The Logics of Dissolution:

Delineating the Urban Problematic in Contemporary British Literature

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This dissertation argues that traditional models of 'place' based on the city-country dichotomy do not adequately represent the complexities of contemporary British space. Prompted in large part by the epochal restructuri of capitalism in the 1970s, the urban problematic profoundly changed the production of space. Far from heralding an 'end of geography' commonly associated with globalization, the urban problematic recognizes that the ontological character of 'place' was transformed to such an extent that it problematizes and ultimately renders obsolete the city-country dichotomy.

To understand this process, and raise the insufficiencies of conventior approaches among literary criticism typified by Raymond Williams's seminal t *The Country and the City,* the methodology of this thesis cross-reads literary texts with theoretical and analytic works. Using the works of J.G. Ballard, Joh King, David Peace, and Niall Griffiths alongside those of Henri Lefebvre and David Harvey, and with extensive reference to the social, political, and economic history of Britain, this dialectical approach problematizes conventic distinctions between 'fiction' and 'theory' as much as it critiques commonplac ideas of space.

With reference to Ballard's Concrete and Steel Trilogy, Chapter One establishes the threshold of the urban problematic, identifies its constitutive features, and provides a theoretical framework that structures the discussion the subsequent chapters. The important subjects of gentrification, the privatization of municipal housing, and the commodification of culture are addressed in Chapter Two through the revisionist accounts of London and th

Thames Valley in the works of King. Chapter Three considers the sustained critique of Thatcherism in the works of Peace, which use the breakdown of the city-country dichotomy to map out the social effects of deindustrialization. As part of a codified response to the urban problematic, Griffiths's works provide Chapter Four with the materials necessary to revise traditional ideas of landscape. Meanwhile Chapter Five utilizes Ballard's later works to illustrate the virtual city, a concept which represents the most systematic response to the contemporary urban problematic in this thesis.

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Introduction. Exploring the 'possible-impossible'

> A contrast between country and city, as fundamental ways of life, reaches back into classical times [...] in our own world, there is a wide range of settlements between the traditional poles of country and city (Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City*, p. 1)

> For a long time into the future, the [urban] problematic will outweigh our understanding. What is most needed is that we categorize, that we prepare concepts (categories) [to] explore the possible-impossible (Henri Lefebvre, *The Urban Revolution*, pp. 162, 163)

> It is a recognition of its distance from the urban form of the city that is the condition of any philosophically critical engagement with the modern urban problematic (David Cunningham, *The Concept of Metropolis: Philosophy and Urban Form*, p. 15)

In *London Orbital*, a 'mad orbital walk' around the M25, Iain Sinclair recounts a journey of 'homage' to meet J.G. Ballard in Shepperton, 'the man who has defined the psychic climate through which we are travelling'.[1] Theirs was an incongruous encounter. As Sinclair previously explains, his 'paradigm' of 'visionary exploration' is based on walking: a form of mobility essential to his 'phantom biopsy' of London's 'diseased tissue'.[2] Ballard's bewildered response reveals a fundamental difference in approach concerning the urban problematic and its concomitant effects, one of which being the mobility of narrative perspective: '"You walked?", said Ballard, incredulously. "We do have buses in Shepperton"'.[3]

This incredulity is borne of a fundamental misunderstanding. Where Ballard 'defined' this 'psychic climate', so Sinclair's 'paradigm' of 'visionary

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[1] Iain Sinclair, *London Orbital* (London: Penguin, 2003), p. 268.
[2] Iain Sinclair, *Lights Out For The Territory* (London: Granta, 1997), pp. 5, 4.
[3] Sinclair, *Orbital*, p. 266. David Cunningham distinguishes between the approaches of Sinclair and Ballard in terms of the former being preoccupied with 'place' while the latter is concerned with 'non-places'. David Cunningham, 'Re-placing the Novel: Sinclair, Ballard and the Spaces of Literature', in *Ballardian* <http://www.ballardian.com/re-placing-the-novel-sinclair-ballard> [accessed 6 September 2010]. While I disagree with the connotations attached to the term 'non-place' (see Chapter Two), I nevertheless agree with the link Marc Augé draws between the role of the automobile and the reconceptualization of place. See Marc Augé, *Non-Places: An Introduction to the Anthropology of Supermodernity*, trans. by John Howe (London: Verso, 1995), p. 86.

exploration'—on foot—does not accurately comprehend its consequences. In his 1995 'Introduction' to *Crash*, Ballard describes the car as a 'total metaphor for man's life in today's society'.[4] Sinclair is not simply oblivious to the importance of the car. 'The concept of "strolling", aimless urban wandering, the *flâneur*', Sinclair reflects, 'had been superceded. We had moved into the age of the stalker; journeys made with intent'.[5] In terms of understanding the social, physical, *and* 'psychic' climate of the contemporary urban problematic, Sinclair's 'age of the stalker' provides an acute, if unintentional, summarization of *Crash*. As the first chapter of my thesis demonstrates, this is a key work in advancing the understanding of the urban problematic. Its narrative perspective, however, is fundamentally at odds with that of Sinclair's 'M25 pilgrimage', a 'leisurely twelve-part walk' that is not part of that 'age of the stalker' so much as an outmoded vestige of the *flâneur.*[6]

Sinclair's mode of narration is, in other words, symptomatic because it corresponds to an outdated spatial form. The difference between the narrative perspective of Ballard and Sinclair parallels what David Cunningham, in the third epigraph, calls the 'distance' between the modern urban problematic and the 'historically specific [nineteenth-century] concept of metropolis'.[7] By emulating what Walter Benjamin calls the 'style' of flâneur—'botanizing on the

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[4] J.G. Ballard, *Crash* (1973) (London: Vintage, 1995), pp. 4-6, p. 6.
[5] Sinclair, *Territory*, p. 75.
[6] Sinclair, *Orbital*, p. 31. See also 'Walking in the City' in Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendell (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), pp. 91-110. For a salient critique applicable to both, see Nigel Thrift, 'Driving in the City', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 21 (2004), 41-59. On the flâneur, see Walter Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*, trans. Harry Zohn (London: New Left Books, 1973), esp. 'The Flâneur', pp. 35-66, and *The Flâneur*, ed. Keith Tester (London: Routledge, 1994). The narrative approach is indebted to 'Book VII: Residence in London' in William Wordsworth, *The Prelude; or Growth of a Poet's Mind (1805)*, ed. by Ernest de Selincourt (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 105-25.
[7] David Cunningham, 'The Concept of Metropolis: Philosophy and Urban Form', *Radical Philosophy: A Journal of Socialist and Feminist Philosophy*, 133 (2005), 13-25, p. 15.

asphalt'—Sinclair's approach largely overlooks how the emergence of the urban problematic critically alters the production of space, and so affects the precepts of representation.[8] For 'if flânerie can transform Paris into one great interior', the archetypal metropolis is frequently defined by contrast with its exterior: the country.[9] As the following section explains, one aspect of the 'distance' between the metropolis and the contemporary urban problematic is the changing nature of this relationship between the country and the city.

Critical and Theoretical Review

The first epigraph of this Introduction cites *The Country and the City* (1973), Raymond Williams's seminal work of literary criticism. This quote is notable for two reasons. Where the first sentence points to a far-reaching historical 'contrast' between the country and the city, the second sentence maintains that these 'traditional poles' continue to make sense of Williams's contemporary 'world'. Analogously, this thesis acknowledges that Williams's contrast provides a useful means of understanding British literature pre-1973. Conversely, the present work contests the validity of Williams's approach with regards to appreciating the complexity of British social and physical space and its various representations in the post-1973 era.

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[8] Benjamin, *Baudelaire*, p. 36. See also p. 37: the street as the flâneur's archetypal 'dwelling'. In summarizing recent developments in theoretical approaches to the city and the urban problematic, Cunningham illustrates one example of Sinclair's obliviousness to spatial change: 'the metropolis is a form of the urban that is in the process of becoming historically surpassed in an age of the so-called network society'. Cunningham, 'Concept of Metropolis', p. 14.

[9] Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, ed. by Rolf Tiedemann, trans. by Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 422. On the frequent ideological contrast between Paris and the country, see David Harvey, *Paris: Capital of Modernity* (London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 30, 82, and esp. 'Rhetoric and Representation', 265-70.

The works of Henri Lefebvre provide an important theoretical backdrop to the current inquiry. While *The Urban Revolution* (1970) refines his theoretical approach, Lefebvre's earlier works help illustrate how Williams's 'world' was fundamentally changing before the publication of *The Country and the City.* 'Town and Country' (1968) contends that the shifting 'relation' between these terms comprises 'an important aspect of a general transformation'. As the 'old exploitation by the city, centre of capital accumulation of the surrounding countryside' subsides, 'more subtle forms of domination and exploitation' emerge.[10] Before elaborating the specifics of these new 'forms', Lefebvre insists that a dualist approach to the city-country relationship is potentially misleading given that it masks the dialectical relations between the following three terms: 'rurality, urban fabric, [and] centrality'.[11] It is not the case, however, that the city-country dichotomy is simply erroneous. 'The 'overcoming of opposition', Lefebvre reasons:

> Cannot be conceived as a reciprocal neutralization [i.e. city erodes countryside]. There is no theoretical reason to accept the disappearance of centrality in the course of the fusion of urban society with the countryside. The "urbanity-rurality" opposition is accentuated rather than dissipated, while the town and country opposition is lessened. There is a shifting of opposition and conflict.[12]

As against arguing for sociologists to reduce the importance they attach to the distinction between the city and the country, Lefebvre calls for a conceptual overhaul of these terms of reference.[13] His insistence on the 'shifting of opposition and conflict' tacitly recognizes that Williams's 'contrast' *was*

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[10] Henri Lefebvre, 'Town and Country' in Henri Lefebvre, *Writings on Cities*, trans. and ed. Eleonore Kofman and Elizabeth Lebas (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), pp. 118-21, p. 119. This brief essay is an extract from *The Right to the City* (1968).
[11] Ibid. p. 118.
[12] Ibid. p. 120.
[13] See, for example, Richard Dewey, 'The Rural-Urban Continuum', *The American Journal of Sociology*, 66, 1 (1960), 60-66.

historically relevant. Its present utility, however, is questioned throughout the following chapters. Chapter Four uses Niall Griffiths's allusion to the 2001 outbreak of Foot and Mouth disease in Britain to illustrate how the networks of dependence, consumption, and communication underpinning urban society call into question traditional linguistic, conceptual, and spatial oppositions between 'rural' and 'urban'.

Such changes are in part attributable to the structural transformation of capitalism throughout the 1960s and 1970s. Lefebvre's essay 'Industrialization and Urbanization' (1968) argues that the decentralization of industry at this time contributed to the expansion of the 'urban phenomenon' across the 'great industrial countries', including England.[14] The resulting 'implosion-explosion of the city' affects villages through the 'depopulation' and 'loss of the peasantry', and demonstrates how '[o]ld "ways of life" become folklore' by 'remain[ing] rural while losing what was peasant life: crafts, small local shops'.[15] Chapter Four again demonstrates these socioeconomic processes. In the context of a largely tertiary British economy, Griffiths's 'fudge box Wales' illustrates how traditional ways of life are capitalized by the economic interests of tourism, and points to a wider connection between deindustrialization and the rise of the heritage industry.[16]

As regards cities, Lefebvre notes that such processes lead to:

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[14] Henri Lefebvre, 'Industrialization and Urbanization', in Lefebvre, *Writings on Cities*, pp. 65-85, p. 71.
[15] Ibid. pp. 71, 72.
[16] Niall Griffiths, *Grits (2000)* (London: Vintage, 2001), p. 367. On the heritage industry, see Patrick Wright, *On Living in an Old Country: The National Past in Contemporary Britain* (London: Verso, 1985) and Robert Hewison, *The Heritage Industry: Britain in a Climate of Decline* (London: Methuen, 1987).

> The extension of highly populated peripheries [alongside] banking, commercial, and industrial networks and [those] of housing (second homes, places and spaces of leisure, etc.) [....] [while] the urban core becomes a high-quality consumption product for foreigners, tourists, people from the outskirts, and suburbanites. It survives because of this double role: as place of consumption and consumption of place.[17]

Chapter One uses Ballard's Concrete and Steel trilogy (1973-5) to explore the increasing significance of these 'highly populated peripheries'. Ballard's representations of Shepperton illustrate the growing importance of suburbia both as a residential setting and site of economic production. The changing economic makeup of Britain, particularly the transnational expansion of the media and emergence of an increasingly tertiary economy, contextualize the spatial importance of Ballard's recasting of suburbia. His description of Shepperton as 'the everywhere of suburbia, the paradigm of nowhere' represents a critical point in conceptualizing suburbia.[18] . As I argue, this is the moment when the idea of suburbia is uncoupled from its traditional link to the city and assumes significance in own right.

The transformation of city centres into a 'consumption product' for tourists is meanwhile explored in Chapters Two, Four, and Five through recurrent experiences of alienation within central London and Liverpool. A common thread running through John King's 'London of Shakespeare', Griffiths's 'Authentic Liverpool experience', and Ballard's 'heritage London' is that gentrification and tourism have altered the demographics of these places such that their experiential relevance is waning.[19] This commonality elaborates how '[u]rban life includes original mediations between town, country, and

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[17] Lefebvre, *Industrialization*, pp. 72, 73.
[18] J.G. Ballard, *The Unlimited Dream Company* (Reading: Triad/Granada, 1981), p. 35.
[19] John King, *White Trash (2001)* (London: Vintage, 2002), p. 246; Niall Griffiths, *Kelly & Victor (2002)* (London: Vintage, 2003), p. 257; J.G. Ballard, *Kingdom Come* (London: Harper Perennial, 2007), p. 101.

nature'.[20] In challenging traditional figurations of the city as a centre of learning and the country as a pastoral retreat, each writer probes how the increasing complexity of British space(s)—physical, social, linguistic, racial, and economic—beckons new forms of representation. As these works collectively suggest, the proliferation of what Lefebvre refers to as 'second homes' and 'places and spaces of leisure' affect cities (gentrification, tourism) and rural areas (tourism, second homes raising house prices) alike, concomitantly heightening the significance of suburbia.

Lefebvre raises the economic transformations underpinning these spatial changes in *The Urban Revolution*, the concept of which:

> Highlight[s] the role of urbanism and more generally real estate (speculation, construction) in neocapitalist society. Real estate functions as a second circuit [...] that runs parallel to that [primary circuit] of industrial production [...] This second circuit serves as a buffer.[21]

This 'buffer' of real estate investment provides a conduit for capital in periods of depression. As its profitability increases, so the role and function of this second circuit increases at the expense of the wider economy.[22] Real estate speculation could, in principle, become the primary means of realizing surplus value. Since the percentage of overall surplus value generated by the second circuit is inversely proportional to that of the primary industrial circuit, the second circuit 'supplants the first, [and] becomes essential'.[23]

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[20] Lefebvre, 'Town and Country', p. 118.
[21] Lefebvre, *Urban Revolution*, p. 159.
[22] When extended to financial services, Lefebvre's second circuit model appears visionary. The Bank of England had 'long favoured' monetarist policies over Keynesian approaches to economic management, ultimately to the detriment of UK industries. In protecting the interests of finance capital by maintaining a strong pound through exchange rate speculation, government policies damaged the export position of industry and contributed to the 1970s balance of payments crises. David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 56.
[23] Lefebvre, *Urban Revolution*, p. 160.

A recurrent problem in Lefebvre's approach is a lack of empirical evidence for his observations. A wealth of information, however, lends credence to Lefebvre's sense of economic transformation at this time. Following substantial inflationary pressures largely attributable to the Vietnam War, President Nixon formally suspended dollar convertibility into gold on August 15 1971. This unilateral action effectively terminated the 1944 Bretton Woods Accord, which had until that point regulated commercial and financial relations between the major industrial states. In marking the end of commodity money, this event was, according to economic historian Filippo Cesarano, 'an epoch-making break in monetary history'.[24]

The results were unprecedented. 'Instead of calibrating long-term economic affairs to fixed standards of exchange', William Engdahl writes, 'world trade' became 'simply another arena of speculation about the direction in which various currencies would fluctuate'.[25] The depreciation of the dollar that followed the breakdown of the Accord indirectly led, two years later, to the 'Oil Shock', a 400% increase in the price of oil by January 1974.[26] Its domestic reverberations, which the first chapter of this thesis addresses, included the breakdown of the post-war Keynesian consensus, hyperinflation, the IMF crisis of 1976, and the rise of neoliberalism symbolized by Margaret Thatcher's election in 1979.[27] While the oil shock 'had a devastating impact on world industrial growth', Engdahl notes, 'it had an enormous benefit for certain established interests', notably London and New York banks and the 'Seven

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[24] Fillipo Cesarano, *Monetary Theory and Bretton Woods: The Construction of an International Monetary Order* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006). This 'break' amounted to a shift from commodity to fiat money.

Sisters' oil multinationals.[28] The post-1973 period amounted, in short, to what Eric Hobsbawm calls a 'new era of decomposition, uncertainty, and crisis'.[29]

The novelty in Lefebvre's approach was not to anticipate these changes, but to systematically link them to a thoroughgoing transformation in the production of space. In his reading of Lefebvre's text, Michael Romandel summarizes that 'the historic divide between the traditional city and the countryside [which] continued to be predominant under feudal society has been surpassed by the increasing dominance of the urban over all spatial relations'.[30] In denoting these shifts in spatial relations and the economic causes thereof, the use of the urban problematic in this thesis recognizes that the production of space has changed such that 'any contradictions that do occur no longer take place between city and country'.[31] Besides highlighting the importance of gentrification both as a means of accumulating surplus capital and altering the social and physical geography of cities, the urban revolution also conveys a new ontology of place. As Cunningham explains, the contemporary urban problematic results from:

> Not only quantitative expansion, but also qualitative shifts—transformations within the relations between urban and rural, as well as, with increasing importance, within and between *different* urban forms and processes of urbanization and the heterogeneous forces which generate them. The potential generalization of social, cultural, and technological

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[25] William Engdahl, *A Century of War: Anglo-American Oil Politics and the New World Order*, Revised Edition (London: Pluto Press, 2004), p. 129.
[26] Ibid. pp. 138-143.
[27] See Kevin Hickson, *The IMF Crisis of 1976 and British Politics* (London: Taurus Academic Studies, 2005); Harvey, *Neoliberalism*; and more generally, 'The Crisis Decades' in Eric Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century 1914-1991* (London: Abacus, 1994), pp. 403-32.
[28] Engdahl, *War*, p. 140.
[29] Hobsbawm, *Extremes*, p. 6.
[30] Michael Romandel, 'Lefebvre's *The Urban Revolution*, the Global Urban Problematic, and Revolutionary Movements in the 21st Century', at *Collaborative Urban Research Lab* <http://www.criticalresearchlab.org/2010/03/book-reviews> [accessed 12 January 2011]
[31] Lefebvre, *Urban Revolution*, p. 170.

> productive logics at a planetary scale, and the "concrete" networks of exchange and interaction that increasingly bind non-contiguous urban spaces together within the differential unity of a global economy a historically new set of relations between universal and particular, concentration and dispersal, [...] clearly demand new conceptions of mediation.[32]

This 'new set' of spatial 'relations' which characterizes the urban problematic is generated by the interaction of what Cunningham calls the 'concrete' systems of consumption and exchange that make up a 'global economy' with, among other things, intangible technological networks such the media and Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs).[33] The ontological effect of this interaction is such that 'transformations within the relations between urban and rural' necessitate 'new conceptions of mediation'.

The effects of the automobile, a subject that Lefebvre mentions only in passing and which is notably absent from Cunningham's account, illustrate this necessity.[34] According to sociologist John Urry, the car 'is more systemic and awesome in its consequences than what are normally viewed as constitutive technologies of the global, such as the cinema, television, and especially the computer'.[35] To grasp its systemic effects, Urry identifies the social and technical networks of 'automobility'. These consist of six components: the car as manufactured object, a form of individual consumption, a machinic complex, a

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[32] Cunningham, 'Concept of Metropolis', p. 13.
[33] For an indicative reading of the ways in which ICTs are 'integrating the world in global networks of instrumentality', see Manuel Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society. The Information Age: Economy, Society, and Culture*, 2nd Edition (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), p. 21. I address Castells's technological determinism in Chapter Three.
[34] See Lefebvre, *Urban Revolution*, p. 18, and Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space (1974)*, trans. by Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), p. 97.
[35] John Urry, 'The System of 'Automobility'', in *Theory Culture Society,* 21, 4/5, (2004), 25-39, p. 25.

quasi-private mobility, a culture, and finally as an overwhelming cause of environmental resource-use.[36]

To substantiate its spatiotemporal effects, Urry refers to Britain's post-war 'car-based suburbanization', a subject Chapters One and Two engage at greater length.[37] Briefly stated, the growing prominence of suburbia and developments such as new towns in the post-war period, which fundamentally altered social and physical concepts of space and time, was largely facilitated by developments in mobility (chiefly the automobile).[38] The resulting proliferation of 'car-only' or 'car-dependent environments' collectively exert:

> An awesome spatial and temporal dominance over surrounding environments, transforming what can be seen, heard, smelt, and even tasted [...] Such car-environments or non-places are neither urban nor rural, local nor cosmopolitan. They are sites of pure mobility.[39]

Although Urry's discussion is largely abstract and so requires contextualization (see Chapter One) and its language of 'non-places' is problematic (see Chapter Two), I take such 'environments' to be illustrative and substantive examples of the ontological issues raised by the urban problematic. By transforming 'surrounding environments' and creating 'sites of pure mobility' that are 'neither urban nor rural', automobility pressures traditional models of place. It contributes to what Cunningham calls the 'distance' between the city and the 'modern urban problematic', and helps explain the incongruous encounter between—and fundamental difference in the works of—J.G. Ballard and Iain

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[36] John Urry, 'Automobility, Car Culture and Weightless Travel: A Discussion Paper', <http://www.comp.lancs.ac.uk/sociology/papers/Urry-Automobility.pdf> [accessed 20 November 2008], p. 2.
[37] Urry, 'Car Culture', p. 4. See also Mark Clapson, 'Cities, Suburbs, Countryside', in *A Companion to Contemporary Britain: 1939-2000*, ed. Paul Addison and Harriet Jones (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), pp. 59-75.
[38] See Urry, 'Car Culture', p. 9.
[39] Urry, *Car Culture*, pp. 10, 11.

Sinclair. Where Ballard appreciates how the urban problematic transforms the objective form and subjective experience of the city, Sinclair's outmoded narrative form overlooks both.

While later events, I argue, qualify Lefebvre's thesis, his account of an urban 'revolution' was by no means uncritically received. In spite of acknowledging the similarities in their approaches, David Harvey disagreed with Lefebvre's emphasis on the role of capitalism's 'second' circuit of real-estate investment and financial speculation. Writing in 1973, Harvey recognizes that the two circuits are 'fundamental to each other', but the one 'based on industrial capitalism still dominates'. *The Urban Revolution* appears, from this perspective, as a speculative 'hypothesis concerning the possibilities immanent in the present'.[40] The subsequent development of Harvey's work, however, suggests that this possibility has become reality.[41] In this respect, Harvey's later works can be read as a sustained engagement with, and refinement of, Lefebvre's ideas.

The essay 'From Managerialism to Entrepreneurialism' (1989) offers a similar sense of periodization to that of Lefebvre's second circuit by identifying an important shift in the practices of local governance.[42] With reference to Sheffield, Liverpool, and Glasgow among other places, and set against a

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[40] David Harvey, *Social Justice and the City* (1973) (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2009), p. 313. Manuel Castells was also a prominent critic: see Neil Smith's discussion in his 'Foreword' to Lefebvre, *Urban Revolution*, pp. vi-xxiii, pp. xvi-xviii, and Edward Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (Verso: London, 1989), pp. 69-70.

[41] In 2005, less than two years before the onset of the subprime mortgage crisis, Harvey notes that '[s]peculative urban property markets [...] have become prime engines of capital accumulation'. Harvey, *Neoliberalism*, p. 157.

[42] 'From Managerialism to Entrepreneurialism: the Transformation in Urban Governance in Late Capitalism' (1989), in David Harvey, *Spaces of Capital: Towards a Critical Geography* (New York: Routledge, 2001), pp. 345-68. This transition forms an important backdrop to the transition 'From Fordism to Flexible Accumulation' in David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), pp. 141-72.

backdrop of deindustrialization, mass unemployment, fiscal austerity, privatization, and the rise of neoconservatism, Harvey identifies a pervasive shift in 'urban politics' circa the 1973 recession.[43] It involved a break from a 1960s managerial framework that concentrated on infrastructural developments (for instance housing and education) to entrepreneurial practices designed to attract investment. These latter practices, which focus on place-specific projects such as business parks and spaces of consumption like restaurants, shopping centres, and sports stadia, establish an essential link between institutional procedures and their physical effects. 'Above all', Harvey writes concerning the climate of heightened inter-regional competition, 'the city has to appear as an innovative, exciting, creative, and safe place to live or to visit, to play and consume in'.[44]

Harvey's investigation into the rebranding of the city continues in a lecture from 2001.[45] 'The Art of Rent' refines the idea of the second circuit of real estate speculation, using the concept of monopoly rents to mediate the relationship between the spatial effects of globalization and the commodification of culture. An inherent contradiction in the production of capitalist spatiality concerns its tendency to produce monopoly and the difficulty of market formation: as an object becomes more easily marketable, it appears less unique and therefore less desirable. To maintain monopoly rents, ways must be found to preserve the uniqueness of objects—a task for which the discourse of authenticity plays an important role. The ensuing conflict, Harvey argues, is

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[43] Ibid. p. 360.
[44] Ibid. p. 355.
[45] David Harvey, 'The Art of Rent: Globalization and the Commodification of Culture', in *Spaces of Capital*, pp. 394-411.

between efforts to preserve uniqueness and an unwitting trend towards standardization.

Borrowing from Pierre Bourdieu, Harvey argues that, in their attempts to acquire symbolic capital often through geographical marks of distinction, cities (more accurately municipal authorities, local development initiatives, and business interests) from diverse locations tend to follow a set pattern of development. It amounts to a tension between maintaining uniqueness—often through derivative means—as a precondition for collecting monopoly rent and the standardization that follows the creation of monopoly. Part of this tension currently involves the definition of culture:

> The knowledge and heritage industries, cultural production, signature architecture, and the cultivation of distinctive aesthetic judgements have become powerful constitutive elements in the politics of urban entrepreneurialism in many places (though most particularly in Europe). The struggle to accumulate marks of distinction and collective symbolic capital in a highly competitive world is on.[46]

This 'struggle' raises three interrelated questions concerning the definition of what is deemed culturally significant, the justification for this evaluation, and the issue of who benefits from these decisions. Harvey's example of the reconstruction of Liverpool Docks highlights a disjuncture between the concerns of local communities and financial and institutional interests. The initial absence of all reference to the slave trade prompted protest from members of the community, whether of Caribbean descent or—as Chapter Four explains—Niall Griffiths. In this way, the discursive battles surrounding the subject and definition of culture have the potential to shape physical geography.

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[46] Ibid. p. 407.

Between these various facts and interpretations an important conclusion can be drawn regarding the subject of the city. In historical terms, Lefebvre's second 'circuit' of speculative capitalism and Harvey's account of urban entrepreneurialism point to the early 1970s as being an important point of transition in the history of capitalism *and* the production of space. For each, this is the period at which conventional ideas of the city are no longer sufficient to the task of understanding the unfolding complexities of the modern world.[47] Analogously, this thesis argues that 1973 provides a convenient focal point around which to frame the urban problematic. The restructuring of capitalism at this time, which encompasses deindustrialization, the onset of the second 'circuit' of speculative investments, and the growth of the tertiary economy, allied to the post-war effects of suburbanization, gentrification, and the Thatcher government's privatization of municipal housing, contributes to a fundamental shift in the social, physical, and economic production of space. This combination of events contextualize the various logics of dissolution delineated throughout this thesis, all of which illustrate (to varying degrees) Lefebvre's contention that '[t]he concept of the city no longer corresponds to a social object'.[48]

This is not, however, to deterministically suggest that the urban problematic uniformly emerged at this time. Chapter One uses Ballard's Concrete and Steel trilogy to illustrate the various constitutive features of the

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[47] Compare the critique of the 'object' of the city and preference for the 'virtual or possible object' of the urban in Lefebvre, *Urban Revolution*, p. 16 with the need to modify the concepts of the urban and the city in line with the 'changing relations' between 'form and process' in Harvey, 'Entrepreneurialism', p. 350. Harvey later writes that a fundamental shift in 'space-time relations', which 'radically altered the relative locations of places within the global patterning of capital accumulation', occurred 'around 1970'. David Harvey, *Justice, Nature, and the Geography of Difference* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), p. 297.
[48] Lefebvre, *Urban Revolution*, p. 57.

urban problematic, many of whose effects—including those of the automobile and suburbanization—can be traced back to, and even before, the interbellum. Accordingly, much of the discussion concerning suburbia and automobility in the works of Ballard (Chapters One and Five) and King (Chapter Two) is applicable to E.M. Forster's *Howards End* (1910). The 'indeterminate note' that leads Mrs Munt to speculate on whether Hilton is part of 'England or Suburbia', is an antecedent of Ballard's Shepperton as the 'everywhere of suburbia, the paradigm of nowhere'.[49] Equally, where Chapter Two explores the continuities and discontinuities between John Betjeman's poem 'Slough' (1937), George Orwell's essay 'The Lion and the Unicorn' (1940), and King's representations of the Thames Valley, Forster anticipates their common link between the automobile and spatial change.[50] To this lineage can be added Leavis and Thompson's *Culture and Environment* (1933) and the three 'Englands' of J.B. Priestley's *English Journey* (1934).[51]

Having outlined the principles of the urban problematic, this section now elaborates the dialectical relationship between theoretical and literary representations central to the methodology of this thesis. Once again, the works of Henri Lefebvre establish an important precedent. *The Production of Space* (1974) outlines a 'perceived-conceived-lived triad', better known as the

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[49] E M Forster, *Howards End* (1910), ed. by Oliver Stallybrass (London: Penguin, 2000), pp. 29-30. See also pp. 115, 116, 170, 329.
[50] See Forster, *Howards End*, pp. 81, 96-7, 187, 198-201, 213, 314-5.
[51] Leavis and Thompson contend that '[i]nstead of the community, urban or rural, we have, almost universally, suburbanism'. F. R. Leavis and Denys Thompson, *Culture and Environment: The Training of Critical Awareness* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1933), p. 2. Priestley distinguishes between the 'Old England' ('the country of the cathedrals and minsters and manor houses and inns'), 'nineteenth-century England' ('the industrial England of coal, iron, steel, cotton, wool, railways; of thousands of rows of little houses all alike'), and the 'new post-war England' ('the England of arterial and by-pass roads, of filling stations and factories [...] of giant cinemas [...] bungalows with tiny garages [...] Woolworths, motor-coaches, [and the] wireless'). J. B. Priestley, *English Journey* (1934) (London: Penguin, 1984), pp. 371-5. Chapters Two and Four also discuss the figurative similarity between T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* and aspects of King's and Peace's novels.

interconnected processes of 'spatial practice, representations of space, [and] representational spaces'.[52] These terms are worth elaborating at length because they shed light on the dialectical relationship between the production and representation of space.

Spatial practice refers to the material facet of social activity and interaction, practices that manifest 'society's space'. In the circumstances of 'neocapitalism', this means a 'close association' between 'daily reality (daily routine)' and 'urban reality (the routes and networks which link up the places set aside for work, 'private' life and leisure)'. *Representations of space* meanwhile are assorted theoretical representations that provide an image and a definition of space: the space of academic disciplines (geographers, scientists, and branches of mathematics such as geometry), all of which 'identify what is lived and what is perceived with what is conceived'. *Representational space* is the space of everyday practice, space as 'directly *lived* through its associated images and symbols': the symbolic dimension superimposed upon the physical dimension.[53]

Lefebvre uses the metaphor of the human body to symbolize the 'three moments of social space'. Social practice—the realm of the perceived—presumes, in a phenomenological sense, the use of the body. Scientific knowledge such as that of anatomy meanwhile provides defining representations of the human body. Finally, 'bodily *lived* experience' involves a complex negotiation of embodiment through the 'symbolisms' of 'culture'. In these ways, '[t]he *heart* as *lived* is strangely different from the heart as *thought*

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[52] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (1974), trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), p. 40.
[53] Lefebvre, *Space*, pp. 38, 39, Lefebvre's italics.

and *perceived*'. The important point is that this triad 'loses all force if it is treated as an abstract model'.[54] As Christian Schmid explains, a social space:

> Includes not only a concrete materiality but a thought concept and a feeling—an "experience". The materiality in itself or the material practice per se has no existence when viewed from a social perspective without the thought that directs and represents them, and without the lived-experienced element, the feelings that are invested in this materiality.

It is the interrelations between these 'three moments of production'—material production, the production of knowledge, and the production of meaning—that is the precondition of social space.[55] The 'complex heuristic' of Lefebvre's triad is fundamental to the methodology of this thesis because it accounts for the relationship between theoretical and analytical representations of space and the representational spaces—the symbolic dimension—of the various novels I use to delineate the urban problematic.[56]

Along these lines, it is instructive that Lefebvre concludes the chapter 'Urban Myths and Ideologies' with reference to science fiction. The 'urban problematic', Lefebvre writes, 'appeared in science fiction novels before they were revealed to our understanding'.[57] This leads Lefebvre to speculate on the 'mythic tale', once the preserve of the 'philosopher and poet, and now the science-fiction novelist'. The latter writer 'combines the various "lexical items" associated with the urban phenomenon, without worrying too much about classifying them according to their provenance or signification'.[58]

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[54] Ibid. p. 40, Lefebvre's italics.
[55] Christian Schmid, 'Henri Lefebvre's Theory of the Production of Space: Towards a Three-dimensional Dialectic' in *Space, Difference, Everyday Life: Reading Henri Lefebvre*, ed. by Kanishka Goonewardena and others (New York: Routledge, 2008), pp. 27-45, p. 41.
[56] Andy Merrifield, *Henri Lefebvre: A Critical Introduction* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), p. 108.
[57] Lefebvre, *Revolution*, pp. 103-114, p. 113.
[58] Ibid. p. 114.

From this reading, the following conclusions can be drawn. At a general level, literature precedes philosophy with respect to identifying the urban problematic, albeit without fully appreciating its significance.[59] More specifically, science fiction is a 'representational space' whose referential status is confirmed by the fact that it 'combines'—without organizing—the 'various "lexical items" associated with the urban problematic'. In other words, since the urban problematic 'appeared' in science fiction works before it was 'revealed to our understanding', these works help shape the subsequent development of 'representations of space'.[60] Along similar lines, I argue that Ballard's Concrete and Steel Trilogy (1973-5) occupies a threshold space, quantitatively and qualitatively, between the forms of the city and the urban problematic.

This approach is not, however, generally recognized in the ranks of literary theory. Published three years after *The Urban Revolution*, Williams's seminal work *The Country and the City* provided a basic theoretical framework that has since become commonplace among analyses of literary space. The 'wide range of settlements' that constitute Williams's 'own world' in the first epigraph are, so he argues, defined within 'the traditional poles of country and city'.[61] While Williams's assertion that '[m]uch of the real history of city and country, within England itself, is from an early date a history of the extension of a dominant model of capitalist development to include other regions of the

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[59] 'The planetary nature of the urban phenomenon [...] appeared in science fiction novels before they were revealed to our understanding [....] the city of the future [appears] broken; it proliferates as a disease afflicting humanity and space'. Lefebvre, *Urban Revolution*, pp. 113, 114. This is more an indictment of philosophy than it is an appreciation of science fiction. Lefebvre elsewhere writes that 'to take up a radically critical analysis and to deepen the urban problematic', philosophy must be 'the starting point'. Cited by Cunningham, 'Concept of Metropolis', p. 15.
[60] The neologism 'cyberspace', taken from William Gibson's *Neuromancer* (1984), is a case in point.
[61] Williams, *Country*, p. 1.

world' is historically credible, I argue that the form of capitalism operating in Williams's 'world' was already, at the time of its publication, problematizing the 'traditional poles' of spatial representation.[62] The irony of Williams's text, which most later critics are oblivious to, is that it recognizes that the binary approach 'was always a limiting inquiry', not least because 'our real social experience is not only of the country and the city [...] but of many kinds of intermediate and new kinds of social and physical organization'.[63] Unfortunately, Williams neither elaborates the meaning of these 'new kinds of social and physical organization' nor considers their impact upon his epistemological framework.

A characteristic feature of many of subsequent discussions of literary space is their entrenched binary perceptions. Burton Pike founds *The Image of the City in Modern Literature* (1981) upon the distinction between the 'static city' and the 'city of flows'.[64] Edward Timms (1985) recalls almost verbatim Williams's rubric when he writes that, '[f]rom the earliest recorded history the city has formed one of the magnetic poles of human existence'.[65] William Sharpe (1990) predicates his analysis on the dualism of the 'real' and 'unreal' city, while Elizabeth Wilson's *The Sphinx in the City* (1992) maintains that the very idea of the city has 'always been defined in terms of th[e] contrast' with the country.[66] Hana Wirth-Nesher's *City Codes* (1996) extols Williams's influence

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[62] Ibid. pp. 279, 1. For a brief outline of the historical development of the city, see Lefebvre, *Urban Revolution*, pp. 8-15.
[63] Ibid. pp. 306, 289.
[64] Burton Pike, *The Image of the City in Modern Literature* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1981).
[65] Edward Timms, 'Introduction: Unreal City—Theme and Variations' in *Unreal City: Urban Experience in Modern European Literature and Art*, ed. Edward Timms and David Kelley (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), pp. 1-12, p. 1.
[66] William Chapman Sharpe, *Unreal Cities: Urban Figuration in Wordsworth, Baudelaire, Whitman, Eliot, and Williams* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1990); Elizabeth Wilson, *The Sphinx in the City: Urban Life, the Control of Disorder, and Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), p. 153.

by avowedly seeking to 'complement [...] important existing studies of literature and the city', not least by distinguishing between public and private space.[67]

There are, however, several salutary exceptions to this trend. In *The Contemporary British Novel*, Phillip Tew identifies four dominant cultural themes from the mid-1970s onwards: British identity, the idea of a culture in transition, 'late capitalist or "Thatcherized" urban spaces', and 'the mythopoeic and hybridity' as revitalizing literary responses to these circumstances.[68] Tew markedly does not refer to 'the city' or 'place', and instead uses the generic and plural terms of urban *spaces* that in some way relate to late capitalism and/or Thatcherism. This captures an interrelated sense of cultural and spatial change: 'urban' replaces the city, while place gives way to 'spaces'. Although I consider at length the precise meanings and consequences of these terms, and delineate a model of the urban problematic that repudiates conventional binary approaches to understanding and representing space, Tew's overview is broadly correct.

Richard Lehan resists dualist approaches to the subject of *The City in Literature* by defining 'the city in terms of its functions—as a commercial, industrial, or postindustrial entity'. It is 'within these contexts', Lehan writes, 'that urban space is authentically defined and redefined, since the city is a changing rather than fixed realm'.[69] This functionalist approach is useful since it focuses on the physical and social organization of space. It does not, in other words, presuppose an absolute and transcendental spatial division such as the city-

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[67] Hana Wirth-Nesher, *City Codes: Reading the Modern Urban Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 7.
[68] Philip Tew, *The Contemporary British Novel* (London: Continuum, 2004), p. 1.
[69] Richard Lehan, *The City in Literature: An Intellectual and Cultural History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), p. 289.

country dichotomy. In addition, Lehan conceptualizes the city as an 'evolving construct'. By 'superimposing urban upon literary modes and vice-versa', such that a discourse of the city is unthinkable without referring to literary representations, Lehan assigns an important role to the referential capacity of literary representations.[70]

This co-evolutionary approach raises an important difference among approaches to the relationship between material and literary cities. In an essay concerning 'Literary Geographies', Jeri Johnson identifies two distinct approaches to this relationship. Johnson distinguishes between a dominant trend which, following Williams, posits cities in literature as representations of 'something else', and a less common approach that understands them to represent 'at least themselves (or their particular material histories)'.[71] Their difference is, in short, between viewing literary cities in terms of signification or reference.

In common with Lehan's approach, this thesis assigns a referential capacity to literary representations of space, using a number of works from 1973 onwards to help delineate the urban problematic. A key difference, however, between Lehan's approach and that of this thesis is terminological. Lehan concludes that '[t]he city—for better or worse—is our future'.[72] One problem with this approach is that 'each city', in the words of Italo Calvino,

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[70] Ibid. p. 3.
[71] Jeri Johnson, 'Literary Geography: Joyce, Woolf and the City', *City*, 4 (2000), 199-214, p. 199. See also p. 200: 'Whatever material reality may be represented through presentations of the city (or indeed the country)' is for Williams 'significant only insofar as it communicates an ideology of the individual as s/he exists within a community'.
[72] Lehan, *City*, p. 292.

'receives its form from the desert it opposes'.[73] Put differently, the identity of the city is historically linked to entrenched binary perceptions in writing about space, whether in the guise of city-country or city-suburb dichotomies. To argue that the city 'is our future' presupposes a sense of continuity in the physical form and conceptualization of space that is not in keeping with Lefebvre's sense of the urban *revolution*.

This latter criticism also applies to Elizabeth Wilson's evolutionary account of 'The Rhetoric of Urban Space'.[74] As its title suggests, this 1995 essay provides a timely response to a number of important themes such as the privatization of space, the 'trap of binary thinking', and the 'rhetorical literature of great cities', a 'distinct literary genre' that constitutes 'a long tradition of rejection of the periphery, the conurbation, [and] suburban sprawl'.[75] The problem with Wilson's alternative—'Nature penetrates the city'—is that it posits the urban as the recognition of earlier *misrecognition(s)*.[76] In other words, the periodizing value this thesis invests in the term 'urban' is largely conspicuous by its absence: to 'recover [...] the periphery' is to overlook the historical specificity of the urban problematic.[77]

Richard Skeates provides another important contribution to the understanding of the urban problematic in his 1997 essay 'The Infinite City'.[78]

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[73] Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities*, trans. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Inc (London: Pan Book, 1979), p. 18.
[74] Elizabeth Wilson, 'The Rhetoric of Urban Space', *New Left Review*, I, 209 (1995), 146-160, p. 153.
[75] Ibid. pp. 147, 153.
[76] Ibid. pp. 147, 146. See also pp. 146-7, my italics: 'Discussion of the way in which the built environment encroaches on the countryside is not unusual, but the urban seeping into the rural is certainly almost always perceived as destructive and polluting, and movement in the *opposite direction* is seldom mentioned at all'. My use of the urban is not as a simple cognate of the city. On the contrary, it denotes a fundamental break with conventional ideas of 'the city'.
[77] Ibid. p. 159.
[78] Richard Skeates, 'The Infinite City', *City*, 2, 8 (1997), 6-20.

Skeates 'invests' the science fiction of William Gibson 'with possibilities that conventional theory may lack', arguing that a recursive approach is 'useful, necessary even' if the processes 'that are presently restructuring the world' are to be better understood.[79] Gibson's works exemplify a 'fully urbanised ontology' which, Skeates argues, 'cannot make use of a set of linguistic constructions' such as the 'culture'/'nature' divide 'which define the world in terms of paradigms of knowledge which have been superseded'.[80] The essay is also important because it draws attention to the role of modern technologies in shaping the understanding and representation of the city, a subject which Lefebvre's works—perhaps given their dates of publication—do not engage at great length. The concept of culturized nature that I develop in the first chapter is indebted to Skeates's essay, particularly with respect to the realignment of conventional notions of critical distance.[81]

The final body of critical material to be addressed in this section is ecocriticism. Defined by Cheryll Glotfelty as 'the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment', ecocriticism has over the last fifteen years acquired significant academic kudos.[82] Its 'ultimate value' is, Jonathan Bate contends, 'as a form of consciousness': a sensitivity 'to words and to the world that acknowledges the intricate, inextricable networks linking

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[79] Ibid. pp. 6-7. See also Harvey's engaging essay on Raymond Williams, which argues that his novels were more critically nuanced than his theoretical works with regards to the dialectics of space and place. David Harvey, 'Militant Particularism and Global Ambition: The Conceptual Politics of Place, Space, and Environment in the Work of Raymond Williams' in *Spaces of Capital*, pp. 158-187.
[80] Ibid. pp. 10, 12.
[81] Skeates, 'Infinite City', pp. 9-10, 12.
[82] Cheryll Glotfelty, 'Introduction: Literary Studies in an Age of Environmental Crisis', in *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*, eds. Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1996), pp. xv-xxxvii, p. xviii.

culture and environment'.[83] Bate's essay forms part of a special volume of *New Literary History* that itself typifies some of the problems of ecocriticism, especially in conceptualizing the physical environment.

