain colonies) are the only sites in which the imperial and thus conservative gender roles can still be played out. The multiplicity found within London can never hold one consistent model (as can be seen with the earlier rejection of a progressive society by the second Churchill government). At the beginning of the novel when Edwin starts to recognize the multiplicity of London, he states: "This feeling of strangeness exacerbated his nervousness, his sense of being a quarry. He groped in his inner pocket and felt reassured by the solid walls of his passport" (81). Here, early on, Edwin wishes to return to the colonies where roles are clearly defined. Part of the uneasiness found in London is that the city offers more than the old structures of imperialism and gender, and when he finally

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accepts that, Edwin can finally see the irony and humor in the conservative modes of control. Before he has accepted the call of London, he wonders what his parents would have thought of his adventures: "It was not what his parents – the dead, kindly parson, Greek scholar; the horticultural and crypto-theosophist mother – had ever envisaged for their only son" (156). Clearly, Edwin was raised with the typical expectations of the white Anglo middle-class: his parents expect a certain kind of civility and decorum as found in the middle-class gentleman. Yet happiness eludes that imperially-derived individual, who has trouble satisfying his desire, and as the novel shows, it is only when those middle-class structures are rejected that happiness can be found.

The end of the novel complicates the realist reading of the novel as Edwin at the end of his wanderings wakes up in the hospital, having had the surgery. He finally finds Sheila there, and she suggests that his wanderings were mostly all a dream. Edwin himself is not readily convinced that his experiences were entirely a dream. Regardless of their reality, his adventures inspire him to finally disown his past life in Burma with Sheila. As Edwin leaves the hospital for the final time after receiving surgery, he steps into the street a completely different man:

> He opened the door and presented Edwin to the freedom of the London night,
> smelling of autumn and oil and distant fires. Or morning, as it should right be. Edwin
> strode off in the direction of the great London thoroughfare which glowed beyond the
> square and the side-streets... Plenty of time for plenty of piquant adventures. (Burgess
> 261).

Like Mildred who sees the potential for a "full life" at the end of *Excellent Women*, Edwin's narrative ends with him going out into London knowing it holds the potential for future

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happiness. London glows in its vibrancy and possibility, which supports the novel's claim that unruly London is a celebratory space and one that is already overcoming the limitations of the conservative politics and social mores of the late 1950s and early 1960s. However much planning is asserted, there will always be ways that individuals rewrite the city to fill their own needs and *The Doctor is Sick* shows that most of those people do not want to or cannot fit into the model conservative family. Instead they are individuals who seek their desire in unconventional ways, whether it is single women, kinky mobsters, or intellectuals and artists. These are the people who are the true denizens of the city and not only make it a space worth living in, but also the fundamental character of the city.

Beginning with *Voyage in the Dark*, there is a clear assertion that the city is not perfect, nor should it be a utopia. Yet, each novel in this chapter shows the gradual evolution of London as a space in which different modes of middle-class identity are first acknowledged, then rejected, and lastly, reformed. However much the government officials and city planners like Patrick Abercrombie designed new spaces that were to enforce the continuation of British patriarchy and imperialism as Hornsey claims, these plans could not control individuals' experiences within them. With the call for a more open and equal Britain as seen in the design and politics of the Festival of Britain, modernization inspired individuals to use their home spaces and neighborhoods to re-envision their own situations and subjectivities. While *Voyage in the Dark* and *Excellent Women* focus on the inherent problems for women in 20th century Britain, they also demonstrate their inherent fascination and conditional love of the city, however much others want to claim it is not for women. All these texts recognize the concerns of the alienated middle-class subject and use the city as a space that can offer new possibilities, whether it is for the single woman, the non-English

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British, or the bureaucrat who has rejected the forms of imperialism and masculinity that have structured his entire life.

Chapter 4: The Untidy Sprawl: Post-Imperial London, Immigration, and Desire

"But the English fellar who does assist Rahamut, he like the tune too bad, he only slapping Mango and Hotboy on the back and saying how he never hear a calypso like that... Hotboy really impressed with the words Mango think up, and he begin to have dreams again about a comeback: he could hear this calypso playing all about London, and people going wild when they hear it." –Sam Selvon, "Calypso in London" (1957)

"It is that aspect of itself which troubled and preoccupied it more than any other, begged and obtained its attention, and which it cultivated with a mixture of fear, curiosity, delight, and excitement. The bourgeoisie made this element identical with its body... it staked its life and its death on sex by making it responsible for its future welfare; it placed its hopes for the future in sex by imagining it to have ineluctable effects on generations to come; it subordinated its soul to sex by conceiving of it as what constituted the soul's most secret and determining part." –Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1 (1978)

In 1968, the rabidly racist Conservative MP Enoch Powell gave his famous "Rivers of Blood" speech in which he described a Britain that was quickly becoming more black than white. His nationalist fervor relayed anecdotes of a sole white child in a classroom, old women who were afraid to leave their homes because of black street gangs, and white working-class men terrified that they were to be the "slaves" of the newly arrived immigrants in a revised form of colonialism.[143] While Powell is often cited as the driving force of contemporary white nationalism in Britain, one in which race became the dividing marker of class and social status, his antecedents have been traced to the dying legacy of British imperialism, changing class structures after World War II, and the influence of the Civil Rights movement in the United States.[144] In this chapter, I analyze how the changing attitudes towards what constituted the middle-class in the post-war period reflect the shifting notions of who was "British" based on the racial politics and hierarchies after World War II

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[143] Powell uses the rhetoric of fighting "evil" and includes statements such as, "As time goes on, the proportion of this total who are immigrant descendants, those born in England, who arrived here by exactly the same route as the rest of us, will rapidly increase. Already by 1985 the native-born would constitute the majority."

[144] Paul Gilroy describes the direct impact that the Civil Rights movement and Black Power had on Jamaican music and diasporic Caribbean culture and the resulting fearmongering amongst the British in *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack* (172-187).

and how that materializes in the space of London. I discuss the novels, *The Lonely Londoners* (1956) by Sam Selvon and *City of Spades* (1957) by Colin MacInnes, and their representations of class, race, and sexual politics for the black immigrants and the middle-class white Britons with whom the immigrant encounter in the texts and who would have read the novels. Each narrative offers a different perspective towards the perception of race and class in 1950s Britain and suggests that in the new, "modernized" city of London not only does "contact" and social mixing occur between the newly arrived immigrants and the native-born Britons, but that racial integration is a facet of cosmopolitan urbanity. This new, post-imperial city becomes the site of generation for a new form of British national subjectivity that reflects the changing demographics of the nation and reinterprets racialized identities into the politics of class. With the shifting borders of race, class, and national identity, the middle-class has several reactions: the progressive and "modern" interpretation in which white British individuals view themselves as post-imperial and thus not racist; the middle-class individuals who once they acknowledge the problems of racism become sympathetic; and those who continually insist upon imperial class definitions that are still tied to the binary of colonizer/colonized and reassert that the racism was crucial to the prior success of colonization and empire.

Each novel offers a radically different understanding of the relationship between racial discourses of Britishness, otherness, and their incorporation into the ongoing evolution of class distinctions post-1945. Literary critics such as Jed Esty, Nick Bentley, and Thomas Davis discuss the novels' stylistic incorporation of modernism and realism as seen in Selvon's use of stream of consciousness[145] and through MacInnes' "sociological" or

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[145] See Nick Bentley's discussion of Selvon's use of stream of consciousness to articulate alienation for black immigrants (269-270) and Peter J. Kalliney's discussion of Selvon's use of the city and the motif of wandering

documentary style.[146] I analyze *The Lonely Londoners* and *City of Spades* as realist novels

that portray English and immigrant working class communities and offer middle-class

readers alternate portraits of class, racial relationships, and British subjectivity to those found

in the mainstream media of the period. Through their reliance on realism, the two novels

consider other sites of marginalized identities and intersectional subjectivities beyond the

isolated discussions of class that were often underscored by the British New Left. *The Lonely*

Londoners and *City of Spades* thus evade the binary of right and left-wing politics that

ascribed a singular class and racial identity as the unifying force of post-1945 Britain.

Instead, the novels insist on the ever-shifting boundaries of classed and racialized

subjectivities in the space of London and for the middle class. Published the same year as

City of Spades, Ian Watt's canonical literary work, *Rise of the Novel*, argues that the novel as

a genre is always representative of middle-class politics and worldview and is never radical

or socialist (9-59). Yet Watt's argument suggests that novels can never be subversive or

challenge ideologies and discounts how texts produced for and read by the middle class can

still have radical potential.[147] While I focus on the middle-class reception of these two

novels, I do not want to imply that these two novels are simple reflections of dominant

bourgeois ideology. Rather they offer a way to counter and subtly address those same

bourgeois notions of British subjectivity. *The Lonely Londoners* and *City of Spades*

demonstrate the complicated and often contradictory ways that the post-1945 British middle

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as a form of modernism and re-investment in narrative technique (106). Rebecca Dyer argues that Selvon's use of the wandering Caribbean in London is a reworking of earlier British literary forms to "get [Caribbeans'] message and voice across" (110).

[146] As Marquita Smith astutely notes, MacInnes' work feels cringe-worthy at times because it takes a sociological or anthropological "approach" to discussing race as was done in the period by white scholars analyzing "other" cultures. However, that does not make his work worth dismissing, because "MacInnes has taken bold steps to address the uncomfortable realities that many of his contemporaries either shied away from or had no interest in tackling" (13).

[147] Nick Bentley argues that all novels, regardless of style, have radical potential regardless of form, readership, or an author's background (67-68).

class viewed themselves, their politics, and what a contemporary society should be. In these novels, the portraits of race and class quickly become gendered and I argue that in their discussions of the position of women, the segregated boundaries of class and race become murkier as they delve into the role of female desire and how that maps onto racial and classed hierarchies.

In my discussion of the racial politics of 1950s London for the middle class, I also return to the importance of a younger generation, who were under forty and saw the potential for Britain to become a progressive utopia through better urban planning, equalized housing and living standards, and class-leveling through aesthetics and design. This younger middle class embraced the progressive formulation of the city-space as a proto-thirdspace, in which the imperialism of British society could be dismantled. In *The Lonely Londoners* and *City of Spades*, both of which emphasize urbanity in their titles, the space of the city is crucial for understanding how the physicality of the urban landscape writes and rewrites cultural experience and negotiations for the postcolonial diaspora. Paul Gilroy argues that urban space encapsulates more than the location in which class formations "achieve geographical expression" and are realized; the city is essential for black communities to create connections. He insists that the "institutions they create: temples, churches, clubs, cafes, and blues dances confound any Eurocentric idea of where the line dividing politics and culture should fall" (*There Ain't No*, 37). These spaces become the crucial locations in which the changing demographics of the United Kingdom become visible and force the British middle class to articulate a post-imperial British subjectivity. Prior to World War II, the middle class relied on the hierarchies of imperialism and the geographically distant space of the colonies

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to define and economically support their positions in the United Kingdom.[148] With "reverse

colonization"[149] and the incorporation of post-imperial structures and bodies on the

metropolis, the middle class's use of geography and economics to define their class position

shifts to include the "here" of the United Kingdom rather than the old space of empire.[150]

Powell and his career trajectory offer an important case study for how racial rhetoric

was used and incorporated into class politics in Britain after World War II. His political

momentum was predicated on two factors: he had a long political career before he became a

symbol of the Far Right in England and their racism against the increased immigration from

former British colonies after World War II as part of the Windrush Generation.[151] As the

Minister of Health from 1960-1963 for Harold MacMillan's Conservative Government,

Powell was in a prime position to see the changing social structures of post-1945 Britain,

including the broadening access to social services for all British people and the move to level

class differences through social welfare. As Minister of Health, he also oversaw the National

Health Service, which was one of the biggest employers of recent immigrants, recruited

directly from Jamaica and Barbados, and whose mission was to promote healthcare to all

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[148] The over-arching understanding of what constitutes the middle-class and subsequent stylization relies on Orwell's discussion of middle-class subjectivity and underscores the direct relationship between the empire and class structures in the inter-war period and immediately following World War II. As Peter J. Kalliney alludes, decolonization disrupts this socially accepted version of middle-class subjectivity, "threatens material security," and "wounds national self-esteem" according to this logic (5).

[149] Louise Bennett's poem "Colonization in Reverse" (166) describes the experience of the Windrush Generation in Britain and seems to be one of the early uses of the concept of "reverse colonization." Ashley Dawson comments that Bennett's poem acted as a "written in a playful Creole vernacular voice that evokes the lively oral culture of her island's peasantry and working class, reflects a sense of excitement and ambition" and documents the Caribbean experience for a British audience (3).

[150] Ian Baucom discusses the importance of the geographic importance of the formation of British subjectivity through the "there" of empire and the "here" of the United Kingdom (37), that with the need to return to the home island of Britain to locate British subjectivity, throws into chaos the former relationship of geography to subjectivity.

[151] The Windrush Generation often refers to the Caribbean migrants who arrived after World War II and were called so because of the ship they sailed on to the UK, the Windrush. The term is often conflated with black immigrants arriving from the former and current British colonies all over the world in the 1950s and 1960s (Dawson 2-5).

residents of the United Kingdom regardless of race or nationality.[152] What is striking is that

Powell as Minister of Health ran the agency that employed and served the same groups of

immigrants who had been encouraged to emigrate to the United Kingdom to fill low-wage

service jobs and who he attacked five years. Powell's position as the Minister of Health

demonstrates how he and other Conservatives were in pivotal government roles that directly

managed social programs such as universal healthcare and education that promoted class-

leveling and a modernized, post-imperial British subjectivity. Instead of dismantling these

popular social programs initiated by the rival Labour Party, the Conservative Party pushed

conservative and traditional "values" in the 1950s and 60s to combat a quickly modernizing

society that rejected the previous racial and colonial hierarchies and included former colonial

subjects.

While Powell's vitriol was abhorrent at the time, is blatantly disgusting now, and has

done lasting damage to British social policies and culture, it illustrates the cultural paranoia

and reaction to a changing London that included non-white residents. These visible markers

of an altered city, and thus British subjectivity, demonstrated how society was evolving

despite nationalist and conservative attempts to derail that modernization. Although Powell's

rhetoric plays on white working-class fears, his position as an upper-class politician shows

that discourses of race post-1945 were not limited to the working class. As Paul Gilroy

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[152] Snow and Jones describe the NHS's recruitment process of immigrants: "As early as 1949 the Ministries of Health and Labour, in conjunction with the Colonial Office, the General Nursing Council and the Royal College of Nursing launched campaigns to recruit hospital staff directly from the Caribbean. Recruitment was aimed at three main categories of worker: hospital auxiliary staff, nurses or trainee nurses, and domestic workers. Senior NHS staff from Britain travelled to the Caribbean to recruit, and vacancies were often published in local papers. In 1949, the *Barbados Beacon* advertised for nursing auxiliaries to work in hospitals across Britain; applicants were to be aged between 18 and 30, literate, and willing to commit to a three-year contract. By 1955 there were official nursing recruitment programmes across 16 British colonies and former colonies. Over the next two decades, the British colonies and former colonies provided a constant supply of cheap labour to meet staffing shortages in the NHS, and the number of women from the African Caribbean entering Britain to work in the NHS grew steadily until the early 1970s."

writes, "the dreams of racism actually have their origins in ideologies of class... above all in claims to divinity among rulers and to blue or white blood and breeding among aristocracies" (*There Ain't No*, 136). Rita Felski suggests that the *petit bourgeois* is "resistant to the romance of marginality" (40), which underscores why Powell focused on the precarity of the working class and played on their fears to gain political momentum. Powell's class-based rhetoric and own social standing demonstrate how racial discourse is always essential to modern conceptions of classed hierarchies, including the middle class, and the preservation of power within those social structures.[153] By consolidating and reaffirming working class difference, Powell insisted that all former imperial class structures were maintained whether upper, middle, or working class.

While Selvon's and MacInnes' fiction articulate the experience of black bodies within the geographic space of the United Kingdom, they also identify the conflation of racial politics and culture for white Britons, which belies a complex reaction as a re-imagined raced British subjectivity emerges. For nationalists and racists like Powell, the presence of a black body and the urban spaces associated with it disrupts the fiction of a white Britain. For white nationalists, the physical markers of difference must be erased or dismantled to "preserve" a white (and often working class) racist utopia of Britain. For the middle class, this vision harkens back to the preservation of Victorian imperialism, in which the visible markers of race are always the mechanism of social hierarchies and preservation of a traditional and "pure" Briton.[154] For the liberal and progressive British middle and upper classes in the

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[153] Radhika Mohanram points out that class politics have furthered the sense of white victimhood by creating tensions between white versus non-white in contemporary British politics (xiv-xv).

[154] Although always a fiction, this discourse of racial purity and Britishness can be traced to Victorian imperialism. Radhika Mohanram states that Victorian conceptions of whiteness were always defined by a lack: "What it was not was the marked body, be it through race or gender, intellectual, homosexual or heterosexual, or visible. In the nineteenth century, whiteness became invisible, universalized in discourse and present, literally, in every part of the globe" (25).

1950s, social equality becomes conflated with anti-imperialism, post-war modernity, and, *on occasion*, racial equality. In *Literature, Politics, and Culture in Postwar Britain*, Alan Sinfield argues that while middle-class dissidence has often been far from left-wing, it is also a "space in which socialism, feminism, and anti-imperialism have been found (Marx, the Suffragettes), disputed, and developed" (273). As Sinfield addresses, the politics of the middle class are always unstable, contradictory, and constantly evolving.[155] Urban spaces such as the dance hall and music club become the places in which the younger middle class can develop and project their political position. By participating in and reappropriating cultural forms labeled as "cool" or bohemian, the younger generations dismantle assumptions about what culture the middle class must consume and perpetuate. Yet in an attempt to embrace cultural difference, the progressive middle-class's vision of racial integration, while well-meaning, [156] also becomes a means of othering and can be patronizing in its attempts to recognize difference. As Arno Mayer affirms, the lower middle class participates in politics just short of topping the establishment and status quo (436). Mayer's statements imply that the middle class is ready to embrace certain forms of otherness, as long as they can function within the already established framework of class and only if they do not alter the status quo too much. Akin to the architectural modernization of London, the consumption of black culture becomes another means to attempt to level class and "modernize" British society by incorporating racial difference into the purview of middle-class acceptability and the space of the city, rather than embrace difference on its own terms.

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[155] Sinfield also states, "There is no reliable political tendency in middle-class dissidence (or in any other class or groups). There is potential for development" (274).

[156] Robyn Wiegman describes the positive form of liberal white identification in which "the anti-racist white subject becomes particular by asserting a political difference from its racial 'self'" and allows for a shared social "burden" across races (138).

The *Bourgeois* Reader: Racial Politics and Literature

The Lonely Londoners and *City of Spades* depict black immigrants in 1950s London and offer insights into the challenges they faced upon their arrival. However, each novel takes a radically different approach to its content and readership. Sam Selvon's work has been discussed at length in terms of its aesthetic invention, modernist quality, and significance for postcolonial literature. As a biracial Trinidadian, Selvon was part of a generation of writers from former British colonies that included George Lamming, V.S. Naipaul, and Salman Rushdie. These writers examined the precarity of their status as the former colonized who were never fully recognized as British because of their race and colonial past. Selvon's work uses Caribbean literary aesthetic and modernist narrative techniques to represent a complex black subjectivity that understands the liminal position of the colonial subject in the center of the empire, London.[157] As Rebecca Dyer has noted, Trinidad did not gain independence from Britain until 1962 so Selvon's fiction is less diasporic than his contemporaries' work, which frames the narrative through the themes of postcolonial homeland and diaspora. Rather as "English-speaking Trinidad could not be considered politically or even culturally 'outside' the United Kingdom... Selvon was not a border-crossing 'immigrant' in the strictest usage of the word, nor was he considered British" (Dyer 113). As Shusheila Nasta asserts, Selvon's writing is "a comi-tragic attempt to subvert and demythologize the colonial dream of a bountiful city" (54), emphasizing the ongoing coloniality of immigrants and white Britons that infuses the novel and the physical space of post-war London.