Lawrence Buell's concluding essay 'The Ecocritical Insurgency' provides an accurate overview of the development of the approach until this point (1999), recognizing its predominant focus on 'nonmetropolitan landscapes' while suggesting that there is 'no inherent reason' why this imbalance should continue. The volume, however, does not reflect what Buell calls the need to place 'greater emphasis than ever before upon the interpenetration of "country" and "city"'.[84] While Bate's essay provides a useful etymological account of 'culture' and 'environment', its contention that '[o]ur longing for the imagined health of the past must be a sign of the sickness of the present' does not account for the complexities of Niall Griffiths's engagement with literary ideas of landscape (see Chapter Four).[85] Besides this, two chapters address ecocriticism's relationship with science, another engages the 'nature' of literary representation, two more tackle poetry, while others consider the subjects of mapping, 'ornithological knowledge and literary understanding', and finally an ecological reworking of the sublime.[86]

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[83] Jonathan Bate, 'Culture and Environment: From Austen to Hardy', *New Literary History*, 30, 3 (1999), 541-60, p. 559.
[84] Lawrence Buell, 'The Ecocritical Insurgency', *New Literary History*, 30, 3 (1999), 699-712, pp. 706, 707. This sense of 'interpenetration' does not, however, extend to a re-evaluation of the categories of spatial representation, hence the difference between Buell's approach and that of this thesis.
[85] Bate, *Culture*, p. 542.
[86] Glen A. Love, 'Ecocriticism and Science: Toward Consilience?' (561-76); N. Katharine Hayles, 'The Illusion of Autonomy and the Fact of Recursivity: Virtual Ecologies, Entertainment, and "Infinite Jest"' (675-97); Dana Phillips, 'Ecocriticism, Literary Theory, and the Truth of Ecology' (577-602); Robert Pogue Harrison, '"Not Ideas about the Thing but the Thing Itself"' (661-73); John Elder, 'The Poetry of Experience' (649-59); William Howarth, 'Imagined Territory: The Writing of Wetlands' (509-39); John Rowlett, 'Ornithological Knowledge and Literary

The point is that none of the essays substantively engage the changing city-country relationship.[87] This is a common absence among later anthologies.[88] By the time of Buell's next intervention into *The Future of Environmental Criticism*, the argument becomes familiar. 'The city as environment, both the built and "natural" spaces, generally presents itself in pieces to literature and critical imagination', Buell writes. That said:

> At least we are starting to see the beginning of [an] incorporation of urban and other severely altered, damaged landscapes [...] into ecocriticism's accounts of placeness and place-attachment. For ecocriticism to recognize "the city" as something other than non-place is itself a great and necessary advance'.[89]

Buell's reference to 'urban *and other severely altered, damaged landscapes*', views the urban as one 'landscape' among many. As this thesis understands it, the concept of the urban problematic encompasses a number of profound changes: firstly in the configuration of capitalism, secondly with respect to the social and physical organization of space, and latterly in the conceptualization and representation of space. From this perspective, the urban is not one 'space' (or landscape) among others. That the urban 'landscape' is in some way 'severely altered and damaged' does not lead Buell to significantly reappraise his terms of address, since the revision of 'placeness' merely means to expand

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Understanding' (625-47); and Christopher Hitt, 'Toward an Ecological Sublime' (603-23) in *New Literary History*, 30, 3, (1999).

[87] While Hayles suggestively notes that 'when the virtual and the natural are aligned, new opportunities for analysis present themselves', these ideas remain broadly undeveloped with respect to overhauling the categories and epistemology of spatial representation. Hayles, *Illusion*, p. 677. Compare this essay with the account of the 'virtual city' in my fifth chapter.

[88] See, for example, *Beyond Nature Writing: Expanding the Bounds of Ecocriticism*, ed. Karla Armbruster and Kathleen R. Wallace (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2001), where only Richard Kerridge's essay 'Ecological Hardy' (pp. 126-42) engages the subject of the city-country dichotomy with any rigour. See also *The ISLE Reader. Ecocriticism, 1993-2003,* eds. Michael P. Branch and Scott Slovic (Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 2003), where Michael Bennett's essay 'From Wide Open Spaces to Metropolitan Places: The Urban Challenge to Ecocriticism' (pp. 296-317) repeats Buell's previous admonishment of ecocriticism, noting that 'the movement itself has been slow to survey urban environments' (p. 296).

[89] Lawrence Buell, *The Future of Environmental Criticism: Environmental Crisis and Literary Imagination* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), p. 88.

its scope to encompass the country *and* the city. That viewing the city as more than a 'non-place' is a 'great and necessary advance' highlights the paucity of ecocriticism's approach up until this point to the historical changes previously discussed.[90]

Literary Approaches

A strength in the approach of this thesis is that while the choice of writers reflects a similar profile—white, heterosexual males—the class and regional variation among them, and their consensus regarding sociospatial change, lends credence to its account of the urban problematic. Such awareness of the urban problematic, however, is by no means uniform across the spectrum of contemporary literature. To accentuate the consensus in the following chapters regarding the changing nature of Britain's social and physical geographies, this section discusses a number of works which were considered for inclusion in this thesis, but ultimately rejected.

Since Lefebvre refers to science fiction in particular, not literature in general, with respect to 'combining' the 'lexical items' of the urban problematic, three important questions of *selection* emerge.[91] What texts were considered for use in this thesis, which were selected, and what were the criteria for their selection? In response to the first question, the reference to 'contemporary British Literature' covers a wide historical period (from 1973 onwards) that coincides with the onset of the urban problematic, the choice of which is

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[90] Greg Garrard's definition of ecocriticism as 'essentially [being] about the demarcation between nature and culture, its construction and reconstruction' accentuates the fact that his overview does not engage the relationship between the city and the country, which this thesis contends is invalid. Greg Garrard, *Ecocriticism* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 179.

[91] Lefebvre, *Urban Revolution*, p. 114.

discussed below. 'Literature' encompasses a diverse range of categories, genres, styles, and traditions, all of which are based on a number of value judgements. Unlike Lefebvre, this thesis does not analyse one genre in particular, preferring instead to emphasize the intertextual and dialectical relations between representations of space and representational spaces—hence the reference to 'British Literature' rather than 'British *Fiction*'.

This distinction leads to the third question: what were the criteria of selection? While this thesis neither evaluates texts on the basis of one being better or worse than another nor actively seeks to revise the canon, the following chapters inevitably raise questions concerning the underlying values of canonicity (not least with regard to the representations of the city). The common denominator in the texts—novels and essays, theoretical books and newspaper articles—under discussion is their interest in the changing production and representation of space. A leitmotiv across the works of Ballard, King, Peace, and Griffiths is that the urban problematic, far from forming a passive backdrop, constitutes an ongoing thematic concern. The chess metaphor Viktor Shklovsky uses to describe the development of art is here pertinent: the 'knight's move' simultaneously refers to the 'conventionality of art' and to its non-freedom.[92] Literature, from this perspective, develops in neither a linear direction nor a straightforward fashion. While this thesis uses the urban problematic as a quantitative historical term and qualitative hermeneutic concept—an historical transformation in the structure of capitalism and associated spatial form, which requires new means of conceptualizing space—it

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[92] The 'knight is not free', Shklovsky observes. 'It moves in an L-shaped manner because it is forbidden to take the straight road'. It is also a metaphor for Shklovsky's escape from Russia in 1922. Viktor Shklovsky, *Knight's Move* (1923), trans. Richard Sheldon (Normal: Dalkey Archive Press, 2005), p. 3.

follows that not all contemporary British literature engages this subject in a similar way.

The response to the second question—which texts were selected?—reveals the uneven development connoted by Shklovksy's knight's move. This section now turns to several brief readings of works that were considered for discussion in this thesis before being rejected. These include works by Martin Amis, Will Self, Alan Hollinghurst, and Nick Hornby, and the debut novels of Zadie Smith and Hanif Kureishi.

Framed around John Self's hedonistic 'addict[ion] to the twentieth century', Amis's *Money* (1984) follows its narrator between London and New York as he attempts to get rich by directing his first feature-length film.[93] For a novel so obsessed with its title, however, *Money* offers little meaningful insight into the changes that underlie '[b]lasted, totalled, broken-winded, shot-faced London'.[94] In respect of the urban problematic, the novel offers little more than symptoms of change. Although Self's likening of Bank Street to 'a chunk of sentimental London' anticipates King's 'London of Shakespeare' and Ballard's 'heritage London' (discussed in Chapters Two and Five), it lacks the substantive rigour of these later critiques.[95] Beyond Self's gestural reference to '[i]nner cities crackl[ing] with the money chaos', there is little sense of a relationship between London's 'residential allotments [...] going up in the world', which are becoming 'gentrified, humidified, [and] marbleized', and the transformation of a 'music shop' into a 'souvenir hypermarket'.[96]

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[93] Martin Amis, *Money—A Suicide Note* (1984) (London: Penguin, 1985), p. 91.
[94] Ibid. p. 159.
[95] Ibid. p. 117.
[96] Ibid. pp. 66, 71.

Similar comments apply to Amis's *London Fields* (1989), which offers a greater degree of reflection on the causes of change than *Money* without forming a systematic response to the urban problematic. Set in London, 1999, amid environmental degradation and 'the world situation [...] the Crisis' of potential nuclear catastrophe, the novel continues Amis's interest in the 'hyperinflation of death'.[97] The novel makes an important observation (see Chapter Three) on the significance of nuclear weapons, which contribute to what narrator Samson Young calls 'synthetic modernity'.[98] *London Fields* later associates these developments with spatial change through the 'teargas of the unreadable streets' that have become 'illegible'.[99] This draws an important parallel with the urban problematic. As demonstrated by the threat of nuclear war, Lefebvre writes that during the 'critical phase' which precedes the urban revolution, 'nature appears as one of the key problems'.[100]

The connection between the novel and the urban problematic is, however, limited in Amis's work to a common interest in the idea of 'nature'. 'Defoliated, deflowered, stripped of leaves and flowers', London is most frequently approached in terms of what Samson calls the 'London theme; the attempt at greenery would itself appear to attract the trash'.[101] 'Greenery' becomes a byword for dissimulation: 'this is London; and there are no fields. Only fields of operation and observation, only fields of electromagnetic attraction and repulsion, only fields of hatred and coercion. Only force fields'.[102] In common with the concept of culturized nature developed in the first chapter

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[97] Martin Amis, *London Fields* (1989) (London: Penguin, 1990), p. 64; *Einstein's Monsters* (1987) (London: Penguin, 1988), p. 6.
[98] Amis, *Fields*, pp. 202. See also pp. 276, 197.
[99] Ibid. p. 369. See also pp. 367, 463.
[100] Lefebvre, *Revolution*, p. 26.
[101] Amis, *Fields*, pp. 439, 25.
[102] Ibid. p. 134.

of this thesis with reference to *Crash*, this symptom of 'synthetic modernity' makes an important observation on the effects of modern technologies.

The problem, though, is that this does not lead to a re-evaluation of the framework of spatial relations. Unlike Peace's works, the death of nature in *London Fields* does not form part of considered response to spatial change. Like Wilson's evolutionary reading of *The Rhetoric of Urban Space*, Samson's recurrent desire to 'go to London Fields, before it's too late' implies that these changes occur 'outside history [....] I must go back to London Fields [...] The time, the time, it never *was* the time'.[103] While *London Fields* is a myth of London's fields, there is little to explain how and why it specifically relates to London at this time. The novel is a symptom of, not a systematic response to, the urban problematic.[104]

A similarly incomplete mapping of the urban problematic occurs within Will Self's debut novel *My Idea of Fun* (1993). In spatial terms, Self's novel revolves around the tension between the representations of London and the urban problematic: the former retains a singular sense of identity which is at odds with viewing the latter as a homogeneous space that effaces cultural differences. The novel moves from Ian Wharton's childhood in the 'interleaved environs' of Saltdean and Peacehaven in the 1960s, close to 'Regency Brighton', through to his adulthood in London.[105] Such a move is characteristic feature in Self's works. 'London and its outlying environs', M. Hunter Hayes notes:

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[103] Ibid. pp. 323, 463.
[104] Hence the similarities with *Money*: 'in the City money was moving in strange ways'. Ibid. p. 318. There is seldom—if any—sense of how this relates to the second circuit of capitalism, gentrification, and the Thatcher government's programme of selling off municipal housing.
[105] Will Self, *My Idea of Fun* (1993) (London: Penguin, 1994), pp. 22-3.

> Lends Self's fiction a continuity that while not exactly linear [provides] [m]ore than just a backdrop in most of his fiction [...] London functions as one of Self's most ambitious and recurring characters, one that appropriately seems to be both alien and familiar. [106]

Ian's move accordingly precipitates a host of familiar ways of writing about the city and urban problematic. The orthodox descriptions of the 'teeming anonymity' of London and Old Street's 'imprisoned [...] stale air' (the latter part of the 'purulent heart of the city') appear at odds with what Ian calls 'the increasingly arbitrary character of the cottages that made up the global village'.[107] There is, to be sure, an element here of Self satirizing the 'ontological and existentialist traditions as a means of drawing attention to states of estrangement in the contemporary city'.[108] One problem, however, is that such defamiliarizing techniques are yet to be fully refined in *My Idea of Fun*.[109] The limitations of the novel to the present analysis are illustrated by the fact that Self's London, in Hayes's words, 'conveys a sense of solidity and stability in the face of change'.[110] This tension between maintaining the 'solidity' and 'stability' of London, on the one hand, while conversely identifying the forces of change—Self's novel views the urban problematic as a homogenizing

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[106] M. Hunter Hayes, *Understanding Will Self* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2008), p. 8.
[107] Self, *Fun*, pp. 291, 272, 205, 212. The anonymity of the modern city is central to the seminal essay 'The Metropolis and Mental Life' in Georg Simmel, *The Sociology of Georg Simmel* (New York: Free Press, 1950), pp. 409-424. See also Benjamin, *Baudelaire*, p. 131. The city has long been associated with corruption: see Williams, *Country*, p. 1. The 'global village' reference, which implicitly links spatial change with technological developments, refers to McLuhan's thesis of how *'[t]he new electronic interdependence recreates the world in the image of a global village'.* Marshall McLuhan, *The Gutenberg Galaxy: the Making of Typographic Man* (1962) (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), p. 31, McLuhan's italics.
[108] Hayes, *Self*, p. 24. The use of conventional tropes of the city is thus a recurrent feature in Self's later fiction: see the associations of London with anonymity and isolation (its 'gauzy indifference'; the 'colourless stupidity of indifference') and filth ('a grimy enough city') in Will Self, *How the Dead Live* (New York: Grove Press, 2000), pp. 378, 166, 70.
[109] See, for example, ibid. p. 315: 'the London I traversed was a Dickensian city of snaking alleys and sunless courtyards, where the corroded bricks oozed pigeon droppings'. 'Any London writer', Wolfreys contends, 'only writes *after* Blake and Dickens'. Julian Wolfreys, *Writing London: Materiality, Matter, Spectrality*, III vols (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2004), II, p. 21.
[110] Hayes, *Self*, p. 8.

force—is played out through the contrasting perspectives Mr Broadhurst (otherwise known as The Fat Controller) and Ian. The former:

> Paused, surveying the hideous jumble of concrete buildings that constituted the airport [...] For The Fat Controller all modern westerners were essentially the same, conforming to the small number of stereotyped characters that had been allotted to them. He opined that, were a suburb of Scranton NJ [*sic*] to be swopped in its entirety for one in Hounslow Middlesex, hardly anyone in the areas abutting them would even notice. All of these people, he mused [...] are in transit from some urban *Heimat*, an ur-suburb, a grey area.[111]

That Broadhurst views 'all modern westerners' through the lens of a 'small number of stereotyped characters' foregrounds the ignorance of his observations. Whether in respect of the airport or the generic terms of an 'urban *Heimat*, an ur-suburb, a grey area', his indiscriminate reading is compounded by a factual error: Scranton is part of Pennsylvania, not New Jersey. This framing mechanism, which ostensibly creates an epistemological distance between the perspectives of Ian and The Fat Controller, makes an important point regarding the representation of space in the circumstances of globalization. The urban problematic is not a homogeneous space or homogenizing force.

An important problem emerges at this point, since the difference between Broadhurst's and Ian's perspectives is not as great as first appears. The novel consequently does not generate a revised sense of critical distance. As Ian's descriptions of a house near to the 'easterly edge of Wormwood Scrubs' that inhabits a 'ragged corner of the urban veldt' and the commercial premise on Hampstead Road which contributes to 'a carnivorous urban scape'

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[111] Self, *Fun*, p. 229, Self's italics.

demonstrate, *My Idea of Fun* uses 'urban' as a generic term.[112] Broadhurst likens Hounslow to an open expanse of grassland associated with southern Africa ('veldt') and describes an area in the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham through the German term *'Heimat'*—put simply, an emphasis on regional identity—while Ian uses 'urban scape' as an interchangeable word for the city to evoke Camden. While the displaced uses of these terms conveys a sense of homogenization, this impression does not—strangely—extend to London per se.

Towards the end of the novel, Ian 'see[s] the city as mighty ergot fungus, erupting from the very crust of the earth; a growing, mutating thing, capable of taking on the most fantastic profusion of shapes'.[113] This raises two problems. Firstly, the biological metaphor of 'ergot fungus', as a 'growing, mutating thing', connotes a process of organic continuity which is incompatible with the concept of urban revolution, whereafter the terms 'urban' and 'city' are no longer interchangeable.[114] Secondly, why is London 'a growing, mutating thing'? In other words, it remains unclear quite why London is exempt from the homogenizing process that until this point characterizes the novel's descriptions of specific places within the city. The relationship between microcosm and macrocosm accordingly remains unaddressed. While Self's later works potentially invite a more detailed reading through the lens of the urban problematic, his debut novel has yet to explore the ramifications of post-war

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[112] Ibid. pp. 268, 269, 196.
[113] Ibid. pp. 303-4. The biological metaphor is most frequently used to connote the pathological development of the city. See, for example, Lewis Mumford, *The City in History* (1961) (London: Peregrine, 1987), p. 618.
[114] One of Self's later short stories tacitly repudiates the biological trope of the city. When its narrator, one of eight bizarre people who run London, describes his ongoing '[a]ttempt[s] to make sure there is a kind of organic unity in London', the 'organic unity in London' is framed by the terms of the story's title: see 'Between the Conceits' in Will Self, *Grey Area* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press 1994), pp. 1-18, p. 17.

developments such as garden cities, which 'contained within themselves the *seeds* of new urban growth', on the idea of London. [115]

Given its historical frame of reference between the 1983 and 1987 general elections, it is perhaps inevitable that Alan Hollinghurst's 2004 Booker Prize winning novel *The Line of Beauty* is more preoccupied with social questions than the works of Amis and Self. In the aftermath of the 1983 election, recent Oxford University graduate Nick Guest moves into the Notting Hill household of Gerald Fedden, father of his university friend Toby and a recently elected Conservative MP. Given its timeframe, the novel is a meditation on Thatcherite Britain. Nick's movement between the Fedden household and his parental home in Barwick—coincidentally Gerald's constituency—addresses the themes of class and social geography.[116] Nick's homosexuality is meanwhile refracted through the prisms of class and ethnicity by his relationships with Leo and Wani, a black council worker and playboy son of a Lebanese millionaire respectively, both of whom die from AIDS-related illnesses.

On the subjects of economic and spatial change, the novel's critique is more implicit. Aesthetics, its title suggests, is a primary concern.[117] Towards the end of the novel, Nick receives a copy of the solitary edition of *Ogee*, the

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[115] Will Self, 'The City that Forever Resists the Rational', *New Statesman*, 7 July 2003, pp. 32-33, p. 32, my italics. The growth of these 'seeds', Self reasons, meant that 'each Stevenage or Milton Keynes stands at the hub of a ribbon development, or forms part of an edge city [...] the stealthy formation of an *ubër*-M25 240 miles in circumference'. Self's position is here much closer to that of Ballard and King, a commonality which suggests his works could provide a future logics of dissolution.

[116] Compare Alan Hollinghurst, *The Line of Beauty* (London: Picador, 2004), pp. 263, 64. See also pp. 67-8 and 269: the disjuncture between Gerald's espousal of 'our splendid property-owning democracy' and the concerns of those 'constituents unsedated by council-house sales and tax cuts' reiterates the importance of class differences.

[117] The title of Hollinghurst's novel alludes to the 'waving or ogee moulding', a doubly curved line 'wherein [...] the convex parts gently glid[es] into the concave'. William Hogarth, *The Analysis of Beauty* (1753) (London: W. Strahan, 1772), p. 103.

magazine he and Wani had lavishly produced. Its contents ('the wonderland of luxury, for the first three glossy spreads, Bulgari, Dior, BMW') allude to a fundamentally changing economy: the conspicuous consumption that the magazine illustrates, which itself forms an important component of the novel's account of the 1980s, is set against the contraction of industrial production.[118] The primacy of the aesthetic resurfaces in Nick's observations on space. While moving through what one critic calls 'Thatcherite London', Nick observes the 'vulgar simulacra of lavish private homes' and notes that 'of course the house [on Abingdon Road] was vulgar, as almost everything postmodern was, but he found himself taking a surprising pleasure in it'.[119]

Although they are easily dismissed as lightweight, Nick's remarks are in and of themselves the broader subject of critique. The 'political scam' of the novel, Richard Canning argues, is that Nick has been literally and figuratively 'taken in' by 'Thatcherites and Thatcherism'.[120] Where Nick's perspective exhibits what Joseph Brooker calls 'the self-congratulatory myopia which made Thatcherism all the easier to implement', so his aesthetic readings of space reflect this short-sightedness.[121] Of Coleridge's one-time house, Nick notes that

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[118] Hollinghurst, *Beauty*, p. 488. See also pp. 139, 159: University College London, where Nick is completing his doctorate, is accordingly a metaphor of economic change: 'The English department used to be a mattress factory'—a site of industrial production becomes a space of consumption.
[119] Nick Rennison, *Contemporary British Novelists* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 69; Hollinghurst, *Beauty*, pp. 409, 199-200. See also pp. 196, 203, 444.
[120] Richard Canning, 'The Literature of AIDS', in *The Cambridge Companion to Gay and Lesbian Writing*, ed. Hugh Stevens (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 132-47, p. 143.
[121] Joseph Brooker, 'Neo Lines: Alan Hollinghurst and the Apogee of the Eighties', at *Birkbeck ePrints* <http://eprints.bbk.ac.uk/archive/0000047> [accessed 9 January 2011]. The subject of sexuality illustrates another dimension of Nick's 'myopia'. 'The gay man of Hollinghurst's fiction', Hugh Stevens writes, 'does not confine his sex life to monogamous couplehood, but in other ways he is an establishment figure, wanting to resist the status quo only when [it] is hostile to homosexuality'. Hugh Stevens, 'Normality and Queerness in Gay Fiction', in *Cambridge Companion to Gay and Lesbian Writing*, pp. 81-96, p. 86.

it 'was having a restoration so thorough that it looked like a demolition'.[122] To its credit, Hollinghurst's novel implicitly discerns a connection between heritage and redevelopment.[123] This is not, however, a sufficient basis for a systematic reconceptualization of space akin to that explored in the following chapters of this thesis.

The fact that the link between heritage and redevelopment is at best implicit exemplifies what Brooker calls a 'persistent disjunction' in the novel between 'a residual aesthetic and a changing modern society'. If 'the historic houses and eighteenth-century furniture have any special place in the 1980s', Brooker reasons, 'it is perhaps as part of the burgeoning heritage industry' at that time.[124] The distance between Nick's aestheticism and the implicit critique of the novel demonstrates the limits of Hollinghurst's work to the present inquiry. While Nick's self-absorption is itself symptomatic of what the novel regards as the ideological excesses of Thatcherism, the implied distance between narrator and narrative provides an insufficient basis for a logics of dissolution. Compared with King's, Griffiths's, and Ballard's sensitivity to the social costs of gentrification and tourism, Hollinghurst's representations of space appear less systematic.[125]

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[122] Hollinghurst, *Beauty*, pp. 194-5.
[123] To continue the comparison, Nick's acquaintance briefly mentions the rising share price of 'Eastaugh', which is 'developing half the City'. As with the 'crackle' of money in Amis's works, this subject is implicit and unsystematic. Ibid. p. 205.
[124] Brooker, 'Neo-lines'. The 'High Victorian wealth of everything' in Hawkesmoor, the home of wealthy aristocrat Lord Kessler, demonstrates this point: its 'rich refined dry smell of a country house on a hot summer day' is belied by the fact that the house is a fabrication built in the 1880s. Hollinghurst, *Beauty*, pp. 51, 48.
[125] Take, for example, the subject of automobility. This is a central theme of Ballard's and King's logics of dissolution, yet Nick only cursorily touches on this subject. He partially glimpses the M25, the 'motorway of the future', as a 'desert of digging and concrete' somewhere in Middlesex. Intriguing, this prompts speculation on the ontological status of this 'scruffy flat semi-country', yet the treatment of this subject is at best tangential. Ibid. p. 46.

Zadie Smith's debut novel *White Teeth* portrays the friendship of Bangladeshi Samad Iqbal and Englishman Archie Jones, from its origins as wartime colleagues in Greece through to their family lives in millennial London. As a 'celebration of postcolonial migration', the novel is sensitive to the problems of immigrant experience in Britain.[126] This sensitivity extends to the spaces of language and national identity, where Samad's contention that '[o]nly the immigrants can speak the Queen's English these days' parallels his wife Alsana's response to the question of defining nationality: 'Do you think anybody is English? Really English? It's a fairy tale!'[127]

The novel initially broaches the overlap between physical and social space through O'Connell's Pool House. As a metonym of London, O'Connell's is 'neither Irish nor a pool house', owned and 'run by Arabs with no pool tables'. Its bricolage interior reinforces this distinction between sign and signifier: '[r]eproductions of George Stubbs's racehorse paintings', 'framed fragments of some foreign, Eastern script', and 'an Irish flag' exist beside a 'map of the Arab Emirates' and a 'life-size cut-out of Viv Richards'.[128] While its metonymic function clashes with 'what Archie loved about O'Connell's [...] [e]verything was remembered, nothing was lost', and so poses him as an unreliable narrator, this distinction does not explain a similar sense of timelessness in the metanarrative:

> You could walk through that door with nothing and be exactly the same as everybody else in there. It could be 1989 outside, or 1999, or 2009 [...]

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[126] Dominic Head, *The Cambridge Introduction to Modern British Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 94. Consider the intergenerational contrast between Samad and his son Millat in Zadie Smith, *White Teeth* (London: Penguin, 2000), pp. 190, 219, 234. Archie's daughter Irie reiterates Millat's sentiment on p. 266. See also pp. 120, 179, 269, 326, 327, 388, 407, 408, 465.
[127] Ibid. pp. 181, 236.
[128] Ibid. p. 183.

> Nothing changes here, things are only retold, remembered [...] It's all about time [...] the pure brazen amount of it.[129]

Though it can be read as a further instance of unreliable narration, such that it destabilizes the superior epistemological position of the metanarrative over the events it overviews, the resulting relativism is unsatisfactory from the perspective of delineating spatial change. Even if the contention that 'things are only retold [and] remembered' is read through the lens of 'soft' and 'hard' cities (the 'soft' associations and memories that form personal narratives within the material, 'hard' city), this approach does not explain a more general failure within the novel to link 'soft' and 'hard' narratives.[130]

'The Final Space' of the novel, the Perret Institute, typifies this point.[131] As the setting for Marcus Chalfen's lecture on controversial genetic research, this 'corporate' or 'virtual place', used by 'people who want to meet somewhere neutral at the end of the twentieth century', is linked to technological developments. To its credit, the novel is at pains to dismiss the idea of the Institute being 'somewhere neutral'. Like O'Connell's, its staff is largely immigrant: its ranks include a 'Nigerian cleaning lady' and a 'Polish watchman'. This sensitivity towards issues pertaining to immigration is not, however, paralleled in the treatment of spatial change. Beyond the context of its immigrant workforce, quite why the Institute is 'the logical endpoint of a thousand years of spaces too crowded and bloody' remains unclear.[132]

A similarly unqualified reading characterizes the 'years of corporate synaesthesia' after which people 'can finally give the answers required when a

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[129] Ibid. pp. 192, 244.
[130] Jonathan Raban, *Soft Cities* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1974).
[131] Smith, *Teeth*, pp. 491-519.
[132] Ibid. pp. 517-8.

space is being designed'. Without clarifying which specific *space* is in question, the novel unsystematically refers to a pervasive sense of 'rebrand[ing], a room/furniture/Britain (the brief: a new British room, a space for Britain, Britishness, space of Britain, British industrial space cultural space space [*sic*])'.[133] Whereas King's works address the connections between deindustrialization, the branding of space associated with the interests of tourism, gentrification, and Thatcher's privatization of municipal housing, *White Teeth* offers no coherent link—save for their rebranding—between these various physical, social, cultural, corporate, and industrial spaces. In its predominant focus on cultural and racial hybridity, the '"multiplicity-in-unity" of Smith's city' overlooks the fundamental changes in the physical, social, and class geographies of London discussed in Chapters One, Two, and Five of this thesis.[134] Put simply, *White Teeth* falsely conciliates these different spaces in the name of multicultural London.

Set in contemporaneous London, Nick Hornby's *High Fidelity* (1995) illustrates how, in spite of numerous changes in London throughout the preceding twenty years, certain spatial assumptions remain undisturbed. To the extent that the novel is 'mapped out according to the values of late twentieth-century urban living', protagonist Rob Fleming's description of Hertfordshire voices a common response to suburbia.[135] 'I might just as well have lived in any suburb in England', Rob explains. '[I]t was that sort of suburb [...] there was

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[133] Ibid. p. 518.
[134] Bart Moore-Gilbert, 'Postcolonialism and 'The Figure of the Jew': Caryl Phillips and Zadie Smith', in *The Contemporary British Novel Since 1980*, ed. James Acheson and Sarah C.E. Ross (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), pp. 106-17, p. 113.
[135] Joanne Knowles, *Nick Hornby's High-Fidelity: A Reader's Guide* (London: Continuum, 2002), p. 32.

nothing around that could help you get your geographical bearings'.[136] The suburbs appear, on this reading, dreary and identical, an undifferentiated aggregate wherein social, cultural, economic, and geographical 'bearings' subside.

By contrast, London accentuates the dullness associated with suburbia. Rob's '[h]*ome* home [...] near Watford', was 'a terrible place to grow up', a 'suburban shit hole' comparatively speaking since 'by moving to London, I had made it easier to be liked by girls'.[137] This libidinal investment illustrates what Daniel Lea calls Rob's 'imperative'—to 'return to the metropolitan centre' in order 'to rediscover the limits and parameters of the self'.[138] In other words, Rob's response to the suburbs demonstrates how suburbia has, in Roger Silverstone's words, long functioned as a 'state of mind [...] constructed in imagination and in desire'.[139] The origins of Rob's desire to return to the city can be traced back to back to the author's views on class and geography. 'To be middle-class means [for Hornby] to be nothing definite or meaningful', Lea writes, 'and the overt parallel is drawn between the equivocal position of the middle class and the geographical liminality of the suburbs, positioned between the city and the country'. *High-Fidelity* thereby projects, through its representations of the suburbs, a conventional sense of middle-class anxiety.[140]

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[136] Nick Hornby, *High Fidelity* (New York: Riverhead, 1995), p. 4. Compare with Smith, *Teeth*, pp. 45, 377.
[137] Ibid. p. 8; Hornby, *High Fidelity*, pp. 136, 21, Hornby's italics. See also p. 138.
[138] Daniel Lea, 'Urban Thrall: Renegotiating the Suburban Self in Nick Hornby's *Fever Pitch* and *High-Fidelity*' in *Expanding Suburbia: Reviewing Suburban Narratives*, ed. Roger Webster (New York: Berghahn Books, 2000), pp. 141-60, p. 142. It is worth noting that in a volume aimed at 'expanding suburbia', there is no reference to Ballard's works.
[139] Roger Silverstone, 'Introduction', in *Visions of Suburbia*, ed. Roger Silverstone (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 1-25, p. 13.
[140] Lea, 'Urban Thrall', pp. 147-8.

In terms of the urban problematic, the spatial framework of Hornby's novel is decidedly regressive. Long before the publication of *High Fidelity*, the relationship between suburbia and the city had been conceptually overhauled. As the first chapter of this thesis explains, Ballard's 1979 novel *The Unlimited Dream Company* represents a fundamental shift in the literary representation of space.[141] In comparative terms, Hornby's conventional account overhauls the city-suburb relationship only at cost of disintegrating the identity of both.[142] Ballard's description of Shepperton as 'the everywhere of suburbia, the paradigm of nowhere' meanwhile represents the moment when conventional dualist accounts of place subside.[143]

While it offers a more nuanced representation of space, Hanif Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia* (1990) does not ultimately reappraise the relationship between cities and suburbia. Set in the 1970s, the novel is a bildungsroman split into two parts. Part one is framed around Karim Amir's adolescence 'In the Suburbs' of Bromley, while the second part 'In the City' recounts his move to West Kensington.[144] Karim's response to the suburbs initially mirrors that of Rob in *High Fidelity*: home was 'a dreary suburb of London of which it is said that when people drowned they saw not their lives but their double-glazing flashing before them [....] In the suburbs people rarely dreamed of striking out

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[141] J.G. Ballard, *The Unlimited Dream Company* (1979) (Reading: Triad/Granada, 1981).
[142] When Rob decries that 'nobody ever writes about how it is possible to escape and rot—how escapes can go off at half-cock, how you can leave the suburbs for the city but end up living a limp suburban life anyway', he reappraises the relationship between cities and suburbs in exclusively social terms and at the cost of crass generalization: 'That's what happened to me; that's what happens to most people'. Hornby, *High Fidelity*, p. 136
[143] Ballard, *Dream Company*, p. 35.
[144] Hanif Kureishi, *The Buddha of Suburbia* (London: Faber & Faber, 1990). On this issue, see Bart Moore-Gilbert, *Hanif Kureishi* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), pp. 126-7.

for happiness. It was all familiarity and endurance: security and safety were the reward for dullness'.[145]

By contrast, 'life' in London 'was bottomless in its temptations'. 'The city blew the windows of my brain wide open', Karim opines, 'a place so bright, fast and brilliant made you vertiginous with possibility [...] London seemed like a house with five thousand rooms, all different'.[146] Karim's journey to Chislehurst accentuates this contrast: 'I knew it did me good to be reminded of how much I loathed the suburbs, and that I had to continue my journey into London and a new life, ensuring I got away from people and streets like this'[147]

The relationship between London and suburbs is not, however, as straightforward as it first appears. Dominic Head argues that the novel provides an 'implicit celebration' of the cultural importance of suburbia since his 'metropolitan experiences stage an enriching conflict between urban and suburban influences'.[148] As will become clear, Head's essay risks over-emphasizing the value attached to this conflict. To be sure, *The Buddha of Suburbia* implicitly interrogates Karim's account of suburbia. His investment in London ('In bed before I went to sleep I fantasised about London and what I'd do there when the city belonged to me [...] parties where girls and boys you didn't know took you upstairs and fucked you [...] all the drugs you could use') is

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[145] Kureishi, *Buddha*, pp. 23, 8. Other disparaging connotations attached to suburbia include consumerism (p. 65), physical 'stigma' (p. 134), ressentiment directed at those of a lower class (p. 149), dismissing the value of education (p. 177), and the 'petty' fear of neighbour's opinions (p. 188). See also p. 117: 'The suburbs were over: they were a leaving place [...] our suburbs were a leaving place, the start of a life. After that you ratted or rotted'.
[146] Ibid. pp. 8, 126.
[147] Ibid. p. 101.
[148] Dominic Head, 'Poisoned Minds: Suburbanites in Post-war British Fiction', in *Expanding Suburbia*, ed. Webster, pp. 77-90, pp. 82, 87.

inextricably linked to his adolescence.[149] In this regard, Head is correct to suggest that Amir's 'proper identity is only partly conveyed by his desire to flee suburbia'.[150]

Where a number of commentators point out that the representation of London acts as a metonym of Britain in Kureishi's works, this observation is usually applied to its racial makeup.[151] In the novel, however, London is as socially divided as it is racially and culturally heterogeneous. Soon after leaving the suburbs, Karim is 'intimidated' by '[t]he city at night', the 'piss-heads, bums, derelicts and dealers' together with the occasional example of police brutality.[152] Such ambivalence resurfaces when Karim later returns to Bromley and witnesses 'how derelict and poor this end of the city—South London—really was, compared with the London I was living in'.[153] Such observations lead Karim to speculate on the important subject of gentrification: Ladbroke Grove forms 'an area that was slowly being reconstituted by the rich' while Central London 'was being ripped apart; the rotten was being replaced by the new, and the new was ugly'.[154]

The problem, however, is that these observations do not lead to an overhaul of the language and representation of space. As a comparative reading of Karim's response to Hammersmith with those of John King's

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[149] Kureishi, *Buddha*, p. 121.
[150] Head, 'Poisoned Minds', p. 84.
[151] See Moore-Gilbert, *Kureishi*, p. 113; Anthony Ilona, 'Hanif Kureishi's The Buddha of Suburbia: 'A New Way of Being British'' in *Contemporary British Fiction*, ed. Richard J. Lane, Rod Mengham, and Philip Tew (Oxford: Polity Press, 2003), pp. 86-105, p. 101; Nahem Yousuf, *Hanif Kureishi's The Buddha of Suburbia: A Reader's Guide* (New York: Continuum, 2002), p. 36. In this respect, see the images of Kensington and Earls Court in Kureishi, *Buddha*, p. 127.
[152] Kureishi, *Buddha*, p. 131.
[153] Ibid. p. 223. See also pp. 224 and 43: the 'cheap and shabby' housing estates and the 'slums of Herne Hill and Brixton'.
[154] Ibid. pp. 173, 258. Such images spatialize Karim's image of a 'bitter, fractured country [...] in turmoil' on the verge of Thatcher's election (p. 259).

characters' demonstrates, Head's reading of the novel overestimates its 'enriching conflict between urban and suburban influences'.[155] Hammersmith is for Karim 'full of hollering middle-class voices'.[156] By contrast, the socioeconomic background of King's characters is fundamental to understanding their responses to Fulham. While its numerous 'up-market restaurants' demonstrate initiative to a stockbroker, his response is an exception to the more general rule of King's works.[157] To be in Central London is synonymous in his novels with the experience of alienation: 'I watch people going into pubs and restaurants', a manual worker notes. 'An outsider'.[158]

Briefly stated, the point is that while *Buddha of Suburbia* notes the physical and (lesserly) the social effects of gentrification, this does not inform an overhaul of the language of space akin to that which occurs in King's works. The existence of distinct experiential accounts of London in King's works—'The London of Shakespeare, Buckingham Palace, and the Houses of Parliament' that exists for the wealthy alongside the alienation encountered in Chelsea, Westminster, and Fulham—is a partial response to gentrification.[159] Its importance, however, is not simply as a sociologically verifiable response to gentrification, but as part of a systematic response to the growing importance of 'peripheral' developments such as overspill towns and their effects on the very idea of London.[160] This fact explains why Kureishi's novel, in spite of some

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[155] Head, 'Poisoned Minds', p. 87.
[156] Kureishi, *Buddha*, p. 126.
[157] John King, *Headhunters* (1997) (London: Vintage, 1998), p. 228.
[158] John King, *The Football Factory* (1996) (London: Vintage, 2004), p. 155.
[159] John King, *White Trash* (2001) (London: Vintage, 2002), p. 246.
[160] 'I don't think London bears any resemblance to England', Kureishi notes in a 2003 interview. 'It's a right crummy place without London. I think if England didn't have London, it'd be a fucking dump'. This insistence on the singularity of London distinguishes Kureishi's writings from those of Ballard and King. Emma Brockes, 'When you're writing, you look for conflict', *The Guardian* <http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2003/nov/17/fiction.hanifkureishi> [accessed 4 January 2011]

important areas of overlap with those of King, is not one of those selected for discussion in this thesis.[161]

In these various ways, the representations of space taken from a limited selection of contemporary British literature highlights the uneven cultural mapping of the urban problematic Lefebvre first identified in science fiction. While there are similarities between these works and those discussed in this thesis, the primary difference is the extent to which the subject of space—more especially, the framework of spatial representation—forms a primary thematic concern. Although Amis's 'sentimental London' provisionally resembles the responses of Ballard, King, and Griffiths, it does not form part of a coherent reading of spatial change. Similarly, while Self's debut novel foregrounds the changing cultural boundaries attributable to globalization, its representations of London do not reflect the associated physical and social effects of these trends. In spite of the fact that Nick's fleeting glimpses of spatial change are part of a wider critique in Hollinghurst's *Line of Beauty*, the partial nature of its overall account makes the novel of limited appeal to the current analysis. Along these lines, the awareness of ethnic geographies in *White Teeth* is set against the cursory markers of physical change. Finally, though *Buddha of Suburbia* provides a more complicated relationship between London and suburbia than that of *High-Fidelity*, it remains ultimately framed by these terms of reference to a degree that the works of Ballard and King are not.

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[161] While I accept that Kureishi's and Smith's novels 'mapped the other identities effaced [both] by Thatcherite ideology and [...] intellectual liberalism', my interest lies with the partial and incomplete nature of this "mapping" with respect to representing physical space, particularly the relationship between suburbia and the city. Richard J. Lane and Philip Tew, 'Part II: Introduction' in *Contemporary British Fiction*, ed. Richard J. Lane et al, pp. 71-3, p. 71.

Key Terms

With reference to their etymological development, several key terms are here defined in order to prevent later misunderstandings, distinguishing their use in this thesis from more commonplace associations. The seven key terms are: 'nature', 'culture', 'the country', 'the city', the 'urban', and, from the title itself, 'dissolution', and 'delineate'. In their everyday usage, *nature* and the *country* are often closely related—the former regularly acts as an interchangeable term for the latter—while the *city* is frequently seen to be the pinnacle of human *culture*. To understand the deep significance of the *urban*, it is first necessary to disentangle and differentiate between the first four terms. From this, the urban no longer appears as a simple cognate of 'the city' or metropolitan space.

'Nature', Raymond Williams famously remarks, is 'perhaps the most complex' word in the English language.[162] Kate Soper usefully distinguishes between three elemental meanings: nature 'refers us to the object of study of the natural and biological sciences; to issues in metaphysics concerning the differing modes of being of the natural and the human; and to the environment and its various non-human forms of life'.[163] Note the implicit contrast with what is today commonly known as 'culture' in Soper's second and third definitions: the differences between the ontological modes of 'the natural *and* the human' together with 'the environment and its various *non*-human forms of life'. The etymology of 'culture' helps explain the significance of this contrast and the common associations attached to the country and the city.

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[162] Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, 3rd edn (Glasgow: Fontana, 1989), p. 219.
[163] Kate Soper, *What is Nature? Culture, Politics and the Non-Human* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), p. 2.

'In all its early uses', Williams points out, culture 'was a noun of process: the tending of something, basically crops or animals'.[164] Jonathan Bate distinguishes between this sense of culture—which until the late eighteenth century referred to a piece of cultivated land, by which point it was already commonly used to denote the process of cultivation—and its figurative meaning that dates back to the early sixteenth century. This figurative definition establishes an important correlation between the act of cultivating the land and intellectual refinement. 'As the soil is improved and made productive by tillage', Bate writes:

> So the mind and manners may be improved by education and training. The word is thus removed from the earth and linked to the advance of society. It is, if you will, removed from the country to the city—cultivation comes to mean civility, a word which has its roots in Latin *civilis*, meaning of, or pertaining to, the city.[165]

As the etymological development of 'nature' suggests, this close association between culture and the city becomes a privileged means of distinguishing between the country and the city. From an early sense of personification ('Nature the goddess'), the term becomes 'a critical argument about the observation and understanding of nature' in the seventeenth century, the philosophical basis for natural laws and model for ideal societies in the eighteenth- and nineteenth centuries (at which point it comes to denote the material world), and, since the late eighteenth century, the 'countryside', 'unspoiled places', and generally non-human life forms. This latter sense is pivotal to the city-country dichotomy. 'Nature is what man has not made',

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[164] Williams, *Keywords*, p. 87.
[165] Bate, *Culture*, p. 543. See also Williams, *Keywords*, pp. 88-93.