The paradox of being part of the empire and yet being outside of the nation is central to Selvon's portrait of London and his characters' understanding of their social positions

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[157] See Shusheila Nasta on Selvon's use of Caribbean calypso, Biman Basu's discussion of Caribbean linguistics in *The Lonely Londoners*, and Jed Esty's discussion of the novel as an echo of "T.S. Eliot's urban anomie" in which Selvon rewrites London from a post-colonial perspective (201-204).

within the city and nation. The irony for these characters is that they are essential to the continuation of the nation because their work fuels the British economy, and yet, they are always excluded and denied a place in British society because they do not fit into the romanticized narrative of a past Britain.[158] As Jed Esty describes it, Powell and English nationalists' insular atavism represents an "Anglocentric continuation, in which imperialism features as an accidental and temporary aberration" which "captures a powerful, semiburied ideology of shared insular experience" and is vital to the recovery of a "crumbling British exoskeleton" during the midcentury (199). This nativist romanticism renders the British class system a function of whiteness so that class mobility hinges upon skin color.[159] Whatever class the immigrants belonged to in the colonies becomes irrelevant in the space of Britain since the racialized social hierarchies relegate any black body to an "underclass" or "sub-proletariat" because of skin color.[160]

Selvon's text reveals the latter two attitudes toward race in Britain for its middle-class audience: race is an issue that most white Britons fail to see in their everyday life and that racism continually inflects British society where non-white immigrants are marginalized and forgotten by the same groups that believed in social welfare, social progress, and equality following World War II. In fact, although Selvon is often described as a Caribbean writer who authentically portrays black experience in London, he also saw his novel as a mainstream text for a wider British audience.[161] Selvon stated in a radio interview that he

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[158] I discuss the romanticization of an atemporal British past in Chapter 2, in which the island nation is always center of the world and with a "stable", fictionalized history of nation.

[159] Radhika Mohanram comments upon the relationship between whiteness and class mobility and that although discourse on social class question the "cultural fabrication of race, ...there is no such solution for black bodies pinned by the materiality of their blackness in a world that insists on racialization" (xvii).

[160] Paul Gilroy discusses the Weberian analysis of race and class in which black bodies become an "underclass", whereas in Marxist terms them are always sub-proletariat because they can never exist in the same white frameworks of labor (*There Ain't No*, 20-21).

[161] As Rebecca Dyer notes, "Selvon has claimed that this wide intended audience did not

"never wrote for Caribbean people, I wrote to show Caribbean people to other parts of the world and to let people look and identify" (Clarke, 76.) Selvon's politics of representation aside, his comment illustrates that the novel was intended for a wide readership and that he saw himself and his work as part of the larger British literary scene of the 1950s. By directly addressing a white readership, Selvon forces his white British readers to acknowledge the racial difference that structures British society and refute white victimization regardless of class difference.[162] Basu Bisman argues that the repetition of Caribbean dialect and slang throughout the text functions as a means to convert otherness and induct the non-Caribbean reader into the text's distinct lexicon (79). This logic suggests that by submerging the middle-class reader in the language and space of the Caribbean immigrant, they become less foreign and different and a way to increase the British reader's empathy and mutual understanding.

City of the Spades, on the other hand, presents Colin MacInnes' well-meaning attempts to dismantle the media stereotypes about black immigrants in Britain and yet often falls into the trappings of the same racialized stereotypes and logic that the text purports to upset. One can argue that in doing so MacInnes represents a more "realistic" portrait of progressive British attitudes towards the racialized other: the novel discusses race and intersubjectivity, wants to support and proclaim a broad equality, but cannot escape the same racial logic it finds itself discussing. MacInnes, who was born in London and raised in Australia, was from a long artistic lineage that included his mother, the novelist Angela Thirkell, and his great-grandfather, the pre-Raphaelite painter Edward Burne-Jones. As a

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include Caribbean people and has hinted that depicting migrants in London was his method of informing white Britons" (116).

[162] Peter J. Kalliney argues that white victimization is overturned through Selvon's portrait of the struggles to survive in post-war London, Selvon creates a mutual sympathy between the white working class and black Londoners: "class functions as a legitimate, if hopelessly frustrating category of belonging" (110).

journalist and a devoted follower of 1950s realism, MacInnes sought to depict what he saw as

the important social changes in post-war London, including youth culture, black experience,

and the increased criminalization of both black and queer men. Openly queer, MacInnes

often includes queer characters and relationships in his novel to illustrate the social fabric of

Britain that was left out of the mainstream media except through pejoratives and in

sensualized ways.[163] Through his depictions of class, race, gender, and sexual orientation,

MacInnes offers an alternative form of 'community' to Raymond Williams's model and

challenges what constitutes the authentic forms of British culture, especially those often

denigrated as "youth culture."[164] The depiction of the other sites that form alternative

national and collective identities as described by Homi Bhabha and Paul Gilroy and "engage

in the ideological construction of an emergent Englishness" (Bentley 241). These depictions

become crucial to emphasize and critique his middle-class readers' assumptions about

shifting cultures (youth and others), racialized and classed subjectivities, and the emergence

of a London that exists outside of the idealized and romanticized portraits of post-war

Britain. MacInnes as a progressive middle-class writer and journalist exposes somewhat

unintentionally the inherent fallacies of white liberalism in its treatment of others. This is

what Paul Gilroy attacks as part of the problems of multi-culturalism that evolved in the

United Kingdom after the riots and racialized politics following the increased post-war

immigration of former colonial subjects to London.[165]

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[163] MacInnes' book, *Loving Them Both: Study of Bisexuality and Bisexuals* (1973), is a sociological case study in which he describes his and others experiences who identified as queer in post-war London himself included.
[164] Richard Hornsey elaborates on the dissolution of "official" British culture and how MacInnes' London trilogy dissolves barriers of class and race in its depictions of the city (253).
[165] In his discussion of post-imperial melancholia and the rhetoric of multiculturalism, Gilroy writes, "...individual and group identifications converge not on the body of the leader or other iconic national objects... but in opposition to the intrusive presence of the incoming, stranger, who trapped inside our perverse local logic of race, nation, and ethnic absolutism not only *represents* the vanished empire but also refers consciousness to the unacknowledged pain of its loss and the unsettling shame of its bloody management" (*After Empire*, 110).

The novel, which includes the pejorative of "spade" in its title, participates in the racialized and classed assumptions of its white readers and yet, wants to demonstrate that the space of the city can be a progressive site of equality where difference can be embraced. Like *The Lonely Londoners*, *City of Spades* describes the experiences and hardships black immigrants face as they navigate London culture and society. The novel is much more successful in its portraits of middle-class characters and how they treat black immigrants than in its depiction of black subjectivity. The text alternates between two first-person narrators: the recently arrived Nigerian immigrant Johnny Fortune and the English middle-class bureaucrat Montgomery Pew. While this narrative style attempts to show that the competing versions and understandings of race and English culture depend on the individual perspectives, the novel unfortunately relies on racial and cultural stereotypes in its construction of black characters and its attempts to highlight the diverging attitudes towards race. By appropriating the voices of black immigrants, *City of Spades* emphasizes the rupture between the "proper" English that Pew speaks and the immigrants' voices. The most obvious example of the multivalence of the English culture is captured in MacInnes' attempt to recreate Caribbean and African English dialects throughout the novel. Yet, as an outsider, MacInnes' recreation of dialect often fails into 1950s anthropological trappings and feels artificial and forced as he tries to understand the other and explain difference.

Of course, the progressive project of class-leveling that was integral to the idea of a modernized Britain and seen in the architecture and planning was transferred to racial politics. Britain never officially enacted any explicit anti-miscegenation laws, yet they did judge various racial and ethnic groups on their abilities be absorbed into British society and culture (Smith 3). Paul Gilroy suggests that this kind of late 20th century cosmopolitanism

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simply retains the "enlightened anthropology" grounded in imperialism that for any recognition of racial injustice, still views race as an essentialized quality.[166] With the influx of immigrants from former British colonies after 1945, particularly the Windrush Generation, the middle class in the United Kingdom had to re-consider the relationship between class and race, as race became more visible within the domestic space of the nation, rather than be removed to abroad to the invisible space of the empire. The economic changes that reshaped class relations in the 1950s became readily apparent in "the populist politics of 'race' and nation" and "call[ed] the vocabulary and analytic framework of class into question" (*There Ain't No,* 34). Gilroy, writing after the rise of English nationalism and Powell's infamous rhetoric of class and racial warfare, locates the friction as a residual of imperial racism that certain groups desperately clung to in the 50s and 60s. While *City of Spades* and *The Lonely Londoners* predate the Notting Hill Riots of 1958, the novels' attempt to capture how realism reflected the precarious boundaries of classed and raced subjectivities for both black and white Britons of all classes as Britain tried to refashion itself as a modern nation post-World War II and post-Empire.

The City of Lights: London and Caribbean Experience

Written in 1956, Sam Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners* examines the experiences of Caribbean immigrants in London through the perspective of its protagonist, Moses Aloetta, and his interactions with fellow immigrants to England. The novel's portrait of racialized

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[166] He argues that this comfortable position makes it easy to dismiss the need for a more radical project to understand the lasting effects of empire and racial hierarchies in our cultural consciousness: "Secreted inside the dazzling rhetoric of universal inclusiveness and limitless variation within humankind, there is another pragmatic and hierarchical anthropology that can recognize a degree of injustice in imperial conquest but can be comfortable nonetheless with the commonsense wisdoms that produce race as a deep fracture in culture, capacity, and experience" (*After Empire*, 70).

London is grounded in Selvon's own experience as a Caribbean immigrant in the United Kingdom and offers a more nuanced voice to black experience than what was commonly depicted in 1950s Britain. In *The Lonely Londoners,* Moses and his fellow immigrants wander around London and recount their experiences of trying to find housing and work. Often grouped with other emerging post-colonial writers of the 1950s as the "upholders" of modernism, Selvon uses stream of consciousness, Caribbean slang and dialect, and the alienation of the city to create a novel that carries on the modernist tradition of the interwar years and straddles the realism of 1950s often attributed to the Angry Young Men.[167] Unlike his contemporaries, Selvon's writing provides an alternative perspective of London for the British middle-class, who would have not been familiar with the lived experiences for black immigrants, only the stereotypes and fears perpetuated in the media. As Nick Bentley argues Selvon "negotiates the anxieties in mainstream fifties culture" by "operating through discourses of criminality, sexuality and miscegenation that ultimately threaten to exceed the boundaries of homogeneous white culture" (42). Bentley's commentary implies that the novel directly addresses the fears perpetuated through the media and its white readership's assumption that immigrants were morally questionable, sexually deviant, and "dirty," and mocks those same fears as hypocritical. In his use of modernist techniques and exposure of the gritty realism of immigrant experience, Selvon channels the artistic innovation (i.e. modernist techniques) that bourgeois tastemakers saw "missing" from post-1945 literature and uses it as a commentary on the social politics of everyday life of London. In doing so, Selvon forces his white readers to readers reconsider the boundaries of a homogenous British culture as reflected in the modern city.