Williams writes, 'though if he made it long enough ago—a hedgerow or a desert—it will usually be included as natural'.[166]

As their respective etymologies suggests, the relationship between culture and nature is a complex one. When Williams summarizes the cultural meanings of *The Country and the City* in the early 1970s, this complexity is less evident. Both terms have, by this time, acquired a series of entrenched binary associations:

> On the country has gathered the idea of a natural way of life: of peace, innocence, and simple virtue. On the city has gathered the idea of an achieved centre: of learning, communication, [and] light. Powerful, hostile associations have also developed: on the city as a place of noise, worldliness, and ambition; on the country as a place of backwardness, ignorance, [and] limitation.[167]

From its initial link to cultivating a piece of land, 'culture' comes to mean self-cultivation, and from its etymological connection with the city becomes connected with 'the ideas of an achieved centre'. Nature, meanwhile, moves from being a singular personification, a concept fundamental to the development of modern science in the seventeenth century, and the philosophical basis for juridical discussions in the eighteenth century, through to the idea of the 'non-human' world in the late eighteenth century: the country and its associated 'idea of a natural way of life'. When Elizabeth Wilson writes that the 'very idea of the city' has 'always been defined in terms of th[e] contrast'

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[166] Williams, *Keywords*, pp. 221, 222, 223. My reading is a very brief overview of these complex terms. For more detailed readings, see Carolyn Merchant, *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology and the Scientific Revolution* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1980); Brian Easlea, *Fathering the Unthinkable: Masculinity, Scientists and the Nuclear Arms Race* (London: Pluto Press, 1983); Stephen Toulmin, *Cosmopolis—The Hidden Agenda of Modernity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).
[167] Williams, *Country*, p. 1.

with the country, she overlooks the complex history of both of these terms.[168] Where the etymological development of culture is, in Bate's words, an 'allegory of the march to modernity', so it is one that tramples over the interrelations between these terms.[169]

The etymological development of urban illustrates a similar conflation. Initially linked to the Latin *civitas*, a community which was not necessarily related to any particular place or construction, *urbs* referred to such a group of people establishing a city in which to dwell.[170] The gradual contrast between the 'urban' and the 'rural' explains its common use today as a cognate of the city.[171] This general use, however, is contrary to that of this thesis, for which the urban is a periodizing term and theoretical concept which explores the dynamics of 'place' following the dissolution of the city-country dichotomy. The dialectical approach to physical and social geographies that characterizes the readings in this thesis is a response to 'one difficulty' David Harvey identifies 'at the very heart of understanding what "the urban" might be about'. The '"thing" we call a "city"', Harvey notes:

> Is the outcome of a "process" that we call "urbanization". But in examining the relationship between processes and things, there is a prior epistemological and ontological problem of whether we prioritize the

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[168] Wilson, *Sphinx*, p. 153. 'The town and country relation', Lefebvre writes, 'has changed deeply during the course of history, according to different periods and to modes of production. It has been sometimes profoundly conflictual, and at other times appeased and close to an association'. Lefebvre, 'Town and Country', p. 119.

[169] Bate, *Culture*, p. 543. See the suggestive discussion of hybridity in Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993).

[170] William Mitchell, *City of Bits: Space, Place, and the Infobahn* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996), p. 159.

[171] See, for example, Williams's discussion of agriculture in nineteenth-century Britain, where 'the key relationship, in the consequent interaction between *urban* and *rural* and industrial and agricultural England, was undoubtedly the market'. 'The Shadowed Country' in Williams, *Country*, pp. 182-196, p. 187.

> process of the thing and whether or not it is even possible to separate the process from the things embodied in it.[172]

Like Lefebvre, Harvey questions the privileging of *things* and spatial forms over social processes. In common with Damien Mugavin, the approach of this thesis appreciates that 'the systematic description and analysis of city/town as place, revealing spatial practice, needs to highlight everyday social, cultural, and institutional processes, so that "product" is understood through "production"'.[173] To understand the 'production' of contemporary space requires that we abandon talk of an a priori distinction between the country and the city, and find new ways of mediating the processes which, in Cunningham's words, 'increasing bind non-contiguous urban spaces'.[174]

The title of the dissertation reflects this emphasis on the processes of becoming and emergence which characterize the urban problematic. The verb 'delineate' variously means to trace out by lines (as when a chart or map traces an outline), to sketch out something to be constructed, and to represent through a drawing or to portray in words. Between these three meanings lies the definition of a critical practice which emphasizes the social production of space in the following ways. By 'tracing' the contours of a new means of understanding space in the representational spaces of four contemporary writers, this thesis helps 'sketch out' the urban problematic by augmenting

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[172] David Harvey, 'Cities or Urbanization?', *City*, 1, 1-2 (1996), 38-61, p. 50.
[173] Damien Mugavin, 'A Philosophical Base for Urban Morphology', *Urban Morphology*, 3, 2 (1999), 95-99, p. 99. While I agree with Mugavin's point that 'representational space, lived space, discovered through history and built elements, is as important in urban morphology as representations of space: both need to be encompassed in order to understand the city/town' (p. 99), I disagree with the use of the term 'city/town'. The urban problematic, I argue, requires a new language of sociospatial process.
[174] Cunningham, 'Concept of Metropolis', p. 13.

purely theoretical or analytical approaches.[175] In this respect, its approach differs from that of Harvey, for whom the 'antidote' to the previous privileging of *things* over processes 'is not to abandon all talk of the city as a whole'.[176] As this thesis demonstrates through its interpretations of the works of Ballard et al., the social processes towards which Harvey seeks to refocus critical attention themselves inform a fundamental *break* with the city as a 'thing' defined by its contrast with the country.

To 'delineate' the urban problematic involves tracing its contours by establishing a series of lateral relations between theoretical readings and several examples of contemporary British literature. The resulting historical narrative and conceptual apparatus mediates the dialectical relationship between the representational spaces of fiction and theoretical representations of space. To 'delineate' the urban problematic in contemporary British literature, then, is distinct from reading contemporary fiction as synonymous with urban literature.

The final key term to be defined is the complex word 'dissolution'. Most commonly used to denote the action of dissolving or the fact of being dissolved, dissolution also refers to the loosening or undoing of a bond or tie and to the breaking up or dispersion of an assembly or association. Relative to the terms

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[175] Lefebvre's concept of 'transduction', which he defines as using 'givens to arrive at a solution', moving 'from the (given) real to the possible', is here important. Transduction constructs a theoretical object both from information pertaining to current 'reality' (the given) and the problematic posed by existent urban realities (the possible). 'As new theoretical imaginings are given concrete form', Simon Parker summarizes, 'the feedback mechanism ensures that subsequent projections/projects are informed by this newly-altered reality in an endless loop of speculation-investigation-critique-implementation'. This dialectical process is a form of praxis: the given and the possible recursively shape one another and so produce a deeper understanding of the urban problematic. Henri Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life: Foundations for a Sociology of the Everyday* (1961), trans. John Moore, II vols (London: Verso, 2002), II, p. 118; Simon Parker, *Urban Theory and the Urban Experience: Encountering the City* (New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 21.

[176] Harvey, *Urbanization*, p. 51.

of life, it means death. It is therefore the act of bringing something to an end, which explains its opposition to evolution in the theory of disease. Finally, and less commonly, it means the solution to, or resolution of, a question. The meaning of the 'logics of dissolution' is accordingly threefold. Firstly, it refers to the 'breaking up' of the historical 'association' between the city and the country. This leads to the second meaning, which 'brings to an end' conventional models of place based on the city-country dichotomy. Finally, it leads to the 'resolution' of the question: what happens to *place* after the breakdown of the city-country dichotomy? The 'logics of dissolution' consequently lead to the critical practice of 'delineating the urban problematic', an act that, so the following chapter synopses demonstrate, conveys an interrelated sense of periodization and conceptual overhaul.

Chapter Synopses

Chapter One develops the conceptual framework of the urban problematic by illustrating its constitutive features with reference to Ballard's Concrete and Steel Trilogy. Since their publication dates overlap the onset of the second circuit of speculative capitalism, this chapter contextualizes Ballard's spatial figurations by providing a narrative of the urban problematic to explain the effects of suburbanization, automobility, deindustrialization, the expansion of the media, and the development of Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs).

As its title suggests, *Crash* explores the effects of automobility, ICTs, the media, and suburbia on the conceptualization of space through the character of Vaughan and its focus on Shepperton Studios. *Concrete Island* meanwhile

provides an important link between the other two novels through its adjacency to the Westway. Finally, *High-Rise* illustrates the effects of deindustrialization through its demographic makeup, connotes the breakdown of the Keynesian consensus through its degeneration, and anticipates the effects of gentrification due to its proximity to the docks awaiting redevelopment.

An intriguing point, however, is the disjuncture between the emerging spatial form the trilogy identifies and the responses of its characters. By simultaneously familiarizing and defamiliarizing the new spatial form, Ballard's trilogy occupies a threshold point between the forms of the city and the urban problematic. The reconceptualization of suburbia that occurs in the 1979 novel *The Unlimited Dream Company* marks the point at which the urban problematic crystallizes in Ballard's works.

Where *High-Rise* anticipates the breakup of 'red belts', inner-city working-class concentrations that dispersed partly in response to the decentralization of industry, the second chapter addresses their social fallout. The works of John King utilize a revisionist approach to Slough and the Thames Valley, taking issue with the history of disparaging responses they generate. Through a range of literary and political reference points, King's works challenge a number of conventional spatial assumptions regarding London and its relationship to the geographical contexts of his characters.

The existential and physical distance between King's characters and 'nature' is partly an effect of automobility, a subject which his later works engage at length through their representations of the Thames Valley. Another important aspect of King's critique is framed around the differing responses of his characters to Central London. For the majority of them, Central London is

synonymous with a sense of alienation attributable to gentrification, the privatization of municipal housing, and the interests of tourism. The one exception is Jonathan Jeffries, the alternate narrator of *White Trash.* A wealthy member of the managerial elite who espouses the 'London of Shakespeare', Jeffries embodies the interests which King's works more generally rail against for changing the social and physical geographies of London and promulgating derogatory images of overspill estates and new towns.

Chapter Three offers a very different response to the urban problematic. The logic of disintegration that emerges from the works of David Peace use the 'death' of the city and the devivification of the Yorkshire Moors to figuratively gauge, in spatial terms, the effects of Thatcherism. In other words, the breakdown of the city-country dichotomy forms a spatialized critique of the social and physical effects of deindustrialization and the miners' strike, which Peace's works view as the culmination of a long assault by the government on the interests of organized labour. By identifying two competing images of the city—one a metaphor of governmental rationality, the other a symbol of an ethical concept of community—this chapter contextualizes the disintegration of anthropological notions of 'place' in Peace's works.

Where 'postindustrialism often manifests itself as a utopian geography' partly through a tendency to overlook the continued significance of industrial production, Peace's works reinscribe the social effects of deindustrialization by concentrating on human geography of deindustrialization.[177] The resulting

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[177] Brian Jarvis, *Postmodern Geographies: The Geographical Imagination in Contemporary American Culture* (London: Pluto Press, 1998), p. 21. Jarvis considers how Daniel Bell's seminal account of postindustrial society 'sees the migration of industrial functions, but continues to insist on its absolute disappearance', creating a form of 'critical amnesia' by

urban 'space' fundamentally differs from that yielded by the other logics of dissolution because it does not lead to a new representation of space. Peace's works, quite simply, use the breakdown of the city-country dichotomy as a damning socio-political judgement.

Chapter Four meanwhile delineates an urban landscape through the works of Niall Griffiths. In response to the extended networks of consumption and communication associated with the urban problematic, Griffiths's works develop a nuanced sense of spatial difference by recursively moving between Aberystwyth and Liverpool. Through a common insistence on the violent 'genesis' of Liverpool and the Welsh landscape that encompasses the militarization of space and the ecological effects of industrial production, Griffiths's works are sensitive to the production of contemporary space while also being aware of the limitations of conventional literary tropes. In depicting the effects of the 2001 Foot and Mouth epidemic, Griffiths's works illustrate the insufficiencies of the pastoral form by foregrounding the modern networks of dependence that render problematic conventional spatial distinctions between 'urban' and 'rural' spaces.

This reappraisal of literary tropes extends to a reconsideration of the relationship between culture and the production of space in the circumstances of globalization. Following the announcement that Liverpool was to be awarded the title of European City of Culture 2008, Griffiths's representations notably engage with the themes of gentrification, the privatization of municipal housing,

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utilizing 'a methodology built upon the exclusion of all awkward contemporary sociospatial details'. See 'Mapping in the Future Perfect', pp. 21-3, pp. 22, 23. Bell's instrumental cartography would therefore overlook the critical role industrial capital generated abroad continued to play in 'postindustrial' societies through such things as real-estate speculation.

and the commodification of culture. In this respect, they advance the discussions of Chapters Two and Five regarding the rebranding of the city both by extending the geographical range of the discussion and raising the ongoing importance of the discursive battles surrounding the definition of culture.

The final chapter returns to the works of Ballard written during the final twenty years of his career in order to discuss the virtual city. By recalibrating the notion of 'the real' to account for the social effects of gentrification and the heightened significance of traditionally 'suburban' developments, this chapter provides the thesis with a suitable endpoint. Ballard's later works, I argue, provide the most systematic account of the urban problematic. As against being set in the archetypal cities of industrialization (Manchester) or modernism (Paris), Ballard's works focus on a gated community in Berkshire, a Spanish tourist resort, a French business park, and a shopping centre in Surrey. The one exception, *Millennium People*, provides an extended critique of the social, ideological, cultural, and material relevance of Central London by moving from—and so creating critical distance between—Chelsea Marina and Heathrow Airport. This critique provides an important foundation for the concept of the 'virtual city', which recalibrates the social, physical, and literary spaces of contemporary Britain.

Chapter I. J.G. Ballard: The City in Dissolution, or; London Unbounded

> Globalization and the planetary nature of the urban phenomenon [...] appeared in science fiction novels before they were revealed to our understanding [....] the city of the future [appears] broken; it proliferates as a disease afflicting humanity and space, a medium for vice, deformation, and violence (Henri Lefebvre, *The Urban Revolution*, pp. 113, 114)

> "Do you know where we are?" he asked after a pause. "The name of this city?" When Kerans shook his head he said: "Part of it used to be called London; not that it matters" (J.G. Ballard, *The Drowned World*, p. 75)

> As he pressed on upwards, Wilder peered through the windows at the car-park sinking from view below. The distant arm of the river stretched towards the darkening outline of the city, a signpost stretching towards a forgotten world (J.G. Ballard, *High-Rise*, p. 63)

The logics of dissolution are a series of responses to the insufficiencies of traditional models of place predicated on the city-country dichotomy. Using what I call J.G. Ballard's 'Concrete and Steel' Trilogy—*Crash* (1973), *Concrete Island* (1974), and *High-Rise* (1975)—this chapter identifies an emergent urban problematic and delineates its constitutive features. The choice of Ballard's works is instructive for a number of reasons. *Crash* was published in the same year as Raymond Williams's *The Country and the City*, a landmark work which has long influenced subsequent discussions of space in literary criticism. As this chapter explains, it was also around this time that the general configuration of capitalism changed. Among other things, the greater emphasis on real-estate speculation led to what Henri Lefebvre calls the urban 'revolution'.

Ballard's works relate to this 'revolution' in two ways. They illustrate, on the one hand, the growing insufficiencies of the city-country dichotomy. The defamiliarized London of the second epigraph to this chapter, which questions its conventional associations with centrality, becomes in the third epigraph that 'signpost stretching towards a forgotten world'. London, in other words, stands in for the dissolution of the city as a symbolic, material, and ideological signifier.

The logics of dissolution this chapter identifies point to the limits of Williams's approach, founded on 'a wide range of settlements *between the traditional poles of country and city*'.[1] On the other hand, the nascent spatial form these works help identify is rendered in the distinctly anxious terms. Consistent with Lefebvre's discussion of science fiction in the first epigraph, the trilogy simultaneously foregrounds and estranges the urban phenomenon.

Ballard's works from this period thereby occupy a threshold space. The disjuncture between their uncanny *form* and spatial *content* indicates their position between two planes, simultaneously pointing to the dissolution of the city-country dichotomy without fully recognizing the urban problematic. As I demonstrate, the 1979 novel *The Unlimited Dream Company* represents the moment at which the urban problematic crystallizes in Ballard's oeuvre. Read in this way, the trilogy traces the historical emergence and constitutive features of the urban problematic and so provides a theoretical framework from which subsequent chapters identify alternative 'logics of dissolution'.

To these ends, this chapter is split into seven sections. 'The Concrete and Steel Trilogy' provides a thematic overview and identifies common interpretative trends against which the present reading situates itself. As a prelude to the later sections, 'Delineating the Urban Problematic' outlines the factors which prompt the new spatial form. 'The Migration to the Suburbs' contextualizes Ballard's waning spatial dialectic of Shepperton and inner London in terms of Britain's nineteenth- and twentieth-century suburbanization

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[1] Raymond Williams, *Country*, p. 1, my italics.

and London's increasing deindustrialization, before elaborating the importance of *The Unlimited Dream Company.*[2]

The fourth section, 'The Economy of the Image', contextualizes the advent of speculative capitalist practices which were to radically reshape the physical and social geography of London from the 1970s onwards. Ballard's works repeatedly evoke this new socioeconomic framework through various indices of the media such as television studios (Shepperton Studios) and directors (the characters of James Ballard and Richard Wilder in *Crash* and *High-Rise* respectively). With reference to the heightened significance of the automobile, 'The Logics of Remediation' illustrates how the new economy prompts new ways of seeing. 'The Culturization of Nature' explores the spatial implications of this new consciousness. It identifies what I call the concept of 'culturized nature' as a new discourse of the 'natural world' in keeping with the effects of the satellite era, and highlights how the phenomenal reality of Ballard's characters is categorically distinct from that which Raymond Williams documents. Finally, 'The Urban Fabric' considers the relationship between the extended networks of consumption and communication Ballard's works identify and the horizon of the urban problematic. The chapter concludes with some remarks on how the trilogy occupies a threshold space.

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[2] As used in this thesis, 'Inner' and 'Central' London refer to the definitions established in the Local Government Act 1963 and the London Plan 2004 respectively. Inner London consists of the boroughs of Camden, Greenwich, Hackney, Hammersmith and Fulham, Islington, Kensington and Chelsea, Lambeth, Lewisham, Southwark, Tower Hamlets, Wandsworth, and Westminster. 'London Government Act 1963', in *Office of Public Sector Information* <http://www.opsi.gov.uk/RevisedStatutes/Acts/ukpga/1963/cukpga_19630033_en_1> [accessed 26 September 2010]. Central London meanwhile comprises the City of London, inner parts of Camden, Islington, Hackney, Tower Hamlets, Southwark, Lambeth, and Kensington and Chelsea, and most of Westminster, and 'is home to many of London's world city activities, including international business and finance, government, culture and tourism'. 'The London Plan', in *Greater London Authority* <http://www.london.gov.uk/archive/mayor/strategies/sds/london_plan/lon_plan_5.pdf> [accessed 26 September 2010]

The Concrete and Steel Trilogy

This section establishes how Ballard's 'vision', to quote Jonathan Taylor, 'is centred upon geography both as the expression and main agent of change in human subjectivity'.[3] In a 1989 interview, Ballard describes his novels from the 1970s as being concerned with 'the effects on human psychology of the changes brought by science and technology, the modern urban landscape, the freeways and motorways, the peculiar psychology of life in vast high-rise condominiums'.[4] The 'irony' of this emphasis on psychological space, Will Self notes, is that Ballard's works have proved 'far more accurate predictions of the character of evolving modern life'.[5]

As regards the evolving 'character' of 'modern life', *Crash* is an excursus on the ways in which modern technologies have shaped, and continue to reshape, personal and social notions of space and time. The novel recounts the fraught relationship between James Ballard, a director of television adverts, and Dr Robert Vaughan, an expert in computerized traffic management systems. Their association begins in the aftermath of James's hospitalization following a car crash, an event which subsequently frames all relationships in the novel. In respect of the urban problematic, Vaughan's unsuccessful attempt to collide with Elizabeth Taylor's limousine, with whom he had 'dreamed of dying', establishes an important relationship between the media, the automobile, Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs), and the remodelling of space.[6]

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[3] Jonathan S. Taylor, 'The Subjectivity of the Near Future: Geographical Imaginings in the Work of J.G. Ballard', in *Lost in Space: Geographies of Science Fiction*, ed. Rob Kitchin and James Kneale (New York: Continuum, 2002), pp. 90-103, p. 90.
[4] Julian Dibbell, 'Weird Science', *Spin*, February 1989, pp. 51-2, 75, p. 51.
[5] Will Self, *Sore Sites* (London: Ellipsis, 2000), p. 14.
[6] J.G. Ballard, *Crash*, p. 7.

Concrete Island continues Ballard's investigation into the effects of technological developments. When Robert Maitland crashes off 'the high-speed exit lane of the Westway interchange', he enters a traffic island that represents the interstitial spaces produced by modern technologies, '[s]ealed off from the world around it by the high embankments on two sides and the wire-mesh fence on its third'.[7] Using the clipped language of reportage and second-person narration, the novel creates an alienating distance between Maitland's experiences and the events the story recounts, while the impersonal terms that describe the accident question conventional links between autonomy and the automobile. This reappraisal of autonomy forms a fundamental part of the urban problematic.

High-Rise provides an important sense of periodization to Ballard's characteristic interest in the psychological and spatial effects of modern technologies.[8] The plight of the high-rise is a metonym for the welfare state. Its degeneration, which signals the end of the post-war Keynesian consensus, also anticipates some of the socio-spatial effects of neoliberalism. The deterioration of the high-rise fits into Ballard's wider thematic distancing from Central London by dint of its associations with high-volume inner-city housing developments. Its proximity to empty docks meanwhile foresees the gentrification programmes of the 1980s, just as its demographic reflects the growing importance of the tertiary sector to London's economy. The physical and social spaces of the novel thereby appear distinctly proto-Thatcherite.

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[7] J.G. Ballard, *Concrete Island* (1974) (London: Vintage, 1994), p. 13.
[8] J.G. Ballard, *High-Rise* (1975) (London: Harper Perennial, 2005).

Interpretations of the trilogy, however, habitually decontextualize Ballard's works. Partly as a result of an overwhelming focus on *Crash*, the geographical and historical context of the novels is frequently overlooked in preference to the familiar poststructuralist themes of the body, desire, and agency.[9] The frequency with which critics associate the novel's setting with sterility highlights the effects of this decontextualizing trend. *Crash's* descriptions of sexual intercourse in the 'dry and precise prose of a technical manual' are, for Claudia Springer, 'inspired by the technological sterility' of 'the sterile industrial landscape'. Jonathan Taylor similarly defines the novel's 'landscape' as 'utterly technological, but strangely barren, like the downtown of a deserted city at night', a sentiment Scott Bukatman echoes in his account of 'a profoundly isolating contemporary environment'.[10]

Such abstract readings of 'landscape' elide the wider problems of identity within the trilogy. A fundamental part of their logics of dissolution, this chapter argues, concerns the specific circumstances of London and south-eastern England during the 1970s. By concentrating on the psychodynamics of technology, criticism potentially overlooks the changing relations between technology and mobility that were, at the time of Ballard's publication, altering

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[9] See Jane Arthurs and Iain Grant, 'Introduction', in *Crash Cultures: Modernity, Mediation, and the Material,* ed. Jane Arthurs and Iain Grant (Bristol: Intellect Books, 2003), pp. 1-14; Roy Boyne, *Subject, Society, and Culture* (London: Sage, 2001), pp. 148-165; Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulations*, trans. by Sheila Faria Glaser (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994), pp. 111-120; Scott Bukatman, *Terminal Identity: the Virtual Subject in Postmodern Science Fiction* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993); Claudia Springer, *Electronic Eros: Bodies and Desire in the Postindustrial Age* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996), and Michel Delville, *J.G. Ballard* (Plymouth: Northcote House Publishing, 1998).
[10] Springer, *Eros*, pp. 6, 5; Taylor, *Imaginings*, p. 98; Bukatman, *Terminal*, p. 293. See also Andrew Hultkrans, 'Body work - interview with author J.G. Ballard and director David Cronenberg' <http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0268/is_n7_v35/ai_19290191> [accessed 29 May 2007]

the production of space.[11] The present work therefore marks an intervention in the understanding of Ballard's works specifically and the urban problematic generally. To this end, the following sections identify the constitutive features of the new spatial form which collectively account for the trilogy's complex interplay of identities.

Delineating the Urban Problematic

> We tend to assume that people want to be together in a kind of renaissance city if you like, imaginatively speaking, strolling in the evening across a crowded piazza [...] One is not [however] living in something like an 18th-to-19th-century city.[12]

Ballard's observations on the 'renaissance city' have practical and important implications for understanding the urban problematic. He associates a particular form of mobility with an outdated spatial form: to 'stroll' across a 'crowded piazza' is something 'one' did in the '18th-to-19th-century city'. While this reference to 'piazza' is consistent with its orthodox use to 'denote some form of public open space', its perceived outmodedness raises two factors considered throughout this thesis: the privatization of space and the spatial effects of the automobile.[13]

In relation to the second point, Roger Luckhurst is one of the few critics to contextualize *Crash*, locating the novel at the 'very beginning' of 'a new era of

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[11] Gasiorek's reading of *Crash*, for example, falls into the trap of geographical abstraction. Andrzej Gasiorek, *J.G. Ballard* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), esp. pp. 87-93. Although he uses a very different vocabulary, Roger Luckhurst also recognizes this trend of decontextualization: see 'J.G. Ballard: *Crash*' in *Companion to Science Fiction*, ed. David Seed (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), pp. 512-520, p. 520.

[12] J.G. Ballard, 'How to Face Doomsday without Really Dying—Interview with Carol Orr' <http://www.jgballard.ca/interviews/jgb_cbc_ideas_interview.html> [accessed 25 September 2009]

[13] Eamonn Canniffe, *The Politics of the Piazza: the History and Meaning of the Italian Square* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), p. 1.

motorway transport'.[14] Far from constituting an abstract landscape, Ballard's works at this time were conscious of the effects of this 'new era' of mass transit.[15] In the introduction to *Vermillion Sands*, a collection of short stories published in 1973, Ballard writes that 'something about the word "suburb" [...] convinces me that I was on the right track in my pursuit of the day after tomorrow'. This 'pursuit' led Ballard to probe the city-country dichotomy:

> As the countryside vanishes under a top-dressing of chemicals, and as cities provide little more than an urban context for traffic intersections, the suburbs are at last coming into their own. The skies are larger, the air more generous, the clock less urgent.[16]

This extrapolation captures several leitmotivs of Ballard's later works. The theme of the dwindling city was not new.[17] What is new is an important rethinking of the terms of the relationship between 'the country' and 'the city' combined with a putative shift to the suburbs.[18] The 'top-dressing of chemicals' conveys how scientific and technological developments radically changed the concept of nature in the twentieth century.[19] In becoming a 'context for traffic intersections', the scale of the city exceeds the mobility of the pedestrians Ballard associates with the piazza. The following sections identify and explain the components of a new urban problematic, beginning with the increased significance of the suburbs.

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[14] Luckhurst, *Ballard*, p. 520.

[15] More generally, see Peter Merriman, *Driving Spaces: A Cultural-Historical Geography of England's M1 Motorway* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007).

[16] J.G. Ballard, *Vermillion Sands* (1973) (London: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1985), p.7.

[17] See, for example, J.G. Ballard, 'Chronopolis' (1960) in *The Complete Short Stories*, II vols (London: Harper Perennial, 2006), I, pp. 202-227.

[18] The early short story 'Concentration City' (1957) is set within an infinite and totally commodified city space, while 'Billennium' (1961) attributes the contraction of the countryside as one consequence of industrial agriculture. Both stories, however, have yet to move beyond the city-country dichotomy and into the suburbs, the recurrent focus of Ballard's later works. Ballard, *Short Stories*, I, pp. 3-50 and 362-78.

[19] See the reconceptualization of 'risk' attributable largely to nuclear weapons in Ulrich Beck, *Risk Society*, p. 10 and Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, p. 4.

The Migration to the Suburbs

> An understanding of how suburbia was produced, and continues to be both produced and reproduced, is an essential precondition for an understanding of the twentieth century [and] the emerging character and contradictions of our everyday life.[20]

Suburbs are, by one definition, 'residential areas built outside the core of the inner city, as distinctly lower density but linked to it through continuous development'.[21] The notion of their 'continuous development' establishes an important historical link between the definition of city and ideas of the *periphery*.[22] Insofar as 'rapid transit and the residential suburb were conceived', Eric Lampard argues, 'as the most practical and benign remedies for the physical and moral "problems" afflicting the impacted populations of great cities', Victorian and Edwardian London witnessed what John Summerson calls 'the enormous increment of suburbia'.[23]

This increment became a deluge in the twentieth century. By 1945, improvements in London's transport infrastructure facilitated substantial suburban growth.[24] The notion of Metroland, created in the 1930s by the Metropolitan Railway Company and promoted by London Underground, illustrates this point.[25] A significant decentralization of industry was occurring at the same time. 'Inner London continued to excel in high-quality products', Roy

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[20] Roger Silverstone, *Introduction*, p. 5.
[21] Richard Rogers and Anne Power, *Cities for A Small Country* (London: Faber & Faber, 2000), p. 69.
[22] For Lampard and Ackroyd, suburbs are as old as cities themselves. Eric E. Lampard, 'The Urbanizing World', in *The Victorian City: Images and Realities*, ed. H.J. Dyos and Michael Wolff (London: Routledge, 1973), pp. 3-58, p. 29, and Peter Ackroyd, *London: the Autobiography* (London: Vintage, 2001), p. 747.
[23] Lampard, 'Urbanizing World', p.29; John Summerson, 'London, The Artifact' in *Victorian City*, ed. Dyos and Wolff, pp. 311-332, p. 311.
[24] See 'Modern Growth, Modern Government: 1890-1945' in Roy Porter, *London: A Social History* (London: Penguin, 1994), pp. 397-418, and 'The City of By-Pass Variegated. The Mass Transit Suburb: London, Paris, Berlin, New York, 1900-1940' in Peter Hall, *Cities of Tomorrow* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), pp. 48-86.
[25] Ackroyd, *London*, pp. 732, 733.

Porter explains, while traditional manufacturing was 'leaving the core for the outer suburbs'.[26] This centrifugal movement was accelerated by a number of post-war efforts to 'redress' what the town planner Sir Patrick Abercombie called the 'unbalanced developments' that had occurred 'as a result of no sort of planning of a broad character in the past'.[27] Abercrombie's rationale was simple: by stemming the 'sprawl' he could 'return [London] to a smaller unit than the whole city'.[28]

The effects were not so straightforward. Designed to accommodate London's 'overspill population', the so-called satellite towns were to greatly change the character of London.[29] For Peter Ackroyd, they were:

> Part of an historical process which was also too powerful—too instinctive—to be "reversed" [...] The "new towns" ineluctably became as much part of London as their predecessors; instead of restricting the size of the city, its post-war planners immeasurably expanded it until the whole south-eastern area became "London".[30]

This 'endless movement' was by any measure voracious. The scale of 'population leakage' was such that Greater London was becoming, in Porter's words, 'less great'. During the 1950s and 1960s, the population of the 'beyond-the-belt Outer Metropolitan Area' rose by over one and a half million. The fact that by 1971 those commuting daily into London from this area surpassed half a million demonstrates how the social and physical geography—indeed, the very idea—of London had radically changed throughout this period.[31]

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[26] Porter, *London*, p. 400.
[27] Patrick Abercrombie, 'Some Aspects of the County of London Plan', *The Geographical Journal,* 102, 5/6 (1943), 227-238, p. 229. See also Peter Hall, 'Bringing Abercrombie Back from the Shades: A Look Forward and Back', *The Town Planning Review*, 66, 3 (1995), 227-241.
[28] Abercrombie, 'London Plan', p. 230.
[29] David Thomas, 'London's Green Belt: The Evolution of an Idea', *The Geographical Journal*, 129 (1963), 14-24, p. 19.
[30] Ackroyd, *London*, p. 757.
[31] Porter, *London*, pp. 421, 422. More generally, see Clapson, 'Cities, Suburbs, Countryside'.

This transformation manifests in several ways throughout the trilogy. A typical Ballardian gambit involves a symbolic and material move from a dwindling inner London. *Crash* seldom refers to London other than in relation to London [Heathrow] Airport, the Westway, or James Ballard's Drayton Park flat. While the 'apex' of *Concrete Island* points 'towards the west and [...] the distant television studios at White City' and looks out to the 'towers of distant office-blocks [...] over Marylebone', these settings ultimately 'reced[e] like the distant clouds over White City'.[32] The novel consequently expands the figurative connection in *Crash* between the mass media and the organization of space to encompass the receding image of the city. *High-Rise* moves a step further by distancing itself from a dwindling Central London: 'Each day the towers of [C]entral London seemed slightly more distant, the landscape of an abandoned planet receding slowly from [Laing's] mind'.[33]

In such ways the trilogy figuratively maps a new spatial form inextricably linked to the profound socioeconomic and technological changes of the latter half of the twentieth century. The emergence of a 'cyborg' discourse in the 1960s, a shortened version of 'cybernetic organism', attests to the ways in which technology altered the understanding of the self during this period.[34] 'By the late twentieth century', Donna Harraway writes in the influential *Cyborg Manifesto*, 'we are all chimeras, theorised and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism; in short, we are cyborgs. The cyborg is our ontology'.[35] Matthew

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[32] Ballard, *Concrete*, pp. 11, 16, 145.
[33] Ballard, *High-Rise*, p. 9.
[34] The term originated in Manfred Clynes and Nathan S. Kline, 'Cyborgs and Space', *Astronautics*, September issue, 1960, 26-7; 74-5. See more generally *The Cyborg Handbook*, ed. by Chris Hables Gray, Heidi J. Figueroa-Sarriera and Steven Mentor (London: Routledge, 1995).
[35] 'A Cyborg Manifesto' in Donna Harraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (London: Free Association Books, 1991), pp. 149-181, p. 150.

Gandy develops the spatial implications of the cyborg metaphor in order to denote the shift from an 'organicist' model of space associated with the nineteenth-century industrial city to a 'neo-organicist' variety linked with the technological complexity of its late twentieth-century equivalent.[36] On this reading, a 'neurological' account of space as 'a diffuse and interconnected realm of human interaction' replaces the nineteenth-century spatial metaphor of human organs.[37] The emphasis on demarcating boundaries illustrated by the image of a regulated body is replaced by a neurological metaphor to convey social and spatial complexity.

This spatial break explains the trilogy's spatial reorientation, beginning with James Ballard's reflections on the view from his apartment. 'The human inhabitants of this technological landscape', James reflects, 'no longer provided its sharpest pointers, its keys to the borderzones of identity'.[38] Over a decade before Harraway's cyborg ontology, this 'technological landscape' had dethroned the traditional anthropocentric role of its 'human inhabitants'. The design of *High-Rise* reiterates the changing 'borderzones of identity'. 'An invisible army of thermostats and humidity sensors, computerized elevator route-switches and over-riders', architect Anthony Royal explains, were 'playing their parts in a far more sophisticated and abstract version of the master-servant relationship'.[39]

In terms of the logics of dissolution, the yielding of ontological boundaries between human and machine posed by this 'more sophisticated and abstract'

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[36] Matthew Gandy, 'Cyborg Urbanization: Complexity and Monstrosity in the Contemporary City', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 29 (2005), 26-49.
[37] Ibid. p. 29.
[38] Ballard, *Crash*, pp. 48-9.
[39] Ballard, *High-Rise*, p. 72.

relationship soon extends to a new understanding of space. *High-Rise* develops the 'technological landscape' of *Crash* by using various neurological metaphors. For Dr Laing, the high-rise represents 'less a habitable architecture [...] than the unconscious diagram of a mysterious psychic event', while the 'ragged skyline' of Central London resembles the 'disturbed encephalograph of an unresolved mental crisis'. Equally, for Royal, the 'dark bands' of the partially-lighted floors 'stretched across the face of the high-rise like dead strata in a fading brain' wherein its residents 'were the cells in a network of arteries, the lights in their apartments the neurones of a brain'.[40] These neurological metaphors point to a more complicated understanding of space than the organicist model allows, recognizing how the recursive shaping of technology and the self requires a reconceptualization of space. As 'a model of the world into which the future was carrying them', the high-rise is part of what Laing calls 'a landscape beyond technology where everything was either derelict or, more ambiguously, recombined in unexpected but more meaningful ways'.[41]

The comparative geography of *Concrete Island* qualifies the sense in which *High-Rise* represents a 'model' of the future. While traversing the island, 'Maitland stumbled into a room-sized enclosure'. Jane's room is decorated with numerous images of Che Guevara, Charles Manson, Black Power, and a 'faded cinema poster [...] advertising a Ginger Rogers and Fred Astaire musical'.[42] With its outmoded iconography taken from the ideological stock of 1960s radicalism and the age of mechanical reproduction, Jane's room occupies what

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[40] Ibid. pp. 25, 9, 75, 40.
[41] Ibid. p. 147.
[42] Ballard, *Concrete*, pp. 63, 91, 82, 80.

Luckhurst calls the 'interstices of the new economy'.[43] This economic break, which the next section addresses at greater length, parallels the spatial periodization Maitland uncovers among the 'outlines of building foundations, the ground-plans of Edwardian terraced houses', and other decaying vestiges of a 'former neighbourhood high-street', a 'stucco Victorian house', 'still identifiable streets and alleyways', 'air-raid shelters', and a 'post-war cinema'.[44] By association, the houses and streets appear as an outmoded historical and ideological foundation, traces of a past spatial form.[45] They are relics of what the short story *Chronopolis* calls the 'fossil city'.[46]

Between *Concrete Island* and *High-Rise*, several fundamental changes occur. The decaying Victorian and Edwardian houses on *Concrete Island*, historically associated with London as an imperial centre, are relics of an outmoded spatial form. In *High-Rise*, meanwhile, the neurological metaphors emphasize the shift from organicist to neo-organicist space. In other words, the historical foundations uncovered in *Concrete Island* anticipate and emphasize the spatial break made in *High-Rise*. This spatial break parallels a socioeconomic transformation: the 'interstices' of the new economy found in Jane's room pre-empt the figurative demise of the welfare state in the collapse of the high-rise. In these and other important ways, the trilogy represents far more than an abstract 'landscape'.

Although the hollowing out of the city centre has yet to fully occur in Ballard's works (see Chapter Five), the trilogy obliquely registers other

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[43] Roger Luckhurst, *The Angle Between Two Walls: The Fiction of J.G. Ballard* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), p. 136.
[44] Ballard, *Concrete*, pp. 38, 40, 69.
[45] Hence the high-rise development 'formed a massive palisade that [...] plunged the suburban streets behind them into darkness'. Ballard, *High-Rise*, p. 19. See also p. 128.
[46] Ballard, 'Chronopolis', p. 212.

important factors of change. When Maitland uncovers 'parts of the island [that] dated from well before World War II', especially the 'eastern end, below the overpass', his discovery is a direct result of the construction of the Westway.[47] Built between September 1966 and July 1970, the Westway joined up with the existing Western Avenue (A40) at Wood Lane, which itself coupled the White City Stadium with the Marylebone Flyover at Paddington Green. It follows that Maitland's view of the television studios at White City and the tower blocks over Marylebone, in addition to registering the new economy, is directly linked to the Westway development. This is important because the Westway, in providing a 'direct link' between Central London and the west that includes Shepperton, forms a geographical and intertextual nexus for Ballard's works.[48]

To recount: the topology of *Concrete Island* registers the physical and environmental effects of the Westway development while providing a means of economic and spatial periodization.[49] The setting of *High-Rise* reiterates these points. Its 'massive scale' and 'striking situation on a bend of the river' together 'sharply separated the development project from the rundown areas around it', which consist of 'decaying nineteenth-century terraced houses and empty factories already zoned for reclamation'.[50] The decaying terraces recall the foundations of *Concrete Island* unveiled by the Westway development while the

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[47] Ballard, *Concrete*, p. 69.
[48] 'A40 (M) Westway and M41 West Cross Route', <http://www.iht.org/motorway/a40mwestway.htm> [accessed 19 November 2008]
[49] On its physical and environmental effects, see Porter, *London*, p. 440 and Andrew Duncan, 'History of the Westway Development Trust', <http://www.westway.org/about_us/history/#a> [accessed 18 November 2008]
[50] Ballard, *High-Rise*, p. 8.

empty factories connote London's deindustrialization and anticipate the effects of large-scale and extensive gentrification.[51]

From this historical perspective, it is possible to understand the deeper significance of Dr Laing's pronouncement that, having 'sold the lease of his Chelsea house and moved to the security of the high-rise, he had travelled forward fifty years in time'.[52] Lefebvre understands the urban 'revolution' to be the spatial correlative of an emergent second 'circuit' of capitalism. Based on real-estate investment and speculative finance, this new 'circuit' replaces industrialization as the primary means of accumulating surplus capital.[53] The proximity of the high-rise development to empty factories and houses, which connotes deindustrialization and gentrification, illustrates some of the spatial effects of Lefebvre's second 'circuit'. Its social effects, meanwhile, are registered in the demographic of the high-rise, which consists of a 'virtually homogeneous collection of well-to-do people'.[54]

David Harvey builds on Lefebvre's theoretical framework when he identifies an important break in the practices of regional governance during the early 1970s. Harvey discerns, in response to the changing economic circumstances at this time, a shift in the practices of local governance from 'urban managerialism' to 'urban entrepreneurialism'. The spatial fallout of this

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[51] Gentrification, Porter notes, 'spread' throughout places like Camberwell, Highbury, Notting Hill, Paddington, and later in Bethnal Green, Bow, Mile End, and Stepney 'as the middle classes infiltrated and recaptured central and inner-suburb precincts abandoned by their grandparents, and then indulged in an orgy of improvements'. Porter, *London*, p. 430. In addition, see p. 431, where the development of the Victoria Line 'speeded gentrification' around a number of its stations while '[p]oorer people were edged out into pockets of Hackney, Camden Town, Tufnell Park, Willesden, Clapham, Battersea, and adjoining areas', and pp. 419-44 more generally. See also Rowland Atkinson, 'The Hidden Costs of Gentrification: Displacement in Central London', *Journal of Housing and the Built Environment*, 15, 4 (2000), 307-26.
[52] Ibid. pp. 8-9.
[53] Henri Lefebvre, *Urban Revolution*, pp. 159-160.
[54] Ibid. p. 10.

shift in capitalist development explains the prescience and importance of Ballard's changing geographical focus. In order to attract investment amid growing 'inter-urban competition', regional governments and local enterprise initiatives increasingly follow prescribed paths of development: science parks, shopping malls, and gentrification are all part of its 'net effect'.[55]

Ballard's later focus on these three subjects is a move consistent with the spatial logics of the trilogy. The high-rise represents a move fifty years forward insofar as it connotes paradigmatic economic and spatial shifts. Inasmuch as 'the high-rise was a model of the world into which the future was carrying them', its degeneration consigns Central London to an outmoded past (left to be gentrified) and paradoxically heralds a suburban future.[56] Before discussing this future, it is worth considering how *High-Rise* represents a proto-Thatcherite space in order to understand the rationale of Ballard's suburban relocation.