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[167] Peter J. Kalliney suggests that *The Lonely Londoners* is able to continue older modernist traditions, and yet function as realist, because it demonstrates a reinvigorated portrait of the city and urban life that reflects the changes of London after 1945 (32-33).

In providing a realist social commentary, *The Lonely Londoners* also challenges the progressive, yet hypocritical liberalism of his readers and asks them to consider what poverty, hunger, and racism actually feel like. Selvon wrote the novel for both an English and Caribbean audience, using what critics refer to as a "calypso aesthetic" to capture the language and experience of the immigrants.[168] The calypso aesthetic works twofold: to "make real" the Caribbean experience in London for non-Caribbeans and to offer a familiar language and genre for a black audience who was otherwise not represented in British fiction.[169] As Susheila Nasta writes in her introduction to the Penguin edition of the novel, Selvon migrated from Trinidad "to escape the parochialism of the West Indian middle-classes and to establish an international audience for his work" (*Lonely Londoners*, ix). Ironically, Selvon found a different kind of "cosmopolitan" parochialism in London in the racialized classes of the city. The difference between the parochialism of the West Indies and that of the United Kingdom, as Daniel tells Moses at the end of the novel, is that "One day you sweating in the factory and the next day all the newspapers have your name and photo, saying how you are a new literary giant" (139). Akin to other narratives of immigration, the hope of fame and fortune always lingers on the horizon for Selvon's characters as they attempt to find some kind of social redemption and class mobility in the world in which they have landed.

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[168] Susheila Nasta describes the influence of the calypso in terms of its "subversive irony, the melodramatic exaggeration of farcical anecdotes, racial stereotyping, repetition for dramatic effect and the inclusion of topical political matter" ("Setting Up Home", 57). Michael Fabre also views the calypso as offering a form of "trickster" as a hero and in the case of *The Lonely Londoners* attempt to "outwit" British prejudice (216). Kate Houlden furthers the politics of the calypso aesthetic in Selvon's work to include a new form of Caribbean masculinity within the space of London that is subversive and rewrites desire (32).

[169] Ashley Dawson argues that use of calypso also perpetuates "forms of masculine self-aggrandizement that hinge on the debasement of women, both white and black, as well as on overt forms of homophobia" (34). Dawson's interpretation of the male characters conflates Selvon's linguistic and stylistic choices with a certain form of patriarchal masculinity, while present in the novel cannot be reduced entirely to one form of masculinity.

Although Selvon includes modernist techniques, his implied realism is incredibly important for the social commentary of the novel. In a 1957 review of *The Lonely Londoners* in *The Antioch Review*, Nolan Miller writes, "The effect of these black West Indian citizens in chilly London, is gravely sad and at the same time jocular. There couldn't be any other writing like this, just as there couldn't be any better way of catching truly what it would be like to be one of the characters, to feel what it would be like not to be white and welcome" (523). While Miller's review is praiseworthy, it underscores the realism of *The Lonely Londoners* and that for every "jocular" scene, it is tinged with the sadness of the alienation Selvon's characters feel in London. Miller's comment also underscores the positionality of the readership of the novel of *The Antioch Review*. These are readers who are unaware what it would be like to be excluded because of race and have never felt "what it would be like not to be white and welcome." The novel directly addresses these white readers, pointing out the self-segregation of races and classes in the city. It foregrounds the racial dynamics of London that were easy for the middle class to avoid if they so chose:

> Them people who have a car, who going to theatre and ballet in the West End, who attending premier with the royal family, they don't know nothing about hustling two pound of brussel sprout and half-pound potato, or queuing up for fish and chips in the smog. People don't talk about things like that again, they come to accept that is so the world is, that it bound to have rich and poor, it bound to have some who live by the Grace and others who have plenty... To stop one of them rich tests when they are going to a show in Leicester Square and ask them for a bob, they might give you, but if you want to talk about the conditions under which you living, they haven't time for that. They know all about that already. People get tired after a time with who poor

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and who rich and who catching arse and who well off, they don't care any more.

(*Lonely Londoners*, 61)

Although Moses' monologue begins by criticizing the rich and those who live in "posh places," it quickly becomes a diatribe against the apathetic, particularly those who are not poor and can enact social change. Moses challenges the reader to consider whether they have personally been in the position where they have had to "queue... in the smog" for food, which creates immediate sympathy and camaraderie amongst the readers who understand and challenges those who are ignorant to become more socially enlightened and empathetic. In fact, what is most counter-intuitive in this description is the encounter Moses describes while begging: the rich man immediately hands over money but has no interest in alleviating the social conditions that caused it in the first place. The narrative's repetition of "it bound" following "that is so the world is" suggests that Moses is not looking for any sympathy or political action. Rather, in clearly documenting the facts of society he could be describing the West Indies or London and that apathy has reduced everyone to ignore the root causes of social ills.

The 3rd person narrative of *The Lonely Londoners* which is focalized through Moses also illuminates the various ways in which class intersects with race through the descriptions the various characters. Sir Galahad, a recently arrived Caribbean immigrant, reveals the class structures within 1950s London through his pantomime of British propriety and the classic Orwellian gentleman. In one scene, he dresses in fashionable clothing and walks down Charing Cross Road:

So, cool as a lord, the old Galahad walking out to the road, with plastic raincoat hanging on the arm, and the eyes not missing one sharp craft that pass, bowing his

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head in a polite 'Good evening' and not giving a blast if they answer or not. This is

London, this is life oh lord, to walk like a king with money in your pocket, not a

worry in the world. (76)

The description suggests a celebration of London and Galahad's flâneurie. Yet when Galahad

encounters a mother and her child on the street, he pats the child on the cheek as if some

benevolent English gentleman and the mother recoils: "She look at Galahad and give a sickly

sort of smile, and the old Galahad, knowing how it is, smile back and walk on" (76). The

hypocrisy of the woman's reaction is immediately apparent in the mirroring of smiles and

reveals the fundamental insincerity of British social manners. Galahad seems to revel in

making the woman uncomfortable, which makes visible her hypocrisy. The hypocrisy occurs

because Sir Galahad transforms the class markers of manners and dress that the woman (and

thus the middle class) claim as entirely British and thus white. His appropriation allows him

to physically embody reverse colonization. Galahad's performance emphasizes that

"Englishness [is] its own destabilizing performance," and the woman's reaction underscores

her horror at the fundamental shifting boundaries of what constitutes "Englishness."[170] As

Rebecca Dyer notes, post-war migrants "poach" the everyday, and thus the city by

"simultaneously borrowing, critiqu[ing], and transform[ing]... metropolitan culture" and

rework "the very language, literary genres, and way of life that had been valorized during

their colonial schooling" (109). By doing so, Sir Galahad's behavior emphasizes that it does

not matter how he performs class or the "colonial education": race, and thus whiteness, will

always transcends whatever class he performs in terms of British social hierarchy.

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[170] Ian Baucom underscores the relationship between performativity and Englishness in his discussion of C.L.R. James' *Beyond a Boundary* (1963), in which the sport of cricket becomes the mode in which Englishness is performed and reconstructed in the space of the colonies (156).

The Lonely Londoners emphasizes how the space of the city is often a fraught space for the construction of a white British national subjectivity. During the 19th century, London was often viewed as a space of degeneration because it allowed for the mixing of classes and races that intruded upon Victorian constructs of white "purity" and threatened the British bourgeoisie's classed and raced hierarchies. As Radhika Mohanram notes, the poor were often described in terms of their "blackness" (such as Irish and Scottish migrants to English cities) in addition to the black bodies that inhabited the empire. For Victorian society, the city becomes a space that is fundamentally dangerous because it allows these imposed hierarchies, which are also essentialized through social Darwinism, to become contaminated: "Class conflict and class mixing, the transitory way of life in urban areas, and race mixing all were perceived as forms of perversion and, therefore, degeneration" (Mohanram 55). The influence of Victorian British society is still ever-apparent in 1950s Britain, particularly for those who cling to a nation that is defined through its empire and thus racialized social hierarchies. What makes Sir Galahad's exchange so frightening for the woman he encounters is that he performs the visible markers of the middle class through his clothes and manners, but his visibly black body "contaminates" what should be stable indicators of class. In smiling back, he refuses to participate in the same hierarchies that insist he must be subservient to the woman. This simple exchange illustrates the social hierarchy of post-1945 London, which simultaneously celebrates imperialism and recognizes a post-imperial nation.[171] For Galahad, he is both the black imperial subject, who is fundamentally beneath any "civilized" English subject regardless of class, and the post-imperial black Briton, who is

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[171] Peter Kalliney describes the dueling natures of London after World War II, in which its inhabitants could simultaneously view themselves as imperial and post-imperial (34). This was visible in the architecture and redesign in the city, particularly the Festival of Britain, in which the atemporal idea of Britain could celebrate its past and view itself as completely modern, and thus, removed from the markers of the past. (See Chapter 2)

an integral part of the fabric of the post-1945 city and yet despite performing the ideals of the

Orwellian gentleman and his "colonial education" will never be integrated into the British

middle class.

The racialized markers of class become even more apparent in *The Lonely Londoners*

through the lens of colorism and how that becomes crucial to an individual's subjectivity and

class distinctions in London. For example, Bart, one of Moses' friends describes himself as

Latin American rather than black and is afraid that other West Indians will reveal his true

origins: "If a fellar too black, Bart no companying him much, and he don't like to be found in

the company of the boys, he always have an embarrass air when he with them in public, he

does look around as much as to say: 'I here with these boys, but I am not one of them, look at

the colour of my skin'" (48). Bart's rhetorical separation from his compatriots emphasizes

how he does not want to be lumped in with the other immigrants who are painted as

degenerates and culturally inferior to the British. In fact, the separation between the "model"

immigrants and the "degenerates" found in the media is a constant theme throughout the text;

Moses as the narrator points this out in his discussion of work, the welfare office, and the

"laziness" of certain "boys." Bart's motivation to socially separate himself and pretend that

he is different from other Caribbean men becomes clear when he falls in love with Beatrice,

an English working-class woman who the novel implies was a prostitute. By denying his

Caribbean background, Bart has the same social standing if not slightly higher than Beatrice.