The demise of the high-rise, as noted, symbolizes a philosophical and economic break with the welfare state. More specifically, it reflects the retrenchment of public housing in London. After what Porter calls the 'hey day' of tower blocks in London between 1964 and 1974, investment in municipal housing diminished, private house prices increased in Greater London, and so 'more people quit London altogether'.[57] It is no coincidence that Philip Tew detects an 'atavistic and unconscious overcoming [of] the veneer of liberal

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[55] Harvey, 'Entrepreneurialism', pp. 359-60. The paradoxical effect of these efforts to attract investment (such as tax breaks, which increases the burden of risk on the public sector) is to lessen the cost of locational change and so reinforce the mobility of multinational capital. A major motive force for gentrification in London throughout the 1960s and 1970s were home improvement grants: see C. Hamnett, 'Improvement Grants as an Indicator of Gentrification in Inner London', *Area*, 5, 4 (1973), pp. 252-261.
[56] Ballard, *High-Rise*, p. 147.
[57] Porter, *London*, p. 431. Although it offers a useful ideological background on the use of the high-rise as a response to municipal housing problems in Britain, Gasiorek's reading does not specifically discuss its history in London. See Gasiorek, *Ballard*, pp. 120-3.

humanist respectability, of civilization' in the novel.[58] This 'overcoming' anticipates the advent of neoliberalism. Home to what Laing calls a 'new type of social being', the residents of the high-rise were the 'first to master a new kind of late twentieth century life', which thrived 'on the rapid turnover of acquaintances, the lack of involvement with others, and the total self-sufficiency of lives'.[59] These isolated monads are precursors to what Eric Hobsbawm calls the 'anomic society' of Thatcherism.[60]

To further illustrate the degree to which *High-Rise* represents a proto-Thatcherite space, consider the political significance of demographic changes within inner cities. Thatcher's electoral success was based 'essentially', Hobsbawm writes, 'on the secession of skilled workers from Labour'. Largely as a result of the decentralization of industry, skilled and upwardly mobile elements of the working class departed from inner cities and so left formerly partisan Labour wards ('red belts') to be 'ghettoised or gentrified'.[61] The satellite towns to which these people relocated did not generate a comparable level of class concentration. In this respect, *High-Rise* presciently delineates 'a pattern of social organization that would become the paradigm of all future high-rise blocks'.[62]

In summary, the trilogy illustrates a number of changes that were to profoundly reshape British cities. It highlights prominent metaphors of spatial change, alludes to the effects of deindustrialization, and foregrounds the emergence of a new economy that will in time radically change the social and

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[58] Philip Tew, *Contemporary Novel*, pp. 34-5.
[59] Ballard, *High-Rise,* pp. 35, 36.
[60] Eric Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes*, p. 335.
[61] Ibid. p. 308.
[62] Ballard, *High-Rise,* p. 70.

physical structure of London. These factors underlie Ballard's thematic relocation to suburbia. His 1979 novel *The Unlimited Dream Company* marks an important step in the logics of dissolution by fundamentally recasting the idea of suburbia and, consequently, the precepts of spatial difference. Put simply, Ballard's suburbia is not defined in terms of a binary relationship with London.

The protagonist Blake crashes into the River Thames at Shepperton after stealing a light aircraft from Heathrow Airport. Whether he dies in the accident remains unclear. This ambiguity, however, does not detract the conceptual significance of the novel's transformation of this 'quiet suburban town'.[63] Set among the 'car-parks, plastics factories and reservoirs that surrounded the airports', the novel occupies a similar physical terrain to that of *Crash*.[64] At first glance Blake rehashes a number of conventional tropes of suburbia, variously describing Shepperton as a 'deserted riverside town', a 'suffocating town', and the medium for 'sterile lives'.[65]

This orthodox approach is mirrored by that of literary critics Andrzej Gasiorek and Randall Stevenson, for whom the novel represents 'an ersatz world, a vacuous domain' and a 'dreary, apathetic Thameside town' respectively.[66] Recalling the earlier discussion of *Crash* as a generic landscape, such approaches elide a deeper sense of change. In the process of transforming 'this suburban town' into a 'reconditioned Eden', Blake insistently

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[63] J.G. Ballard, *The Unlimited Dream Company* (Reading: Triad/Granada, 1981), p. 9.
[64] Ibid. p. 14.
[65] Ibid. pp. 7, 46, 35. See also p. 40.
[66] Gasiorek, *Ballard*, p. 136; Randall Stevenson, *The Oxford English Literary History: The Last of England? 1960-2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), XII, p. 517.

points to fundamental ontological and epistemological changes.[67] The important point about Blake's self-appointed role as 'a messiah [...] who would one day assemble a unique identity out of this defective jigsaw' is not its messianic pretensions but what is indeed 'unique' about its reassembly of spatial identity.[68]

Blake's allusions to Plato's cave, a foundational work in Western philosophy, helps illustrate how the novel reworks the idea of suburbia. 'That real world which I was slowly unfolding as I drew back the curtains that muffled Shepperton and the rest of this substitute realm', Blake notes, amounts to 'a re-ordering of reality in the service of a greater and more truthful design'.[69] This transformation leads Gasiorek to incorrectly adduce that the novel portrays Shepperton 'as a pale copy of the world, an empty simulacrum of the real'.[70] Such a reading fundamentally misunderstands the simulacrum. 'The simulacrum is not a degraded copy', Gilles Deleuze writes. 'It harbours a positive power [....] The copy is an image endowed with resemblance, the simulacrum is an image without resemblance'.[71]

Unlike Deleuze's definition of the simulacrum, Gasiorek's 'pale copy of the world' is based upon resemblance. As regards the logics of dissolution, Gasiorek's reading posits a model of identity which defines Shepperton by the sum of its difference from the putative outside 'world'. Blake, by contrast, charts

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[67] Ballard, *Unlimited*, pp. 129, 128. Though Gasiorek notes that Blake's 'reality [...] is not so much uncovered as co-created by the imagination', his reading does not consider the figurative significance of the novel's representations of space. Gasiorek, *Ballard*, p. 136.
[68] Ballard, *Unlimited*, p. 13.
[69] Ibid. pp. 90, 106. See also p. 100.
[70] Gasiorek, *Ballard*, p. 136.
[71] Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, ed. by Constantin V Boundas, trans. by Mark Lester and Charles Stivale (London: Athlone, 1989), pp. 299, 295.

a very different terrain.[72] In a remarkable passage, he describes Shepperton as 'the everywhere of suburbia, the paradigm of nowhere'.[73] As the 'paradigm of nowhere', Shepperton is no longer defined by its relations with the 'outside world', which is to say measured in terms of resemblance with the conventional terms such as the city or the country.[74] This is not what Gasiorek calls 'a parody of a genuine "place"' but the moment at which traditional territorial designations subside, yielding new senses of space and place to be delineated in the following chapters.[75]

In conclusion, Blake's definition of Shepperton represents the crystallization of the urban problematic in Ballard's works. The 'machine landscape' and new 'borderzones of identity' in *Crash*; the liminal geography of *Concrete Island*; the proto-Thatcherite spaces of *High-Rise*: all these point to a fundamental break in the understanding and representation of space. It is only in *The Unlimited Dream Company*, however, that these various strands of critique coalesce and make sense of the 'wave of the future' that for Ballard 'breaks in the suburbs'.[76] While the 'world' that Blake announces, 'of which Shepperton was merely a brightly furnished but modest antechamber', remains in an embryonic state in the trilogy, these works nevertheless assist in identifying its threshold.[77] The next section considers how what Ballard calls the 'communications landscape' fits in with the urban problematic.[78]

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[72] Blake implies as much when he refers to the famous explorers Columbus and Pizzarro. Ballard, *Unlimited*, p. 54.
[73] Ibid. p. 35.
[74] It also marks the point at which suburbia is no longer defined by what Richard Rogers previously called its 'continuous development' relative to the inner city.
[75] Gasiorek, *Ballard*, p. 136.
[76] Dibbell, 'Science', p. 52.
[77] Ballard, *Unlimited*, p. 217.
[78] Ballard, *Crash*, p. 4.

The Economy of the Image

This section considers the underlying economic changes that raised the prominence of the tertiary sector in London from the 1960s onwards and outlines its spatial impact. The decade after 1966 witnessed a further contraction of manufacturing. Greater London lost half a million (forty per cent) of its factory jobs, while the total employment figures for manufacturing in inner London dropped by almost a third between 1971 and 1976.[79] Set against this retrenchment of industry was the expansion of the tertiary sector.

During the 1960s, Porter explains, London became 'a major international centre for fashion, design, and music', bringing employment in associated industries such as photography, modelling, publishing, and advertising. These services together employed almost a quarter of a million people.[80] London was at the same time becoming the 'geographical centre' of the Eurodollar market as part of what William Engdahl calls the Bank of England's 'strategy of reconstructing the City of London as the centre of world finance'.[81] The net effect of these changes was that, by the mid-1970s, around seventy per cent of London's jobs were involved in the service sector.[82]

This tertiary remodelling of the economy is encountered in the initial collision in *Crash*. After leaving Shepperton Studios, James Ballard skids off the

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[79] Adapted from Porter, *London*, p. 421.
[80] Porter, *London*, p. 442.
[81] William Engdahl, *Century of War*, p. 184. See also David Harvey, *History of Neoliberalism*, p. 56. Such was its impact that London became a 'global city' in terms of finance and specialized service industries. See Saskia Sassen, *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991).
[82] Porter, *London*, p. 421.

road 'at the intersection below the entrance to the Western Avenue flyover'.[83] This conjunction of media and industrial technologies obliquely raises the changing nature of the British economy, as part of a broader transformation of the frameworks of capitalism. Lefebvre's second circuit forms one facet of a new transnational economy for which state territories and frontiers were no longer defining forces but complicating factors. As Hobsbawm explains:

> Institutions whose field of action was effectively bounded by the frontiers of their territory, like trade unions, parliaments, and national broadcasting systems, therefore lost, as organizations not so bounded, like transnational firms, the international currency market, and the globalized media and communications of the satellite era, gained.[84]

What James Ballard calls the 'unseen powers' of the 'technological landscape' is rendered visible throughout the trilogy by the domestic material geography of the transnational media networks.[85] Vaughan's apartment in *Crash* is adjacent to 'the film studios at Shepperton', the 'apex' of *Concrete Island* looks out onto the 'distant television studios' of White City, while the *High-Rise* is hemmed in by 'new television studios'.[86] The physical and social effects of these networks are the underlying subject of Laing's speculation on the distance between the high-rise and Central London:

> For all the proximity of the City two miles away to the west along the river, the office buildings of [C]entral London belonged to a different world, in time as well as space. Their glass curtain-walling and telecommunication aerials were obscured by the traffic smog, blurring Laing's memories of the past.[87]

Laing's move to the high-rise and its distance from the office buildings is part of Ballard's general move away from the inner city. That sense of Central London

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[83] Ballard, *Crash*, p. 19.
[84] Hobsbawm, *Extremes*, pp. 277, 424. See also Harvey, 'Fordism to Flexible Accumulation'.
[85] Ballard, *Crash*, pp. 47, 48.
[86] Ibid p. 7; *Concrete*, p. 11; *High-Rise*, p. 8.
[87] Ballard, *High-Rise*, p. 8.

belonging 'to a different world' is attributable to the second circuit of capitalism. The closely associated phenomenon of urban entrepreneurialism changes the experience and structure of the city through gentrification and increases the socioeconomic significance of suburban developments through the construction of science parks and shopping malls. Laing's reflections provide, in this respect, an evocative image and accurate account of spatial and temporal periodization.

Contrary to Laing's 'memories of the past', however, the 'telecommunications aerials' are very much part of the new 'world'. The demography of the high-rise, as was previously mentioned, attests to the fact that Ballard's works seldom mention primary and secondary sections of economic production. Without exception, the protagonists of the trilogy are members of what the NRS (National Readership Survey) calls the 'A' grade of higher managerial, administrative, or professional vocation.[88] The demographic of the trilogy, while not to suggest ideological affinity, is that of a postindustrial variety insofar as its characters attest to a condition wherein 'information, education, and consumption are more closely bound [...] to the realm of production'.[89]

This section has identified the emergence of a new economy in the early 1970s, shown how the demographic of the trilogy illuminates the growing prominence of the tertiary sector, and explained how these changes inform Ballard's wider distancing from the inner city. The following section considers

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[88] James Ballard (*Crash*) and Richard Wilder (*High-Rise*) work in the television industry, Robert Maitland (*Concrete Island*) and Anthony Royal (*High-Rise*) are architects, and Robert Laing (*High-Rise*) is a medical doctor.
[89] Alain Touraine, *The Post-Industrial Society*, trans. by Leonard F.X. Mayhew (London: Wildwood House Ltd, 1974), p. 19.For a critique of the postindustrial thesis, see Chapter Three.

the less obvious but no less tangible effects of this economy on the ways of seeing initially through the medium of the car crash.

The Logics of Remediation

> My relationships [were] mediated by the automobile and its technological landscape.[90]

Contrary to technologically determinist readings, the expansion of digital media did not inaugurate a wholly new era. Recent developments such as the internet and virtual reality continue a trend that has informed Western visual representation for the last several hundred years. Media analysts Bolter and Grusin use the term 'remediation' to signify this 'attempt to achieve immediacy by ignoring or denying the presence of the medium and the act of mediation'.[91] The 'double logic of remediation' operating in contemporary Western culture seeks, in their words, 'both to multiply its media and to erase all traces of mediation', to 'ideally [...] erase its media in the very act of multiplying them'. It amounts to an order of visual representation based upon the 'logic of transparent immediacy'.[92] Their reading prompts an important conclusion: the media seeks to underplay the fact that its expansion increases the range of mediation.

The value of the remediation thesis is twofold. Firstly, it updates *The Urban Revolution* (1970). Its publication predates by several years the palpable

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[90] Ballard, *Crash*, p. 101.
[91] Robert Jay Bolter and Richard Grusin, *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (London: MIT Press, 1999), p. 11.
[92] Ibid. pp. 5, 23. See also 'Afterword: Recognizing Modernity' in Graham MacPhee, *The Architecture of the Visible: Technology and Urban Visual Culture* (London: Continuum, 2002), pp. 222-6. As MacPhee concludes, technology constantly reshapes visual experience without inaugurating a clear break with previous paradigms.

effects of the latest round of 'time-space compression' Harvey partly attributes to 'satellite communication'.[93] The extended scope of remediation therefore offers a new means of understanding how, as 'a transforming form, the urban destructures and restructures its elements: the messages and codes that arise in the industrial and agrarian domains'.[94] As it impacts distinctions between culture and nature, the effects of the media on the restructuring of the 'codes' of the industrial era are addressed in the next section, which develops the concept of 'culturized nature' as an aesthetic response in keeping with the satellite era.

This links in with the second use of the remediation thesis, as a means of exploring what Nicholas Daly calls the 'mediated landscape' of *Crash*.[95] Until now, the treatment of the media has focused on its material geography and links to the new economy. The present discussion considers its effects on the orders of visual perspective, beginning with the heightened significance of the car crash. In the words of Arthurs and Grant, the crash is:

> A symbolic *and* material event that can produce insights about the experience of living in a modern, technologically saturated world [...] through these events [...] we can intimate the force of our conventionalized ways of seeing and being: the discursive management of the unruly materiality of everyday life.[96]

As the matrix through which *Crash* refashions industrial technologies by ICTs, the crash is central to how the trilogy envisions 'a modern, technologically saturated world'. In what James Ballard calls the 'age of the automobile accident', the 'image' of the car is disrupted, 'almost as if its true nature had

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[93] Harvey, *Postmodernity*, p. 147.
[94] Lefebvre, *Revolution*, p. 174.
[95] Nicholas Daly, *Literature, Technology, and Modernity: 1860-2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 111.
[96] Arthurs and Grant, *Introduction*, p. 2.

been exposed by my accident'.[97] The crash, in other words, foregrounds the ways in which the automobile and driver are always-already dependent on other road users and the traffic infrastructure. To defer a traffic jam, Sean Dockray explains, 'we incrementally transfer agency to optimizing algorithms'.[98] The driver's degree of reliance on technology becomes clearer in the event of an accident. As 'bodies-in-vehicles are captured by cameras, averaged into speed data, and described in the machine-prose of incident reports', so the 'informational essence of the body is amplified'.[99] Such complex relays of agency belie commonplace investments in the automobile as a symbol of freedom and help explain how, for Robert Maitland, the crash represents 'some bizarre kind of rationalization'.[100]

A more thorough 'rationalization' of the crash concerns the relationship between what Mark Seltzer calls 'machine culture and the Second Industrial Revolution (the information-control revolution)'.[101] As a symbol of industrial technology which yields the important social science concept of Fordism and situated within the networks of traffic control, the car connects machines of production with ICTs. It is chiefly through the figure of Dr Robert Vaughan that the trilogy explores this relationship. On the one hand, Vaughan is the 'nightmare angel of the expressway', patrolling a 'condensed universe' of 'endless highway systems'. As 'a one-time computer specialist' in 'the application of computerized techniques to the control of all international traffic

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[97] Ballard, *Crash*, pp. 57, 49.
[98] Sean Dockray, Steve Rowell, and Fiona Whitton, 'Blocking All Lanes: Sig-Alerts, Detection Loops, and the Management of Traffic' <http://www.cabinetmagazine.org/issues/17/blocking.php> [accessed 12 November 2008]
[99] Ibid.
[100] Ballard, *Concrete*, p.9. Compare with *Crash*, p. 65.
[101] Mark Seltzer, *Serial Killers: Death and Life in America's Wound Culture* (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 40.

systems', Vaughan on the other hand uses ICTs to ensure 'all the traffic in the world might flow'.[102] By combining these elements, the raised profile of the car in *Crash* is consistent with what John Urry calls its status as the 'quintessential manufactured object' of twentieth-century capitalism *and* always-already contextualized within the system of automobility.[103]

This is not, however, the sum of the car's significance. In the 1995 'Introduction' to *Crash*, Ballard describes the car as a 'total metaphor for man's life in today's society'.[104] Besides being a symbol of industrial production and linked to ICTs, the car is also an index of remediation. Consider Vaughan's iconic vehicle, a 1963 Lincoln Continental. Named after an assassinated president, it is precisely the same vehicle (make, model, and year of manufacture) as that in which President Kennedy was assassinated. The car, as *Crash* demonstrates, is never simply an object-in-itself but always-already mediated.[105] Ballard's 'total metaphor' thereby illustrates some of the changing ways in which an item is organized and interpreted as a result of technological developments in the latter half of the twentieth century.

In addition to exemplifying the processes of remediation, Vaughan's truncated media career restates the role of the automobile as the key to deciphering the broader problems of identity within the trilogy:

> Halfway through his television series he had been seriously injured in a motorcycle crash. All too clearly his face and personality still carried the memory of that impact [...] His features looked as if they had been

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[102] Ballard, *Crash*, pp. 84, 159, 212, 63, 208.
[103] John Urry, 'Automobility and Car Culture', p. 2.
[104] Ballard, *Crash*, p. 6.
[105] *Crash* is also an intertextual reference: the title of a 'magazine devoted solely to car accidents'. Ballard, *Atrocity Exhibition*, p. 28.

> displaced laterally, reassembled after the crash from a collection of faded publicity photographs.[106]

Since Vaughan's 'face and personality still carried the memory of that impact', the wound becomes a convergence point for the reorganization of society. The reconstruction of his 'features', to the extent that they resemble and are reassembled from 'a collection of faded publicity photographs', enmeshes material bodies and reproduced images such that a rethinking of the bounds between the *natural* and the *cultural* is unavoidable. James Ballard implies as much when noting, in the aftermath of a crash, how 'even now Vaughan was dramatizing himself for the benefit of these anonymous passers-by, holding his position in the spotlight as if waiting for invisible television cameras to frame him'.[107]

To recount, the very ways of seeing are changed by the proliferation of media technologies. Consider the following remediation of the body and the self. Where once the body represented 'determinism and boundness' for Ernest Becker, so previously external forces shape James Ballard's experiences of embodiment. 'These plenums of the flesh' contain, James ruminates after sexual intercourse, 'all the programmes of dreams and genocides'.[108] *Crash's* technological remodelling of the individual and social body is most forcefully explored in the traumatological aftermath of James's collision. The 'automobile components' which 'shadowed like contact prints' on James's 'skin and musculature' alter the physical experience of embodiment—what he calls

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[106] Ballard, *Crash*, p. 64.
[107] Ibid. p. 88.
[108] Ernest Becker, *The Denial of Death* (New York: Free Press Paperbacks, 1997), p. 42; Ballard, *Crash*, p. 181.

'organic expertise'—to the degree that the 'crash was the only real experience I had been through for years'.[109]

James's sense of self, as that which Becker calls an 'inner landscape' of 'memories and dreams', is likewise reconfigured.[110] 'I was already becoming a kind of emotional cassette', James explains after being hospitalized:

> Taking my place with all those scenes of pain and violence that illuminated the margins of our lives—television newsreels of war and student riots, natural disasters, and police brutality which we vaguely watched on the colour TV set [...] as we masturbated each other. This violence experienced at so many removes had become intimately associated with our sex acts.[111]

Such are the potent effects of the media that it becomes 'intimately associated' with the subject at the physical and psychological level, prompting an 'emotional cassette' which undermines notions of rational autonomy. James's description of the 'pleasantly promiscuous mind' of his wife Catherine, 'fed for years on a diet of aircraft disasters and war newsreels, of violence transmitted in darkened cinemas', similarly recognizes the deindividualized character of desire.[112] Writing over a decade before William Gibson and Donna Harraway, Ballard points to the effects of technology in the latter half of the twentieth century on understanding and representing the human subject and on human consciousness itself.

'Modern communications has usurped and hijacked everyday reality—it gets between us and [...] any kind of original response by imposing its own myths and fictions on us all', Ballard reasons. 'The reality of life in the late 20th

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[109] Ballard, *Crash*, pp. 38, 39. See also p. 60.
[110] Becker, *Death*, p. 51.
[111] Ballard, *Crash*, p. 37. This literalizes Enzensburger's theory of the media as the 'industry that shapes consciousness'. Hans Magnus Enzensburger, 'Constituents of a Theory of the Media', *New Left Review*, I (1970), 13-36, p. 13.
[112] Ibid. p. 46.

century demands analytic tools that can come to grips with it'.[113] This section has used Ballard's works to illustrate one such 'analytic tool': the concept of remediation. The following section considers how this phenomenon impacts upon traditional ideas of the natural world and associated forms of critical distance.

The Culturization of Nature

> The chromium controls reared in the shadows like the heads of silver snakes, the fauna of a metal dream.[114]

A striking feature of the trilogy is its repeated association between rationalization and remediation. Vaughan's flat displays his 'evident narcissism' through numerous 'snapshots of himself on location', while Richard Wilder's 'determination to make the documentary' about the high-rise was 'part of a calculated attempt to come to terms with the building'.[115] Put simply, the multiplication of media prompts a re-evaluation of the relationship between representation and reality that is particularly important when considering the trilogy's images of the natural world.

This process begins with the increasing prominence of artificial lighting. In *Crash*, the choreographed scene of several prostitutes 'in the postures of uneasy sex acts' among the wreckage of a breakers yard is 'lit by [Vaughan's] Polaroid flash'. Such is the later ubiquity of remediation that Laing remarks on the 'true light of the high-rise' being 'the metallic flash of the Polaroid

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[113] Dibbell, 'Science', p. 52. See also the 'death of affect' in Ballard, *Atrocity Exhibition*, p. 116.
[114] Ballard, *Crash*, p. 178.
[115] Ibid. p. 168; *High-Rise*, p. 48.

camera'.[116] A threefold denaturalization of light occurs between these extremes. Sunlight is initially a neutral medium of illumination: 'The sun fell behind the apartment blocks at White City', '[t]he concrete junction of the two motorway routes shone in the sunlight like an elegant sculpture'.[117] The illumination it affords thereafter becomes increasingly oblique: 'Lit by the afternoon sun, the fading scar on her face marked off these concealed motives like the secret frontier of an annexed territory'. This process of devivification concludes in the 'over-bright sunlight' and the 'sunlight [which] broke through the white cumulus to the east of the island, illuminating the high embankment like a spotlight switched on to a stage set'.[118]

Between these moments, the figurative significance of light has transformed from a source of neutral illumination to little more than a stage prop. James Ballard heightens this sense of artifice when entering:

> An immense traffic jam. From the junction of the motorway and Western Avenue to the ascent ramp of the flyover the traffic lanes were packed with vehicles, windshields leaking out the molten colours of the sun setting above the western suburbs of London. Brake-lights flared in the evening air, glowing in the huge pool of cellulosed bodies.[119]

As suggested by the play on inorganic 'bodies', the windshields' 'leaking out the molten colours of the sun' ostensibly remediate the sun by reflection. This transformation is not, however, understood to be seamless. Refraction, the following examples demonstrate, is a better choice of metaphor. Just as Maitland's view from the traffic island consists of '[b]rake lights pumped' and the 'sunlight flar[ing] off the windshields in electric lances', so the scene from James

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[116] Ballard, *Crash*, p. 10; *High-Rise*, p. 109.
[117] Ballard, *Concrete*, pp. 49, 143.
[118] Ibid. pp. 83, 68, 67.
[119] Ballard, *Crash*, p. 151.

Ballard's car encompasses 'the drifts of broken windshield glass [that] flashed like Morse lamps in the sunlight'.[120] In figurative terms, the 'electric lances' pierce the integrity of nature, which is to say they supplant its organicity.[121] The 'Morse lamps' obliquely signify the violence inherent to this process, since the transcribing of an object from one medium to another violently changes its dynamics. Ballard's use of simile is here instructive: that the sunlight becomes '*like* Morse lamps' iterates its appropriation.

Laing's rhetorical question provides some indicators as to the causes of this change. 'What depraved species of *electric flora* would spring to life', Laing asks, 'from the garbage-strewn carpets of the corridors *in response* to this new source of light? The floors were littered with [...] negative strips, flakes falling from this *internal sun*'.[122] Like the 'countryside' that disappears under a 'top-dressing of chemicals' in *Vermillion Sands* (above), the juxtaposition of artificial light, negative strips, and 'electric flora' associates the new discourse of nature with technological developments.[123]

This concern with the relationship between technological change and the language of nature illustrates and updates Lefebvre's concept of the urban. 'Nature, a desire, and what we call culture', Lefebvre writes, 'are reworked and combined' in urban society as part of its 'second-order creativity'. The

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[120] Ballard, *Concrete*, p. 18; *Crash*, p. 74.
[121] See also *Crash* p. 143 and *Concrete*, p. 73.
[122] Ballard, *High-Rise*, p. 109, my italics.
[123] This theme is dealt with at length in Ballard's later novel *The Day of Creation*. Where television 'doesn't tell lies, it makes up a new truth [...] the only truth we have', so the novel reworks a 'forgotten centre of Africa' in terms of the 'transparent flattery of the lens' and 'television's flattering revision of nature'. Hence 'the West's image of Africa was now drawn from the harshest newsreels of the civil wars in the Congo and Uganda, of famine in Ethiopia, and from graphically explicit films of lions copulating in close-up on the Serengeti or dismembering a still-breathing wildebeest [....] another stylized fiction, a more sensational but just as artfully neutered violence [...] authentic first-hand experience had long ceased to be of meaning in the last years of the century'. J.G. Ballard, *The Day of Creation* (1987) (London: Harper Perennial, 2006), pp. 62, 14, 159, 175-6.

'secondary naturality' of the urban 'produces (creates) meanings from elements that already possess signification', including the city-country dichotomy: the urban 'transcends the opposition between nature and culture created by the ideology of the industrial era'.[124] Lefebvre's reading is important because it links the language of nature with a new means of conceptualizing space. Ballard's 'electric flora' and remediation of the automobile develops the 'secondary naturality' of the urban by associating this transcription process with technological developments that postdate the publication date of *The Urban Revolution*. Between these readings, the remediation of nature is not simply a new way of writing about its subject matter but a response to new ways of conceptualizing space.

The transitional space of *High-Rise* clarifies this point. In terms of the logics of dissolution, the neo-organicist space of the novel provides an important form of periodization. Organicist space was founded, Gandy explains, 'on a clear separation between mind and body that enabled the city to be conceptualized as a coherent entity to be acted upon, disciplined, regulated, and shaped according to human will'.[125] By contrast, the 'more sophisticated and abstract version of the master-servant relationship' manifest in *High-Rise* points to more complex ideas of agency and space.[126] This latter point informs what I call the concept of the 'culturization of nature', which illustrates how the urban problematic reworks and combines traditional ideas of nature and culture.

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[124] Lefebvre, *Urban Revolution*, pp. 174, 175, 144.
[125] Gandy, *Cyborg*, p. 29.
[126] Ballard, *High-Rise*, p. 72. 'Actor Network Theory' takes this more complex relationship between the human subject and technology as its starting point: see Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*.

Looking out of Catherine's office at Heathrow Airport, James Ballard observes 'the hundreds of cars in the parking lot' whose 'roofs [*sic*] formed a lake of metal'. Later, while sitting in a traffic jam on the Western Avenue interchange, he describes '[r]ed tail-lights [that] flared like fireflies around us'.[127] These paradoxical formulations indicate the expiration of the *naturality* of nature. In coalescing to form 'a lake of metal', the 'hundreds of cars' realign the organic associations of the lake with the inorganic denotations of metal, a strategy repeated in the 'fireflies' of the red tail-lights and the 'electric flora' and 'internal sun' of the high-rise. Such early examples of the culturization of nature demonstrate how it forms an aesthetic response in keeping with the new economy and its associated spaces.[128]

Richard Skeates uses the works of William Gibson alongside theoretical and analytical approaches to probe the changing ways in which space and time are experienced and represented through the medium of technology. Therein, Skeates writes, 'the "urban" has effectively taken over from "the natural" and has become a kind of "second nature", complete in itself'.[129] Drawing upon a body of theoretical material that postdates the publication of Ballard's trilogy, Skeates's definition of the urban helps explain the importance of James's descriptions of Heathrow's 'metalized air' and Catherine's aircraft as 'a glass dragonfly carried by the sun'.[130] By replacing the ontological hygiene of the culture/nature divide with their repeated miscegenation, Ballard's works predate

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[127] Ballard, *Crash*, pp. 76, 137.
[128] For other examples, see Ballard, *Crash*, pp. 41, 48, 50, 65, 76-7, 79-80, 125, 139, 151, 178, 184, 196-7, 199, 217; *Concrete*, pp. 26, 39, 45, 64, 70. In the subsequent chapters, this concept becomes more explicitly associated with cinematic and televisual images.
[129] Richard Skeates, 'Infinite City', p. 10.
[130] Ballard, *Crash*, pp. 77, 209.

what Skeates calls the 'late-modern experience' of the urban as an all-inclusive rubric.[131]

This section has shown how the trilogy illuminates new forms of spatial representation and self-perception partly attributable to the new economy. In refracting nature through the lens of culture, the phenomenal reality of Ballard's characters is of a profoundly different order from that which Williams documents in *The Country and the City*. In short, the trilogy exemplifies Skeates's contention that human culture cannot any longer be grounded in 'a language which will confer on it an authenticity based in nature'.[132] The final section explains how this realignment of critical distance relates to the urban problematic, and clarifies how the trilogy remains a threshold space.

The Urban Fabric

> The *urban fabric* grows, extends its borders, [and] corrodes the residue of agrarian life. This expression [...] does not narrowly define the built world of cities but all manifestations of the dominance of the city over the country. In this sense, a vacation home, a highway, [and] a supermarket in the countryside are all part of the urban fabric.[133]

Intersecting the technological cultures of the car and the computer, Vaughan anticipates the importance of mobile communications and ICTs fundamental to latterday theories of space.[134] *Crash* consequently provides an important update to Lefebvre's 'urban fabric'. This is not, however, the sum of the trilogy's contribution to understanding the emergent spatial form. The post-war patterns

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[131] Skeates, 'Infinite City', p. 8.
[132] Ibid. p. 10.
[133] Lefebvre, *Urban Revolution*, pp. 3-4, Lefebvre's italics.
[134] See Stephen Graham, 'Introduction: From Dreams of Transcendence to the Remediation of Urban Life', in *The Cybercities Reader*, ed. by Stephen Graham (London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 1-29.

of suburban migration in Britain largely facilitated by the automobile forms another important strand of the urban fabric. When travelling along the Western Avenue, James witnesses how:

> The traffic sped and swerved from one jam to the next. Overhead, the engines of the airliners taking off from London Airport wearied the sky. My glimpse of an unmoving world, of the thousands of drivers sitting passively in their cars on the motorway embankments along the horizon, seemed to be a unique vision of this machine landscape.[135]

The Western Avenue is a direct link to the geographical and thematic preoccupations of Ballard's later works, while the ubiquitous traffic jam restates the centrality of the car to the experience of the urban. While these are familiar topics, the reference to Heathrow Airport adds a new dimension to this 'machine landscape'. Besides forming the 'background to all [of Vaughan's] pictures', and providing employment for Catherine Ballard, Helen Remington (*Crash*), and the airline pilots and air stewardesses (*High-Rise*), the airport actively reorganizes the very idea of the 'horizon'.[136]

The development of the telegraph provided the first purely technological means of extending the reach of instantaneous communication beyond visible horizons.[137] Subsequent developments extended the range of communication, mobility, and commerce.[138] By the 1960s, airports had in Hobsbawm's opinion replaced railway stations as the 'quintessential building representing transport'.[139] Their metonymic significance explains the conspicuous absence of

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[135] Ballard, *Crash*, p. 54.
[136] Ibid. pp. 101, 72; Ballard, *High-Rise*, p. 10.
[137] This is not to suggest that systems of communication which predate the development of the telegraph (such as carrier pigeon and postal systems) did not reach beyond the limits of the visible horizon. Rather, they did not provide instantaneous communication beyond these visible limits.
[138] See Harvey, *Justice, Nature, and Difference*, pp. 240-1.
[139] Hobsbawm, *Extremes*, p. 262.

railways in the trilogy.[140] The engines of the 'airliners' extend beyond the (broadly) national scale of railways and change the understanding of nature: the aircraft '*wearied* the sky'.[141] This description reiterates how the culturization of nature corresponds to fundamental spatial changes, linking the international scale of air travel and the transnational space of the media with an altered image of the natural world.

As Ballard's works understand them, the international spaces connoted by the airport challenge the very definition of the city. While Shepperton has yet to become 'a suburb not of London but of London Airport', one of his short stories from this period highlights the conceptual importance of aviation.[142] 'My Dream of Flying to Wake Island' (1974) is set around Melville's desire to fly to the Pacific atoll. While recovering from electroconvulsive treatment in an abandoned resort in southern England, Melville spends his days uncovering the ruins of aircraft among its isolated beaches. Though Melville's dream goes unrealized, its deeper meaning directly broaches some of the underlying causes and effects of the newly extended horizon. '"A big airport like the Wake field", Melville explains, "is a zone of tremendous possibility—a place of beginnings [...] not ends"'.[143]

In terms of the constitutive features of the urban problematic, the descriptions of aircraft in the language of culturized nature connect aviation and

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[140] The typical Ballardian image is of decaying railway lines. See *Drought*, p. 149, *Crystal World*, p. 54; *Chronopolis*, pp. 204, 211, and *Super-Cannes*, p. 149.
[141] The airport and associated view from aircrafts is often evoked as a paradigmatic example of urban *space*: for example, see Oliver Gillham, *The Limitless City: A Primer on the Urban Sprawl Debate* (Washington: Island Press, 2002), p. xiii and Dejan Sudjic, *The 100-mile City* (London: A. Deutsch, 1992), pp. 10, 327-8.
[142] J.G. Ballard, 'Airports' <http://jgballard.com/airports.htm> [accessed 25 September 2009]
[143] 'My Dream of Flying to Wake Island' in J.G. Ballard, *The Complete Short Stories*, II vols (London: Harper Perennial, 2006), II, pp. 330-341, p. 337.

the media with the diminution of spatial barriers.[144] The iconic image of the Earth taken during the 1969 Apollo space mission provides another way of thinking about this relationship. While its environmental costs were staggering, the underlying social and industrial organization of this exemplary 'globalization of the imagination' illustrates the significance of Melville's dream and some of the socioeconomic factors underpinning the urban fabric.[145]

'Melville's real interest', the omniscient narrator explains, 'had been in the island itself, a World War II airbase and now a refuelling point for trans-Pacific passenger jets'.[146] Wake Island is therefore firmly embedded within the networks of the military-industrial complex. The circumstances surrounding Melville's psychiatric treatment meanwhile point to his 'dream' being part of the technological unconscious of the new media. For years a 'military test pilot', Melville achieved notoriety by becoming 'the first astronaut to suffer a mental breakdown in space': his 'nightmare ramblings had disturbed millions of television viewers around the world'.[147] In this way, the story provides an important link between the culturization of nature and the extended spaces of the media and aviation. The former is the aesthetic response appropriate to the effects of the latter.

While his later works develop to a greater extent the implications of these changes on the idea of the city (see Chapter Five), James Ballard's milieu—a 'quiet terrain of used-car marts, water reservoirs, and remand centres, surrounded by the motorway systems that served London Airport'—develops a

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[144] Ibid. pp. 331, 334.
[145] Greg Garrard, *Ecocriticism*, p. 162.
[146] Ballard, *Wake Island*, p. 332.
[147] Ibid. p. 339.

nascent form of what Ballard's final novel *Kingdom Come* calls an 'airport and motorway culture'.[148] Heathrow correspondingly forms the convergence point of movement.[149] It is the pivot around which to measure bearings.[150] These factors collectively prompt a reconceptualization of landscape. From his apartment, James observes:

> The endless landscape of concrete and structural steel that extended from the motorways to the south of the airport, across its vast runways to the new apartment systems along Western Avenue. Our own apartment in Drayton Park stood a mile to the north of the airport in a pleasant island of modern housing units, landscaped filling stations, and supermarkets, shielded from the distant bulk of London by an access spur of the northern circular motorway.[151]

Perhaps no other passage in the trilogy better illustrates the questions raised by the urban problematic. The connection between the culturization of nature and the extended networks of communication leads to a move away from Central London. As the recurrent point of departure for Ballard's later works, the 'distant bulk of London' is replaced by an 'endless landscape of concrete and structural steel'. In other words, the bounded identity of the 'distant bulk of London' is replaced by the lack of a discernible boundary in James's 'endless landscape'. Neither city nor country, this 'endless landscape' cannot be measured in conventional terms. It is London unbounded, a space typified by the 'entire zone' of James Ballard's existential 'landscape', which 'was now bounded by a continuous artificial horizon, formed by the raised parapets and embankments of the motorways and their access roads and interchanges'.[152]

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[148] Ballard, *Crash*, p. 26; J.G. Ballard, *Kingdom Come* (London: Harper Perennial, 2007), p. 85.
[149] Ibid. pp. 140, 142.
[150] Ibid. pp. 178, 191.
[151] Ballard, *Crash*, p. 48.
[152] Ibid. p. 53.

This 'continuous artificial horizon' is the aggregate of the various constitutive features of the urban fabric. Using Lefebvre's previous definition of the term, the 'vacation home', 'highway', and 'supermarket in the countryside' are all 'part of the urban fabric' since they are served by the various networks of consumption and communication that Ballard's works illustrate. *Crash*'s descriptions of a 'technological landscape' and an 'endless landscape of concrete and structural steel' thereby foreground important transformations in spatial relations. As Maitland's sense of inhabiting a 'world whose furthest shores were defined only by the roar of automobile engines, the humming of tyres and squeal of brake linings' illustrates, the extended networks of consumption and communication inherent to the urban problematic fundamentally transform the idea of spatial difference by reconfiguring the relations between the city, country, and suburbia.[153]

With regards to the urban problematic, the trilogy occupies a threshold space: it is quantitatively and qualitatively framed between two spatial planes. By exploring the effects of the computer and the automobile to a greater degree than *The Urban Revolution,* the 'cyborg' dimension to *Crash* and the neurological metaphors in *High-Rise* provide important qualifications and updates to Lefebvre's thesis. Conversely, the trilogy has yet to develop a requisite set of adjusted literary tropes. While the culturization of nature and the logics of remediation these works illustrate undeniably point to important new forms of spatial perception and representation, the trilogy's more general response to the new spatial form is one of anxiety.[154] This chapter concludes

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[153] Ballard, *Concrete*, p. 127.
[154] One notable exception is provided in Ballard, *Crash* p. 106.

with a brief discussion of the parallax status of the trilogy in order to emphasize the difference between the urban problematic and preceding concepts of space.

Richard Skeates notes that *Crash* has simultaneously 'familiarized' and 'defamiliarized' the urban, foregrounding the new spatial form 'as a site which literature might take seriously' while rendering it as 'an uncanny, haunted, "overlit" [...] place that is infused with anxiety'.[155] Ballard's 1995 'Introduction' to the novel is a case in point. His description of the 'communications landscape' as an 'overlit realm' mirrors the novel's various allusions to the uncanny.[156] These are not simply instances of what Luckhurst and Daly calls a 'technological uncanny'.[157] While the 'dreamlike logic' of the Road Research Laboratory, the 'nightmare logic' of the crash, and the 'maze of electronic machinery' can be read as such, the more general consensus is one of anxiety concerning the new spatial form.[158] The 'over-heated light of the island', its 'over-bright sunlight', and 'unvarying yellow glow of the sodium lights' in *Concrete Island,* together with the 'over-lit air' and 'brilliantly lit decks' of *High-Rise*, attest to a more general dis-ease concerning the urban problematic.[159]

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[155] Richard Skeates, ''Those Vast New Wilderness of Glass and Brick': Representing the Contemporary Urban Condition', in *Cities on the Margin, on the Margin of Cities: Representations of Urban Space in Contemporary Irish and British Fiction*, ed. by Phillipe Laplace and Eric Tabuteau (Paris: Presses Universitaires Franc-Comtoises, 2003), pp. 25-42, p. 37.

[156] Ballard, *Crash*, p. 4. See also pp. 16, 84, 92, 107, 217, and 218 for examples of an uncanny rubric.

[157] Luckhurst, *Angle*, p. 135; Daly, *Literature*, p. 58. Luckhurst's reading of *Concrete Island* as a 'technological uncanny' overlooks the spatial dimension of Freud's concept. These residual traces attest to an outmoded spatial framework: the trilogy occupies an interstitial point between the modern city and the urban problematic. From this perspective, I disagree with David Cunningham's reading of Ballard's 'fictional world' as containing 'only a rigorously non-nostalgic vision'. David Cunningham, 'Re-placing the Novel: Sinclair, Ballard and the Spaces of Literature', in *Ballardian* <http://www.ballardian.com/re-placing-the-novel-sinclair-ballard> [accessed 6 September 2010]

[158] Ballard, *Crash*, pp. 121-2, 23, 40.

[159] Ballard, *Concrete*, pp. 12, 68, 23; *High-Rise*, pp. 162, 40.

Maitland augments this sense of un-ease, and raises its spatial and literary significance, when he describes the Western interchange as both 'a labyrinth of ascent ramps and feeder lanes' and a 'maze of concrete causeways'.[160] The most obvious point is that a labyrinth is centre-less whereas a maze has a centre: the Westway cannot be both. This paradox highlights the parallax status of the trilogy. Its spatial uncanny, typified by Maitland's 'nightmare logic' of repeating 'some circuitous route through the labyrinth of motorways', is inextricably linked to older ways of conceiving the city.[161]

Sigmund Freud uses an instructive spatial metaphor to elaborate the psychoanalytic concept of the uncanny. While 'walking around one hot summer afternoon' through the 'deserted streets' of Genoa, Freud anecdotally recounts coming across an 'unknown' quarter:

> Nothing but painted women were to be seen at the windows of the small houses, and I hastened to leave the narrow street at the next turning. But after having wandered about for a time without enquiring my way, I suddenly found myself back in the same street [...] I hurried away once more, only to arrive by another *détour* at the same place yet a third time. Now, however, a feeling overcame me which I can only describe as uncanny, and I was glad enough to find myself back at the piazza I had left a short while before, without any further voyages of discovery.[162]

Hélène Cixous's description of Freud's essay as 'less a discourse than a strange theoretical novel' raises the question of its intertextuality.[163]. While the repetitiousness of the 'same street' ostensibly illustrates the return of the repressed which Freud considers fundamental to the experience of the uncanny—'something which is secretly familiar, which has undergone

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[160] Ballard, *Crash*, p. 101; *Concrete Island*, pp. 149, 20.
[161] Ballard, *Concrete Island*, p. 59.
[162] Signmund Freud, 'The "Uncanny"', in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Signmund Freud*, ed. by James Strachey, trans. by James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis, 1955), XVII, 217-56, p. 237, Freud's italics.
[163] Hélène Cixous, 'Fiction and Its Phantoms: A Reading of Freud's Das Unheimlich', *New Literary History*, 7, 3 (1976), 525-48 & 619-45, p. 525.

repression and then returned from it'—the 'unintended recurrence of the same situation' in Genoa illustrates how Freud's account is indebted to earlier, chiefly literary representations of space.[164] The 'painted ladies' are a euphemism for prostitutes.[165] Like that of the flâneur, the archetypal mobility of Freud's account is on foot. When read through the lens of literary criticism, the uncanny effect Freud illustrates through this representation of Genoa—at once labyrinthine in its repetitiousness yet maze-like because the narrator escapes from the scene of anxiety—closely resembles late-nineteenth century representations of London as the 'city of dreadful delight'.[166]

The occasional resurfacing of a spatial uncanny in the Concrete and Steel trilogy, features which in Freud's Genoa were linked to the literary form of nineteenth-century metropolis, are an unbecoming vestige of an outmoded spatial form at odds with the more general logic of these works. Consider the following differences between Freud's and Ballard's representations, which reveal very different psychosexual preoccupations and a dissimilar spatial configuration. Ballard's characters openly refer to prostitutes.[167] In addition, the fact that they seldom travel on foot, save for being marooned in the interstitial

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[164] Freud, 'The Uncanny', pp. 245, 237.

[165] See William Acton's description of prostitutes in Judith Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women, Class, and the State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), p. 44, and Jane Marie Todd, 'The Veiled Woman in Freud's "Das Unheimlich"', *Signs*, 11, 3 (1986), 519-28.

[166] Judith Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London* (London: Virago Press, 1992). Walkowitz's title is a pun on James Thomson's nineteenth-century poem 'City of Dreadful Night'. See James Thomson, *City of Dreadful Night* (London: Agraphia, 2003). The 'painted ladies' and 'narrow' streets of Freud's Genoa closely resemble the 'air of invitation' and 'florid charms' of the 'rows of smiling saleswomen' that character 'a busy quarter of London' in Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886) (London: Penguin Classics, 1994), p. 10, and more generally to Arthur Conan-Doyle, *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* (1892) (Harmondsworth: Penguin Classics, 1994). See particularly 'A Scandal in Bohemia' (pp. 3-29), especially the 'remarkably animated' character of Serpentine Avenue, 'a small street in a quiet neighbourhood' (p. 20). See also Anthony Vidler, *The Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhomely* (Camb. Mass: MIT Press, 1992).

[167] See Ballard, *Crash*, pp. 24, 61, 191.

space of *Concrete Island*, indicates a very different spatial and historical form. The neo-organicist complexity of Ballard's space compares with the organicist form of Freud's Genoa. Put simply, the extended realm of the urban fabric is fundamentally incompatible with the organization of Freud's Genoa and nineteenth-century literary London, as Ballard tacitly admits in the above reference to the 'renaissance city'.

The significance of the uncanny to the 'space' of Ballard's trilogy can be read as a manifestation of anxiety in response to profound change. In response to numerous problems besetting London in the 1960s, particularly an aging infrastructure, old buildings, a lack of housing, and an inefficient approach to traffic management, Porter notes that:

> Despairing of the existing street plan—crumbling, labyrinthine, narrow, and seemingly conceived by a drunken, deranged cartographer—[town planners] were eager to experiment with modernism, with clean lines, with wide motorways and flyovers, with superhighways and freeways, with tower-blocks, high-rise buildings and multi-level precincts, to drag London kicking and screaming into the twentieth century.[168]

Where the characteristic emphasis on the automobile, motorways, and tower blocks in *Crash*, *Concrete Island*, and *High-Rise* is very much part of this 'experiment with modernism', Ballard's occasional deployment of uncanny imagery belong to an older spatial form—the labyrinthine configuration of the nineteenth-century city in Freud's essay. On the one hand, this disjuncture can be seen to illustrate the unevenness of such changes, including that of the urban problematic more generally. Vestiges of older spatial configurations remain. London, to be sure, was not uniformly affected by this 'experiment'. While the trilogy manifests residual traces of an earlier spatial form, the spatial

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[168] Porter, *London*, p. 437.

logic of Ballard's later works—identified and appraised in Chapter Five—exhibits a more developed sense of urban representation.[169]

From this perspective, the Concrete and Steel trilogy occupies a threshold position stylistically, in the development of Ballard's representations of space, and historically, in terms of the transition from the modern form of the city to the urban problematic.[170] As this chapter has shown, while the trilogy helps to identify the advent of a new urban problematic and delineate its constitutive features, it occupies a parallax position therein. Its use of the uncanny disputes Jean Baudrillard's insistence that *Crash* does not contain a 'moral gaze'. If 'the critical judgment [...] is still part of the functionality of the old world', then—pace Baudrillard—Ballard's works are caught between the planes of the 'old' and 'new' world.[171]

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[169] In Ballard's own terms, the trilogy has yet to fully appreciate '[t]he entire consumer goods economy which would one day smother the landscape in high-rises, hypermarkets, and massage parlours'. Ballard, *Day of Creation*, p. 51.

[170] Nicholas Royle writes that the uncanny 'has to do with a strangeness of framing and borders, an experience of liminality'. In this respect, the uncanny traces in the trilogy, and their lack in Ballard's later works, figuratively illustrate the transition from an older conception of the city to the contemporary urban problematic. Nicholas Royle, *The Uncanny: An Introduction* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), p. 2.

[171] Baudrillard, *Simulation*, p. 119. Roger Luckhurst uses the metaphor of the hinge, a 'device which simultaneously joins together and separates two planes or surfaces', to explain the relationship between Ballard's works and literary judgement. While it differs from that of Luckhurst, the present reading offers a new 'spatial' take on the metaphor of the hinge. Luckhurst, *Angle*, p. xiii.

Chapter II. John King: An Urban Poetics

> Unable to locate it conveniently within their simplistic schema of the urban, suburban, or rural, commentators found it easier to sneer than to try to analyse the new city, still less to understand its success (Mark Clapson, *A Social History of Milton Keynes: Middle England/Edge City*, p. xiv)

> It is not the academic literary hacks from the smart side of town, nor the "populists" in search of ever-more-picturesque poverty to stimulate their descriptive whimsy, who can understand industrial housing estates and working-class neighbourhoods (Henri Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life*, Volume I, p. 234)

> The sort of places where the people live [...] the likes of Slough, Hayes, West Drayton, Bracknell, Woking, Camberley, Feltham, Reading, and so on (John King, *Human Punk*, p. 244)

The present logics of dissolution engage the works of contemporary English author John King. Where the first chapter identified the constitutive features and historical circumstances of the urban problematic, this chapter develops a complementary model of urban *place*. While Ballard's Concrete and Steel Trilogy points to an emergent urban problematic in terms of physical space, King's works provide an attendant sense of its social geography.

The thematic division in King's works focus on the changing physical and social geographies of London.[1] The Football Factory Trilogy, which consists of *The Football Factory* (1996), *Headhunters* (1997), and *England Away* (1998), is set within the 'Anglo-Saxon estates of West London'.[2] These works consequently address the physical and social impact of gentrification, the privatization of council housing, and the influence of the tourist sector from the vantage point of red belts, former inner-city working-class Labour wards. The Satellite Cycle, which comprises *Human Punk* (2000), *White Trash* (2001), and

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[1] John King, *The Football Factory* (1996) (London: Vintage, 2004); *Headhunters* (1997) (London: Vintage, 1998); *England Away* (1998) (London: Vintage, 1999); *Human Punk* (2000) (London: Vintage, 2001); *White Trash* (2001) (London: Vintage, 2002), and *Skinheads* (2008) (London: Vintage, 2009).This chapter does not consider *The Prison House* (2004).
[2] King, *Factory*, p. 22.

Skinheads (2008), reappraises the 'long old urban sprawl of the provinces': a byword for the new towns and overspill estates to which many former red belt residents decamped.[3] This move to the Thames Valley marks an important step in the development of the logics of dissolution. Shifting between the council estates of West London and places such as Slough, Uxbridge, and Milton Keynes, King's works help substantiate the critique of Central London developed in the previous chapter by raising important issues of social geography.

Collectively, King's works point to fundamental changes in the structure and experience of space which, to be fully appreciated, entail an overhaul of the spatial terms of literary criticism. The present chapter is accordingly divided into four sections. 'The Problems of Language' provides a thematic overview of King's works, considering how their interest in the politics of language fits in with the wider spatial logics of dissolution. This leads to a reconsideration of the culture-nature relationship in the second section. Utilizing Henri Lefebvre's concept of social space, 'The Urban Realignment of Critical Distance' reads King's receptiveness to the culturization of nature and the effects of automobility against the absolute concept of space entrenched in John Major's image of 'invincible green suburbs'.

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[3] King, *Trash*, p. 9. King's works do not specifically deal with new towns at great length. King's works refer to 'new towns' generally, and Stevenage and Milton Keynes specifically: see King, *Factory*, p. 3; *England*, pp. 47-8; *Punk*, pp. 257-8; *Trash*, p. 4. The New Towns Act 1946 led to the development of places such as Basildon, Bracknell, Harlow, Hatfield, Hemel Hempstead, Milton Keynes, Stevenage, and Welwyn Garden City: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1946/68/pdfs/ukpga_19460068_en.pdf> [accessed 13 February 2011]. See also the definition of 'London Overspill' in a 1973 Parliamentary address by the-then Minister of State at the Department of Environment, Graham Page < http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/written_answers/1973/feb/16/london-overspill> [accessed 13 February 2011]

The timelessness of the latter image illustrates the ideological interests in perpetuating an outmoded image of Britain consistent with the promotion of 'Brand London and the Privatization of Space'. This penultimate section considers how the second circuit of speculative capitalism led to the remodelling of British city centres through gentrification and the privatization of municipal housing. In addition to qualifying his characters' responses to Central London, these changes demonstrate how a 'tourist gaze' is partly constructed through a contrast with the places of King's fiction. Finally, 'Narrating the Urban: A Literary Reappraisal' fits this gaze into a wider literary tradition of pejorative responses to the *periphery* of the city. By mapping out the complex relationship between King's works and the literary canon, this section considers how the urban problematic represents more than simply an urban space before drawing together a series of concluding remarks on the nature of King's logics of dissolution.

The Problems of Language

The politics of the country played out on its dance floors.[4]

King's description of his works as an ongoing search for a 'punk' style 'integrity' and 'honesty' conveys their interest in popular music.[5] Music, however, is not their exclusive cultural reference point. Their frequent allusions to a range of cinematic, literary, and musical sources leads Steve Redhead to dub King a member of the 'repetitive beat generation', a group of writers who emerged in

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[4] King, *Punk*, pp. 158-9.

[5] Steve Redhead, *The Repetitive Beat Generation* (Edinburgh: Rebel Inc/Canongate, 2000), p. 53. Music is a formative influence for his characters: see King, *Factory*, p. 179; *Headhunters*, pp. 91, 262; *Punk*, pp. 143, 195, 245, 264-5, 291; *Skinheads*, p. 69.

the mid- to late-1990s and 'wrote a cultural history as it was happening [...] in fiction, not in the language of sociology, history, jurisprudence or politics'.[6]

The 'repetitive beat generation' at once refers to Conservative government legislation against raves featuring dance music with repetitive beats and alludes to influence of the American 'beat' generation.[7] Redhead's conscious terms of categorization thereby capture many of King's interests: a thematic interest in drug and popular culture and an antagonistic relationship towards authority combined with a stylistic awareness of literary history. This makes sense of what Michael Bracewell calls the 'social landscape' of King's fiction, which, along with its 'psychology and language', is 'regional, volatile and dispossessed'.[8]

King's sense of marginalization and dispossession is chiefly explored through the lens of white, working-class masculinity. Narrated by Tom Johnson, a figure who sporadically appears throughout the trilogy, *The Football Factory* recounts the experiences of a number of figures associated with football. The diverse perspectives encompassed within the novel, from a war veteran through to journalists and football fans, raises the significance of its title. 'None of us are into being a spectator', Johnson explains. 'Leave that to the pundits on the telly'.[9] Its primary concern is not football per se, but the construction of the identity of its supporters and their wider social function.

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[6] Redhead, *Beat Generation* (Rebel Inc. /Canongate: Edinburgh, 2000), p. xxviii.
[7] See also Boyd Tonkin, 'Review of The Prison House' in *London Books*, <http://www.london-books.co.uk/BOOKS/prisonhouse.html> [accessed 15 July 2010]
[8] Michael Bracewell, 'Penguin Classic meets the NME', in *The Independent* <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/reviews/penguin-classics-meets-the-nme-625452.html> [accessed 4 December 2008]
[9] King, *Factory*, p. 51.

The title is therefore an early indication of the subtle treatment of subject matter that is a hallmark of King's works. Its connotations of mass production allude to King's ongoing interest in foregrounding dominant ideologies of representation, for which the football hooligan is the principal focus of the trilogy. *The Football Factory* does not condone violence so much as decode its wider significance.[10] Hostility to the media is a recurrent feature of this critique. The chapter 'Hooligan' concerns several journalists discussing the profitability of the eponymous caricature. 'Professional football journalism was a small circle and they were doing very nicely thank you', one journalist explains. 'If people on the outside took some of their stories a little too seriously, then whose fault was that?'[11]

Though it is set in the same pub as the previous novel, *Headhunters* focuses on a different set of characters. While they are also football fans, the five childhood friends that are the novel's alternating narrators are several years older than Tom Johnson and less interested in violence. Their differing social circumstances allow the novel to explore conflicting perspectives on sexual relationships, gender identity, and gentrification. Will's idealism contrasts sharply with Mango's neoliberal ethos, whose individualism is attributable partly to his success in the financial sector and the earlier disappearance of his brother.[12] This decoding of subject positions extends to the character Carter, whose reductive approach to sex as a 'business transaction' is not explained in

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[10] The novel contains a number of media excerpts whose common denominator is scapegoating and sensationalism: see King, *Factory*, pp. 9, 15, 24, 45, 51, 92, 131, 143, 148, 176. See also *Headhunters*, pp. 42, 108-9, 210; *England Away*, pp. 13, 53, 54, 87, 102, 147, 148.
[11] Ibid. pp. 52-9, p. 56. Compare with John King, 'Bottled Off to the Highest Bidder', in *New Statesman* <http://www.newstatesman.com/200206100008> [accessed December 2 2008]
[12] Compare Will's views on women and sex (pp. 10, 41, 98-9, 103-4, 254) with Mango's use of prostitutes (8, 54, 80, 118, 151, 241), Will's emphasis on class (85) and morality (76) with Mango's materialism (14), idolization of Thatcher (44, 139), espousal of a 'classless society' (61), and justification of 'getting ahead' (43).

terms of demonstrating virility but as the product of circumstance. Following the breakdown of his marriage, Carter's actions ensure that he 'wouldn't get caught out [...] like before'.[13]

The plight of the remaining characters emphasizes King's interest in decoding violence. Following his acrimonious resignation from a labouring job, Balti is left to ponder for the first time in years 'the way he saw things'.[14] His heightened political consciousness, however, is set against an escalating conflict with his former employer. His vengeance brings with it not catharsis but recrimination, 'like something was over and there was nothing to take its place. He felt like that for a bit, then he was a man again'.[15] The novel's denouement exposes the insidious consequences of such 'patriarchal masculinity'.[16] After leaving a party 'the happiest he'd been in years', Balti is shot dead by his past boss.[17]

England Away explores the effects of Balti's death on the final character Harry. While travelling to Germany with a group of other fans to see England play an international match, Harry discovers the delights of travelling such that when he is name-checked in a subsequent novel it concerns his immigration to Thailand.[18] Tommy Johnson's reappearance in the travelling party is set against that of Bill Farrell, a Second World War veteran who was a minor character in *The Football Factory*. The contrast between Johnson's hooliganism and Farrell's wartime recollections provide the trilogy with a powerful means of

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[13] King, *Headhunters*, p. 181.
[14] See 'Northern Lights' in King, *Headhunters*, pp. 267-286, p. 270.
[15] Ibid. p. 175.
[16] See Berthold Schoene-Harwood, *Writing Men: Literary Masculinities from Frankenstein to the New Man* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000).
[17] King, *Headhunters*, p. 307.
[18] King, *Skinheads*, p. 206.

deciphering important questions of class, gender, racism, and xenophobia.[19] Such contrasts attest to the validity of Bracewell's description of King as an 'anatomist of authenticity'.[20]

Human Punk more closely resembles a bildungsroman than King's previous works. The novel narrates in three stages protagonist Joe Martin's development from adolescence to adulthood. Set in Slough during the summer of 1977, 'Satellite' revolves around the lives of four teenagers—Joe, 'Smiles', Chris, and Dave—and their love of punk music. After Joe and Smiles are pushed into the Grand Union Canal for being punks, the latter is left recovering from a coma while those guilty (led by Gary Wells) avoid serious legal reprimand. 'Asylum' begins with Smiles's suicide following a history of mental illness and institutionalization after his coma. By now it is autumn 1988, and Joe is living in Beijing. News of the funeral prompts his return to Britain, during which he speculates at length on the state of the Thatcherite nation. Finally, 'Dayglo' is set in Slough, Spring 2000. After Smiles's hitherto unknown son Luke appears, the three remaining friends explain the circumstances of his father's death. When Luke is beaten up after confronting Gary Wells, Joe retaliates in kind. An orthodox sense of closure is achieved when natural justice is seen to be done: Dave kills Wells in a skirmish while he removes incriminating evidence of Joe's presence from Well's house.

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[19] Compare, for example, Johnson's rationalizations of violence as catharsis and its later links to nationalism (*Factory*, pp. 32, 84, 51, 102, 210; *England*, p. 270) with Farrell's wartime recollections (*Factory*, pp. 163, 161). Contrast Farrell's perspective on patriotism ('Poppy Day', *Factory*, pp. 159-164; *England*, pp. 43, 161) with Johnson's brand of nationalism (*England*, pp. 23-9, 56-61, 91, 239). Other more general narrative conflicts explore the contradictions of the objectification of women and sexual performance (*Factory*, pp. 11, 13, 17, 23, 42-51, 86, 184; *Headhunters*, pp. 5, 10, 11, 49, 50, 54, 55, 80, 85-6, 254; *England*, pp. 37, 108) and masculinity (*Factory*, pp. 64, 68, 154, 191; *Headhunters*, pp. 41, 86, 119, 243, 270-1, 287, 306; *England*, p. 215).

[20] Bracewell, 'Penguin Classic'.

White Trash offers a similarly conventional sense of closure. Set within a vaguely defined town somewhere on the outskirts of London, the novel is divided between the perspectives of two National Health Service (NHS) employees. Ruby James is a nurse from a working-class background, while the senior administrator Jonathan Jeffries comes from a life of privilege and expectation. Their contrasting circumstances inform fundamentally different worldviews. Ruby's almost Panglossian optimism contrasts sharply with Jeffries's Hobbesian bleakness. This clash of ethos reaches its climax when Jeffries suspects that Ruby is about to discover his covert activities, murdering those patients he considers expendable. That Jeffries is himself killed in the process of trying to murder Ruby symbolizes a victory for humanism over the forces of technocratic bureaucracy.

The final novel in the cycle, *Skinheads*, ends with a less spectacular sense of affirmation. It is narrated mostly by original skinhead Terry and his nephew Ray, with a few chapters accommodating the perspective of Terry's teenage son Lol. When diagnosed with an unspecified illness on the verge of his fiftieth birthday, Terry reflects upon his life in the expectation of impending death. After discovering the disused Union Jack Club, Terry purchases a lease and sets about refurbishing the club as a way of leaving a legacy. Ray, meanwhile, is dealing with the stigma attached to being a skinhead. After learning that his young daughter obtained drugs from local dealer Ali, Ray beats him up. Although the incident occurred away from surveillance cameras, the police arrest Ray on unverified and false charges of racially-motivated assault. The novel concludes with Terry arranging for Ray's charges to be dropped after informing Harry Ram, a long-time friend and influential member of the local Asian community, of the circumstances. This restoration of equilibrium is

paralleled when Terry's illness is finally diagnosed as being less serious than expected, leaving him 'bursting with the sort of joy only a reprieved man can feel'.[21]

Skinheads makes explicit much that was previously latent in King's works. One consequence is that the subtle processes of decoding facilitated by narrative contrast are replaced a more polemical sense of righteous values.[22] Consequently, the novel highlights a number of previously implicit themes in King's works. Built by immigrants after the Second World War, the history of the Union Jack Club draws an important distinction between the connotations and denotations of the British flag while indicating 'England's liberal ways'.[23] Following in the wake of the football hooligan and the punk, the novel's interest in the eponymous skinhead continues King's concern with the ideology of representations of 'white trash'. Meanwhile, 'Estuary Cars', the name of Terry's minicab firm, highlights the regional context of King's fiction and the importance of language therein.

This regionalism raises important questions of literary influence. In spite of important thematic and stylistic differences largely attributable to the different geographical contexts of their works, the comparison frequently drawn between King and Irvine Welsh is most usefully deployed in terms of the importance

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[21] King, *Skinheads*, p. 287.

[22] Consider, for example, the justifications for violence (152-3, 240-2, 280-3), patriotism as anti-EU standpoint (16-18, 65, 203), emphasis on standards (123, 239), family values (13-4), and the selectiveness of political correctness with regards to white working-class ethnicity (18, 66, 149, 248, 264, 266). This is not to suggest that the novel does not make important points, since it consolidates many of King's earlier themes: it maintains the distinction between patriotism and nationalism (171), recognizes that 'these were conservative times' (147), while Ray is more vocal politically than King's previous characters when declaring his belief in 'the welfare State and core socialist values' (96) and describing himself as a 'patriotic socialist' (170).

[23] Ibid. p. 199. See also pp. 28 (immigrant history of the club) and 163-4 (different connotations of the flag).

each assigns to class and language.[24] Their mutual focus on socially marginalized characters is redoubled in their use of dialect, which, in the words of Welsh, recognizes that 'language, as well as its context, meaning, and culture are moving pictures rather than snapshots'.[25] It follows that their frequently visceral and colloquial use of language, in particular the occasional inclusion of expletives, is not to be simply dismissed as a manifestation of what Welsh calls the 'petulant desire to shock'. It is, on the contrary, borne 'out of a love for literature and [the] possibilities of its power', combined with the refusal to 'buy into the idea that fiction necessarily exists simply to reaffirm the values of the white, western bourgeoisie'.[26]

The following sections consider how such a refusal to 'reaffirm' bourgeois values is fundamental to King's logics of dissolution, which offer a revisionist account of the social significance of the Thames Valley and towns such as Slough through the contrasting class perspectives of his characters.

The Urban Realignment of Critical Distance

In a new town, concrete taking over from forest.[27]

The Grand Union Canal is throughout *Human Punk* a privileged metaphor of change. Its initial state in 1977 is one of qualified contamination. While surrounded by 'billions of tiny green leaves fighting for a place in the sun,

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[24] Redhead, *Beat Generation*; Bracewell, 'Penguin Classic'; Tonkin, 'Review'. To raise an important thematic difference, Welsh's works are concerned with the politics of drugs consumption while those of King are more interested the politics of consumption per se. Compare in particular *Human Punk* with Irvine Welsh, 'Trainspotting', in *The Irvine Welsh Omnibus* (London: Jonathan Cape and Martin Secker, 1997), pp. 1-350 and *Ecstasy* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1996).
[25] Irvine Welsh, 'The Fictions of Misogyny', <http://www.irvinewelsh.net/journalism.aspx?jid=10> [accessed 4 December 2008].
[26] Ibid.
[27] King, *Punk*, p. 319.

soaking up the light, growing and spreading, forgotten', Joe remarks on how the canal is 'covered in scum, cartons and tins stuck solid'. Thereafter the canal appears increasingly devivified. Its reappearance in 1988 is described in terms of 'the industrial leftovers of the Grand Union Canal'. By 2000, and in spite of having 'been cleaned up' (an allusion to deindustrialization and gentrification), Joe observes that '[t]here's nothing here, not even weeds, no life, everything ripped out'. The canal is, in short, 'more dead than the last time'.[28]

This transformation is juxtaposed with other approximations of nature. Early in the novel Joe describes an orchard as 'not proper countryside' yet nonetheless 'good enough'. This sense of appropriation resurfaces in his later account of an allotment, a 'tiny patch of countryside' emphasizing how he 'doesn't see many fields these days, stuck in town'.[29] Joe's responses demonstrate how King's characters always-already experience nature at a distance. This elemental shift in the aesthetics of nature, transformed from a scene of contemplation to a state of equivalence, corresponds to an ontological overhaul implicit in Joe's description of the allotment as:

> A forgotten world of rusty wire and splintered wood, the plastic Coke bottles stripped of their advertising and used as cloches, old windows for cold frames and concrete-splattered planks, vines budding from dead wood, lining the tilting shed and stringed coconut shells, daffodils bursting out all over, saved from the council tip.[30]

The literal process of recycling is at the same time a figurative form of transcription: the Coke bottles 'stripped of their advertising' and the vines 'budding from the dead wood' of old window frames are imbued with a new level

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[28] Ibid. pp. 36, 171, 336.
[29] Ibid. pp. 41, 275.
[30] Ibid. p. 277

of signification.[31] Such coalescing and transcription is particularly important as regards the urban problematic. The changing balance between culture and nature experienced by King's characters can be explained in terms of the previous concept of culturized nature. Briefly restated, the structural changes in the post-1973 economy symbolized by the extension of the media fundamentally altered the social and physical organization of space. This transformation provides the context for a new trope of nature that signifies the dominance of culture.

While it does not explicitly link this change in the understanding of nature to the extension of the media, Lefebvre's suggestive idea of the urban as 'the source and foundation of another nature or a nature that is different from the initial nature' emphasizes the link between the urban problematic and a revised concept of nature.[32] *The Production of Space* refers to a dialectical method which would move 'from primary and primordial nature to a "second nature"'.[33] Lefebvre's concept of 'second nature' as a 'produced space' helps explain the difference between *primary* and *secondary* nature.[34] Primary nature shares with absolute concepts of space and time (e.g. Newtonian-Cartesian approaches) the sense of being a priori. This compares with the 'produced space' of Lefebvre's 'second nature', which views space and time as indivisible. On this reading, space is always 'social space' as it is produced and reproduced in the context of human interaction.[35]

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[31] See also King, *White Trash*, pp. 3, 253.
[32] Henri Lefebvre, *Urban Revolution*, p. 108.
[33] Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, p. 409.
[34] Ibid. p. 345.
[35] See also the definition of urbanization as process in David Harvey, 'Cities or Urbanization', p. 52.

'The science of space', Lefebvre writes, 'should [...] be viewed as a *science of use*'.[36] King's representations of space correspond with this 'science' since they move from an aesthetic contemplation of nature to focus on its use—a functional approach which concentrates on its social and physical organization. As it informs the conceptualization of space, the recalibration of the culture-nature relationship in the trope of culturized nature is tantamount to the shift from absolute to social space. An intrinsic feature of produced space is the understanding that 'capitalism cannot be analysed or explained by appealing to [...] binary oppositions' since it 'mobilizes triads, tripartite conflicts, or connections'. Lefebvre's characteristic triadic approach informs the sense that capitalist space forms through the intersection of 'land, labour, *and* capital'.[37]

To briefly recap, this notion of space as social process explains the deeper significance of the trope of culturized nature. Its frequent associations with cinematic and televisual images on one level allude to the new transnational economy through the metonym of the media. The insistence on the dominance of culture over nature, however, also recognizes how space is not a natural given but a social product. Where the descriptions of the allotment in *Human Punk* figuratively and literally raise this issue in terms of a modified sense of nature as use-function, the descriptions of landscape in *White Trash* recognize an important formative influence in the production of contemporary space. Early in the novel, Ruby contemplates:

> The cars and the sunset, relaxing, chilling out [...] she heads across the empty ground that separates the nearest houses from the motorway [...]

[36] Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, p. 368, Lefebvre's italics.
[37] Ibid. p. 288, my italics.

> broken glass, rubbish and plants heaped together, a long wooden fence ahead of her marking the boundary, where the houses begin and the empty land ends [...] it lines the motorway [...] a minefield of nails and broken glass, the long splinters of cracked planks.[38]

This '*minefield* of nails and broken glass' is doubly significant. It forms an abject physical space wherein various leftovers from the construction industry exist beside domestic refuse and weeds. In addition, it exemplifies the social space of King's fiction, what Boyd Tonkin calls its 'critique of dominant values from the despised fringes of society'.[39] From this perspective, the indivisibility of physical and social space in this image reiterates the production of space as social process.

Ruby's vista is additionally important because it, like Ballard's *Crash*, demonstrates the ways in which the automobile shapes space. The deeper significance of the view of 'the cars and the sunset' is the proximity of the motorway, which informs Ruby's sense of 'boundary'. In other words, where the bounded space consists of the 'minefield of nails and broken glass', so the outlying region consists not of a redemptive vision of nature but the motorway that is an index of 'automobility'. Sociologist John Urry develops this concept in order to explain the thoroughgoing effects of the automobile, whose various social and technical components (see the introduction) 'best' exemplify the 'development of a putative globalization'.[40] Urry goes on to argue that the role of

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[38] King, *White Trash*, p. 8.
[39] Tonkin, *Review*. As a physical *and* social space, Ruby's vista forms a very different abject space from Ballard's *Concrete Island*, which predominantly focuses on physical space (see Chapter One).
[40] John Urry, *Automobility and Car Culture*, p. 1.

the car in the construction of twentieth-century ideals of the British countryside has been largely neglected.[41]

King's foregrounding of the indices of automobility are, relative to the logics of dissolution, part of a wider recalibration of critical distance which renders obsolete the city-country dichotomy. Consider Ruby's impressions when passing a local baker's shop:

> The breeze blowing over her skin in the summer, when heat rippled off the hot tar, burning barrels, red coals, roasted spuds, that black asphalt smell of baking bread, somewhere between the petrol drifting off the motorway and the fresh loaves.[42]

The 'black asphalt smell' and the petrol haze of the motorways illustrate the sensorial adjustment concomitant with what Urry calls the 'spatial and temporal domination' of the automobile.[43] Other examples of this 'domination' are explored and clarified partly through intertextual reference. William Blake is a recurring point of reference.[44] When Tom Johnson travels with a coach party to Newcastle midway through *The Football Factory*, he recites Blake's famous image of 'England's green and pleasant land'.[45] The context is imperative: the image 'over the fields' of 'birds signing and mist rolling across lush grass', of 'hedges and old oaks' and a 'brilliant blue' sky, is part of that ideal English countryside facilitated by automobility.[46]

Johnson is not oblivious to the irony of the reference to Blake: 'we all understand the difference between this bit of England and our own lives. It

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[41] Ibid. p. 4. E.M. Forster's 1910 novel *Howards End* is a notable exception: see Andrew Thacker, 'E.M. Forster and the Automobile', *Literature and History*, 9 (2000), 37-52.
[42] King, *Trash*, p. 165.
[43] Urry, *Car Culture*, pp. 4, 11.
[44] King, *Factory*, p. 123; *Punk*, pp. 258-9; *Trash*, p. 177; *Skinheads*, p. 168.
[45] King, *Factory*, p. 123. The reference to Blake is from the Preface to 'Milton: A Poem' in *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, ed. by David Erdman (Berkeley: University of California, 2008), pp. 95-6.
[46] King, *Factory*, p. 125.

doesn't have to be spelt out'.[47] Such is the difference between the experience and expectations of King's characters that this idealized nature is itself an alienating experience. 'There's no time to muck about with nature and romance' Johnson contends. 'Maybe we think we're shit and don't deserve something this good'.[48] Recalling that 'myths tend toward proverbs', the reference to Blake performs a textualization of subject matter that at once mythologizes and defamiliarizes nature.[49] A 'mild day in the park with green grass and trees', Johnson later explains, is a 'funny' and 'uncomfortable' experience. Johnson as such voices the consensus of the majority of King's characters. 'We're out of our surroundings' in 'the English countryside', he explains. 'We didn't belong'.[50]

The incongruity between the quotidian lives of King's characters and the countryside both recognizes the effects of the automobile and is itself an index of the changing conceptualization of space. In terms of King's logics of dissolution, the overhaul of the city-country binary is not a cause for lament but the precondition for developing a sense of urban place. Early in *Headhunters*, Mango contemplates driving 'through North London past Hampstead, Barnet, out into Hertfordshire or cutting along the M25 to Essex' to find a 'nice little beauty spot' that would '[d]o them both a bit of good, breathing fresh country air, the hum of the nearby dual carriageway keeping him sane'.[51] The reassurance the dual carriageway offers is indicative of a state of being for which the motorway, as against the countryside, provides the basis of existential orientation. 'The countryside flashed past', Mango explains, 'and you could

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[47] Ibid. p. 125.
[48] Ibid. p. 125.
[49] Roland Barthes, 'Myth Today' in *Mythologies* (Hertfordshire: Paladin, 1973), pp. 109-157, p. 154.
[50] King, *Factory*, p. 205. See also *Skinheads*, p. 103: Terry 'found the countryside lonely, knew it was no escape'.
[51] King, *Headhunters*, p. 52.

understand the road protesters, even though the motorways made life a lot easier'.[52]

If this exhibits an anxious sense of nostalgia, it also heralds an important perceptual shift. Where once the automobile facilitated a particular conception of the countryside, latterly it exists only in a residual fashion. '*Somewhere*', Mango remarks, 'there was a bit of English countryside that would remain forever English'. His consequent sense of etherealness after having 'pulled into the next services and parked up' betrays the paucity of encounters with the countryside: they were 'in *another world* now, an outpost in the wilderness'.[53] Such experiences demonstrate how, in the words of Richard Skeates, King's characters 'have developed a new kind of relationship with both nature and mobility that bears little relation to that which grows out of a rigid adherence to the older forms of [...] seeing and experiencing the world'.[54]

These findings are, however, frequently deemed to be outside the purview of political discourse. The following tranquil suburbs illuminate how political discourse has on occasion overlooked the changing *nature* of Britain:

> Fifty years on from now, Britain will still be the country of long shadows on cricket grounds, warm beer, invincible green suburbs, dog lovers and pools fillers and, as George Orwell said, "Old maids bicycling to holy communion through the morning mist".[55]

This abiding image is taken from a speech delivered by then Prime Minister John Major to the Conservative Group for Europe on 22 April 1993. Delivered little more than a year after the Conservatives' fourth consecutive electoral

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[52] Ibid. p. 165.
[53] Ibid. pp. 53, 148, my italics.
[54] Richard Skeates, 'Vast New Wildernesses', p. 32.
[55] David and Gareth Butler, *British Political Facts since 1979* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006), p. 296.

success, Major's premiership was beset by an ongoing 'crisis of legitimacy' stemming from the pit closure scheme, economic depression, the internecine conflict within the Conservative Party over the question of Europe, and the debilitating circumstances of Britain's withdrawal from the Exchange Rate Mechanism on 'Black Wednesday', 16 September 1992.[56]

The 'invincible suburbs' were part of the government's 'Back to Basics' campaign, which sought to deflect attention from its numerous problems by focusing on social affairs in order to create a 'holistic fantasy' at odds with Britain's increasing social polarization.[57] Partly through the conflation of 'country' both as a nation and part of the land, Major sought to enshrine a timeless sense of community. In so doing, the image dismisses the concept of history as temporal change by constructing a mythical past to define a present which would implacably shape Britain 'fifty years on from now'. Major thereby elided not only what Eric Hobsbawm calls the 'extraordinary dissolution of traditional social norms, textures and values' that marked the latter half of the twentieth century, but also the urban revolution.[58] The implicit distinction between the suburbs and the city, which draws upon a long rhetorical history, epitomizes this point. Where the suburbs are 'invincible' (beyond plight and time) and 'green' (to connote health and naturalness), they present a remedy to the city, around which associations 'of noise, worldliness, and ambition' have long gathered.[59] Major consequently and deliberately overlooks the changing

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[56] Timothy Heppell, 'A Crisis of Legitimacy: The Conservative Party Leadership of John Major', *Contemporary British History,* 21, 4 (2007), 471-490.
[57] Timothy Bewes, *Cynicism and Postmodernity* (London: Verso, 1997), p. 57. For empirical evidence of this growing divide, see Ted Honderich, *Conservatism: Burke, Nozick, Bush, Blair?* (London: Pluto Press, 2005), pp. 29-30.
[58] Eric Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes*, p. 428.
[59] Williams, *Country and the City*, p. 1.

magnitude of the suburbs and overspill estates explored in Ballard's and King's fiction.

The misappropriation of George Orwell further exposes the degree to which Major's vision was at odds with the lives of the majority of British people: the increasing irrelevance of Holy Communion is paralleled by the obsolescence of the bicycle as an indicative form of mobility.[60] In the age of automobility, so King's works suggest, the only 'mist' is likely to be that of 'a haze rising off the tarmac same as fumes from a lorry', 'the trapped diesel fumes [...] the fumes and roaring engines, smoke rising till it can't go any further and settles along the roof', or 'the fumes and debris' of 'the tight London air' that 'smelt like the inside of a garage', with its 'artificial, carbonised warmth'.[61]

The contention that Britain is a nation of 'dog lovers' is a further example of what Timothy Bewes calls the 'depoliticization' of language, which conceals 'the "power-political" nature of all social relationships' by replacing the 'radically insensitive language of *realpolitik*' with that of 'interpersonal relations, of "civility" and 'human decency'.[62] It follows that the question of access to the parks in which this 'nation' of owners will exercise their dogs is conspicuous by its absence. As against Major's cosmetic approach, which in Bewes's words perceives political questions 'not as an index of something underlying but as its

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[60] Writing about the 'big shots of literary journalism' in the 1920s, Orwell writes how they were oblivious to the fact that '[t]he wind was blowing from Europe, and long before 1930 it had blown the beer-and-cricket school naked, except for their knighthoods'. 'Inside the Whale' in George Orwell, *Inside the Whale and Other Essays* (London: Penguin, 1957), pp. 9-50, p. 25.
[61] King, *Punk*, pp. 15, 13; *Headhunters*, pp. 74, 260, 235. Major's emphasis on beer as opposed to lager is another difference between his image and the majority of King's characters.
[62] Bewes, *Postmodernity*, p. 68, Bewes's italics.

own problem, a problem of aesthetics', issues of access are paramount to understanding the comparative view of Kew Gardens in *The Football Factory*.[63]

Towards the end of the novel, Vince Farrell finds that Kew 'wasn't London really, at least not the London he knew. During the summer there was a cricket pitch and the old church opposite served tea and cakes. It was more like a country village'. Though it ostensibly resembles Major's 'country of long shadows', Farrell's sense of Kew's singularity emphasizes the retrenchment of the 'parks in London and all the museums', foregrounding the degree to which 'cutting back and closing down' makes questions of access pertinent. 'If they could get their hands on Kew', Farrell concludes, 'the developers would chop down the trees and flog the land as prime real estate'.[64]

The metaphor of deforestation resurfaces in *Headhunters*, where the stockbroker Mango enshrines the realpolitik underlying Major's speech:

> You had to look out for number one because that was the first law of nature and England was a nature-loving country, where the land had been deforested and carved up for the various business interests guarding the nation's heritage.[65]

This ethos is precisely the free-market dogma Major and later Tony Blair defended by cynically utilizing the 'end of politics' as a means of ideological naturalization.[66] Its seemingly contradictory description of Britain as a 'nature-loving country' whose 'land had been deforested' relates to the concept of 'heritage'. Britain's figurative deforestation registers the ways in which outmoded industries have been rebranded as part of the expansion of the

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[63] Ibid. p. 69.
[64] King, *Football Factory*, pp. 216-7.
[65] King, *Headhunters*, p. 233.
[66] Bewes, *Postmodernity*, pp. 67-76.

tourist sector, 'carved up by various business interests' and commodified in the name of experience.[67]

By understanding space in terms of what Lefebvre calls a 'science of use', this section has connected the 'depoliticization' of language with what King calls the 'business interests' of 'heritage'. The next section considers how the construction of heritage is simultaneously a discursive and material reality through what I call the concept of 'Brand London'.

Brand London and the Privatization of Space

> *Placing*, and the *making of places* are essential to social development, social control, and empowerment in any social order [....] Above all, the city has to appear as an innovative, exciting, creative, and safe place to live or to visit, to play and consume in.[68]

'State branding', according to Peter van Ham, 'is gradually supplanting nationalism'.[69] On this reading, the much-vaunted problems of the nation state in conditions of globalization provide an opportunity for nations to create what van Ham calls a 'brand niche' in the pursuit of 'brand loyalty'.[70] Within the context of the second 'circuit' of speculative capitalism, van Ham's thesis generally recognizes the increased prominence of tourism and specifically

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[67] See Stuart Hannabuss, 'Postmodernism and the Heritage Experience', *Library Management*, 20, 5 (1999), 295-302, and Robert Hewison, *Heritage Industry*.
[68] Harvey, *Justice, Nature, and Difference*, p. 265, Harvey's italics; *Managerialism to Entrepreneurialism*, p. 355.
[69] Peter van Ham, 'The Rise of the Brand State: The Postmodern Politics of Image and Reputation', *Foreign Affairs,* 80, 5 (2001), 2-6, p. 2.
[70] Ibid. p. 6. See also Mark Leonard, *Britain TM: Renewing Our Identity* (London: Demos, 1997), esp. p. 46. In respect of the plight of the nation state, Eric Hobsbawm writes that the history of the world 'will inevitably have to be written as the history of a world which can no longer be contained within the limits of 'nations' and 'nation-states' as these used to be defined, either politically, or economically, or culturally, or even linguistically. It will see 'nation-states' and 'nations' or ethnic-linguistic groups primarily as retreating before resisting, adapting to, being absorbed or dislocated by, the new supra-national restructuring of the globe'. Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalisms since 1780: Programme, Myth, and Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 182.

raises the importance of branding. The transformation of London into what Roy Porter calls a '"Mecca" of tourism' was, he explains, 'intimately linked' to industrial stagnation: the basis of the wealth of nations which financed such tourism (for example, America, Japan, and Korea) was primarily industrial.[71]

This section explains the relationship between the branding of the city and conventional tropes of outer city space in order to understand how King's works provide a logic of dissolution wherein the areas of London overspill are meaningful in their own terms. Through a host of cinematic and televisual analogies, these works juxtapose the process of branding with the physical and social reconstruction of space.[72] Such references thereby attest to the extension of the media *and* recognize how branding, particularly through the construction of heritage, becomes an ongoing means of organizing space. Consider Tom Johnson's provocative description of London's West End:

> The centre's lit up for tourists and everywhere you look there's Arabs selling plastic police helmets and models of Parliament [...] It's all bright lights and fast food hamburger meat [...] a black hole in the middle of London [like Soho, another] abortion with its fake reputation for sleaze.[73]

The ubiquitous tourist paraphernalia acts as a metonym for the restructuring and rebranding of London into a tourist 'Mecca', whereby the increasing prominence of these reproduced objects figuratively and literally symbolizes a dwindling link between historic signifier and its signified. One of the values of King's works is their attention to social consequences of physical change, of

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[71] Porter, *London*, p. 467.

[72] Liverpool is variously referenced through *Boys from the Blackstuff* and Cilla Black, London is likened to *Blade Runner* and referred to in conjunction with Dick Wittington, while Birmingham is mentioned with passing reference to Jasper Carrot. See King, *Factory*, pp. 5, 81, 121, 123, 252, 201. See also the 'postcard-style' of Windsor Castle through to the 'thousands of *Mary Poppins* rooftops' and the 'Post Office Tower lording it over thousands of Monopoly streets' in *Punk*, pp. 49, 67, and *Skinheads*, p. 231, where the characters take issue with Ricky Gervais's representation of Slough in *The Office*.

[73] King, *Factory*, p. 68.

which the 'black hole' is an extreme example. As an undetectable surface which marks a point of no return (an 'event horizon'), a 'black hole' is a region of space whose gravitational field is so great that nothing can escape its pull. This raises two issues: the broader question of racism in King's works, and the use of Soho as a microcosm.

To address the first point, the attention drawn to 'Arabs' undeniably makes for uncomfortable reading. In spite of this ostensibly racist focus on ethnicity, King's works resist such easy categorization. Although 'the lives of his male characters are dominated and characterised by violence and drugs, racism and homophobia', Richard Skeates recognizes how King's works offer 'no moral position or voice with which the reader can readily identify'.[74] Far from being simply racist, the challenge these texts set is to decode the structure of feeling that underlies the responses of individual characters. While such terms as 'black hole', 'abortion', and their proximity to 'Arabs' are, to be sure, distasteful, it would be disingenuous to extrapolate a general consensus from this. Such a manoeuvre would elide the complexity of these works.