Bart decides to marry her and when he meets her parents, the father immediately kicks him

out on sight because "he don't want no curly-hair children" (51). Despite Bart's relative

"whiteness" and performed "decency," the potential of future racial impurity renders him

lower than the lowest English class in the father's eyes, regardless of how physically separate

he is from the others. What is also significant is that the father, a working-class English man, is not worried about the relationship but rather the progeny of the couple, who will be biracial or "curly hair[ed]." What makes Bart a threat is his potential to disrupt any kind of white "purity" and expose the fallacy of an atemporal, and thus white, British nation.

The most striking example of the rupture between class and race in the novel is the figure of Harris, who "like to play ladeda, and he like English customs and thing... he does get up in the bus and the tube to let woman sit down, which is a thing even them Englishmen don't do" (103). Harris performs Englishness in a stereotypical and anachronistic way. He wears a bowler hat, carries an umbrella, and holds a "briefcase under the arm, with *The Times* fold up in the pocket so the name would show" (103). Harris immediately becomes an unsympathetic character when he betrays his friends, the old Five, by refusing to remember past adventures in Trinidad so that he can uphold his "Englishness." Peter Kalliney suggests that the novel tries to show that class "functions as a legitimate, if hopelessly frustrating category of belonging" (110) and that there is a mutual sympathy between black Londoners and the English working class. This often is displayed in Selvon's discussion of the poverty and social conditions that his characters face that mirror the issues their white working-class neighbors face. Yet Harris becomes a traitor to both his West Indian peers and his class origins when he caters to his English middle-class customers and rejects his friends and culture. Professionally, Harris works as a club promoter and events producer in which he organizes dances:

> So there Harris is, standing up by the door in a black suit and bow tie, greeting all the
> English people with a pleasant good evening and how do you do, and a not so
> pleasant greeting for the boys, for if is one thing he fraid is that the boys make rab

and turn the dance into a brawl... he always have a word for the boys as they come:

'See and behave yourselves like proper gentlemen, there are a lot of English people

here tonight so don't make a disgrace of yourselves' (104).

Harris polices the "boys" because he is concerned that they will not be "English" enough and scare his English customers. When the "boys" smoke weed, dance with white women, and party, Harris becomes enraged and tells them that the dances will be "by invitation only" in the future and they will not be invited. The contrast between the Caribbean men's jovial fun and partying and Harris' uptight pretension is not lost on the attendees. They flock to the "boys" as a source of entertainment and when one woman asks Harris about steel drums, she mentions she had heard them on the BBC a few nights before (109). This woman and other "proper" (and thus inferred middle-class) British people attend the event because they want to partake in the "spectacle" of Caribbean culture that is becoming "hip" amongst consumers of bourgeois cultural. If the BBC, a bastion of traditional British culture, is playing Caribbean music, it shows how the music has transcended the sub-cultures of London and been integrated into mainstream acceptability, even if the immigrants are not.

Despite Harris' ability to make money, he becomes symbolic of the immigrants who betray their origins and attempt to embody an imperial middle-class Englishness that fundamentally refuses any non-white individuals. Harris' attempts to alter his working class and racial identity renders him unsympathetic to both his peers and he becomes a figure of parody for Moses and the others. As Five tells Harris, "You think you could fool me? You forget I know you from back home. Is only since you hit Brit'n that you getting on so English" (*Lonely Londoners* 106). Harris "getting on so English" emphasizes the artificiality of his manners, and thus English social custom. Moses constantly comments on this

artificiality throughout the novel when he discusses his interactions with the middle and

upper classes. Harris is thoroughly afraid that if Caribbean men smoke weed it will alienate

his customers, and yet, as Moses counters when asked if he smokes weed, it "remind me of

them English fellars. Is a funny thing, but sometimes you walking down the road and all

them who you pass ask you the same thing. They like the weed more than anybody else, and

from the time they see you black they figure that you know all about it, where to make

contact and how much to pay" (114). Moses illuminates the irony that although white Britons

enact and police certain forms of social "propriety" and discriminate against the Caribbean

immigrants for "immoral" behavior, they participate more than the Caribbean men. The

immigrants become scapegoats for the British so that they can protect their own moral

superiority and simultaneously use drugs, engage in casual sex, and participate in other

entertainments that are looked down upon as part of "degenerate," thus black, culture. The

parties that Harris puts together become a way for the British to break their imposed social

regulations and yet still maintain their whiteness, just as Moses is brought in as the

"entertainment" for an upper-class party.

The frustrated category of belonging becomes more apparent in the context of

generational divides and how that is reflected through the lens of desire in post-war society.

The post-1945 racial intermixing of London is also symptomatic of a new generation and

their changing understanding of race and culture, which can be seen amongst those who

embrace Caribbean culture and black bodies. When Selvon's black characters successfully

engage in sexual encounters with the English, it is often with the young working-class

women in London, who do not seem to perpetuate the racial stereotypes of their parents. Yet

because the women in the text are barely named, let alone given agency, it is hard to fully

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demonstrate that they do not perpetuate racial stereotypes. Kate Houlden views the lack of

female voices as part of the tensions of Caribbean masculinity in which men are "pushed to

their limit, reaching their apotheosis in the problematic, sexualized figure of the black stud"

(31). Selvon's characters, Houlden argues, must perform the figure of the "black stud" to

have social cache and uphold Caribbean masculinity. When sex is depicted between black

men and white women in *The Lonely Londoners*, it is often described in terms of what the

men can derive materially from the encounter and bolsters their sense of masculine prowess.

As Tanty decries at one point, "Your own kind of girls not good enough now, is only white

girls," (*Lonely Londoners* 59) which illustrates how race becomes an integral aspect of sexual

conquest. Moses and the other men "cruise" around Marble Arch and other London

landmarks to meet white women, who vary in class. In one instance, a wealthy woman picks

up Moses and takes him to a party where he becomes the "entertainment" for the white men

there who "feel they can't get big thrills unless they have a black man in the company" (101).

Moses quickly moves on to other anecdotes that prove his encounter with a wealthy English

woman is not unique and to avoid commenting on the power and racial dynamics of the

situation rather than be stripped of his masculinity. The experience becomes another example

in which he emphasizes the how class boundaries are broken, especially when one claims a

sexual trophy.

 Although Moses does not go into as much detail about his sexual escapades with

white middle-class women, his discussion of the class mixing amongst the working, middle,

and upper classes reveals a changing London in which it is harder and harder to continue

class and racial segregation. The club in which Harris has parties is emblematic of the spaces

in which Caribbean culture has become cool, not just for youth culture or the working class,

but all Britons as a new form of artistic expression and cultural consumption. These spaces have often been discussed in terms of youth culture, and while many were the sites of working-class youth to reject and challenge the middle-class parent culture,[172] they also function as the sites of younger middle-class individuals to reject the imperialist middle-class culture of the inter-war years. This can be read as a pseudo-bohemian "slumming" in novels such as Iris Murdoch's *Under the Net* (1954) and Hanif Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia* (1990). These texts show how minority culture becomes a mechanism for otherwise middle-class individuals to demonstrate their progressive ideologies. Selvon's allusion to the women who listen to the BBC and go to Caribbean dance halls foreshadows the importance of Caribbean culture for the generation of new cultural production and thus consumption by the middle-class in the following decades because it was a way to be cool and reject working-class nationalism and preservation of traditional Englishness. When Moses and his friends linger around the Marble Arch, they physically impose their black bodies upon the markers of white imperialism. They symbolically demand that white Briton recognize the symbiotic relationship between imperial cultural production and consumption. By using the Caribbean men as a form of entertainment for parties and attending their cultural spaces, the middle and upper classes are still objectifying and othering them. However much a function of class and racial othering, the novel demonstrates that these events function as a way to slowly broaden the boundaries and parameters of what constitutes British culture.

The "Sexy" Black Man in Post-War Britain

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[172] Dick Hebdige discusses the importance of youth culture for the British working class in post-WWII Britain in his *Subculture: the Meaning of Style.*

Published a year after *The Lonely Londoners*, *City of Spades* (1957) centers around black experience in post-war London and explores many of the same themes. Unlike Selvon's novel, *City of Spades* more explicitly examines the various relationships between middle-class white Londoners and black immigrants. As a journalist, Colin MacInnes wanted to offer a more "sociological" portrait of the changing racial dynamics of post-1945 Britain, counter the narratives found in the media of the period about newly arrived immigrants, and document how the city was evolving. The novel, which alternates between the first person of the middle-class English Montgomery Pew and the newly arrived Nigerian student Johnny Fortune, dives into the various intersections and conflicts between white Londoners and the newly arrived black immigrants. As a black man in London, Johnny quickly realizes that despite his education and social status as a middle-class Nigerian he is always beneath any white Briton and that racism extends deep into British culture. This revelation pushes Johnny into a despair and he becomes trapped by the same racism he had initially discounted and thought he could overcome. Montgomery Pew's narrative sections work as a foil to Johnny's experience and reveals how Pew, and most middle-class Britons, are naïve and blind to the visible and invisible racism that the new immigrants face. In fact, the novel attempts to act as a comedy of errors that will dismantle its readers' assumptions about race in London through the unlikely friendship of the two men, who met at the Colonial Department Welfare Office where Montgomery Pew works as an Assistant Welfare Office. At first, this improbable depiction of the two men's interactions seems as if it is a racialized version of Shaw's *Pygmalion*: Montgomery Pew will "educate" Johnny to the ways of British life. Instead, the novel satirizes and mocks its British readers as Johnny educates Pew, and thus the middle-class reader, about the social realities of black immigrants.