While the occasionally venomous use of language that reveals a deep sense of anger dissuades ready identification, this is not simply a conservative or nationalist lament. *The Football Factory* creates friction between Tom Johnson's views on Soho and Vince Farrell's left-wing history of London's racial conflicts.[75] *Human Punk* adds a new dimension to this racial history of London. 'There's probably more white Londoners outside the M25', Joe Martin observes, 'than there is in London proper, from Margate to Milton Keynes, Southend to

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[74] Skeates, 'New Wildernesses', p. 38.
[75] See 'Bombay Mix' in King, *Factory*, pp. 176-182. See also the descriptions of the East End and Slough in *Skinheads*, pp. 55, 285,

Reading'.[76] If 'London proper'—a term which is discussed and ultimately refuted in the final part of this chapter—is taken to include what Tom Johnson earlier calls the 'plastic Disneyland of the West End', the dispersal of 'white Londoners outside the M25' is an ethnic *and* class register of the degree to which London has been physically and socially transformed by tourism and gentrification.[77] The connotations attached to these references, then, are not simply racist. They disclose enmity for the circumstances surrounding the social and physical changes to London that remain largely overlooked by recent fiction.[78]

This resistance to simple identification is for Richard Skeates a fundamental part of King's representations of space:

> It is precisely the lack of suggestions of unhomeliness or uncanniness lurking in the city margins that [*Human Punk*] provides that contributes to its difficulty for readers who have become used to enjoying the comfortable shiver of distaste at representations of the marginalised "other" stranded between city and country.[79]

King's refusal to indulge conventional sensibilities vis-à-vis the city's 'margins' is a notable feature of his logics of dissolution. Their spaces of representation are not simply interstitial points *between* the city and the country: they are meaningful in their own terms. This explains how King's works augment the urban problematic first identified in Ballard's Concrete and Steel Trilogy. In addition to identifying the

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[76] King, *Human Punk*, p. 257

[77] King, *Factory*, p. 225. It is worth noting that King's works follow a sociological tradition of focusing on the social effects of gentrification in London. Since being coined in 1964 by Ruth Glass to describe the process by which 'many of the working class neighbourhoods of London have been invaded by the middle-classes' until 'all or most of the original working-class occupiers are displaced and the whole social character of the district is changed', the concept of gentrification has closely been associated with London. Ruth Glass, *London: Aspects of Change* (London: Macgibbon and Kee, 1964), p. xviii.

[78] Consider the glossing over of the displacement of the 'old working class of the East End', who '*evacuated* their dying homeland' and 'found[ed] new pebbledashed colonies in Essex and beyond' in Matthew D'Ancona, *Going East* (London: Sceptre, 2004), p. 157, my italics. To evacuate implies escape from a natural disaster, and so obviates the pressing question of attributing agency and responsibility for these changes.

[79] Skeates, 'New Wildernesses', p. 38.

physical and conceptual changes to the understanding of space, King's works point to the increasing experiential relevance and literary necessity of moving beyond the 'margins' of the city-country dichotomy.

The Football Factory Trilogy elaborates the causes of the increasing experiential distance between King's characters and notably wealthy parts of London. In *Headhunters*, Balti ponders while walking to the train station how '[i]t didn't feel like London in Barnes. He could've been at the seaside or in some market town'. King's treatment of gentrification is more clearly illustrated by the differing responses to Fulham. Its many 'up-market restaurants' demonstrate initiative to the stockbroker Mango.[80] His perspective is, however, an exception to the rule. Johnson's alienated sensibility when walking down Fulham Palace Road expresses the more general consensus of King's works: 'I watch people going into pubs and restaurants. An outsider'. To be in Central London is already to assume an outsider's perspective:

> There's an atmosphere to this place. It even smells different. This part of Westminster means money. Big money. There's no rundown cornershops or takeaways. Nothing but luxury flats and Government buildings. The flat's in the middle of London but it doesn't belong here. It's another dimension. A world without people.[81]

The 'atmosphere' of Westminster is in no small part attributable to the Thatcher government's privatization of municipal housing during the Eighties. Its purpose, David Harvey explains, was to provide a means of 'bribing or forcing low-income populations out to the periphery in cities like London' and so transform former red belts into 'centres of intense gentrification'.[82] The resulting speculation created an absence of affordable housing in commercially attractive

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[80] King, *Headhunters*, pp. 276, 228. See also pp. 243-4.
[81] King, *Factory*, pp. 155, 189.
[82] Harvey, *History of Neoliberalism*, p. 164.

central locations, prompting homelessness or long commutes for those in low-paid service jobs.[83] Westminster is therefore figuratively part of a 'world without people' inasmuch as the majority of working-class people have been priced out of the market.[84]

Johnson clarifies this 'world without people' early in *England Away* while discussing the 'symbolic' meaning of the Channel Tunnel:

> Taking the fast train through to the new shopping precincts of Central London. Looking for the excitement of football mobs, punk rockers and traditional London boozers. But all the Londoners will have been forced out to new towns by then, the city overrun by Britain's yuppies and the world's rich tourists. You can't afford to buy a house where you grew up, so if you want to get ahead you have to move down the arterial roads.[85]

This extrapolation represents both the other 'dimension' of Westminster and (in terms of the second point) that sense in which Soho represents a microcosm of change. The 'new shopping precincts' that replace 'all the Londoners' attest to a vicious cycle of socioeconomic changes prompted and reinforced by gentrification. In his account of the 'hidden costs' of gentrification in Central London, Rowland Atkinson notes that a 'new service infrastructure' emerged to accommodate to the new, wealthier residents of Kensington. Bars and delicatessens replaced pubs and grocers, increasing the cost of living or extending the time and distance of shopping trips.[86] While such changes are

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[83] This explains Joe Martin's 'feeling [that] people were being bought off in the South [in the 1980s], as long queues formed for mortgages and tax cuts became more important than welfare'. King, *Punk*, p. 150.

[84] In other words, King's Westminster reflects the 'pronounced losses of working class groups and private renters' Atkinson detects in Hammersmith, Kensington, and Camden from the 1960s onwards. Atkinson, 'Gentrification', p. 312.

[85] King, *England*, pp. 47-8. Anti-EU sentiment is a common feature of King's works. See, for example, *Factory*, p. 13; *England*, pp. 13, 48, 238; *Skinheads*, pp. 66, 203, 266. This is not, however, a simple form of xenophobia. A more considered response sees the EU as a byword for business, as in *England*, pp. 75, 161, and *Skinheads*, pp. 16-8. As Ray is at pains to point out, asylum seekers are not the enemy—they are seen as a productive feature in Britain's history—but business interests: *Skinheads*, p. 66.

[86] Atkinson, *Gentrification*, p. 321.

frequently perceived as improvements, these impressions belie the fact that in Camden and Kensington 'the need for various public services was eroded by changes in consumption patterns in reaction to changes in the profile of local residents'.[87] Collectively, these changes explain Johnson's account of the city being 'overrun' by the wealthy. As real-estate speculation assumes an increasingly important role in accumulating surplus capital, so the social and physical geography of the city changes: 'all the Londoners' will have been transposed by 'Britain's yuppies and the world's rich tourists'.[88]

In terms of the logics of dissolution, this perceptual shift in the understanding of Central London is an essential feature of King's revisionist project. Since Britain has, as John Urry notes, 'come to specialize in history and heritage' within the field of tourism, 'this affects both what overseas visitors expect to gaze upon, and what attracts UK residents to spend time holiday making within Britain'.[89] The language of authenticity and cultural capital Johnson uses elsewhere in his extrapolation—'there'll be nothing left but a maze of empty galleries, Jack the Ripper tours and coach trips out to the shires to view the natives'—indicates once again how to be in Central London presupposes for King's characters an outsider's perspective.[90]

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[87] Ibid. p. 320. In providing the local authority with what Atkinson calls 'a self-serving legitimation for the loss of such public services' since it argued that that such services were unnecessary, these changes illustrates the localized effects of David Harvey's concept of urban entrepreneurialism (see the Introduction).
[88] This emphasis on 'all the Londoners' also reiterates how King's works are not simply racist: their critique is primarily class-based.
[89] John Urry, *The Tourist Gaze*, 2nd edn (London: Sage, 2002), p. 45. See more generally 'The Changing Economics of the Tourist Industry', pp. 38-58.
[90] King, *England Away*, p. 48. See also the description of Hackney, Hoxton, and the East End on this page, and the descriptions of the other areas 'gutted and gentrified by the sort of scum that leeches off other people's culture' in *Punk*, p. 243. See also p. 258.

This section has, in conclusion, explained how in King's view deindustrialization, real-estate speculation, and tourism together reshape city space, a perception of urban existence that arguably captures many of the dynamics of actual historical change. The interaction of these processes explains the repeated sense of alienation from and within Central London experienced by King's characters. This, however, forms only one part of the tourist gaze. As Urry points out, the gaze is defined by what it is contrasted with.[91] The final section of this chapter considers how 'Brand London' is constructed through the contrast with areas such the London overspill and new towns. In addition, it discusses how King's representations of Slough and the Thames Valley comprise a logic of dissolution that reappraises yet another neglected literary geography and history.

Narrating the Urban Fabric: A Literary Reappraisal

> The great arterial roads to the London country sprawl surrounding the capital. This is where you find the people, in the low-lying landscape of the satellite towns, the new-brick estates filling in the connecting villages and junctions, lining the trunk roads [...] a free-for-all paradise where the property is cheap and there's a chance to get ahead.[92]

Home for many of 'the people' displaced from London by gentrification or taking a 'chance to get ahead', the 'London country sprawl' is the context of King's later works. A notable feature therein is the attempt to move beyond binary frameworks of spatial perception and representation. Where Joe Martin's definition of 'sprawl' represents a 'free-for-all paradise', so Ruby James wryly

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[91] Urry, *Gaze*, p. 1.
[92] King, *Punk*, p. 233.

refers to it as 'the workers dream, make no mistake'.[93] An inherent feature of King's logics of dissolution is the move beyond simply celebratory or critical responses to urban *sprawl*. Joe's early evocation of Slough through 'grey slabs of stone and steel, small glass squares' creates an aesthetic of mass production that relates to what Hobsbawm calls the 1960s use of 'factory methods' to construct public housing.[94]

While King's works are aware that places like Slough are beset by a number of problems—not least those deriving from a lack of investment—they recognize, along with those of Ballard, that the outer metropolitan area is an increasingly important spatial paradigm and subject of literary attention. By critically engaging conventional ideas of London, both writers complicate notions of a literary London canon. The literary and intellectual history of Slough is a case in point. *Human Punk* begins with an epigraph from George Orwell's wartime essay, 'England Your England'. 'The place to look for the germs of the future England', Orwell writes, is in 'light-industry areas' and 'along the arterial roads' in Slough and other places 'on the outskirts of great towns'. Therein:

> The old pattern is changing into something new. In those vast new wildernesses of glass and brick the sharp distinctions of the older kind of town, with its slums and mansions, or of the country, with its manor houses and squalid cottages, no longer exist. There are wide gradations of income but it is the same kind of life that is being lived at different levels.[95]

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[93] King, *Trash*, p. 4. See also *Factory*, p. 179: [Y]ou're living in the real world, not some whitewashed Tory ideal of a constipated paradise or socialist ideal of good-natured underdog, just people'.

[94] King, *Punk*, p. 49; Hobsbawm, *Extremes*, p. 262. Other examples of this aesthetic include the 'spread of houses and matchbox cars' and 'the spread of houses and factories the same as a plastic model' that comprises the 'new model estates'. King, *Punk*, p. 49; *Trash*, pp. 4, 9.

[95] 'England Your England' in Orwell, *Inside the Whale*, pp. 63-90, p. 89. This essay is an extract from a longer essay, 'The Lion and the Unicorn', published in 1940, and contained in George Orwell, *The Collected Essays, Journalism, and Letters*, ed. by Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus, III vols (Jaffey, NH: Nonpareil, 2000), II: My Country Right or Left, pp. 56-108.

In an interview I conducted with John King in February 2009, he described this citation as being 'perfect' since Orwell's 'predictions', along with those of Aldous Huxley, 'have come true'.[96] This is undoubtedly correct. Orwell's focus on the 'outskirts of great towns' and emphasis on light industry respectively anticipate the effects of Britain's post-war suburbanization and later deindustrialization. The 'vast new wildernesses of glass and brick' that are an effect of 'cheap motor cars' also anticipates some of the spatial effects associated with automobility.[97]

Orwell's language nevertheless remains problematic. The connotations of the 'germs of the future', and the 'new red cities of Greater London' that 'are [...] the rash that accompanies a change', are unfortunate given their association with the trope of the city as an organic entity which has, throughout its long history, mostly been used to identify its pathological development.[98] This is perhaps attributable to Orwell's affinity with ordinary England which, Raymond Williams contends, was 'not so much of membership as of conscious affiliation', the 'emotions of an exile from a lost country'.[99] The more patronizing elements of Orwell's account are signally absent from the abridged Penguin version, which omits the link between the 'germs of the future' and a 'rather restless, cultureless life'.[100]

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[96] This email correspondence is included in the appendices, and is hereafter referred to as 'personal correspondence'. The epigraph in *White Trash*, 'Ending is better than mending', is taken from Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World* (1932) (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), p. 49.
[97] Orwell, *England*, p. 89. The divine status of 'Our Ford' in Huxley's novel is another prescient account of the later importance of automobile, and helps explain King's ringing endorsement of both works. See Huxley, *World*, pp. 31, 41, 129.
[98] Orwell, *England*, p. 89. A prime example is the description of London's cancerous development in Lewis Mumford, *City in History*, p. 618.
[99] Raymond Williams, *Orwell* (London: Fontana, 1971), pp. 16-17, 28.
[100] Orwell, *Essays,* pp. 77-8.

By contrast, King's works excoriate the tradition of spatial representation typified by John Betjeman's 1937 poem *Slough*. Consider the first four lines:

> Come friendly bombs, and fall on Slough
> It isn't fit for humans now,
> There isn't grass to graze a cow
> Swarm over, Death![101]

Betjeman's negative characterization is the subject of extensive reflection in *Human Punk*. While ruminating on the 'modern world', Joe Martin considers Betjeman to be one of a number of 'self-appointed experts' that routinely pass through and condemn Slough, 'one of thousands of places where social commentators never stop, flashing past in a train or on a motorway'.[102] Martin's critique is a response to the poem's failure to differentiate physical and social geographies.[103] His emphasis on mobility thereby foregrounds the importance of class perspective: Betjeman's privileged socioeconomic position 'in first class' is reflected in the viewpoint, 'cruising through and passing judgement, slagging off thousands of ordinary lives'.

Through Joe situating Betjeman in a long line of 'social commentators', an implicit distinction emerges between Orwell's perceptive observations on physical geography and the social inferences drawn thereafter.[104] The latter approach is, in Joe's words, ignorant to the fact that:

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[101] John Betjeman, *John Betjeman's Collected Poems*, ed. by Earl of Birkenhead, 3rd edn (London: Murray, 1970), pp. 22-4. All subsequent line references are to this edition.
[102] King, *Punk*, pp. 315, 316. See also *Skinheads*, p. 152.
[103] The poem's vituperative longing to '[m]ess up the mess they call a town' (9) is followed by a condescending patrician beneficence: 'spare the bald young clerks who add/The profits of the stinking cad' (21-22) since '[i]t's not their fault they do not know/The birdsong from the radio' (25-26).
[104] The following passage is missing from the Penguin edition: 'It is a rather restless, cultureless life, centring round tinned food, *Picture Post*, the radio, and the internal combustion engine'. Orwell, *Essays*, pp. 77-8. This invites comparison with Betjeman's metonymic chain: 'Tinned food, tinned meat, tinned milk, tinned beans/Tinned minds, tinned breath' (7-8). A momentary convergence in their perspectives should not, however, be mistaken for a general concordance

> It takes time for things to grow, for a culture to sink roots and flower [...] Over the years life has spread out, the local markets and pubs as well as the houses, roads, depots, shops, jobs. Betjeman rolled through and didn't bother to get off. He sums up the condescending attitude of this country's Establishment, who look at the housing they've forced people into and turn their noses.[105]

King's logics of dissolution recognize that the 'spread' of post-war developments like new towns and overspill towns acquire cultural significance over time, thereby moving beyond definitions of the urban as space (not 'place'). His characters accordingly insist on the social character and production of place, the 'local markets and pubs as well as the houses, roads, depots, shops, jobs' Joe refers to. In this way, Joe follows in the lineage of Lefebvre, who writes in the second epigraph that neither 'academic literary hacks' nor 'populists' can understand housing estates and working-class neighbourhoods. To this should be added: to understand *their sense of place*.

While Ballard's works are less concerned with social geography, they share with King's oeuvre the desire to reinvest meaning in those areas ritually condemned as meaningless. King views such condescension and oversight as far from naïve: 'the elite can't say they hate it because it is a "working class town", so they invent a list of other, often contradictory reasons. It is dull... violent... faceless'.[106] His works therefore constitute a political and literary rejoinder. In repudiating class disdain for the post-war developments such as overspill towns, King's novels offer a timely reminder that such areas are a subject worthy of literary attention. New towns are 'the sort of places where the people live', and as befits this fact, worthy of respectful analysis. They are not

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in their political and social outlooks. See Peter Lowe, 'Englishness in a Time of Crisis: George Orwell, John Betjeman, and the Second World War', *The Cambridge Quarterly*, 38, 3 (2009), 243-63.

[105] King, *Punk*, p. 316.

[106] Keyes, 'Personal Correspondence'.

merely spaces, but places: 'Everywhere is somewhere', Joe insists, and home to 'families, friends, work, history, [and] culture'.[107]

Put simply, King's works are important because they represent Britain's changing physical space and attendant social geography in a non-disparaging language. Their nascent sense of identity does not emerge from external contrast but internal difference. Towards the end of *Human Punk*, Joe considers how Britain has fundamentally changed over the last forty years:

> Cities have spilt into the countryside, but the lecturers are stuck in the sixties explaining how half the population is stuffed inside a single Birmingham high-rise [....] Britain is a post-industrial society, but the image of the common people is stuck in grainy black-and-white footage, a dusty column of Jarrow marchers and the coal-dust face of a Yorkshire miner, pre-war East London ragamuffins and shoeless Somerset peasants nailed to the back of a plough. Heavy industry has been and gone, the green fields of England soaked in insecticide. Protesters travel by coach and the pits have been flooded. The East End has moved out to Essex.[108]

Heralding a new urban problematic wherein older, more conventional ways of seeing and representing the world no longer apply, this important passage merits detailed consideration. The first sentence foregrounds a disjuncture between what Lefebvre calls lived and conceived space by pointing to the dissolution of the city-country dichotomy and the obliviousness of academics to this fact. It amounts to the difference between everyday practices that inform the symbolic dimension overlaying physical space and images that define space such as academic theories. A byword for high-volume inner-city housing, the lecturers' focus on the high-rise is 'stuck in the sixties' since it fails to recognize the fundamental effects of changes such as the second circuit of capitalism upon the organization of space.

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[107] King, *Punk*, pp. 244, 211.
[108] Ibid. pp. 259, 258.

The second sentence redoubles this sense of obsolescence. That Britain is a 'post-industrial society' fits in with the urban problematic given that emergence of the second circuit of speculative capitalism radically changes the organization and uses of space. The urban problematic is a qualitative and quantitative change: where 'heavy industry has been and gone', meaning that industrial production is no longer the principal means of capitalist accumulation, so 'cities have spilt into the countryside'. In other words, the hygienic distinction between cities and countryside that was meaningful for Raymond Williams is no longer appropriate to the task of describing the social conditions and physical experiences of King's representations—hence 'cities have *spilt* into the countryside'.

This need for updated forms of representation is amplified by the obsolete iconography of 'the common people'. The contrast between the image of the Jarrow marchers and the protesters that now 'travel by coach' registers the effects of automobility, while the dispersal of the East End to Essex is a reminder of the social and physical changes in London during the post-war period.[109] These factors collectively leave 'the green fields of England soaked in insecticide'. In this instance, the culturization of nature appears as an aesthetic response that is both in keeping with deindustrialization and aware of the need for literary reappraisal, suitably updating Blake's 'green and pleasant lands'.

Throughout the 'invincible green suburbs', Brand London, the lecturers' inquiries, and the imagery of the 'common people', the common denominator is that each is an analogue or ideologue of commercial interests. Such 'discursive

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[109] See the discussion of 'Outer Metropolitan Area' and 'new (or overspill) towns', and more particularly South Essex, in Porter, *London*, p. 426.

battles' are intimately related to the branding of the city. They are 'part of the game', Harvey explains, 'and advocates (in the media and academia, for example) gain their audience as well as their financial support in relation to these processes'.[110] This sets the context for the resurfacing of the tourist gaze in *White Trash*, which maps out different perspectives on the urban problematic partly through allusion to distinct literary traditions.

Through its alternating narrators, NHS administrator Jonathan Jeffries and nurse Ruby James, the novel plays out a series of such 'discursive battles'. Jeffries's standpoint on the 'satellite town in which he worked' is founded on the critical distance afforded by his weekend home, a Central London 'apartment' the journey from which 'merely emphasized the shabby nature of these outer zones'.[111] Drawing upon the rhetoric of great cities, this stance perpetuates what Elizabeth Wilson calls 'a long tradition of rejection of the periphery, the conurbation, [and] suburban sprawl'.[112] His views on the consequence of socioeconomic change are particularly instructive with regards to the construction of the tourist gaze:

> Supersonic jets [...] brought in the finest minds from around the globe. At their head the best the United States had to offer. Corporate generals. International bankers. Free-market philosophers dedicated to the spread of opportunity and wealth. The airliners also brought tourists whose welcome [money] helped boost the economy. These were wealthy men and women fully appreciative of the real Britain. The London of Shakespeare, Buckingham Palace, and the Houses of Parliament.[113]

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[110] Harvey, *Monopoly Rent*, p. 409.
[111] King, *Trash*, pp. 43, 44.
[112] Elizabeth Wilson, *Urban Space*, p. 153.
[113] King, *Trash*, p. 246.

The vastly extended horizon of the 'supersonic jets' and the tourists therein connote the importance of creating and perpetuating cultural capital.[114] Jeffries's rubric of authenticity shows how the tourist gaze is constructed through signs: the 'London of Shakespeare, Buckingham Palace, and the Houses of Parliament' is a familiar travel brochure iconography. The epistemological bedrock of this perspective is a centre-periphery binary: where Jeffries's 'three-bedroom affair overlook[s] the Thames [...] North bank of course', so it provides the critical distance necessary to diagnose the 'rancid sprawl of this awful town'.[115] On this basis the urban is an abomination in two senses: it undermines the clear lines of order, the possibility of which threatens the 'welcome' money which 'helped boost the economy'. The substantive changes wrought during the post-war period accordingly have no place in this account of 'the real Britain', which perpetuates a static vision of London largely by insisting on the pathology of the London overspill.[116]

Questions regarding the tradition to which Jeffries's perspective belongs are raised by his response to terraced housing, which he associates with endemic failure. The 'terraces coming right up to the edge of the dual carriageway' consist of 'cheap housing and tacky shops lack[ing] character'. Recalling the critique of Betjeman 'flashing past' Slough, Jeffries discerns only existential mediocrity while driving to work:

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[114] See Chapter One on the reconstruction of the City of London as a centre of the financial industry.
[115] King, *Trash*, pp. 240, 185. See also p. 312: Jeffries's 'private gallery' is within a gentrified 'former factory'.
[116] Jeffries's and Joe Martin's respective use of William Blake illustrates a fundamental difference. The former valorizes the 'green and pleasant land' while arguing that 'those dark and satanic mills had only existed in the warped mind of the revolutionary Blake', while the latter insists that the land is saturated with insecticide (above). King, *Trash*, p. 177.

> These streets were so empty of culture it made him despair. Endless houses butted the tarmac as if they were blank walls. He passed parades of shops, service stations, pubs, yards, fast-food outlets, a snooker hall, patches of wasteland. The burnt out remains of a car sat in a lay-by. There was no individuality and very little colour to stir the spirit.[117]

In the most general sense, this *view from above* dismisses the quotidian narrative it associates with the streets.[118] This sublimated fear of the masses, the 'despair' at the absence of 'culture', fits into a conservative response to modernity associated with, among others, T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound. The 'burnt out remains' and decaying vestiges of nature found in Jeffries's 'patches of wasteland' echo the entropic sensibility of Eliot's poem *The Waste Land:*

> What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow
> Out of this stony rubbish? Son of man,
> You cannot say, or guess, for you know only
> A heap of broken images, where the sun beats,
> And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief,
> And the dry stone no sound of water (I. 19-24).[119]

Eliot takes London to be an archetypal 'broken image', an 'unreal city' in the lineage of '[f]alling towers/Jerusalem Athens Alexandria/Vienna London' (III. 207; IV. 373-5). From this perspective: where the Greek polis was the origin of philosophy, so London represents the endpoint of both.[120] Eliot's sense of cultural crisis is mapped through, and is consonant with, the dwindling image of the city. Contrary to Enlightenment notions of progress, the 'stony rubbish', the 'dead tree [that] gives no shelter', and the 'dry stone' without the 'sound of water' all play on a vegetative myth which dissociates London from the nourishing land. Rendering London as a depleted industrial city '[u]nder the

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[117] King, *Trash*, pp. 46, 177-8. See also p. 323: 'the white scum who inhabited the terraces and flats'.
[118] For example, Jeffries views the 'common people' as having 'corrupted the language with their ever-changing slang', King, *Trash*, p. 308.
[119] T. S. Eliot, 'The Waste Land' in *The Waste Land and Other Poems* (London: Faber and Faber, 1990), pp. 21-49, p. 23.
[120] See David Cunningham, 'Concept of Metropolis'.

brown fog of winter dawn' (l. 61), Eliot's poem betrays a conservative revulsion of modern industrial society.

Emerging from Eliot's litany of literary and mythical allusions is the basic ideological form of Jeffries's assessment.[121] Like the 'falling towers' of London, Jeffries' description of the town as a 'no-man's land [...] neither here nor there' connotes cultural depravity through spatial metaphor.[122] This negative logic of disintegration uses the ontological status of the town ('neither here nor there', neither country nor city) as an illustrative and substantive example of its social critique. While important differences remain, not least the fact that his perspective perpetuates (contra Eliot) the 'cultural capital' of 'The London of Shakespeare', Jeffries's response shares Eliot's elitist disdain for common experience which impels detachment from the crowd and, more significantly, uses the disintegration of spatial categories to affirm social inequality.

In terms of the logics of dissolution, Jeffries's approach links together the branding of the city with the construction of the tourist gaze: the former creates the latter in part through a pejorative contrast with the outer metropolitan area. His outlook, moreover, utilizes points of reference unavailable to King's other characters. 'He wished he could instruct the skinhead to keep on driving. Deep into the countryside. He imagined small hamlets and green fields, ancient country pubs and a village cricket match'.[123] The similarities with Major's invincible suburbs are deeper than a passing resemblance. Neither manifests a

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[121] Joe Martin implicitly rejects the literary perspective typified by Eliot when explaining 'that was what made these people [punk] so special, their reference points the same as ours, right there in our own lives, not thousands of miles and years away in ancient Greece'. King, *Human Punk*, p. 195.
[122] King, *Trash*, p. 45.
[123] Ibid. p. 45.

level of signification beyond that of the aesthetic, thereby obviating the analysis of causation.

Their surface aesthetic contrasts sharply with the depth of social signification manifest in Ruby's description. Her flat, while lacking 'ornate decorations or plaster casts, creeping vines or stained-glass windows, just bricks and glass in metal frames that were peeling and spotted with rust', is nevertheless 'perfect, so many lives being lived there, by people she knew', the flat 'a proper home'.[124] This understanding of a 'proper home' is based on a sense of belonging for which outward appearances—'the one-parent flats, small starter homes where flaking cement hangs like icicles, frozen Arctic sculptures'—do not detract from the value of place generated through social interaction.[125]

The interpretative tension between Jeffries's approach and the majority of King's other characters illustrates how his works move beyond the strictures of utopian and dystopian accounts. With the Football Factory Trilogy foregrounding the gentrification of red belts and Central London and the Satellite Cycle reassessing the London overspill, King's works dismantle the framework of the rhetoric of great cities. Contrary to the binary of the 'London of Shakespeare' and overspill towns as a 'monstrous carbuncle on the edge of a great capital', the aesthetic of mass production recognizes that, while unfashionable, areas like Slough are neither 'empty of culture', devoid of

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[124] King, *Trash*, p. 25. See also Joe's similar response to terraces: King, *Punk*, p. 217.
[125] Ibid. p. 12. Compare with *Punk*, p. 294: 'there's not much to see [in Slough], no famous sites or classic architecture, just everyday life, same as most places'.

meaning, nor a monstrosity.[126] The point, in other words, is that the urban problematic manifests in these works not simply as a 'space' or 'non-place'.[127] 'Life is being stripped down to the bone, another sort of factory farming', Joe Martin reflects, 'but wherever there's people life blooms'.[128]

Ruby develops this sensibility in an early description of Milton Keynes, which in turn takes up the challenge of analysing what Mark Clapson in the first epigraph calls the 'new city'.

> The spread of houses and factories the same as a plastic model, the place ready to explode along the power grids, industrial ley lines melting down as the sun scorches the earth and the reservoirs boil and sink, slow columns of steel and rubber oozing past concrete blocks, slate terraces fanning out from the train track, car parks and gas tanks, patches of asphalt and prefab factories [...] patches of yellow where the fields have died [...] the hum of computers, chemical visions and exhaust hallucinations [...] the motorway a road to somewhere else [...] a tropical paradise off the hard shoulder, a little bit of heaven [...] the perfect factory farming, concrete cows in a concrete paradise, the black-tarmac snake of the motorway passing through dreamland.[129]

Captured by a thermal imagining camera, this extrapolation is an apt metaphor for the processes of remediation and the urban revolution. In supplanting the organicity of nature for the always-already constructed state of 'chemical visions', the 'patches of yellow where the fields have died' signal the obsolescence of any form of critical distance couched in a traditional language of nature. Recalling the discussion of Lefebvre's 'second nature', this 'plastic model' focuses on the functional organization of this space. It is a reorientation

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[126] King, *Trash*, pp. 246, 228. See also p. 185. The carbuncle alludes to Prince Charles' infamous address to the Royal Institute of British Architects on 30 May 1984. In deriding the National Gallery Extension as a 'monstrous carbuncle on the face of a much-loved and elegant friend', he draws upon William Cobbett's description of London as the 'great wen'. William Cobbett, *Rural Rides*, II vols [1830] (New York: Cosimo Classics, 2005), I, p. 43.
[127] Marc Augé, *Non-Places*.
[128] King, *Punk*, p. 257.
[129] King, *Trash*, p. 4. So Clapson point out, Milton Keynes has since 1970 been Britain's fastest growing city. Mark Clapson, *A Social History of Milton Keynes: Middle England/Edge City* (London: Frank Cass, 2004), p. 1. Its present discussion is therefore an illustrative and substantive example of the urban problematic.

encapsulated by the 'slow columns of steel and rubber oozing past concrete blocks'. The coalescing of steel, rubber, and concrete creates an all-inclusive rubric of the urban that encompasses slate terraces, car parks, and gas tanks surrounding train tracks.

Where once the city was defined by its relationship with the countryside, so 'patches of asphalt and prefab factories' presently encircle King's Milton Keynes. With the attendant culturization of nature witnessed in the 'black-tarmac snake' and the 'concrete cows in a concrete paradise', this image recognizes how the new economy profoundly changed the organization and representation of space.[130] The decentralization of industry and later deindustrialization of the economy which created the conditions for gentrification in the inner-cities also led to the serial reproduction of science and business parks together with out-of-town shopping malls.[131]

In sum, King's suggestive description of Milton Keynes attests to new ways of experiencing nature and culture in the urban context: the references to a 'concrete paradise' and 'dreamland' are neither simply ironic nor celebratory. The literary impact of this reworking is exemplified by the 'industrial ley lines'. Based upon the hypothetical arrangement of several or more places of interest which are seen to divine a deeper truth of the city, the theory of ley lines is commonly associated with the works of 'psychogeographers' Peter Ackroyd and Iain Sinclair. Their 'more numinous' function, Ackroyd explains, is to 'plot the trajectory of the city' and so 'connect certain sites in straight alignment'.

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[130] The 'concrete cows', which allude to a 1978 installation in Milton Keynes by its first artist-in-residence Liz Leyh, suitably convey the spatial and cultural nuances of the urban problematic.
[131] See Harvey, 'Managerialism to Entrepreneurialism' and 'Art of Rent'. The economy of, and patterns of migration to, Milton Keynes demonstrates this point. Its economy is predominantly tertiary, based on banking, retail, and computing, while its inhabitants have chiefly moved from London and the South East. Clapson, *Milton Keynes*, pp. 10, 91.

Frequently encompassing the churches of Nicholas Hawksmoor, St Pancras Old Church, the British Museum, and Greenwich Observatory, such an approach gives, in Ackroyd's words, 'due recognition to the power of place'. This, Sinclair explains, is why the 'psychogeographers' espouse a 'paranoid poetic' which contains 'lies [...] so spectacular that they have become a new form of truth'.[132]

King's use of the term and associated sense of place is very different from the occult geography of Ackroyd and Sinclair.[133] By aligning the ley lines around the 'power grids' that distribute the energy necessary for the 'hum of computers', King points to how Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) have contributed to the restructuring of space and place such that it cannot be conceived in terms of a city-country dichotomy. Another contributory factor is automobility: the 'road to somewhere else' that brings in its wake 'exhaust hallucinations' indicates how the physical reshaping of space by the automobile prompts new forms of consciousness. While driving on the M4 to Swindon, Joe offers the following speculation:

> One day this motorway will be lined with concrete, the Thames Valley a solid block of housing estates fed by service-station mini-markets and warehouse superstores, a spread of car parks and shopping malls, multiplex cinemas and fast-food strips. In the old days there were city walls around the ruler's towers, and now there's the M25. We're working to an American model, extending the highways and cutting down on public transport, spreading out, more and more people flushed out of London by the rich.[134]

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[132] Peter Ackroyd, *London*, p. 216; Iain Sinclair, *Lights Out For The Territory*, p. 26.
[133] See Peter Ackroyd, *Hawksmoor* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1985), p. 116, and Iain Sinclair, *White Chappell Scarlet Tracings* (1987) (London: Granta, 1998), pp. 35-6.
[134] King, *Human Punk*, p. 257. Note the transition in this discussion of London from an earlier racial emphasis in the Football Factory Trilogy to that of *class* ('people' versus 'the rich'). To reiterate: King's works are not racist.

This extrapolation accelerates the transition from the city to the urban problematic. While the 'spread of car parks and shopping malls, multiplex cinemas and fast-food strips' and the state of becoming in which the Thames Valley finds itself 'a solid block of housing estates' represents the *telos* of Urry's 'car-only environments', they also denote the dispersal of class formations attributable to gentrification.[135] The increasing numbers 'flushed out of London by the rich' reflect the social effects of gentrification—the relationship between what Atkinson calls 'neighbourhood change in the form of professionalisation' and 'the exiting of various groups from that area by those with fewer resources'.[136]

In King's terms, the 'city walls around the ruler's towers' recognizes how gentrification potentially symbolizes a convergence point for the interests of local municipal authorities and the middle classes.[137] The 'East End has moved into Essex' in response to the decentralization of industry and gentrification.[138] 'As gentrification proceeds,' Atkinson writes, 'levels of resistance to it are cumulatively lessened. Perceived levels of need [are] lowered, while the distance of needy residents to services set up by local authority and voluntary groups [is] increased'.[139] King's Thames Valley at once captures the physical and social effects of automobility and gentrification respectively. It forms an infinitely extended commuter belt, an 'American model' insofar as the extension of the networks of automobility, combined with the retrenchment of public

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[135] Urry, 'Car Culture', p. 2.
[136] Atkinson, 'Gentrification', p. 309.
[137] Since the middle-classes were perceived as being more politically savvy than lower-class groupings, Atkinson concludes that political change 'was both complementary to the gentrification process and was also influenced by gentrifiers'. Atkinson uses the example of local authorities such as Westminster, 'which have pursued gentrification as a means of securing political survival and to boost local revenue'. Ibid. pp. 322, 323.
[138] King, *Punk*, p. 258.
[139] Atkinson, 'Gentrification', p. 322.

transport, increases the dependence on the car, home to those 'flushed out' from London by gentrification.[140]

The suggestive analogy of the 'American model' offers the opportunity for some concluding remarks. In spite of many contested attempts at defining such an 'American model', there is a general consensus surrounding the term urban sprawl.[141] Like its cognates 'urban blight' and the 'slum', 'sprawl' is, Robert Bruegmann correctly points out, not an 'objective reality' so much as a 'cultural concept'. His alternative 'exurbia' refers to an automobile-dependant 'very low-density urban penumbra that lies beyond the regularly built-up suburbs and their urban services'.[142] The present point is not to argue the relative merits of these definitions of an American phenomenon, but to point towards a more developed sense of space that appreciates the obsolescence of the city-country dichotomy.

Another important point King's works raise with regards to the new spatial form is the mobility of the narrator. The archetypal narrator of the urban problematic is no longer that 'secret spectator of the spaces and places of the city', as Keith Tester describes the *flanêur*.[143] Contrary to the 'defining mobility' of the *flanêur* as what Priscilla Ferguson calls an 'indefatigable walker', the extended range of King's fiction is more suitably evoked through mobile

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[140] See also King, *Skinheads*, p. 40.
[141] Contrast Dolores Hayden, 'What Would a Non-Sexist City Be Like? Speculations on Housing, Urban Design, and Human Work', *Signs*, 5 (1980), S170-87, with James Kunstler, *The Geography of Nowhere: The Rise and Decline of America's Man-Made Landscape* (New York: Touchstone, 1993), p. 10.
[142] Robert Bruegmann, *Sprawl: A Compact History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), p. 3. See also Oliver Gillham, *The Limitless City: A Primer on the Urban Sprawl Debate* (Washington: Island Press, 2002). This subject resurfaces in Chapter Five, where Ballard's discussion of science parks similarly illustrate the need for new tropes of the urban.
[143] Keith Tester, 'Introduction', in *The Flâneur*, pp. 1-21, p. 7.

communications and the commuter journey.[144] While the leisurely, pedestrian perspective of the *flanêur* and detective corresponded to the labyrinthine configuration of the nineteenth-century literary city, so automobility's 'dwelling-within-the-car' is the defining mobility of the urban problematic.[145]

In conclusion, this chapter has provided an important series of certain qualifications to the urban problematic. It has identified how overspill towns and the outer metropolitan area have been traditionally understood and the means by which this pejorative approach assumes renewed significance in light of the increased importance of tourism. Together this explains the binary of the 'London of Shakespeare' and the monstrosity of overspill estates that King's works deconstruct. It additionally points to new ways of conceptualizing place through the concept of social space, helping to explain the remarkable reference to the 'city walls around the ruler's towers' (above) which highlights the continuing prevalence of myth among representations of the city. 'Promoted as a sort of joke boundary by the London elite, another monstrosity to sit next to a place like Slough', the M25 represents a new mythology of the city's limits.[146] Within King's works, however, the instability of that which lies within the M25—let alone its outer limits—renders the relations between centre and periphery, city and countryside, as historically contingent.

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[144] Priscilla Pankhurst Ferguson, 'The Flâneur On and Off the Streets of Paris', in *The Flanêur*, ed. Keith Tester, pp. 22-42, p. 32. This reiterates many of Walter Benjamin's points in *Charles Baudelaire,* esp. 'The Flâneur', pp. 35-66.
[145] Urry, 'Car Culture', p. 9. This is another of the fundamental differences between King and Sinclair. See the 'M25 pilgrimage', a 'leisurely twelve-part walk' in Sinclair, *London Orbital*, p. 31.
[146] Keyes, Personal Correspondence.

The logics of dissolution in this chapter, in other words, point to the changing circumstances of articulating difference.[147] No longer defined in absolute terms, difference is seen as the product of political struggle. Understanding space as a social product, the M25 appears in the lineage of the 'London of Shakespeare' and the 'invincible green suburbs': the latest in a series of myths designed to perpetuate hegemonic socioeconomic divisions. By discerning 'a form of urban space, increasingly the dominant form, which is and has been infrequently represented in British fiction in any form other than as a negative example by which positive models of authentic city and country life can be measured', King's works illustrate new ways of understanding and representing the complexities of contemporary British space.[148]

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[147] On Lefebvre's concept of difference as a result of political struggles rather than an *a priori* condition of linguistic *différance*, see Stefan Kipfer, 'How Lefebvre Urbanized Gramsci: Hegemony, Everyday Life, and Difference', in *Space, Difference, Everyday Life: Reading Henri Lefebvre*, ed. by Kanishka Goonewardena and others (New York: Routledge, 2008), pp. 193-211, esp. pp. 201-5.
[148] Skeates, 'New Wildernesses', p. 31.

Chapter III. David Peace: the Urban Problematic as a Logic of 'Disintegration'

> Public space has been privatized to such an extent that it no longer makes sense to understand social organization in terms of a dialectic between private and public spaces [...] The place of modern liberal politics has disappeared [...] In effect, the place of politics has been de-actualized (Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire*, p. 188)

> Its motion does not tend to identity in the difference between each object and its concept; instead, it is suspicious of all identity. Its logics is one of disintegration (Theodor Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p. 145)

> Yorkshire is always the last bastion of common sense. Like the bloody resistance. (David Peace, *Nineteen Eighty*, p. 29)

To delineate the urban problematic, this thesis uses the works of several contemporary British authors. The present chapter uses the first five works of contemporary English novelist David Peace both to extend the geographical range of the thesis and outline an alternative means of understanding and representing the new spatial form.[1] Like those of J.G. Ballard, John King, and Niall Griffiths, Peace's works engage the effects of deindustrialization and the second circuit of speculative capitalism partly through the breakdown of the city-country dichotomy. Their representations of space accordingly pose significant problems for conventional dualist approaches to literary criticism. Peace's works diverge from those of the other three novelists, however, in respect of the significance each attaches to this spatial change. Where the logics of dissolution lead respectively to the reappraisal of suburbia (Ballard), overspill estates (King), and the concept of landscape (Griffiths), Peace's logics of disintegration use Yorkshire—that 'last bastion of resistance'—to map out what Hardt and Negri call the 'de-actualization' of politics.

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[1] David Peace, *Nineteen Seventy Four* (London: Serpent's Tail, 1999); *Nineteen Seventy Seven* (London: Serpent's Tail, 2000); *Nineteenth Eighty* (London: Serpent's Tail, 2001); *Nineteenth Eighty Three* (London: Serpent's Tail, 2002); *GB84* (London: Faber & Faber, 2004).

To qualify these observations, this chapter is divided into five sections. 'A million little apocalypses and a lot of bloody reckonings' provides a thematic and stylistic synopsis of Peace's works before distinguishing between competing concepts of the city. With reference to images of a high-rise and telephone boxes, 'Bad Faith, 1969 to 1984' discusses the breakdown of the Keynesian consensus and the privatization of space before establishing the significance of modern technologies within Peace's representations of space. Next, 'A Genealogy of Nature' explains how the Yorkshire Moors figuratively gauge the plight of British manufacturing.

'The Death of the City' considers how Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) contribute to this figurative phenomenon. Their links to automation and associated effects on the manufacturing workforce forms an important backdrop to the final section. 'The Bodiless Politic' explains how Peace's representations of the human body act as a metaphor for the public sphere, and, like the 'death' of the city, symbolize a terminal shift in political life. In conclusion, the chapter distinguishes between logics of disintegration and those of dissolution with respect to how each evaluates the urban problematic.

'A million little apocalypses and a lot of bloody reckonings'[2]

Writing in 1845, Friedrich Engels describes the 'woollen district of the West Riding of Yorkshire' as a 'charming region' of 'beautiful green hill country'. Almost a century and a half later, while discussing her mother's childhood in Burnley during the 1920s, Carolyn Steedman notes the historical influence of

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[2] Peace, *Eighty*, p. 114

immigrants from the 'unmechanized weaving centres of the West Riding', who 'brought with them still-living Chartist and radical traditions'.[3] Between these two descriptions lies an accurate overview of Peace's interest in the region: the 'last bastion of common sense' draws upon a rich legacy of industrial and political history.[4]

Taking their name from the three-yearly increments between *Nineteen Seventy Four* and *Nineteen Eighty Three*, the Red Riding Quartet demonstrates Peace's characteristic interest in violence. Throughout this 'ecosystem of brutality' events are seldom straightforward.[5] Routed through numerous arcane subplots, the quartet's convoluted story centres on the police as an atavistic and repressive state apparatus indelibly linked with organized prostitution, robbery, rape, and murder. Though less idyllic than Engels's description of the region, Peace's West Riding follows in the political tradition that Steedman traces. As a crucial battleground, Peace's Yorkshire is the site of 'bloody resistance'. It comprises a space of conflict and resistance, the plight of which is fundamental to Peace's logics of disintegration.