Over the course of a series of ever-unlikely events and their initial dislike of one another, the two men find each other sympatico because of their misadventures at music clubs, the various neighborhood dives, and bohemian parties. The novel blends the picaresque and 1950s realism to create a caricature of British society, in which Johnny exposes Montgomery Pew to people who are outside of what would be considered socially acceptable for a "respectable" middle-class English man. Many of these characters are Dickensian allegories for the types that inhabit the subcultures of London. Karl Marx Bo, the Marxist African who is studying law and wants to become a politician in order emancipate Sierra Leone, represents political Africans. Billy Whispers, on the other hand, is the prototypical African gangster, drug czar, and pimp, who becomes Johnny's nemesis and tries to kill Johnny. Others such as Detective Purity ironically symbolizes the British legal system and the 1950s cultural obsession with purifying any "deviant" behaviors. The heavy-handed names help intensify MacInnes' goal to create a modern social realism and emphasize the satirical and ridiculous nature of the story. This emphasizes that this is the "real" London and yet it is fictional in its events.

These descriptions of the people who inhabit London and the various subcultures begin with Johnny's quest to find his English half-brother, Arthur. In the second chapter of the novel as Johnny is to embark for London, his father who is a Nigerian police official tells him about his affair with his English landlady when he lived London before World War II. It is only when he arrives in London and tracks down the landlady that he learns of his half-brother. As Johnny embarks on his search, Montgomery Pew, for somewhat unclear motivations, cannot forget his encounter with Johnny and the Welfare Office and decides to inspect the hostel where Johnny is staying and proceeds to try to find him around South

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London. These two quests are what inspire the remainder of the novel, as each subplot becomes more and more convoluted and each man explores the city and meets its various inhabitants. As the two men become friends, Pew also introduces him to his neighbor, Theodora, who becomes infatuated with Johnny, and tries to rescue him in a convoluted subplot in which his half-brother's half-sisters (who are unrelated to Johnny) both fall in love with Johnny and one becomes pregnant. As Johnny becomes more integrated in the social fabric of the black community in London, he loses interest in his original plans to become a meteorologist, gambles away his money, and starts dealing drugs to support his pregnant girlfriend as no other jobs are open to him. Pew follows Johnny and his friends around the city in a somewhat detective-like fashion to try to help Johnny and attends various nightclubs, theaters, and parties with actors, directors, and other artists. It is amongst these various subcultures that the thoroughly sheltered Pew half-heartedly embraces this new London and exposes the inherent problems with his colonial attitude.

When Johnny is arrested by the police as a supposed pimp at the end of the novel, he is put on trial. In another subplot, the narrative shows how black immigrants are constantly framed by the police and go to prison because of Britain's legal and social discrimination. However, Johnny's case is unusual in its outcome. Theodora, who is desperately in love with Johnny by the end of the novel and is willing to damage her reputation for him, comes to his rescue by providing bail and a valid character witness. As she is a middle-class white woman, she offers what is viewed as credible testimony in the British courts unlike the black immigrants who are dismissed because they are seen as "degenerates." The novel ends sadly, though, as Theodora loses her job because of her involvement with Johnny, is hospitalized with an emotional breakdown and miscarriage (which is inferred to be Johnny's child), and

Johnny is re-arrested for the possession of hemp and sent to prison when he cannot pay a fine. In a strange finale, Johnny is sent home to Nigeria after abandoning Theodora, his other girlfriend Muriel, and his child with Muriel, and in exchange, his sister Peach arrives in London to attend nursing school and uphold the good name of the family.

As Johnny and Montgomery's friendship evolves over the course of the novel, each learns a complicated and demoralizing lesson about contemporary London society. Initially, Johnny believes that he can befriend any Briton and tells his former school mate Hamilton that "whites are alright if you are proud and strong with them" (MacInnes 68). Hamilton, who has been in London longer, reminds him that, "Friendship between us is not possible, Johnny. Their interest is to keep washing dishes, and in their kindest words are always hidden secret double thoughts" (68). Despite his outward optimism, Johnny belies his initial impression of Montgomery Pew in a letter to his sister: "do you remember... Our tall English minister who walked on legs did not belong to him? And spoke to us like a telephone? Well, that was the appearance of the young Mr. Pew who interviewed me, preaching and pointing his hands at me if I was to him a menacing infant..." (39). Johnny's description of Pew is heavy in its irony and attempts to mock this form of middle-class do-gooder who always seems to arrive in the form of a missionary, government bureaucrat, or snooping neighbor. If Pew is a representative of the reader, it immediately highlights MacInnes' attempts to satirize his "do gooder" progressive readers, who often search for some sort of social morality tale in the confines of realism. When Johnny states that Pew "talks like a telephone" and that Pew spoke to Johnny as one speaks to a child, it underscores that Johnny is not the naïve or unintelligent African that British society has pegged him to be and he immediately recognizes the condescension. Equally important is that Johnny's impression of Pew is

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recounted through a letter that Montgomery finds while snooping in Johnny's room. This narrative device makes the reader draw the same conclusions at the same time as Montgomery, which helps align Montgomery and the middle-class reader as one in the same and upset the reader's assumptions about Johnny and how Pew perceives him.

Pew, who initially seems well-intentioned but reveals his own racial bias and class snobbery, describes Johnny as having an air of "frank villainy" (39) and that the exterior of Johnny's lodgings had "never yet recovered its dull dignity" after its use as wartime barracks and was now decorated with "dark forms, in white singlets, hanging comfortable out of windows: surely *not* what the architect had intended" (emphasis in original, 36). It is understandable why contemporary readers recoil at Pew's words (and thus MacInnes' writing) and yet he represents an ever-present faction of the contemporary British middle class who demonize newly arrived immigrants and discount their cultural practices as threats to a static and ahistorical British culture. MacInnes also demands a careful reader in his satirization of Pew's interiority. Although Johnny's lodgings have not recovered after the war, what they have not recovered from is their previous "dull dignity," which suggests a previously staid and boring building. The men in white undershirts who hang from the window are not what the architect could have imagined because the architect also probably could not have imagined black British subjects in London. If this is a typical white stuccoed Edwardian building, the contrast between the white façade, the black men, and the white shirts creates a striking visual image in which the men's bodies merge with the structures. Just as *The Lonely Londoners* shows the conflation of black bodies on iconic London memorials to emphasize how the Caribbean migrants are a function of the city, this scene

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shows how the men and their bodies are integral to the space of the city and rewrite the narrative of a "pure" and white London.

In addition to his portraits of the city, MacInnes' use of realism demonstrates the complicated racial politics of London in two other ways. The novel documents what London would have been like for a middle-class man like Montgomery Pew as he encountered and explored the new emerging spaces that reflected Caribbean culture. Pew's perspective upsets certain middle-class assumptions about race, the post-war city, and British social politics. MacInnes' need to follow the conventions of realism also contribute to the anachronistic quality of *City of Spades*. In using a bifurcated narrative technique in which the chapters alternate between Montgomery's and Johnny's first person perspectives, the text presents the two men's experiences as equal and thus attempts to dismantle white Britons assumptions about the realities of immigrant experience and any overarching racism.[173] As the two men's friendship unravels over the course of the novel, the narrative's tension becomes even stranger in that the two voices seem to merge and become one in the same. Pew's first-person narrative begins to take on Johnny's voice, whereas Johnny's language starts to replicate Pew's voice. What were originally distinct narrative voices begin to merge as each man appropriate the other's voice, making it difficult to determine who is speaking. In many ways, this reaffirms that this narrative and Johnny are the imaginary of a progressive middle-class writer who was writing for his peers.

The narration of *City of Spades* also includes two interludes in the novel, "Idyll of miscegenation on the river" and "'Let Justice be done (and seen to be)'", that are recounted

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[173] Bentley reiterates: "The dual narrative structure of the novel allows MacInnes to represent the voice of a particular minority subculture, that of the black immigrant living in London in the 1950s, but also to represent dominant white middle-class culture (albeit a 'liberal' representative) ... Through the paradoxical construction of an 'authentic' subcultural voice that functions to articulate the case of the marginalized group, whilst at the same time alerting dominant white society to the actualities of the racism in fifties England" (238).

by an omniscient third person narrator. The first interlude describes Johnny and Muriel's outing on the Thames, while the second depicts the courtroom scene and Johnny's trial. By adding these two sections, the novel further shows how the space of the city becomes integral for understanding racial and classed politics. On the river, Johnny and Muriel can have an equal and happy relationship that is not replicated anywhere else in the text. In this scene, the use of the third person narrator helps "denaturalize miscegenation" (Bentley 253), but it also offers a space in which Johnny and Muriel can desire one another without enacting some form of politics. As the boat floats down the river, the guide recounts historic anecdotes about the city and "bludgeon[s] the passengers' defenceless ears" (MacInnes 102). The Thames figures as a metonym for the continuation of British history and culture throughout time. By allowing the couple to enact their relationship from a positive perspective in this scene, the novel asserts that mixed-race relationships are an integral part of British history and culture. As they look back upon the city from the boat, Muriel and Johnny act as voyeurs, removed from the demands of the city: "Up in the sun, beneath a pink-blue sky, they watched the stately architectural rhetoric slide into view... They stood hand in hand by the railing to be first off at the pier, as the boat swung round the river in a circle. No one else followed them..." (106). Here, the description of the city is romantic and yet abstract like a Turner painting: the colors and outlines of buildings are what matter, not the precise forms. In this way, the characters see the city as an atemporal site that can hold a happy future for both, away from the historical pressures of interracial relationships and their social significance.

The courtroom scene also creates a needed distance from the interior commentary and interpretation of events by Pew or Johnny and becomes almost surreal in its narrative

distance. The ironic voice of and use of stereotypes in earlier passages disappears, which emphasizes the severity and unfairness of 1950s British law. Like the first interlude on the river, this section creates a more compelling commentary about British law and society and the continued replication of colonialism through the official legal system. In fact, the surreal quality of the scene verges on absurdity and this absurdity reflects the inherent ludicrousness of legalized racism. Space is integral to the interlude's commentary and the description of the courtroom acts as a bricolage of design, history, and politics:

> The trial of Johnny Macdonald Fortune took place in a building, damaged in the Hitler war, which had been redecorated in a 'contemporary' style—light salmon wood, cubistic lanterns, leather cushions of pastel shades—that pleased none of the lawyers, officials or police officers who worked there. The courts looked too much like the board-rooms of progressive companies, staterooms on liners, even 'lounges' of American-type hotels, for the severe traditional taste of these professionals; and all of them, when they appeared there, injected into their behaviour an additional awesome formality to counteract the lack of majesty of their surroundings. (207)

The third-person narrator finds the conflation of the contemporary and traditional elements of the courtroom jarring and contradictory. It can be assumed that the building was probably built in a modernist style and predates World War II. In labeling WWII "Hitler's war," the narrator defamiliarizes the war by renaming it and making it seem as if the war belongs to Hitler alone. The narrator's relabeling of WWII deemphasizes the cultural devastation of the Blitz and instead reframes the court's rebuilding through the guise of any other contemporary redecoration gone awry. In this case, the pomposity of British courts becomes the trendy space of an American-style hotel bar, and in the process, delegitimizes the court's sanctity.