Nineteen Seventy Four begins amid the search for the missing child Clare Kemplay. The compromised nature of the police investigation highlights a leitmotiv among Peace's works, that conspiracy belies contingency. Narrator Ed Dunford embodies this paranoid imagination. As a journalist, his job becomes at odds with the truth he uncovers. After discovering widespread corruption,

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[3] Friedrich Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (1845), ed. by Victor Kiernan (London: Penguin, 1987), p. 80; Carolyn Steedman, *Landscape for a Good Woman* (1986) (London: Virago, 2000), p. 118.
[4] See, for example, David Peace, 'Crisp Sandwiches and Pickets', in *New Statesman*, March 1 2004, p. 25.
[5] Andy Beckett, 'Political Gothic', http://www.lrb.co.uk/v26/n18/beck01_.html [accessed 12 February 2009]

Dunford is dismissed and another journalist associated with the 'Dawsongate' case is murdered. Dunford's resulting peripatetic status enables him to piece together the identity of the murderer George Marsh and his place in a wider jigsaw of deceit, which is at odds with the official conviction of Michael Myshkin. The novel's denouement involves Dunford killing Marsh and several other people (mainly policeman) involved in the cover-up.

Nineteen Seventy Seven casts as its alternate narrators the previously incidental characters of journalist Jack Whitehead and policeman Bob Fraser. While the novel ostensibly focuses on the hunt for the Yorkshire Ripper, institutional corruption remains its overriding concern. Whitehead's inquiries reveal evidence of police manipulation in the Ripper investigation designed to conceal an underlying agenda, which as Fraser later discovers concerns their ambition to control prostitution and pornography. The narrators' respective fates highlight another leitmotiv: whether physically or psychologically, knowledge is always traumatic. Fraser's discovery that he is not the biological father of his son is so unpalatable that he commits suicide. Whitehead's discoveries meanwhile lead him to the mysterious Reverend Laws, who enacts divine retribution by trepanning Whitehead.

The biblical motif of compromised knowledge and the theme of institutional corruption resurface in *Nineteen Eighty*. In response to its questionable handling of the Ripper case, the Yorkshire force is to be covertly assessed by the senior policeman Peter Hunter. Seconded from his role as Assistant Chief Constable of the Manchester constabulary, Hunter's arrival

signals a clash of ethos that recalls the War of the Roses.[6] Hunter's reputation, founded on investigating police corruption, is fundamentally at odds with the Yorkshire force. The cost of knowledge is again high. Contrary to their best efforts, Hunter's marriage remains childless. It is, like his descriptions of Wakefield, 'barren'.[7] The novel's fatal twist re-emphasizes the deep symbolism of fertility. After Hunter discovers that an extramarital affair resulted in an abortion, the connection between knowledge, thwarted ambition, and termination resurfaces in the wake of the fortuitous circumstances of the Ripper's arrest, which sidelines his investigation. The inevitability of this event mirrors his own fate: Hunter proleptically announces his murder in a dream sequence on the first page.

Narrated by the previously minor characters of Detective Chief Superintendent Maurice Jobson, lawyer John Piggott, and rent boy Barry James Anderson ('B.J.'), *Nineteen Eighty Three* offers only partial denouement. Its opening scene, an analeptic episode wherein George Marsh rapes B.J., establishes a sense of narrative circularity that Piggott compounds while leading Myshkin's appeal. His discovery that the wrongful conviction was instigated by Jobson recalls Dunford's previous investigation, which drew similar conclusions. Set on Thursday 9 June 1983, the novel's concluding episode is significant because it was the date of Thatcher's re-election, an event which helps make partial sense of the disjointed ending. B.J. murders Reverend Laws to avenge his complicity in the preceding events before setting fire to the house prior to Jobson entering it. The fate of the narrators remains unclear. No further

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[6] It also anticipates the description of the miners' strike as '*The Third English Civil War*'. Peace, *GB84*, p. 137, Peace's italics.
[7] The reference to civil war is taken from Peace, *GB84*, p. 137. The 'barren' descriptions of Wakefield originate in *Eighty*, pp. 21, 26.

reference is made to B.J., while Jobson—traumatized by his culpability in the Kemplay case—is left a tremulous wreck. Piggott, meanwhile, is left hollering '*No hope for Britain*'.[8]

This closing sensibility appositely introduces Peace's fifth novel. Charting the 1984-5 miners' strike, *GB84* recounts a familiar episode in British history that represents a logical endpoint for Peace's representations of the city.[9] The remainder of the present section considers how its thematic and stylistic interests illustrate Peace's logics of disintegration. Divided between the perspective of two miners and an official narrative of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) and the government, the novel seeks to analyse what one character refers to as '*the way the world works*'.[10]

The relationship between these narratives makes a pertinent observation on the perceived nature of the strike. That the miners are referred to only as 'Martin' and 'Peter' indicates their marginality relative to the official line. Peace's use of tense reaffirms the miner's position. The first person and present tense of Martin's narrative in the first part becomes the third person and past tense of and Peter's account in the second part. This comment on historical agency is compounded by the past tense of NUM official Terry Winters, which compares with the present tense of the various government agents. The NUM—and by extension organized labour—is a passive force while the government is active.

Peace's use of grammar and allocation of narrative space restates this inequality. Each chapter is prefaced by a single page that contains Martin and

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[8] Peace, *Eighty Three*, p. 399, Peace's italics.
[9] Alex Callinicos and Mike Simons, *The Great Strike: The Miners' Strike of 1984-5 and its Lessons* (London: Pluto Press, 1986); Seumas Milne, *The Enemy Within: The Secret War Against the Miners* (London: Verso, 1994).
[10] Peace, *GB84*, pp. 186, 328, Peace's italics.

Peter's unbroken interior monologue which, with its occasional absence of the definite article, evokes the phonetics of a Yorkshire accent.[11] The institutional standpoint meanwhile receives the remaining space in each chapter. Its grammatical formalism also points to the subordinate position of the miners' narrative, reiterating the contrast between written and oral histories. This alienating distance is compounded by a temporal disparity: the quotidian miners' narrative compares with an official account measured in weeks.

Such attention to detail leads Matthew Hart to characterize Peace's prose as being:

> Notable more for its terse and profane formalism than for its subordination to the dictates of the crime genre [...] it eschews the institutional realism of the police procedural or the guilty pleasures of the killer thriller for what [Peace] reveals to be inventive programmatic formal choices.[12]

Hart's observations are broadly correct. Compared to the typically conservative genre of detective fiction, which usually avows the perspective of authority and resists social change, the quartet is anti-heroic.[13] If a heroic discourse exists in Peace's works, it is that of the miners. Their monologue provides *GB84*'s most acute form of analysis.[14] In addition, Peace's works spurn the conventions of the police procedural, not least because the *'[n]ew Realism'* of his works is one where the police imperil democracy.[15]

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[11] Ibid. pp. 2, 10, 22, 62, 152, 230.
[12] Matthew Hart, 'An Interview with David Peace', *Contemporary Literature*, 47, 4 (2006), pp. 546-569, p. 548.
[13] Extrapolated from Dennis Porter, *The Pursuit of Crime: Art and Ideology in Detective Fiction* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), pp. 125-6.
[14] It calculates the strike's economic cost to the government (p. 158), recounts the infringement of civil liberties (pp. 150, 168), and draws national and international parallels (pp. 202, 210, 264, 322).
[15] Peace, *GB84*, p. 234, Peace's italics.

Peace's works bear close resemblance to the paranoid imagination of the American author James Ellroy, whose influence he openly acknowledges.[16] In spite of their geographical differences, the analogy is to a limited degree valid. Andrew Pepper's description of Ellroy's L.A. Quartet as the 'quintessential expression of "noir" crime fiction, replete with labyrinthine plots, multiple protagonists and emphasis on the confluence of political and economic corruption and psycho-sexual obsession', can be applied to the Red Riding Quartet.[17]

Witness the similar descriptions of the police: Ellroy's description of 'a *wave* of hot squeals with meat wagon backup' in *The Big Nowhere* compares with 'a *river* of ten blue vans churning seventy miles an hour' pillaging a gypsy camp in *Nineteen Seventy Four.*[18] This resemblance extends to the espoused philosophies of policing. Dudley Smith's notion of '"[c]ontainment"', by which 'the police establishment knew he only shot when shot at; he *played the game*', becomes Bill Molloy's notion of '[c]ontrolled vice [...] Off the streets and out into the shop windows, under our wing and in our pocket'.[19]

Their works diverge on the degree to which they exhibit characteristics of the thriller genre, which helps explain Peace's opinion that theirs has become an 'easy comparison'.[20] The genre is unusual, David Glover notes, for its 'single

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[16] Chris Verguson, 'West Yorkshire Confidential?', in *BBC—Bradford and West Yorkshire* <http://www.bbc.co.uk/bradford/content/articles/2008/06/02/david_peace_2008_feature.shtml> [accessed 12 February 2010]
[17] Andrew Pepper, *The Contemporary American Crime Novel: Race, Ethnicity, Gender, Class* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), p. 26.
[18] 'The Big Nowhere' in James Ellroy, *The Dudley Smith Trio* (London: Arrow, 1999), pp. 1-472, p. 1; Peace, *Seventy Four*, p. 45; my italics.
[19] 'L.A. Confidential' in Ellroy, *Trio*, pp. 473-956, p. 696, Ellroy's italics; Peace, *Eighty Three*, p. 227. See also *L.A. Confidential*, p. 547, and 'White Trash' in Ellroy, *Trio*, pp. 957-1319, pp. 1084, 1239.
[20] Stoop, 'Interview with David Peace', in *Bookmunch* <http://www.bookmunch.co.uk/view.php?id=1341> [accessed 12 December 2004].

minded drive to deliver a starkly intense literary effect'. It constantly seeks to 'raise the stakes' of the narrative, 'heightening or exaggerating the experience' by turning events into a 'rising curve of danger, violence, or shock'.[21] To this end, Ellroy's and Peace's works conform to Glover's definition. They differ in regards of the magnitude and location of the perceived threat. Ellroy's works conform to Glover's definition inasmuch as it is conventional for the ramifications of the threat to be inestimable. As will become clear, Peace's works suggest nothing less than the death of politics at the behest of the government.

Another difference concerns what Glover calls the '*intensity*' of the experience, which consists of:

> Assaults upon the fictional body, a constant awareness of the physicality of danger, sado-masochistic scenarios of torture or persecution, a descent into pathological extremes of consciousness, the inner world of the psychopath or the monster.[22]

Though Peace's works delve into many of these themes, their use is tempered by what he calls the 'obligation to examine the causes and consequences of crime'.[23] Contrast the ontological primacy of the miners' narrative—a voice of empirical reason that documents the social, political, and economic effects of the strike—with Ellroy's avowed desire 'to change things [...] If I don't like something and the way it plays out, I don't want to be beholden to the facts'.[24] This is not to infer a straightforward contrast between Peace's faction and Ellroy's fiction, but to observe an important difference of *ends*. The factual

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[21] David Glover, 'The Thriller' in *The Cambridge Companion to Crime Fiction*, ed. by Martin Priestman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 135-54, pp. 135, 137.
[22] Ibid. p. 138, Glover's italics.
[23] Hart, *Interview*, p. 559.
[24] 'James Ellroy and David Peace in Conversation', in *The Guardian* <http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2010/jan/09/james-ellroy-david-peace-conversation> [accessed 12 February 2010]

accuracy of the miners' narrative compares with what Mike Davis calls Ellroy's 'all-encompassing *noir* mythology', which potentially dampens the tension and power of the genre.[25]

This explains why Peace considers his writing to be 'more grounded in reality' than the 'slightly cartoonish element' of Ellroy's works.[26] In spite of their stylistic, structural, and thematic similarities, *GB84* demonstrates how Peace's works are ultimately beholden to some degree of factual correspondence. This difference can, however, be overstated. 'The new historical novel', as Joseph Brooker characterizes *GB84*, 'risks substituting mimesis for understanding, imitative form for integrated analysis'.[27] This cautionary note tempers Hart's overemphasis on Peace's inventiveness, which overlooks the degree to which his works lend themselves to comparison with the paranoid imagination of American novelists such as Ellroy. The convoluted structure of his works can be seen to lead to the excision of political tension, which of itself is not inventive.[28] If it is to retain utility, the analogy should be restricted to the Red Riding Quartet since it fosters a less discriminate view of social and political processes.[29]

The significance Peace attaches to the events underpinning *GB84* goes some way to explaining his logics of disintegration. Its consequences 'still

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[25] Mike Davis, *City of Quartz*, p. 45, Davis's italics.
[26] Stoop, *Interview*. Although there are 'cartoonish elements' in Peace's works, such as the Nazi overtones of *GB84* (pp. 3, 305, 440), they stop short of Ellroy's excess. See, for example, the use of monstrosity in Ellroy, *Big Nowhere*, p. 153.
[27] Joseph Brooker, 'Orgreave Revisited: David Peace's GB84 and the Return to the 1980s', *Radical Philosophy*, September/October 2005, pp. 39-51, p. 43.
[28] Ellroy's works do not constitute a hermeneutic of suspicion so much as foster the suspicion of hermeneutics.
[29] The Quartet's 'sense of the workings of British politics and society in the 1980s seems stuck in the mid-1970s: the same corruption, the same griminess, Thatcherism [remains] little more than a rumour, at least in West Yorkshire'. Beckett, *Gothic*.

linger', Peace contends in a 2004 interview. 'Much of what British society is like now' remains:

> Thatcher's thing, that was a kind of battle, that was lost. Her big notion was that there *is no community*, there's just yourself, and your family [...] She wanted to pave the way to employment laws being run roughshod over, that people shouldn't join trade unions. All these things that British people now take for granted were formed during that time.[30]

This vision of British society as 'Thatcher's thing' is essential to understanding Peace's logics of disintegration, which involve the breakdown of the city-country dichotomy. For where the act of writing the city provides, in Julian Wolfreys's words, 'one possible site for translation, for putting in place a transformative textual practice that bears upon historical, cultural, ideological, and political practice', it forms one strand of what Hart dubs Peace's 'menacing critique of Thatcherite ideology'.[31]

The 'battle' around the notion of community begins in *Nineteen Seventy Four* 'on the walls of dark factories and silent mills', where Ed Dunford observes '[e]lection posters, mush and glue. A circus here, a circus there; here today, gone tomorrow. Big Brother watching you'.[32] Notable for their torpor, the 'dark factories and silent mills' are juxtaposed with and ultimately set against the 'mush and glue' of the election posters, campaigning for one of two general elections that year. Their decay highlights an increasing disjuncture between the interests of party politics and the absent workforce of the 'dark factories and silent mills', a conflict thereafter mapped out through distinct conceptions of the city.

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[30] Gene Gregorits, '"These Endless Fucking Days"', in *Sex and Guts Magazine* <http://www.sexandgutsmagazine.com/david_peace_int2.htm> [accessed 12 December 2004], Peace's italics. See also Peace, *Crisp Sandwiches*.
[31] Julian Wolfreys, *Writing London: Materiality, Matter, Spectrality*, p. 7; Hart, *Interview*, p. 547.
[32] Peace, *Seventy Four*, p. 28.

Dunford's reference to election posters concerns the figurative function of the city as a 'model of governmental rationality', what Michel Foucault calls a 'matrix for the regulations that apply to a whole state'.[33] Foucault's model is hereafter referred to as the *governmental* concept of the city, a synecdoche for the processes of governmentality pertaining to the state. The 'dark factories' meanwhile relate to a Platonic ideal of the city. When Plato beckons forth 'one man who has a city obedient to his will', 'his' significance is as one who 'might bring into existence the ideal polity about which the world is so incredulous'.[34] In spite of its problematic assumptions of gender, Plato makes an important correlation: the city is the highest ideal of humanity. The sense of community which informs humanity's pursuit of an 'ideal polity' is reflected in the physical organization of the city. This Platonic conception is henceforth referred to as the *ethical* concept of the city.

The increasing conflict between the governmental and ethical city is fundamental to Peace's logics of disintegration. This explains Peace's use of Yorkshire as what Andy Beckett calls an 'English Sicily or Deep South: the most primal, brutal, prejudiced and [...] politically honest place in the country, the place where the battles that matter are played out'.[35] Peace draws these lines of battle in his account of the miners' strike, a stand by 'those families, those communities, that culture and that heritage against monetarism, deregulation, privatisation, market forces, and the trickle down'.[36] The underlying significance

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[33] Michel Foucault, 'Space, Knowledge, and Power', in *Power: Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984*, ed. by James Faubion, trans. by Robert Hurley and Others, III vols (London: Penguin Books, 2000b), III, 349-64, p. 351.
[34] Plato, *The Republic of Plato*, trans. by Francis Macdonald Cornford (Oxford: Clarendon, 1941), p. 387.
[35] Beckett, 'Gothic'. It is, for example, the 'heartland' of the strike: see Peace, *GB84*, pp. 11, 430.
[36] Peace, 'Crisp Sandwiches', p. 25.

of the decaying election posters is precisely this conflict between the ethical principles of the blue collar 'community' and the monetarist interests of the Thatcher government.

This section has offered a stylistic and thematic overview of Peace's works, explained how their logics of disintegration are informed by the conflicting interests of organized labour and the government, and identified how this encounter is mapped out through distinct concepts of the city. The following section explores how the increasing cleft between these interests informs the comparative images of a Leeds tower block and telephone boxes.

'Bad Faith, 1969 to 1984'[37]

When questioned about his approach to writing, Peace comments on how he 'very deliberately and consciously' tried to excise the '"entertainment"' from *Nineteen Seventy Four*, such that it contains 'little humour and no irony'. The 'combination of the subject matter itself and [this] self-discipline', Peace reflects, informs a periodizing sense of '"I Hate 1974".'[38] That this acute historical judgement coincides with a profound period of change, including the rise of the second circuit of capitalism, is not fortuitous. This section considers the significance of several spatial metaphors in Peace's works in relation to the advent of neoliberalism.

The title of this section comes from a passage in *GB84*, where the secret agent Malcolm Morris reflects on his role in the government's betrayal of '*[p]romises and plans*'. Those fifteen years of 'bad faith' culminate, in the final

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[37] Peace, *GB84*, p. 437.
[38] Hart, *Interview*, p. 556.

sentence of the novel, with 'the Year is Zero'.[39] The origins of this existential and ultimately millenarian despair can be traced back to *Nineteen Seventy Four*, when Dunford visits:

> City Heights, Leeds. I locked the car under the white skies going grey with their threats of rain and never snow, thinking it must be all right round here in the summer. Clean sixties high-rise: flaking yellow and sky-blue paintwork, railings beginning to rust.[40]

Used to connote the erosion of Enlightenment ideals of progress, the decay of the high-rise is a figurative strategy common to all of the authors considered in this thesis. In this instance, the increasingly overcast weather and the rusting railings convey the attrition of the Keynesian consensus, which ran from the end of the Second World War until the mid 1970s.[41] Utilizing an expanded welfare state to create a 'system of political control over economic life', Keynesianism dictates that the market requires external stimulation through state intervention.[42] To achieve its goals of affluence, progress, and social justice, Keynesianism weds capitalism and democracy through state intervention. The death knell of the consensus came in 1976, when Prime Minster James Callaghan announced at the Labour Party conference that 'that option no longer exists'.[43] That 'option' was soon to be replaced by the laissez-faire imperatives of monetarism.[44]

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[39] Peace, *GB84*, pp. 437, 462.
[40] Peace, *Seventy Four*, p. 234.
[41] On the demise of the Keynesian consensus, see Kevin Hickson, *The IMF Crisis*, esp. p. 221.
[42] Robert Skidelsky, 'The Decline of Keynesian Politics', in *State and Economy in Contemporary Capitalism*, ed. by Colin Crouch (London: Croon Helm, 1979), pp. 55-87, p. 55.
[43] Hickson, *IMF*, p. 103. See pp. 104-6 on the external IMF pressures and pp. 168-9 for the six stages of change.
[44] Ibid. p. 212; David Harvey, *History of Neoliberalism*, pp. 57-9.

The well-documented fallout of this shift forms an important backdrop to John Piggott's later visit to City Heights.[45] 'You climb the stairs to the fourth floor', Piggott notes, and:

> You read the walls as you go: *Wogs Out, Leeds, NF, Leeds, Kill a Paki, Leeds* [...] You turn one corner and there's something dead in a plastic bag [...] You turn the next and there's a pile of human shit [...] You quicken past broken windows and paint-splattered doors—Doors banging in the wind, in the rain: New tears in your old eyes, the lights are already going on across Leeds—But not here.[46]

The return to the tower block illustrates how 'Peace's language', to quote Stéphanie Benson, 'is not only a tool to redefine a reality; it participates in the physical construction of this reality'.[47] As in *GB84*, the use of tense highlights a fundamental shift in governmental and individual agency: the passivity of Piggott's second-person account replaces Dunford's active first-person description. Piggott's diminished agency corresponds to the social changes imbued in the image of the tower block. In the nine years between Dunford's and Piggott's visits, during which monetarism has replaced Keynesianism as the government's guiding economic ethos, the formerly 'clean sixties high-rise' has become an abject space filled with human excrement, racist graffiti, and refuse.

While ostensibly similar to the partially lighted floors that 'stretched across the face of the high-rise like dead strata in a fading brain' in Ballard's *High-Rise*, the partial illumination in Piggott's account carries very different

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[45] See Harvey, *Neoliberalism*, and William Engdahl, *Century of War*, esp. 'Imposing a New World Order', pp. 178-222.
[46] Peace, *Eighty Three*, p. 313, Peace's italics.
[47] Stéphanie Benson, 'The Strange Language of David Peace or The Exile from Yorkshire' in *Europolar* <http://www.europolar.eu/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=66&Itemid=30> [accessed 17 June 2010]

connotations.[48] Where the neurological metaphors of *High-Rise* connote a new spatial problematic, the absent lights of City Heights convey a marked sense of decline. Such is their value-laden depth that Peace's descriptions form what Roland Barthes calls an 'axiological' mode of writing, wherein the 'distance which usually separates fact from value disappears within the very space of the word, which is given at once as description and as judgement'.[49] This rationale distinguishes Peace's logics of disintegration from the other logics of dissolution.

An axiological rationale informs the changing descriptions of telephone boxes. After Dunford views a 'public phone box [with] all its glass and most of its red paint missing', Peace's works make no further reference to it being public property.[50] Its changing colour redoubles this sense of transformation. Following its initial state of disrepair that connotes a lack of public investment, the phone box is described by Fraser as being 'bright red'.[51] Finally, it becomes in Maurice Jobson's words 'the colour of dried, spilt blood'.[52] In addition to its associations with violence, red is 'London's colour'.[53] From this perspective, the changing hue of the phone box forms another front in the conflict between governmental and ethical definitions of the city, particularly in terms of the privatization of space.

Peace's images of the telephone box are a metaphor for the diminishing space of the public realm. Privatization was a key subject in the 1983 general

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[48] J.G. Ballard, *High-Rise*, p. 75.
[49] Roland Barthes, *Writing Degree Zero* (1953), trans. by Annette Lavers and Colin Smith (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), p. 20.
[50] Peace, *Seventy Four*, p. 141.
[51] Peace, *Seventy Seven* p. 294. See also pp. 162, 199, 261, 266.
[52] Peace, *Eighty Three*, p. 248.
[53] Peter Ackroyd, *London*, p. 217.

election. The Conservative manifesto proclaimed reform of the nationalized industries to be 'central to economic recovery', while the Labour alternative sought to 'return to public ownership the public assets and rights hived off by the Tories'.[54] Due in no small part to the Falklands War and having 'given every council and new town tenant the legal right to buy their own house', the Thatcher government was re-elected with a mandate to privatize nationalized assets.[55] This began with the sale of British Telecom in 1984, which coincides with the end of the fifteen years of 'bad faith'. 'It was not just British Telecom that was being sold', the company's official history remarks, 'but the whole concept of privatization'.[56]

Peace's account of the fallout from the miners' strike clarifies the deeper significance of this sale. 'The defeat of organized labour and the defeat of socialism' it represented, Peace writes, signalled 'a victory for Thatcher's idea that there is no society. Now it's carte blanche, full-on privatization, deregulation, trickle-down'.[57] The importance of the telephone box is therefore threefold. It recounts the Conservative's privatization programme, indicates the privatism inherent to Thatcherism, and introduces the figurative link between ICTs and the diminution of public space.

To reiterate, this section has established a link between Peace's images of tower blocks and telephone boxes and the privatization of space. The next section explains how the connection between the qualitative condition of the

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[54] The manifestos are available at <http://www.psr.keele.ac.uk/area/uk/man/con83.htm> and <http://www.psr.keele.ac.uk/area/uk/man/lab83.htm> [accessed 25 March 2009]
[55] *Conservative Manifesto.*
[56] British Telecom, 'Privatisation Information Sheet', in *The Historical Development of BT* <http://www.btplc.com/Thegroup/BTsHistory/Privatisationinfosheetissue2.pdf> [accessed 24 March 2009]
[57] Mike Marqusee, 'David Peace: State of the Union Rights', *The Independent*, 5 March 2004.

Yorkshire Moors and the quantitative state of British industry forms another component of Peace's logics of disintegration.

A Genealogy of Nature

This countryside of pain and ugly anguish.[58]

As an overview of this section, the 'pain' and 'anguish' inscribed upon the Yorkshire Moors gauges the effects of deindustrialization. Consider the changing images of the land throughout the quartet, beginning with the autumnal repose of *Nineteen Seventy Four.* While driving down the A966, Dunford observes 'flat brown fields as far as the eye could see'.[59] Brown is here the operative colour, as its descriptions of landscape repeatedly emphasize.[60] Vestiges of a pre-culturized nature later surface in *Nineteen Seventy Seven*, where Fraser's family memories consist of sitting 'on the swings among the quiet and gentle nature, the ducks and the butterflies, the sandstone buildings and black hills watching us from above the trees, waiting'.[61]

The conspicuousness of this image in Peace's oeuvre is attributable to the fact that it is nostalgic. As a periodizing emotion, nostalgia constructs a positive image of the past with which to diagnose the deficiencies of the present, enabling the nostalgic subject to establish sources of agency, community, or identity which it finds to be presently imperilled.[62] Nostalgia has three distinct temporal features. The subject constructs a prelapsarian world, identifies a traumatic moment of separation, and finally views the present in

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[58] Peace, *Nineteen Eighty*, p. 246.
[59] Peace, *Seventy Four*, p. 226.
[60] Ibid. pp. 49, 230, 231, 233, 264, 266, 267.
[61] Ibid. 199.
[62] Extrapolated from Stuart Tannock, 'Nostalgia Critique', *Cultural Studies*, 9, 3 (1995), 453-64.

postlapsarian terms. Fraser's *'quiet and gentle nature'* represents a prelapsarian world. 'It's going to be really hot and all the gardens on the street smell of cut grass and barley water', Fraser recalls, 'the sky completely blue'. It is a moment of familial unity:

> All around us, a Friday. And the sky is still blue, the flowers and the fruit bright, the telephone box red, the old woman and the young mothers in their summer dresses, the ice-cream van white. All around us, a market day [...] All around us, a summer's day. A Yorkshire summer's day.[63]

This 'Yorkshire summer's day' offers a rare image of plenitude in Peace's works, with Yorkshire for once unified 'all around us' and vividly coloured. Its conspicuousness, however, was already apparent midway through *Nineteen Seventy Four*. When Dunford visits the 'dirty brown mining town' of Fitzwilliam, he identifies the traumatic moment of separation—the second phase of nostalgia—among the 'dirty moorland. Ponies grazed between rusting tractors and piles of scrap metal'.[64] Autumnal repose here gives way to wintry decay. The juxtaposition of mining and dirty moorland with the rusting tractor figuratively conjoins the cycles of industry and agriculture with the fertility of the land.

In terms of the urban problematic, this conjunction paves the way for the emergence of a postlapsarian world: the disintegration of the city-country dichotomy through the metaphor of barrenness. Hunter's description of 'Wakefield, barren Wakefield' at the beginning of *Nineteen Eighty* builds upon Whitehead's state of the nation from *Nineteen Seventy Seven*: 'None of us deserved our cruel cities and faithless priests, our barren women and unjust

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[63] Peace, *Seventy Seven*, pp. 198, 199. Compare with Hunter's memories of his father's cremation: *Eighty*, p. 306.
[64] Peace, *Seventy Four*, pp. 150-1.

laws'.[65] These passages together draw an important connection between the city, polity, and the country. Whitehead's association of 'cruel cities' and 'unjust laws' with the hypocrisy of 'faithless priests' encodes a crisis of social and political relations that is mapped out by the gendered image of 'barren women'. Hunter's 'barren' Wakefield and his childless marriage, combined with Whitehead's 'barren' women, map the disintegration of personal and social relations through the gendered image of nature.

Since the seventeenth century, the rhetoric of scientific discourse has been based on the 'feminization' of nature and the 'masculinization' of science.[66] This approach, which for Brian Easlea views 'female nature' as a 'machine to be controlled by men' and is linked to development of nuclear weapons, finds its apotheosis towards the end of *Nineteen Seventy Seven*.[67] When driving through Dewsbury, Whitehead observes 'black slags where the fields have been'.[68] By supplanting the organicity of the previously 'brown fields', the 'black slags' represent a postlapsarian world of ravaged nature. This slag, which simultaneously denotes the waste produced from the re-sorting of coal and the vitrified matter that separates during the reduction of a metal from its ore, reinforces the ideological connection between the states of nature and industry.[69]

The relationship between fertility, the plight of industry, and the city-country dichotomy reaches a critical point in the representations of the Moors.

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[65] Peace, *Eighty*, p. 21; *Seventy Seven*, p. 65. See also *Eighty Three*, p. 323: 'burning skies, empty churches and barren wombs'.
[66] Brian Easlea, *Fathering the Unthinkable*.
[67] Ibid. p. 23.
[68] Peace, *Seventy Seven*, p. 330.
[69] The reference to slag later recounts the death of nature and the breakdown of anthropological notions of place. Peace, *GB84*, pp. 78, 104, 225.

Prior to being trepanned at the end of *Nineteen Seventy Seven*, Whitehead freely associates a number of disparate and violent images, including:

> *Me trapped on a train in a snowstorm on top of the Moors, in the rooms of the dead, in the houses of the dead, on the streets of the dead, in the cities of the dead, the country of the dead, world of the dead.*[70]

As a passenger, Whitehead is a disconnected and passive spectator. The saturating snowstorm augments this sense of disconnection, leaving the landscape without discernible features. A similar sense of saturation informs the horizontal associations between 'houses' and 'streets' through to 'cities' and 'the country', all of which are permeated with death. They constitute another example of axiological writing, a representational logic of disintegration which makes no attempt to assemble a new identity from the fragmented 'world of the dead'.

The changing significance of the streets in *GB84* demonstrates this point. Initially the domain of the miners' quotidian narrative, the increasing occupation of streets by government forces literalizes Whitehead's reference to the 'streets of the dead'. The repressive presence of the police and security services signals the death of the mining community—the ethical city—through the emergence of a police state. Whitehead's 'cities of the dead' ominously portend '*[a]n entire country completely sealed off*'.[71]

The circumstances of what NUM official Terry Winters deems the 'savage butchery' of government reforms contextualizes the devivification of the Moors and the death of the city as part of a systematic response to

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[70] Peace, *Seventy Seven*, p. 340, Peace's italics.
[71] Peace, *GB84*, p. 18, Peace's italics. See also pp. 18-9, 43, 55, 382, 424, where the streets of northern cities and villages are repeatedly occupied by the police.

deindustrialization.[72] As the first chapter explained, the post-1973 reorganization of capitalism fundamentally redefined international socioeconomic and political frameworks. The resulting 'internationalization of production', Colin Leys summarizes, 'subjected whole national economies of industrialized countries to the unforgiving judgments of the law of value'.[73] This 'law of value' appositely captures the essence of the clash between governmental and ethical concepts of the city, whereby the quantitative weight of the former increasingly subsumes the qualitative associations of the latter. 'The battlefields of the North' are a casualty of what the government agent Neil Fontaine calls '*[t]he Numbers War*'.[74]

The underlying logic of this war, David Harvey explains, 'was to transform the UK into a country of relatively low wages and a largely compliant labour force (relative to the rest of Europe) within ten years'.[75] This transformation was not simply cyclical but structural. The majority of the jobs lost during this time, predominantly in the primary and secondary sectors, were unrecoverable. This 'new international division of labour', Eric Hobsbawm writes:

> Transferred industries from old regional countries and continents to new ones, turning the old centres of industry into 'rust-belts', or, in some ways, even more spectrally, into *urban landscapes* like face-lifts from which all trace of former industry had been removed.[76]

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[72] Ibid. p. 6.
[73] Colin Leys, 'Thatcherism and British Manufacturing: A Question of Hegemony', *New Left Review*, I, 151 (1985), 5-25, p. 5. This continued the trend in government policy since the 1960s of favouring the interests of the City of London, often at the expense of domestic manufacturing. See Harvey, *Neoliberalism*, p. 31.
[74] Peace, *GB84*, p. 252, Peace's italics. See also p. 336, where Stephen Sweet elaborates Thatcher's rationale of 'winning [...] her many, many wars—*The IRA. British Leyland. GCHQ. Cammell Laird. CND. The* Belgrano. *The GLC*'.
[75] Harvey, *Neoliberalism*, p. 59.
[76] Eric Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes*, p. 413, my italics. See also Engdahl, *War*, pp. 180-1, and Harvey, *Neoliberalism*, p. 59.

Hobsbawm's terms are useful inasmuch as they bridge the gap between what I call an 'aesthetic of absence'—Peace's empty Moors—and the socio-historical context they represent. Hunter's descriptions demonstrate how Peace's Moors are seldom described in conventional aesthetic terms of physical beauty: 'over the Moors again, between the articulated lorries, stark and empty', 'drive back alone across the M62, alone between the articulated lorries crawling slowly along, the weather stark, the landscape empty—Just murder and lies'.[77] Where the first response finds no trace of the beauty Engels associates with the region, the second account finds only 'murder and lies'.

This allusion to the Moors murders in the 1960s makes sense of Hunter's later description of the '*cold, lost bones*' that characterize '*[b]loody Yorkshire*'.[78] As a typographic marker for moving between the levels of the individual and the social, the italicization of '*bloody Yorkshire*' sets it apart from commonplace ideas of landscape. For Raymond Williams, this idea often entails a wilful elision of the social organization of the land. The 'corrective fictions' of seventeenth-century Dutch art are an extreme example of such abstraction.[79] Peace's landscapes are, by contrast, axiological: they offer a new form of 'corrective fiction'. Far from being idealist or remedial images of the world, the Moors reinscribe the social effects of Leys's 'law of value'. They are, in Whitehead's words, *'the Valleys of Death, the Moors of Hell'*.[80]

Hobsbawm's 'urban landscape' helps distinguish Peace's logic of disintegration from the other logics of dissolution. As against its use in this

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[77] Peace, *Eighty*, pp. 19, 9.
[78] Ibid. p. 47, Peace's italics.
[79] Williams, *Country and the City*, p. 120; Svetlana Alpers, *The Art of Describing: Dutch Art in the Seventeenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984).
[80] Peace, *Seventy Seven*, p. 340, Peace's italics.

thesis, where the 'urban' indicates a fundamental break in the understanding of space, Hobsbawm's 'urban landscape' denotes sites divested of the traces of former industry. The urban *space*, as Hobsbawm and Peace view it, is defined by the absence of its previous components. Take, for example, Hunter's 'landscape empty but for telegraph poles'.[81] More commonly associated with developments in the nineteenth century, the telegraph disconnected language from subjectivity and so prefigured the telecommunications revolution of the twentieth century.[82]

It is also indelibly linked to a particular aesthetic form. In *American Technological Sublime*, David Nye contends that the telegraph system 'embodied' the 'dynamic technological sublime' which, in the nineteenth century, 'conquered space and time'.[83] As against this 'dynamic' embodiment, Hunter's landscape uses the telegraph to symbolize entropy. Its qualitative loss of vitality is akin to the definition of entropy as a measure of the loss of information in a transmitted signal or message. Empty save for telegraph poles and telephone lines, Hunter's Moors are the antithesis of a 'technological sublime', which, in 'a physical world that is increasingly desacralized', represents 'a way to reinvest the landscape and the works of men with transcendental significance'.[84]

The link between technology and the devivification of the Moors unfolds accordingly. Firstly, they are depopulated. As Whitehead travels 'across the Moors', he observes '[n]o-one; no cars, no lorries, nothing: Deserted spaces,

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[81] Peace, *Eighty*, p. 3.
[82] On the mechanization of information, see Friedrich Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter* (1986), trans. by Geoffrey Winthrop-Young and Michael Wutz (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999).
[83] David Nye, *American Technological Sublime* (London: MIT Press, 1994), p. 77. See also Kittler's 'time-axis manipulation' in *Gramophone*, pp. 35-6.
[84] Ibid. p. xiii.

these overground places. The world gone in the flash of a bomb'.[85] This 'flash' opens up a fallacious opposition between technology and humanity by highlighting the destructive potential of the former at the expense of the latter.[86] Contrary to Nye's 'dynamic' investment in the telegraph, this destructive capacity is reinforced when ICTs become the solitary feature of note. Hunter's view of the Moors, which typographically moves between the levels of individual perception and social commentary, consists of:

> The black poles and the telephone wires—*The North after the bomb, machines the only survivors*. Murder and lies, war [....] Over the Moors [...] *I stared out at the lane of lorries, the black poles and the telephone wire*.[87]

Such images are noteworthy for three reasons. Again, note the absence of distinctive features. Modern technologies thereafter overlay generic landscape: 'machines the only survivors'. Finally, when read in conjunction with Whitehead's 'dead cities', the absence of physical features and bodily presence disintegrates the city-country dichotomy.

This section has established a correlation between Peace's representations of the Moors and the plight of British industry. Their qualitative state is, in short, an aesthetic response to deindustrialization, which Peace's works gauge spatially through the disintegration of the city-country dichotomy. The next section considers how this aesthetic response encompasses the 'death' of the city.

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[85] Peace, *Seventy Seven*, p. 149.
[86] Ibid. p. 149. See *Seventy Four*, pp. 239, 240; *Eighty*, pp. 3, 19, 20, 35, 55, 256, 363; *GB84*, pp. 7, 306, 418 for numerous references to bombs, nuclear technologies, and apocalypse.
[87] Peace, *Eighty*, pp. 20, 47, Peace's italics.

The Death of the City: A 'tear in the landscape'[88]

> In Lancashire, and especially in Manchester, English manufacture finds at once its starting-point and its centre.[89]

The hypothesis of Alain Touraine's 1971 sociological account of *The Post-Industrial Society* concerns the closer links in the 'realm of production' between 'information, education, and consumption'. In a 'progressively more tertiary' society, Touraine reasons, 'the treatment of information plays the same central role that the treatment of natural resources played at the beginning of industrialization'.[90] Manuel Castells later develops this idea in *The Informational City*, where he outlines an 'informational model of development' whose '*raw material itself is information, and so is its outcome'.*[91] In spite of numerous well-documented problems, not least its tendency to overstate the obsolescence of industrial production, the present utility of the postindustrial thesis is as a figurative means of explaining the connection between deindustrialization and ICTs implicit in Peace's model of spatial development.[92] For the 'neo-liberal' shift Touraine identifies, 'directed not toward values but toward objectives imposed by the transformation of the environment and by competition', is mediated in Peace's works through the qualitative matrix of the city.[93]

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[88] Peace, *Eighty*, p. 26.
[89] Engels, *Class*, p. 82.
[90] Touraine, *Post-Industrial Society,* pp. 3, 19, 17, 62.
[91] Manuel Castells, *The Informational City* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), pp. 2, 13, Castells's italics.
[92] See, for example, 'The Myths of Postindustrialism' in Alex Callinicos, *Against Postmodernism: A Marxist Critique* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1989), pp. 121-8, and Naomi Klein, *No Logo* (London: Flamingo, 2000), esp. 'The Discarded Factory', pp. 195-229. While theoretically lightweight, the latter explains the links between 'postindustrial' economies and foreign subcontractors. Other problems with the '*post*-industrial' thesis include its descriptive nature: it defines what it *is not* without explaining its defining features. Although the 'informational' paradigm seemingly addresses this shortfall, it is technologically determinist since it refuses to analyse the causal links between the 'informational' model of development and the restructuring of capitalism. See Castells, *Informational*, p. 3.
[93] Touraine, *Post-industrial Society*, p. 23.

This limited degree of figurative similitude should not be mistaken for ideological correspondence, since Peace's works use the breakdown of the city-country dichotomy to reinscribe the 'critical contours' of capitalism Brian Jarvis views as signally absent from the postindustrial thesis.[94] To this end, the state of Peace's Moors and cities is indissolubly linked to the plight of British industry. The link between the postindustrial thesis and the disintegration of the city-country dichotomy comes through the concept of spectrality, which Hobsbawm raises in his notion of 'urban landscapes'. 'Contrary to what we might believe,' Jacques Derrida writes, 'the experience of ghosts is not tied to a bygone historical period' but is 'accentuated' and 'accelerated' by the 'phantom structure' of 'modern technologies like film, television, [and] the telephone'.[95]

Unlike the informational model of development, Hunter's 'screams of the wires and the signals, like the voices and the numbers' upon the Moors do not simply fetishize information.[96] Through their links to ICTs, these 'wires' extend the de-realization of politics through the privatization of public space first witnessed in Peace's images of telephone boxes. On the subject of conceptualizing hegemony and testimony in contemporary Western society, Derrida later writes that the proliferation of ICTs is such that they now 'essentially fashion the very concept of public space in so-called liberal democracies'.[97] Derrida's observations on spectrality and public space interlink

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[94] Brian Jarvis, *Postmodern Geographies: The Geographical Imagination in Contemporary American Culture* (London: Pluto Press, 1998), p. 14.
[95] Jacques Derrida, 'The Ghost Dance', *interview* with Andrew Payne and Mark Lewis, *Public* 2, 1989, pp. 60-74, p. 61. See also Kittler, *Gramophone*, pp. 30-8.
[96] Peace, *Eighty*, p. 236. See also 'radio on: alive with death', the *'field recordings of the dead'* that are the contents of surveillance tapes, and the description of the Moors as 'a stage bare but for the wraiths and the sheep, the pylons and the pile-ups, the sky black' in Peace, *Seventy Seven*, p. 3; *GB84*, p. 371; and *Eighty Three*, p. 248, Peace's italics.
[97] Jacques Derrida, *Spectres of Marx: the State of Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*, trans. by Peggy Kamuf (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 52-3.

Peace's representations of the Moors with the correlation between ICTs and the privatization of space first witnessed in the telephone box. In relation to the automation of industrial production, Hunter's reference to a radio story 'about a factory in Germany that needs no people, just machines' alludes to the fact that the effects of ICTs were most visibly felt by blue collar workers.[98] The spectral 'screams and wires' on the Moors therefore obliquely acknowledge that Britain had become, by the early 1980s, what Hobsbawm calls a 'veritable industrial holocaust'.[99]

Nineteen Eighty Three reiterates the spectral link between technology and the death of the ethical city by repeatedly referring to 'ghost bloodied old city of Leodis'.[100] Referring to an internet archive of photographic and cinematic materials concerning Leeds, *Leodis* contains footage from Louis Le Prince's 1888 short film *Traffic Crossing Leeds Bridge.*[101] Having previously directed *Roundhay Garden Scene*, which remains the earliest surviving motion picture, Le Prince's subsequent short film represents a landmark in the relationship between representation and the material city. For Stephen Barber, it instigated the 'capacity' of film to 'transfuse its spectators a compacted charge of nostalgia for the momentary apparitions of cities or human bodies whose forms were just about to disappear forever, fatally engulfed either by conflicts and revolutions or by technological transformations'.[102] Leodis is therefore a doubly important bridging reference between the textual, cinematic, and material spaces of the

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[98] Peace, *Eighty*, p. 19.
[99] Hobsbawm, *Extremes*, p. 304. Peace's works are replete with spectral references: see *Seventy Four*, p. 127; *Seventy Seven*, pp. 3, 205, 212; *Eighty*, pp. 26, 95, 241; *GB84*, pp. 153, 166, 307, 320, 358-9, 375, 413, 415, 452.
[100] Peace, *Eighty Three*, pp. 193, 195, 240-4, 246, 320, 322, 343.
[101] <http://www.leodis.net/default.aspx> [accessed 14 April 2009]
[102] Stephen Barber, *Projected Cities* (London: Reaktion Books. 2002), p. 19.

city: it reaffirms the spectrality of those technologies which in Peace's works figuratively engulf the ethical city.