This description also showcases the legal officials' intense need for formality and tradition in all aspects of their work, including their physical space. As the trial proceeds, it also proves that British law is far from modern and is still rooted in an imperial past despite the "contemporary" setting. Johnny is presented as the devious and sexually-aggressive African that is not capable of understanding British custom or culture, assumptions that rely on racial essentialism. Theodora even states that because English was not his first language (which implies formal British English), he as an African "has greater difficulty in expressing himself clearly than many of us realize" and has a "language handicap," which further paints him as inferior in the eyes of the law (225). Of course, the absurdity lies in the contrast between language of the courts, the testimony of the trial, and what the reader now knows to be true about black subculture and experience. When one of the lawyers states that "in British court, all men are equal before the law" (226), the irony is palpable.

City of Spades also offers important insights into how the British middle-class white women perceive and desire black men. Like *The Lonely Londoners*, *City of Spades* demonstrates how sexual desire becomes a mechanism to deconstruct and rewrite cultural and class boundaries even when unsuccessful. One of the important differences between the two novels is that MacInnes includes more in-depth portraits of British women and their desire for black men. In fact, *City of Spades* is most compelling is in documentation of white female desire that explicitly rejects traditional and socially accepted relationships. By shifting desire from black individuals to white women, the novel "challenges the dominant cultural stereotypes of black individuals as sexually promiscuous" (Bentley 259). Yet, *City of Spades'* portrait is not necessarily celebratory of British women, interracial relationships, or desire. Although English women who participated in interracial relationships in the 1950s were

asserting a form of anti-Fascist and liberal politics,[174] the novel shows that not all women

followed that logic. It is impossible to ascribe one political meaning to the mixed-race

relationships in *City of Spades* as multiple women regret their liaisons with black men and

reject their biracial children whereas others embrace their mixed-race offspring.[175] The

women in the novel have different motivations, which is often tied to their social class and

financial status, and for the middle-class women, several initially engage in relationships

with black men because of what Sarah Ahmed labels "stranger fetishism," where othering

becomes integral to desire and becomes part of their sexual fetish.[176]

 Although the desire of the other can be another form of racism, what makes

interracial relationships seem radical for the women in MacInnes' text—and thus white

British women in the 1950s—is that it is a mechanism to reject the imperial logic of class and

the prescribed and "appropriate" forms of female desire. This logic can be traced to early

modern class formations with the loss of the aristocracy and the ascendency of the middle-

class, at a time when women were relocated to the home to reaffirm the status of bourgeois

men (Mohanram 29). As I discussed in Chapter 3, certain aspects of Victorian femininity still

lingered in post-1945 Britain and were embraced by conservatives because they represented a

romanticized British imperial past, despite the rapid decline and relevance of this colonial

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[174] Micah Nava argues that interracial relationships in 1950s London held radical political power, particularly for the white women who engaged in them (91).

[175] As Marquita Smith notes, "In *City of Spades,* the varied responses and motivations of the white British female characters render questionable the act of assuming a certain political meaning for such relationships. For example, Muriel is willing to have Johnny's baby while Dorothy would rather eliminate her reproductive capabilities than birth a mixed-race child" (4).

[176] Ahmed traces the fetish of the other to Marxist models of commodity fetish and discusses Marx's problematic means of conflating primitive religion with objects, in which they as autonomous and with lives of their own: "The analogy suggests that the process of fetishisation involves, not only the displacement of social relations onto an object, but the transformation of fantasies into figures... What is at stake is the 'cutting off' of figures from the social and material relations that overdetermine their existence, and the consequent perception that such figures have a 'life of their own'. Stranger fetishism is a fetishism of figures: *it invests the figure of the stranger with a life of its own insofar as it cuts 'the stranger' off from the histories of its determination*" (emphasis in original, 4-5).

system for modern Londoners. Peter J. Kalliney attributes this persistence of traditional (or Victorian and imperial) gender roles in the post-war period as part of the relocation of the working classes to new housing, in which "domesticity became a site of commentary on both newfound prosperity and the subtle persistence of class boundaries" (115) These spaces, like their Victorian forebearers, were the most stable, and yet paradoxically, the most susceptible to outside influence. The new housing promoted the nuclear family and role of the patriarch of the family as essential to British masculinity, particularly for the working classes, and needed women to be relegated to the home to support those gender roles.

The arrival of the former colonial subject in London and white British women's subsequent desire for, and relationships with, the racialized other challenged these gender roles and the figure of the white patriarch. In addition to its relegation to the interior space of the home, the middle-class Victorian woman's body became the crucial site for the preservation of racial purity and whiteness because it was where the future of the race was determined and perpetuated. The female body essentialized and constituted Britishness (and thus whiteness) but also has the potential to alter the whiteness of British bodies. Thus, the management of women's sexuality and femininity were crucial to the perpetuation of the empire and its racial hierarchies and yet it was entirely unreliable and vexing.[177] This "unreliability" and bodily "vexation" refutes the colonial logic that asserts the biological superiority of European white men and rationalizes patriarchy, racial hierarchies, and sexual desire for the sole purpose of procreation. In post-war London, white middle-class women's desire for the non-white other, however problematic, becomes a function of that "unreliability" and rejection of women's sole function to uphold and continue imperial gender norms and whiteness. In this sense, it takes on a radical potential for middle-class

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[177] Mohanram discusses the 19th century logic and the "problem" of women's bodies for imperialism (34).

women who want to re-imagine their position in modern British society and reject the imposed racialized femininity.

At the beginning of *City of Spades*, Theodora, Montgomery Pew's neighbor, comments: "It is always a danger to fall in love with another race. It makes you most dissatisfied with your own... Most races seem marvelous when one meets them for the first time. It might surprise you, Montgomery, but I once I was enamoured of the Irish... I loved them for what I hadn't got" (MacInnes 66-67). Theodora's comments suggest racial fetishization and underscore the typical middle class "liberal" attitude towards race in 1950s Britain. The reason that falling in love with someone of another race is "a danger" is that it makes an individual question their own racial identity and assumptions of racial superiority. Of course, on the surface, Theodora simply projects how desire becomes a project of othering. What is also striking is that in a novel that centers on black immigrants in Britain, Theodora lumps all immigrants together, whether Irish or African. Throughout the text, Theodora both confirms the appeal of stranger fetishization and upsets it in her attraction to and relationship with Johnny. For example, she asks Johnny about the stereotype of black "virility" and he responds, "the way to find that out is surely by personal experiment" (65). Despite these racist statements, Theodora compromises her own social standing to defend Johnny in court because she loves him. As an independent middle-class woman who works for the BBC, she already is in a precarious position in 1950s society as an unattached, career woman, or twenty-eight-year-old "spinster" as the courts describe her (223). In the first description of Theodora, Montgomery Pew states: "Such a rude, hard, determined girl, packed with ability and innocent of charm, repelled me: so clearly was she my superior in the struggle for life, so plainly did she let me see she knew it. She made it cruelly clear she

thought the world would not have been in any way a different place if I had not been born"

(33). That Theodora is ambitious and lacks social graces irritates Pew. Perhaps more

noteworthy is that she feels no need to cater to him or please him.

Initially, Theodora rejects Johnny because she views him solely as a sexual object.

Theodora's desire of the other becomes explicitly clear in other scenes in which she is

described as holding court with her various black admirers, particularly African American

GIs and artists that she meets at various clubs and parties. Johnny describes one scenario in

which in exchange for twenty pounds, Theodora makes him go to a "play by a French man

about nothing" and they end up at a party in the "fashionable area by Marble Arch" held by

Mr. Vial, a lawyer and one of the queer English characters who also fetishizes black men

(137). Before Johnny can describe the party, the chapter ends and the next shifts to

Montgomery's perspective, who recounts the same party. Ever the middle-class prude,

Montgomery has words with Johnny for bringing Theodora to what he considers an

inappropriate venue:

> And away he went, indifferent and debonair, to rejoin Theodora, who, crouched like a
>
> flamingo on a cushion, was holding a little court of coloured boys lying round her,
>
> relaxed, inquisitive and amused. She was treating them to a display of mental
>
> pyrotechnics which delighted them as an athletic performance, however little note
>
> they took of what she said. And though her questions and observations were
>
> outrageous, they took no offence because they recognized in Theodora what I had
>
> never thought her to be—a natural. (140)

In Montgomery's description, it is clear that Theodora enjoys the spectacle of the men

around her and plays to the stereotypes about cultures and races. The group does imitations

of various ethnicities, including the English and their bad teeth (140), and yet, the scene recounts a typical masculine perspective in which Theodora is reduced to an object, or a flamingo. The voyeurism of Montgomery and the "boys" who sit on the floor around her pay little attention to her verbal wit and instead "take little note of what she said." They, like Pew, relegate her to her status as a middle-class white woman and that is what makes her attractive. In fact, in preening like a bird, she becomes the "natural" Pew describes, or a woman who attracts men because of her outward performance, not because of her interiority. The scene works doubly as it perpetuates Theodora's racial fetishization through its harem-like description of black men surrounding her and reveals how she is the exotic object for the men, regardless of race.

This form of racialized desire and objectification is not unique to the British middle class and the novel describes working-class interracial relationships. As a white working-class woman, Muriel, Johnny's half-brother's half-sister and thus non-blood relative, becomes Johnny's live-in girlfriend and underscores another form of racialized desire. She idolizes Johnny because he represents an object of fetish for her: that of the polished, beautiful gentleman with money.[178] When he asks her why she loves African men, she exclaims that she only loves Johnny and yet discusses Johnny in terms of his race. She states that she loves "those lovely manners you all have. And because you're all so beautiful to look at... Not just your faces—it's the way you move... You step out as if you owned the world" (104). Although British society may refuse to acknowledge black immigrants as equals, Muriel as a white working-class woman fetishizes their social manners, confidence, and as "wonderful fighters" (105). (Johnny's retort to Muriel's comment about his

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[178] During the trial, it is revealed that Johnny comes from a successful Nigerian business family and could ask for money from them but refuses to because of pride (MacInnes 224).

physicality is that Africa also has "intelligent citizens" (106).) By addressing his physicality,

Muriel identifies Johnny's body as integral to her desire and in her use of the collective

"you're all" implies that any black body will do. Yet, however much she objectifies Africans,

she also identifies the shared rapport between the white working class and the black

immigrants: they both must carve out a niche of London and struggle to survive. Her

fetishization of Johnny becomes political because it represents the working-class women's

dream of social movement and future prosperity.

However much the novel emphasizes this racialized desire and the objectification of

the other, it also works to overturn certain assumptions about interracial desire for the

characters and upends the idea that interracial relationships are only based on objectification.

The clearest example is Theodora, whose objectification of the other becomes dismantled

when she falls in love with Johnny and no longer views him through the lens of sexual desire

alone. When cornered as to why she refuses to admit that she loves Johnny, Theodora tells

Montgomery that she is not "ashamed" because of Johnny's race but that she has "a feeling

so strong she can't control it" and that she is "not used to that and I can't cope" (MacInnes

174). Theodora's intense love and recant of her earlier comments about racial fetishization

explain her willingness to bail Johnny out from jail and her refusal to acknowledge his

simultaneous relationship and child with Muriel. Theodora's love for Johnny illustrates a

shift from her perspective as the liberal, middle-class English woman who flaunts her

interracial relationships as a political statement and projection of her progressiveness to that

of a raw, emotional desire and love that transcends her racialized and classed assumptions.

To be in love with Johnny means that she loses her agency and independence as a single

woman. To regain her control of the situation, Theodora once again others Johnny by stating,

"They're so appalling! So tender and so heartless. So candid and evil!" (174). Pew makes the

scene even more uncomfortable by lecturing her as to the finer points of "tribal loyalties" and

cultural differences amongst the Africans. While on the surface it seems that Theodora is

participating in her earlier racialization of Johnny, she also betrays her own feelings that go

beyond desire. This contradictory and complicated list is less about Johnny although it is

framed through him. It mirrors her own feelings that she cannot otherwise express because to

be in love with him means that he defines her individual sense of self, rather than being an

unemotional and unattached desire that asserts her political position as a "bohemian" middle-

class woman.

By the end of the novel, Theodora is sent away to the countryside to recover from her

mental breakdown after the intense media attention following her testimony on behalf of

Johnny and her public declaration that she was pregnant with his child. She writes a letter to

Pew in which she describes her feelings after the dust has settled from her testimony on

behalf of Johnny:

> "I don't, as they say, 'regret it'... All I deeply regret, Montgomery (oh, how I do!—
>
> you'll not understand, however much you think you do), is losing my child in that so
>
> squalid, absurd and dreadfully sad miscarriage (my first—I mean my first pregnancy
>
> as it happens), because thought I've never meant anything to Johnny Fortune, I would
>
> still have had that...it—he—she: anyway, a fragment of him." (MacInnes 234)

Theodora is at her most sympathetic here as she describes the loss of her child and admits her

true feelings for Johnny by stating that this child would have been the one piece of him she

could ever have. In this instance, it becomes clear that her desire is not a fetishization of the

other in the guise of liberal sexuality but unrequited love. Theodora finishes the letter by

making grandiose statements about the differences between races and disowns her feelings for Johnny because she believes that friendship is impossible between different races. According to her logic, "...we can never really understand each other because we see the whole world utterly differently. In a crisis each race will act according to its nature, each one quite separately, and each one be right, and hurt the other." (235) Theodora's return to the racist logic she enacted at the beginning of the novel functions as an emotional dismissal of Johnny and the intense personal betrayal she refuses to admit. Pew's description of her as hard and determined describes the façade she wears to protect herself and lets her dismiss the emotional pain she suffers when Johnny abandons her. The logic in which races can never understand one other belies her own experiences and that Johnny will never understand what she has given up for him. In reasserting her racism, she can fall back upon her middle-class status and pretend it was a social experiment or fetishization. Akin to the other women of the novel who simply disappear, Theodora's letter acts as her last words and she fades into the obscurity of the countryside. She becomes another middle-class woman who is sent away to be an afterthought and any discussion of mixed-race relationships becomes an unspoken and unacknowledged story, just as Arthur's mother impresses at the beginning of the novel.

If *City of Spades* provides any redemptive portraits of London, it is in the scenes that document the city of London itself and the stories that occur outside of the Montgomery Pew-Johnny Fortune plotlines. The celebration of subcultures from a middle-class perspective is a refreshing counternarrative to the dismissal of various "youth cultures" often found in the 1950s. Often these subcultures were labeled as "youth cultures" because they were associated with American and/or black cultures and in labeling it as a function of

"youth", it helped dismiss these cultures as irrelevant, naïve, or unserious.[179] In fact, beyond

the novel's insistence that its middle-class reader sympathize with the hardships faced by the

immigrant communities and the British social structures that refuse to allow them to become

equals with white Britons, it shows the spaces of London that actively encourage cultural and

racial mixing. In addition to the private parties held by Mr. Vial, *City of Spades* describes the

leisure spaces that become associated with modern London. Before he becomes involved

with Johnny, Montgomery Pew describes his dislike of the traditional English pub, not

because he doesn't like "bars and boozing." Rather, pubs are "a legend unshakeable; but all a

dispassionate eye can see in them is the grim spectacle of 'regulars' at their belching back-

slapping beside the counter or, as is more often, sitting morosely eyeing one another, in

private silence, before their gassy pints" (MacInnes 42). Pew's portrait of the traditional pub

wallows in the decay and morosity of tradition, one that is no longer relevant to someone

who is relatively young like Pew. In the following chapter, Johnny describes the

Cosmopolitan dance hall: "And when I first got a spectacle of the crowded ballroom, oh,

what a sight to make me glad! Everywhere us, with silly little white girls, hopping and

skipping fit to die! Africans, West Indians, and coloured G.I.s all boxed up together with the

cream of this London female rubbish!" (49). The contrast between the Cosmopolitan and

public house are stark and gendered. The pub is filled with dying, older Englishmen whereas

the dance hall is alive with a diverse, London population. Pew's description of the

Cosmopolitan is laughable when he states, "I find this place quite gripping. An Elizabethan

fragment come to life in our regimented world" (54). Pew as the decent English gentleman

acts as an interloper in this world and because of that, his commentary is obviously stilted

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[179] Both Hebdige and Bentley discuss youth culture in-depth. Hebdige argues for the lasting significance of these counter-cultures for British culture and Bentley reclaims the radical potential these alternative sub-cultures held for multiple generations.

and formal even to the staidest reader. The novel's descriptions of the various clubs and parties illuminate the interiors of the spaces and demonstrate that they are what make London vibrant, not the dusty traditions that conservatives cling to as the harbingers of culture. In fact, it is the spaces that breathe new life into the austere space of the city and offer regeneration.

At the end of *City of Spades*, the major characters face disillusionment about Britain and its ability to become a truly modern and equal society. At every turn, law or social convention oppresses the immigrants, women are placed on the boundaries of society because of their sexual desires, and nothing changes in London. However, the novel's end refuses to be completely hopeless. As he is about to embark on his return voyage to Nigeria, Johnny declares, "No one will kill me, countryman! This is my city, look at it now! Look at it there—it has not killed me! There is my ship that takes me home to Africa: it will not kill me either! No! Nobody in the world will kill me ever until I die!" (248). Despite being broken down physically and psychically, Johnny proclaims an optimistic future. He is the agent of his own life and no one else can push him to his death. More striking though is that he claims London as his own and in doing so, he emphasizes how it equally belongs to him and every inhabitant. He demands the reader "look at it now" because it has changed with his and the other immigrants' presence to become a more vibrant city that has cast off the "dull dignity" of the past. The novel does not try to claim an optimistic end for each of its characters, but Johnny's words assert that there is a positive future there. Just as he and Muriel look back upon the city and imagine a future while on the river, he does the same before he embarks on his return to Nigeria. His return may signal the end of this chapter for him, but it does not close off the potential of a hopeful future. The space of the city as an ever-evolving entity is

what allows for this projection and it can be found in the spaces of the dance halls, music venues, and other "youth" spaces that even old spinsters like the 28-year-old Theodora and the government bureaucrat Montgomery Pew embrace.

Both *The Lonely Londoners* and *City of Spades* become an entry point for their British readers to better understand immigrant experience and each document different aspects of black subcultures within London. *City of Spades* has obvious flaws in terms of its appropriation of black subjectivity and at times, reaffirms the same racial stereotypes and middle-class liberalism it tries to critique and upset. *The Lonely Londoners'* is also not without its own problems as it fails to include women's voices and experiences, particularly Caribbean women, and relegates them as archetypical foils for masculine agency and desire. However, in using realist techniques, both novels refuse to prescribe an answer to social hierarchies or insist that desire can erase all class boundaries. Sexual desire becomes a mechanism to show the complicated politics of gender and race for both Selvon's Caribbean men and the white women in *City of Spades.* Both texts are careful to avoid the romanticization of a singular narrative in which love triumphs over difference and instead show how gender roles make it impossible for these relationships to be successful within the confine of 1950s Britain. The interracial desire foreshadows the shifting notions of classed and gendered subjectivities within Britain and shows how the redefinitions of class post-1945 become racialized for both progressive and conservative Londoners. The one commonality for all London's inhabitants is that the city is an incredibly isolating and lonely place. What makes both novels so important in their depictions of 1950s London is that they force their readers to recognize the city as a shared space and experience, one that has the potential to change its inhabitants and cast-off individual alienation. As Selvon writes at the end of *The*

Lonely Londoners, "What is it that a city have, that any place in the world have, that you get so much to like it you wouldn't leave it for anywhere else?" (134). In this city, desire allows for racial and class barriers to be restructured and made visible, and yet as Selvon affirms, what is truly at the heart of this desire is the recognition of new possibilities for British society and the desire for the future potential of the city itself.

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