Peter Hunter unfolds the significance of Leodis, and by extension ICTs, in his overview of:

> Yorkshire, bloody Yorkshire—Primitive Yorkshire, Mediaeval Yorkshire, Industrial Yorkshire—Three Ages, three Dark Ages—Local Dark Ages—Local decay, industrial decay—local murder, industrial murder—Local hell, industrial hell—Dead hells, dead ages—Dead moors, dead mills—Dead cities.[103]

As an axiological statement concerning post-1973 Britain, this passage connects the quantitative state of industrial production with the qualitative condition of the city-country dichotomy. The quantitative 'decay' of the former leads to the qualitative disintegration of the latter: the 'dead mills' equal 'dead moors' and '[d]ead cities'. With this, the urban problematic emerges as a means of mapping out Leys's 'law of value'.

Such rubric invites comparison with T.S. Eliot's epic poem *The Waste Land*.[104] Take, for instance, '[h]e who was living is now dead/We who were living are now dead' (IV. 328-9). Initially manifest in Whitehead's 'plagued day of blighted visions and wretched memory [...] the dead abroad, wrought from the living', Eliot's sense of death later permeates the miners' interior monologue.[105] Like Eliot's 'voices singing out of empty cisterns and/exhausted wells' (IV. 384-5), Martin's narrative—the immiserated voice of mining communities—is deprived of nourishment: *'You took from us the sea'*, *'You took us from the wild-fields* [....] *Put us in the ground* [...] *To drown. To suffocate*', *'We lie among*

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[103] Peace, *Eighty*, pp. 305-6.
[104] Eliot, *Waste Land*, pp. 21-49.
[105] Peace, *Seventy Seven*, p. 219.

corpses. Thousands of them. We are parched. Drowned in blood', '*[u]nder the ground*', where '*[t]he soil is cold. The wounds old*'.[106]

The thematic lack of sustenance in *The Waste Land* produces what Richard Lehan calls an 'urban wasteland' whose 'metaphorical equivalent is the desert, as the city was cut off from redeeming water, the mythic impulses of life'.[107] Like the 'rust-belts' of Hobsbawm's 'urban landscapes', Eliot's 'urban wasteland' is negatively defined by absence and disconnection. Martin's references to the '*skulls*' that '*sat in monstrous and measureless heaps*', which are indices of Thatcherism's Pyrrhic victory over organized labour, similarly leaves only '*[h]eaps of fragments* [...] *in the dark lands*'.[108]

This likeness extends to the 'human engine' (III. 215) of the city, which Peace describes as a voracious force. For Hunter, the 'whole bloody city' of Leeds is 'the City of the Dead' while the once archetypal industrial city of Manchester is transformed into necrotic 'black streets [...] dominions of disease and depopulation'.[109] This metaphoric connection between the body and the city tellingly attests to what Hunter calls the:

> Collision of the worst of times, the worst of hells—The Mediaeval, the Victorian, and the Concrete [...] industrial decay, industrial murder, industrial hell—Dead city abandoned [...] Dread spectre from a woken nightmare—A past trapped in a future [...] a tear in the landscape—Leeds, the grim and concrete mediaeval: Dead city.[110]

Ostensibly, this 'collision' resembles Eliot's:

> Falling towers
> Jerusalem Athens Alexandria

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[106] Peace, *GB84*, pp. 10, 20, 90, 82, 110, 248, Peace's italics. See also p. 462.
[107] Richard Lehan, *City in Literature*, pp. 134-5.
[108] Peace, *GB84*, pp. 340, 282, Peace's italics.
[109] Peace, *Eighty*, pp. 332, 48.
[110] Ibid. p. 26.

> Vienna London
> Unreal (IV. 373-6)

Its model of causality, however, is fundamentally different. Following the 'three dark ages' of Yorkshire, the qualitative state of Hunter's Leeds gauges the effects of deindustrialization. The disintegration of the ethical city ('[d]ead city abandoned') is prompted by the 'decay', 'murder', and 'hell' of industry, all of which are set against the 'dread spectre' linked to modern technologies. This use of technology indicates a fundamental difference. While *The Waste Land* articulates a conservative *cultural* crisis of industrial society, Peace's works gauge the *social* crisis of deindustrialization through the breakdown of the city-country dichotomy.[111]

Their differences extend to the significance of London. As against Eliot's '[u]nreal city' (I. 60; III. 207), Peace's London is the base of realpolitik. The miners' strike 'would end here, in London', Terry belatedly realizes. '*Not in Sheffield. Not in Mansfield. Not in Scotland. Not in Wales*'.[112] Whereas its unreality attests to the cultural poverty of civilization in *The Waste Land*, London—as the base of polity—generates what Hunter calls a 'tear in the landscape'.[113] Its underlying causes manifest in the scene of the crime:

> *This is the place* [...] Heavy workbenches, oil and chains, tools; the stink of machines, oil and chains, tools; the sound of dirty water, oil and chains, tools; dripping, dripping, dripping, dripping, dripping, tools. High skylights, rain against the pane—Strapped down upon a workbench, trapped in chains, wrapped in: DEATH.[114]

Peace's use of italicization again denotes the switch between individual perception and social commentary. The fading rhythms of industry represented

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[111] 'If it's something political, that happens on a national level', Peace explains, 'the first point of view to consider [...] is the victims'. Gregorits, 'Days'.
[112] Peace, *GB84*, p. 446, Peace's italics. See also pp. 58, 61, 143 192.
[113] Peace, *Eighty*, p. 26. Hence the salience of the North/South divide in the miners' and Scargill's narratives: see *GB84*, pp. 11, 58, 192.
[114] Peace, *Eighty*, p. 126, Peace's italics.

by repetition and alliteration mimic the very characteristics of the Xerox copies that litter *Nineteen Eighty*, and so articulate the transposition of machines of production with technologies of reproduction (ICTs).[115] In stylistic terms, this substitution explains the short bursts of words, which mimetically capture the entropic rhythms of industry. The general waning of representation Peace's works use to connote the social effects of deindustrialization acquires spatial significance in Hunter's image of the Vaughan Industrial Estate:

> Low dark buildings in the cold rain and the blue lights, police the black wraiths against the white light, their cloaks wings about a factory: DEATH—*All the gods of the North are dead now, moribund.*[116]

The plight of these industrial 'gods of the North' directly affects the 'moribund' state of Peace's representations of space. Hunter's repetitious descriptions of crime scenes symbolize the obsolescence of industrial production.[117] This evocation of the simulacrum, where there is no individual crime scene but only copies of scenes, links in with the use of italicization. The switch between the individual and social realms suggests that the breakdown of spatial difference is a symptom of wider malaise: the simulacral 'scene of the crime' wrought large as the *industrial* state of the nation. Through its links to the second circuit of capitalism, the urban problematic figuratively emerges through the breakdown of place. Inverting King's logics of dissolution, the 'empty wasteland' of Peace's works tellingly has no *place*, only space.[118]

This section has established how Peace's logics of disintegration draw a figurative link between modern technologies and the organization of space,

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[115]Ibid. pp. 292, 294-298, 314, 366. See also *GB84*, p. 105, where an 'old chemical factory' is transformed into a local 'base of [government] operations'.
[116] Peace, *Eighty*, p. 125, Peace's italics.
[117] Ibid. pp. 126, 141, 179.
[118] Ibid. p. 179.

using the breakdown of the city-country dichotomy as an axiological judgement on Thatcherism. In the next section, this spatialized critique extends to the human body as a metaphor for social relations.

The Bodiless Politic

> In place of the individual person [the social contract] creates an artificial and collective body [...] The public person thus formed by the union of all other persons was once called the *city*, and is now known as the *republic* or the *body politic* [...] People forget that houses may make a town, while only citizens make a city.[119]

The numerous 'bodies and the corpses, the alleys and the wasteland, the dirty men, [and] the broken women' that populate Peace's works refract the traumatic effects of Britain's deindustrialization.[120] To better understand the frequent transactions in Peace's works between physical and social geographies—the lateral relations between what Neil Fontaine calls the 'scars across your country' and those 'across your heart'—this section develops the concept of the bodiless politic.[121]

Since the time of Rousseau, the relationship between the body and polity has radically changed. Once the surrogate of 'all other persons', the body politic is today something of a dead metaphor.[122] Where its use continues, the body politic is conceptually modified. Mark Seltzer reworks the medical concept of 'wound culture' to explain the ongoing public fascination with torn and exposed bodies that, he argues, organizes the concept of sociality in late twentieth-

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[119] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract* (1762), trans. by Maurice Cranston (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968), p. 61, Rousseau's italics.
[120] Peace, *Eighty*, p. 318.
[121] Peace, *GB84*, p. 332.
[122] See Mark Neocleous, 'The Fate of the Body Politic', *Radical Philosophy*, 108 (2001), pp. 29-39.

century America. From this angle, the ubiquity of violated and fragmented bodies in Peace's works provide one means of 'imagining and situating' what Seltzer calls the 'very idea of "the public", and, more exactly, the relations of bodies and persons to public spaces'. Put simply, where the body 'always becomes visible as a model for something else', so it 'increasingly appears as a model for the public sphere'.[123]

Reformulated in the phenomenological terms of Peace's works, the disappearance of the body offers symbolically a model of the public sphere. The bodiless politic disbands the traditional liberal distinction between public and private space, and conceptually links the privatization of space and the disappearance of the body in Peace's works with the disintegration of the city-country dichotomy. While ICTs figuratively eclipse public space and bodily presence in Peace's images of telephone boxes and the Yorkshire Moors, so Seltzer's account explains the wider relationship between corporeal violence and the public sphere.

'Public corporeal violence', Seltzer writes, 'has become a way of keeping open the possibility of the shared social spaces of the public sphere itself'.[124] Such is the ubiquity of wrecked machines, torn and violated bodies, and the wound (in its most general sense) within Peace's works that they constitute what Seltzer calls the 'spectacles' of a 'wound culture' and the 'scenes' that constitute the 'pathological public sphere'.[125] The former refers to the many fragmented bodies that inhabit Peace's works, the latter concerns their

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[123] Mark Seltzer, *Serial Killers: Death and Life in America's Wound Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1998), pp. 37, 34-5.
[124] Ibid. p. 280.
[125] Ibid. p. 280.

numerous images of corporeal violence. Hunter's 'alien landscapes of wastelands and buildings, tires [*sic*] and tools, of wounds' thereby amounts to a traumatological space, a *wound-scape* in which the interlinking physical, social, and corporeal spaces of Peace's works frame an axiological statement about deindustrialization: the fragmentation and disappearance of the body as the death of the community and the ethical city.[126]

Hunter's description of another crime scene highlights the connection between physical space and the human body: 'The factory—Sun gone, only night and looming buildings dark and towering with their dead eyes, their empty rooms—Pitch-black and deathlike, silent but for the screams of passing freight'.[127] This personification of space amplifies the sense of loss: the 'dead eyes' reflect the 'empty rooms' of the factory. These rooms, 'silent but for the screams of passing freight', are important because, in juxtaposing the 'silence' of industrial production with the 'screams' of passing freight, distribution offsets production. With it emerges a nascent disembodied—informational—economy.

The point of note is that the ascendancy of the second circuit of capitalism does not prompt a re-evaluation of suburbia (Ballard) or the London overspill (King), but yields the fragmentation of the human body, the breakdown of the body politic, and the death of the city. It is not an urban 'revolution' so much as terminal regression. Peace's works figuratively render the urban problematic in terms of the wound: a space—not place—which represents the wounded memory of industrial community. Elana Gomel associates such an 'eroticism of disaster' with the trope of the postapocalypse, which is 'concerned

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[126] Peace, *Eighty*, p. 79.
[127] Ibid. p. 139.

not with the sharp moment of death but rather with the interminable duration of dying'. Gomel's comparison is instructive when distinguishing between logics of dissolution and disintegration. 'If the apocalypse promises glorious rebirth, postapocalypse is enmeshed in the backward-looking narrative of trauma'.[128]

This 'backward-looking narrative of trauma' acutely captures the essence of Peace's logics of disintegration, as illustrated by his reading of the miners' strike as a conflict between:

> Sacrifice and selfless versus brutality and bribery, fear and greed. And we know who won. And we know who lost—their jobs, their families, their communities, their culture, their heritage—150 years of socialist heritage. British heritage, not nostalgia. Not romanticism. A heritage of sacrifice, of selflessness.[129]

This account explains the fact that none of Peace's works have to date addressed, or are ever likely to address, British history after 1985.[130] As Peace's literary works imply, the task of representing this period is to record the traumatic loss of 'jobs', 'families', 'culture', and 'communities'. Given this ethic of representation, it is unsurprising that Peace's representations of the individual and social body are traumatized.[131] Peace's characters, Beckett observes, are:

> Always ill [...] It's as if the corruption he sees everywhere has found its way into their bodies; as if taking part in, or even just probing, British

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[128] Elana Gomel, 'The Plague of Utopias: Pestilence and the Apocalyptic Body', *Twentieth Century Literature*, 46, 4, (2000), 405-433, pp. 405, 408.
[129] Peace, 'Crisp Sandwiches'. Eagleton's review of *GB84* offers a similar reading of the strike as 'a showdown that history, or at least the shift to a post-industrial Britain, was going to stage sooner or later'. Terry Eagleton, 'At the Coal Face', in *The Guardian* <http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2004/mar/06/featuresreviews.guardianreview20> [accessed 12 February 2010]
[130] *GB84* is 'the last of an inverse post-war trilogy which will include UKDK, a novel about the plot to overthrow Wilson and the subsequent rise of Thatcher and another book, possibly about the Atlee Govt'. Stoop, 'Interview'.
[131] See Peace, *Seventy Four*, pp. 4, 23, 48; *Seventy Seven*, p. 77; *GB84*, pp. 5, 42, 48, 68, 75, 108, 132, 158, 175, 199, 215, 234-5, 274, 276, 442, 447.

> political life as these books define it—competitive, obsessive, claustrophobically male—always destroys people in the end.[132]

GB84 explores this destructive relationship at greater length, beginning with its reference to the 'body politic'.[133] Though its origins date back to the pre-modern era, this idea is frequently associated with the 'Artificiall man' and 'Body Politique' of Thomas Hobbes's early modern political treatise *Leviathan.*[134] At its most simple level, the body politic as an analogy for socio-political relations fragments in the latter half of *GB84*, when Winters uses the pseudonym of 'Mr Verloc', a reference to the eponymous figure of Joseph Conrad's *The Secret Agent* (1907).[135]

In lieu of its title, Verloc's role as a secret agent is to ensure the 'protection of the social mechanism'. To demonstrate his loyalty to the 'cause of social stability', Verloc intends to bomb the Greenwich Observatory. While unsuccessful, the symbolic consequences of this attempt are unmistakable. Verloc's proxy, his brother-in-law Stevie, inadvertently detonates the device prematurely, bringing about his 'violent disintegration [....] Blown to small bits: limbs, gravel, clothing, bones, splinters – all mixed up together'. The plight of Stevie and that of Verloc, murdered by his vengeful wife, reiterates the disintegration of the body politic.[136]

The Secret Agent is additionally important because it identifies a new priority for the state. Its 'first necessity' is 'protection', a negative principle which

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[132] Beckett, *Gothic.*
[133] Peace, *GB84*, p. 61.
[134] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (1651), ed. by Richard Tuck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 9-10.
[135] Peace, *GB84*, p. 359.
[136] Joseph Conrad, *The Secret Agent* (1907) (New York: Dover Publications, 2001), pp. 8, 151, 149, 132. Consider the new metaphors of society: pp. 8 (the 'social mechanism') and 58 (the state as a 'machine').

prioritizes order over liberty.[137] With this, Rousseau's sense of citizens making the city no longer applies. *GB84*'s reference to Verloc therefore connotes a critical sense of transition in governmental practices and the city which coincides with that which David Harvey identifies in 1970s.[138] Associated with the second circuit of capitalism, the transition from urban governance to urban entrepreneurialism explains the burgeoning association between technology and apocalypse Hunter alludes to when he mentions '[t]he Four Horsemen riding on the radio waves' that translate as *'2,133,000 record jobless'*.[139]

To briefly restate and clarify this important link: the Verloc reference connotes the disintegration of the body politic. In the historical period Peace describes, this sense of transition coincides with the new forms of governmental practice Harvey links to the new economy. Hunter's triangulation of ICTs, apocalypse, and unemployment relates to the role of modern technologies in the new economy, which includes the automation of industrial production. The next step, which explicitly associates apocalypse with nuclear weapons, clarifies the relationship between the bodiless politic and Peace's representations of space.[140]

In the article 'Consent and the Body', Elaine Scarry links the development of nuclear weapons with a new conception of political life. With reference to the histories of medicine, politics, and marriage, Scarry demonstrates how traditional notions of consent were grounded in the body.[141] The most important conclusion she draws is that the development of nuclear

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[137] Ibid. p. 6.
[138] Harvey, 'Entrepreneurialism'.
[139] Peace, *Eighty*, p. 101, Peace's italics.
[140] Ibid. pp. 3, 19, 35, 55, 143, 256, 261, 325, 363.
[141] Elaine Scarry, 'Consent and the Body: Injury, Departure, and Desire', *New Literary History*, 21 (1990), 867-96.

weapons heralds a *'new form of political life in which the essential features of argument and citizenry are no longer needed or available'*.[142]

Reading Peace's works through the lens of Scarry's article, the diminishing presence of the body, the 'dead cities', the devivification of the Moors, and the symbolic importance of modern technologies all point to a logic of political and social disintegration that critiques Thatcherism through the breakdown of the city-country dichotomy. *GB84* illustrates this point. The consequences of what Scargill calls the government's 'nuclear dreams'—their 'secret plans to denationalize the coal industry'—are threefold.[143] Firstly, it restates the breakdown of consent vouchsafed by the body.[144] Secondly, the 'nuclear dreams' interfere with communication: when referring to the battle lines of the strike, Fontaine notes how *'no one speaks since the bomb'*. Latterly, it restates the causative link between the government and destruction. 'Jupiter Securities runs Trident Marine', Fontaine pieces together. 'Trident dumps nuclear waste at sea—For the government'. Collectively, these portend the consequences of the 'bloody strike', what Fontaine calls *'[t]he death of everyone'*.[145]

The novel also connotes the bodiless politic through the medium of language. From the initial abundance of *'[t]alk. All talk. Nothing but talk—Language'*, negotiations are beset by miscommunication: *'The Chairman blamed semantics over the third category of pit closures'*. A familiar division consequently emerges between governmental rationality and the ethical

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[142] Ibid. p. 867, Scarry's italics.
[143] Peace, *GB84*, p. 7.
[144] As when Martin speaks of the policing of the strike in terms of 'World War bloody Three [...] Folk nothing but a number now. Just another bloody body'. Peace, *GB84*, p. 322.
[145] Ibid. pp. 306, 418, 215, Peace's italics.

community in the form of *'the living with their language and code'* and the *'[f]orgotten voices*' of the miners, theirs '[a] *lost language. A code. Echoes*—Like funeral music'.[146] *'Phrases had become empty'*, Winters explains. *'Faces became blank. Words empty. Looks blank'*. The hollowing out of 'phrases' and 'words' which corresponds with the blankness of 'faces' links the condition of verbal communication with that of the human body. Winters connects this hollowing of language with deindustrialization when he belatedly realizes that '[i]t was all about the numbers now. Not words. Numbers'.[147] The quantitative value of 'numbers' supplants the qualitative significance of 'words', a calculus that literalizes Leys's 'law of value'.

On another level, this breakdown of language reaffirms the disintegration of the social world. For Jacques Lacan, language is the matrix through which the child enters the symbolic order. 'By submitting to the laws of language', Yannis Stavrakakis explains, 'the child becomes a subject in language, it inhabits language, and hopes to gain an adequate representation through the world of words'. Accordingly, the 'symbolic laws of language' permit 'the subject to enter into the social world in which he or she can constitute him- or herself as a desiring subject'.[148] It follows that the generalized problems of communication are a comment upon the social world. As B.J. remarks early in *Nineteen Eighty Three*:

> I make no sense, words in my mouth, pictures in my head, they make no sense, lost in my own room, like I've had a big fall, broken, and no-one

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[146] Ibid. pp. 128, 163, 440, 136, Peace's italics.
[147] Ibid. pp. 431, 216, Peace's italics.
[148] Yannis Stavrakakis, *Lacan and the Political* (London: Routledge, 1999), pp. 20, 33.

> can put me together again, messages: no-one receiving, decoding, translating.[149]

This disintegration of 'sense' and lack of connection between 'words' and 'pictures' leaves 'messages' untranslated. Language, in other words, no longer confers upon the subject entry into the social world. Each is, like B.J., irreparably 'broken'.

The state of language connects with the plight of industry and the condition of the city through the metaphor of drowning. As a displaced reference to deindustrialization—a *deluge* of information—Dunford's suggestive metaphor of 'drowning in lists, drowning in information' resurfaces in Hunter's description of Manchester: 'Silence, again silence—Just the rain black upon the window, running—The city grey below, swimming—Drowning'.[150] That these descriptions re-establish the historic connection between the body and the city accentuates the fact that each is beset by a terminal logic of disintegration. Jack Whitehead closes the loop between language, the breakdown of the symbolic order, and the death of the city while traversing:

> The dirty afternoon streets [of Leeds], the breeze wind, the plastic bag birds, the newspaper snakes. I turned into a cobbled alley out of the gale, searching for the walls, the words. But the words were gone, the alley wrong, the only words lies.[151]

The act of 'searching' for 'words' among the 'walls' is fruitless since 'the words were gone, the alley wrong'. At this point the city becomes indecipherable, lost in an array of disjointed 'messages' and inchoate 'words' that culminates the

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[149] Peace, *Eighty Three*, p. 95, Peace's italics.
[150] Peace, *Seventy Four*, p. 201; *Eighty*, p. 129. See also *GB84*, pp. 72 ('The Jew is on the phone in the middle of a dark sea of maps and plans') and the descriptions of Wakefield and 'mine shafts sunk with black water and open-mouthed bodies' in *Seventy Four*, pp. 124, 281.
[151] Peace, *Seventy Seven*, p. 309.

previous sense of drowning. As an axiological statement, the city is no longer a meaningful signifier.

This raises an important point of comparison and contrast with modernist literature. Consistent with, for example, Arthur Conan-Doyle's fiction, the city is the scene of the crime, a liminal space of signs, words, and codes. Its arcane language, however, is no longer decipherable in Peace's works. The role of the detective as semiotician is redundant: 'the words were gone [...] the only words lies'. Put differently, the 'semiotic nature of detection' whereby the detective, in Alison Young's words, 'relocates intelligibility and order in the city space', no longer applies.[152] The 'order' of Peace's 'city space' is akin to that of his fragmented characters: *'no one can put me together again'*.[153]

This chapter concludes with some brief remarks on the differences between logics of disintegration and those of dissolution with regards to representing the urban problematic. If one quote epitomizes the worldview of Peace's works, it is the words of Stephen Sweet, Thatcher's proxy in covert operations. 'There's no politics', Sweet tells a union official, 'without industry'.[154] Without industry there is indeed no politics, no city, and ultimately no future within Peace's works. The historical reality in Britain was, of course, more complicated. Industrial production continued to play a significant role in the British economy in the form of armaments manufacturing.[155] In Peace's works, however, this is not the point.

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[152] Alison Young, *Imagining Crime: Textual Outlaws and Criminal Conversations* (London: Sage, 1996), p. 86.
[153] Peace, *Eighty Three*, pp. 95, 266, Peace's italics.
[154] Peace, *GB84*, p. 435.
[155] See 'Arming the World' in John Pilger, *Hidden Agendas* (London: Vintage, 1998), pp. 115-152, and David Edgerton, *The British Military-Industrial Complex in History.*

Andy Beckett notes that in the centre of *GB84* lies 'simply the strike itself: an enormous metaphor for the way Britain works, floating surprisingly free of historical context for a novelist with such a command of political reference'.[156] By interpreting his first five novels and piecing together their representations of the Yorkshire Moors, various cities, the human body, and technology, this chapter has contextualized Peace's works in terms of the spatial critique that spans this thesis. Its recurring argument is that the breakdown of the city-country dichotomy is properly seen in historical terms as a response to the emergence of the second circuit of capitalism in the 1970s. From this perspective, Beckett's conclusions appear a little hasty.

Like the other works considered in this thesis, those of Peace recognize that it is no longer possible to conceptualize British space in terms of the city-country dichotomy. It is the significance each attaches to this conclusion that distinguishes logics of dissolution from those of disintegration. Carol Watts offers an adroit reading of *GB84*—and by extension Peace's logics of disintegration—when she describes the novel as 'a montage without a synthesis, a dialectic with no positive outcome'.[157] In answer to what Hart calls the central 'question' in Peace's works—who governs Britain?—the miners' strike represented the defeat of organized labour.[158] This explains how, from a spatial perspective, the dialectic of the governmental and ethical cities in Peace's works has no synthesis. Their encounter yields only 'dead cities' because it records the death of community.

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[156] Beckett, 'Gothic'.
[157] Quoted by Brooker, 'Orgreave', p. 47.
[158] 'The strike is the answer to the question posed by Conservative Prime Minister Ted Heath in the 1974 election, the question that lies within all Peace's novels: "Who governs Britain?" In 1974, the answer came back, "Not you, Ted"; in 1984, the state demanded a different answer'. Hart, 'Interview', p. 551.

The logics of disintegration are an allusion to Theodor Adorno's 1966 magnum opus *Negative Dialectics*. While deeply indebted to Hegel's dialectic, Adorno's negative alternative is distinguished by the fact that it does not presuppose to have already successfully accessed absolute truth. It is a move consistent with Adorno's suspicion of all identity thinking. 'To define identity as the correspondence of the thing-in-itself to its concept is *hubris*', Adorno writes. 'But the ideal of identity must not simply be discarded'.[159]

Adorno's insistence that the 'ideal of identity' should not be 'simply discarded' helps distinguish Peace's logics of disintegration from the other logics of dissolution in this thesis.[160] In the respective logics of dissolution, the breakdown of the city-country dichotomy precipitates the re-evaluation of suburbia (Ballard), London overspill (King), and the idea of landscape (Griffiths). Peace's works meanwhile dispense with the 'ideal of identity': their urban *space* is an axiological end-in-itself. The deaths of the city and the Yorkshire Moors are forms of ontological degradation that correspond to the demise of working communities. 'I didn't want [*GB84*] to offer a sense of redemption', Peace explains, 'because as a country we haven't got it. And we don't deserve it'.[161]

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[159] Theodor Adorno, *Negative Dialectics* (1966), trans. by E.B. Ashton (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 149, Adorno's italics.
[160] On the specifics of Adorno's non-identity thought, see Simon Jarvis, *Adorno: A Critical Introduction* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998), esp. pp. 148-92, and Peter Dews, 'Adorno, Post-Structuralism and the Critique of Identity', *New Left Review*, I, 157 (1986), 28-44.
[161] Gregorits, 'Days'.

Chapter IV. Niall Griffiths: Delineating an 'Urban Landscape'

> The urban (urban space, urban landscape) remains unseen. We still don't see it. Is it simply that our eye has been shaped (misshaped) by the earlier landscape so it can no longer see a new space? [...] Yes, but [...] It's not just a question of lack of education, but of occlusion. We see things incompletely (Henri Lefebvre, *The Urban Revolution*, p. 29)

> Perhaps because of their addiction to form, writers always lag behind the contemporary formlessness. They write about an old reality, in a language that's even older (Martin Amis, *London Fields*, p. 238)

> This is borderland, where the urban becomes the rural; the zone between ways of life, between specialized vocabularies, two localized lexica (Niall Griffiths and Paul Farley, *Netherley*)

The 'logics of dissolution' denote a series of responses to the perceived insufficiencies of the city-country dichotomy prompted by the emergence of the second circuit of capitalism in the 1970s. This chapter delineates what Henri Lefebvre calls an 'urban landscape' with reference to the works of contemporary author Niall Griffiths.[1] As a countermeasure to the 'addiction to form' Amis's character Samson Young detects in the archaic 'language' of most writers, Griffiths's works help to unfold the urban problematic in two principal ways. Firstly, they critically engage one form of the 'old reality' Young refers to: the literary history of the idea of landscape. Secondly, they illustrate the social and physical organization of contemporary British space.

The lateral and recursive movement in Griffiths's novels between Aberystwyth and Liverpool raises the insufficiencies of the city-country dichotomy by engaging the effects of the modern networks of communication and consumption associated with the urban problematic. Relative to the preceding logics of dissolution, Griffiths's works provide a more developed sense of spatial

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[1] Niall Griffiths, *Grits* (2000) (London: Vintage, 2001); *Sheepshagger* (2001) (London: Vintage, 2002); *Kelly & Victor* (2002) (London: Vintage, 2003); *Stump* (2003) (London: Vintage, 2004); *Wreckage* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2005). This chapter does not consider Griffiths's 2007 novel *Runt*.

difference than the 'technological landscape' of J.G. Ballard's Concrete and Steel Trilogy, John King's concreted Thames Valley, and David Peace's 'dead cities' by addressing the relationship between what was traditionally dubbed the country and the city.

To demonstrate these points, this chapter is divided into four sections. 'Language and Space' provides a thematic overview of Griffiths's works. Their characteristic interest in the politics of language combined with the recursive movement between Aberystwyth and Liverpool generates overlapping social, physical, and linguistic spaces, the significance of which is developed in the following section. 'The Genesis of Liverpool' addresses the subjects of gentrification and branding the city. By inserting the present identity of Liverpool within a diachronic chain of inscriptions and highlighting the ongoing 'discursive battles' surrounding the definition of culture, Griffiths's representations address the social and physical organization of space in a manner that contests the discourse of authenticity linked to the interests of tourism.

The penultimate section 'Towards Something Else' meanwhile engages the literary history of landscape through its account of 'another' Welsh village. By extending to Wales the use of inscription and violence which characterizes their representations of Liverpool, Griffiths's works undermine traditional literary concepts of landscape. This approach leads to a discussion of the contemporary urban landscape, using the militarization of space and the 2001 Foot and Mouth epidemic to highlight the insufficiency of the city-country dichotomy. Finally, 'Conceptualizing Difference after the Urban Revolution' uses Griffiths's descriptions of Netherley, Shrewsbury, and Wrexham to explore Lefebvre's concept of differential space. While the creation of difference is an

inherent part of the production of space, this section explains how the urban problematic does not manifest spatial difference in terms of the city-country dichotomy.

Language and Space

> [It is vital that] the language in which the urban problematic is embedded be transformed, if only to liberate a whole raft of conceptual possibilities that may otherwise remain hidden.[2]

Described by one critic as 'existentialist novels for the consumerist age', and containing characters who are, by their own admission, '[r]ootless, anchorless shadows in a world of forced fixed values and steady consumption', Griffiths's novels recurrently focus on marginalized figures alienated from a world of 'sick capitalist dynamics'.[3] Another conspicuous feature is their interest in space. Through their concern with the Welsh landscape and Liverpool's cityscape, the Welsh language and the scouse dialect, Griffiths's works highlight the connections between social, physical, and linguistic spaces. In terms of the logics of dissolution, these various thematic and stylistic interests help 'liberate' what David Harvey calls the 'conceptual possibilities' of the urban problematic by focusing on the language of space and, more particularly, the insufficiencies of the city-country dichotomy.

Griffiths's debut novel *Grits* is set during the late 1990s in Aberystwyth, a 'small colony of sadness and insanity' that 'attracts all the fuck-ups'.[4] The novel is organized around the space of a rented house. Its alternate narrators are a

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[2] David Harvey, 'Cities or Urbanization', p. 58.
[3] David Ian Paddy, 'Niall Griffiths', in *The Literary Encyclopaedia* <http://www.litencyc.com/php/speople.php?rec=true&UID=5965> [accessed 21 April 2009]; Griffiths, *Grits*, p. 250; *Kelly*, p. 188.
[4] Griffiths, *Grits*, p. 415.

group of people who have at some point arrived there from a diverse range of backgrounds. Paul comes from London and shares a common Irish heritage with Liam. Mairead and Margaret originate from Yorkshire and Shrewsbury respectively, Colm hails from Liverpool, while Malcolm descends from Essex. Sioned, Roger, and Geraint meanwhile were born in different parts of Wales. Their diverse origins contrast sharply with the ubiquity of substance abuse, a recurrent theme throughout Griffiths's oeuvre.

Roger's description of the New Gurnos estate in Merthyr Tydfil as 'a fuckin real Wales fyer boy, none uv-a fuckin mountains or lakes yer jes fuckin sewage an dumps n boxes t'fuckin live in', provides an early indication of Griffiths's overlapping interests in language and space.[5] The phonetic reproduction of dialect in Roger's account meanwhile exemplifies the importance of regional identity in Griffiths's works. That each section phonetically reproduces the dialect of the respective characters proves Sioned's point. 'I'll talk Saesnag so you can understand', Sioned concedes, since 'no bugger'll listen to me if I use my own language [...] even though hardly anyone speaks "proper" English now'.[6]

This interest in the politics of language informs the title of Griffiths's second novel. *Sheepshagger* is a pun designed to 'offend [...] the straight world', Griffiths explains. 'You've abused us with this word for centuries, now we'll use it as a term of praise for ourselves [...] take the caricature, explore it, and make it offensive to the straight eyes'.[7] Set in millennial west Wales, the

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[5] Ibid. p. 57.
[6] Ibid. p. 398.
[7] JP Coillard, 'Niall Griffiths: Don't Kill the Wales', in Disturb <http://www.disturb.org/griffiths_eng.html> [accessed 23 March 2007]

novel interlinks language and space by recounting the 'wreckage' of Ianto.[8] From a formative encounter with 'The Englishman', who rapes the ten-year old child, through to his later murder in reprisal for killing a tourist, Ianto is produced by, and reproduces, a history of violence. In spatial terms, this history of violence and dispossession is mapped through the transformation of Ianto's childhood home.

With a familial history dating back to the use of 'oxen to plough' the fields, the farmhouse is where his 'family ha[s] always lived'. Until, that is, the 'clean and moneyed people' purchase the 'basic superstructure' of his formative years after its repossession and so become the 'occupiers of his childhood'. The farmhouse thereafter:

> Has sprouted a patio French-doored and a small gazebo to the left of the small garden, spaceship-like and to Ianto alien, incongruous. There is a smoothly tarmacked drive and a corrugated carport, shining cars and one huge humped motorbike and a barbecue pit.[9]

With its 'incongruous' character, this transformed exterior inverts Walter Benjamin's concept of the bourgeois interior. Where living for Benjamin 'means leaving traces', so the 'tarmacked drive', 'corrugated carport', and 'shining cars' of the modified farmhouse glosses over the traces of its former inhabitants, which are elsewhere found in the 'shallow slashes' of whitewash, 'exposed grey stonework', and 'mildewy corner' of a cottage.[10]

Kelly & Victor exchanges the previous setting of Aberystwyth for millennial Liverpool. Split into two parts, the novel narrates the brief but intense relationship between the eponymous protagonists. Spanning three sexual

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[8] Griffiths, *Sheepshagger*, p. 260.
[9] Ibid. pp. 91, 9, 18, 15-6.
[10] Walter Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire*, pp. 77-88, p. 84; Griffiths, *Sheepshagger*, p. 101.

encounters, the escalating intensity and violence of their relationship leads to Victor's death through sexual misadventure. The novel's descriptions of Liverpool mark an important point in developing the logics of dissolution for two reasons. Firstly, they consolidate the critique of Brand London developed in Chapter Two by recognizing how the interests of tourism promote a discourse of authenticity that materially shapes space. The second point concerns the way in which the novel repeatedly draws attention to Liverpool's historical links with slavery. By focusing on the naming of streets and the gentrification of factories and houses, *Kelly and Victor* raises the ongoing significance of discursive battles within the definition and production of space.

Stump raises the recursive relationship between the recurrent settings of Griffiths's works by relating the journey of thugs Darren and Alastair from Liverpool to Aberystwyth in order to avenge an earlier theft by the alternate, unnamed narrator. While ultimately unsuccessful, the fact that Darren and Alastair seek vengeance disproves the example of Colm, who left Liverpool believing the move to Aberystwyth was tantamount to escaping violence.[11] The broader point this raises relative to the logics of dissolution concerns the ways in which Griffiths's works resist conventional binary approaches to the understanding and representation of space. With reference to a cattle pyre that connotes the modern interlinked networks of consumption and communication, Aberystwyth pointedly does not represent the innocent pastoral alternative to the corruption of Liverpool.

This counterintuitive approach raises the deeper significance of the title, which demonstrates how Griffiths's recurring interest in substance abuse is not

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[11] Griffiths, *Stump*, p. 40. See also *Grits*, p. 280.

simply prurient sensationalism but a more acute concern with the politics of consumption and its wider social significance.[12] As a recovering alcoholic, substance abuser and consequent amputee, the anonymous protagonist personifies how, in the aftermath of deindustrialization and labour market flexibility, 'there are over two million people in Britain with a chronic addiction to drink an [sic] drugs', each of whom 'finds being in their own minds a horribly uncomfortable place to be'.[13]

A fundamental principle of Griffiths's works is the emergence of identity within constitutive matrices of violence. Set in the immediate aftermath of *Stump*, *Wreckage* is framed around Darren and Alastair's return to Liverpool, during which they commit an armed robbery that results in Darren murdering a postmistress. Besides reiterating Griffiths's concern with the causes and effects of violence, the novel notably provides an outline of Liverpool's socioeconomic history.[14] Resembling the miners' monologue in David Peace's *GB84* (see the previous chapter), the metanarrative acts as the voice of what Richard Bradford calls 'spectral forebears, people drawn into the macrocosm of types and inheritances that has characterized Liverpool's history since its beginnings as a muddy hinterland'.[15] Its importance to the logics of dissolution concerns the way it informs a diachronic approach to understanding space. Contrary to the dualist

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[12] 'It's incumbent on nonviolent people to study [...] and write about violence [...] Like all ages, ours is characterised by violence [...] it's vital that we try to work out why'. Anthony Brockway, 'An Interview with Niall Griffiths', <http://homepage.ntlworld.com/elizabeth.ercocklly/niall.htm> [accessed 21 April 2009]

[13] Griffiths, *Stump*, p. 87.

[14] For the history of Liverpool, see Griffiths, *Wreckage*, pp. 67-71. The novel more generally decodes the formative influences of the family, history, and education in perpetuating violence. See pp. 26-33 for the formative absence of the father, pp. 96, 103-4, 267 on the socialization of violence, and pp. 128-9 concerning the generational displacement of violence. See also *Kelly*, pp. 24, 33, 37, 41, 54, 62, 119, 171, 320, 327, where the inconsistencies of masculinity inflect Victor's narrative.

[15] Richard Bradford, *The Novel Now: Contemporary British Fiction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), p. 189.

and dehistoricized terms of utopian and dystopian accounts, the novel's descriptions of Liverpool focus on its socioeconomic organization. The concomitant effect is that Griffiths's works represent space as social process, not as an absolute given.

Griffiths's more general stylistic and thematic interests merit comparison with John King. Stylistically, each probes the shifting relationships between dialect and grammatical form, phonetically reproducing vernacular language such that both can be said to be 'at the forefront of linguistic innovation in the novel, helping move it away from its traditional solidly middle-class ground'.[16] Their focus on language is a logical extension of their respective geographical interests. King's use of Estuary English is consistent with his revisionist interest in the Thames Valley. Griffiths's use of vernacular similarly complements the social and geographical contexts of his fiction. 'In terms of dialect', Griffiths explains:

> Welsh [...] politics and identity is all bound up in their voice, the Welsh language and accent. So I have kind of taken that and looked at all the politics bound up in language and how you speak [....] your own culture can be literary.[17]

This explains the overlapping cultural, linguistic, and physical spaces in his works. Where 'your own culture can be literary', and space—following Lefebvre—is a social product, it follows that the representation of space intersects the politics of language and the production of space. The act of

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[16] Garan Holcombe, 'Niall Griffiths', <http://www.contemporarywriters.com/authors/?p=authC2D9C28A0cb241C48FSxO1691DFA> [accessed 23 April 2009]. On Griffiths' literary influences, see Coillard, *Don't Kill the Wales* and Gareth Evans, 'Between the Rocks and Hard Places', The Independent: Review, March 2, 2002, p. 10.

[17] Kenn Taylor, 'Niall Griffiths Interview', in *Nerve* <http://www.catalystmedia.org.uk/issues/nerve8/niall_griffiths.htm> [accessed 21 April 2009]; Evans, *Between the Rocks*.

delineating the urban problematic is, in other words, a transformative practice that draws upon and reformulates cultural, linguistic, and physical spaces.

Such concern for the politics of language and national identity is characteristic of these works, as the response to 'hiraeth' demonstrates. This 'peculiarly and wholly Welsh' concept, Griffiths explains, is 'a kind of affirmative sadness, of attachment to a place so physically and spiritually profound that it can be heartbreaking, as well as a powerful spur to creation'.[18] Towards the end of *Grits*, Sioned considers how 'sometimes what starts off as anti-racism can become mutated into racism itself—and something as precious as hiraeth becomes like Aryanism was to the Nazis'.[19] By considering how readily the unquestioning celebration of hiraeth can morph into racism, Sioned's perspective refutes the potentially divisive claims of identity politics.[20] Her example suitably demonstrates how these works appreciate the politics of identity without granting identity primacy over politics.

Another important subject of critique that Griffiths's works share with those of King is the ideology of media representation.[21] Midway through *Grits*, Colm decodes:

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[18] Niall Griffiths, 'Wales: England's Oldest Colony', in *New Statesman* <http://www.newstatesman.com/politics/2007/04/welsh-language-wales-england> [accessed 29 March 2010]
[19] Griffiths, *Grits*, p. 404.
[20] In 'forcing people to take on one, and only one, identity', identity politics ultimately 'divides them from each other' and so 'isolates these minorities'. Eric Hobsbawm, 'Identity Politics and the Left', *New Left Review*, I, 217 (1996), 38-47, p. 44. Similarly, Griffiths's works are generally hostile to uncritical ideas of nationalism: see *Grits*, pp. 31, 83, 86; *Sheepshagger*, pp. 74-5. 226. While recognizing that not all forms of identity politics are divisive (one example: the universalist aspirations of the early gay liberation movement), I share Terry Eagleton's objection that the prioritizing of identity (which Eagleton associates with certain branches of postmodernism) over class potentially represents a 'deepening and displacement' in the approach to politics. Terry Eagleton, *The Illusions of Postmodernism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), p. 17.
[21] For example, see Griffiths, *Grits*, pp. 335, 423; *Sheepshagger*, pp. 15, 173; *Kelly*, p. 99; *Stump*, pp. 104-5, 126, 168; *Wreckage*, p. 54.

> A hideous programme on the telly, a think it's just called *The Eighties*, some kind uv retrospective on tha vile fuckin decade [...] Ther's been a glut uv such programmes recently; objectionable attempts at the assuagement uv guilt [...] What ther sayin these programmes is, don't worry; don't entertain doubts about what you did under [Margaret] Thatcher.[22]

By dismissing the idea that the past was without qualification better, these works dispute what Amanda Craig calls the 'nostalgia-fest [...] rampant in [contemporary] literature'.[23] On another level, the foregrounding of the revisionist ideology of 'retrospective' programmes contests the populist narrative of the media, whose insistence that its content during the 1980s reflected consumer choice 'echoes the ideological script of the Reagan-Thatcher era'.[24] As forms of ideological naturalization, such 'objectionable attempts at the assuagement uv guilt' played an important role in consolidating neoliberalism, which by the 1990s became a 'new orthodoxy'.[25] This critical approach corresponds with that of critics such as Ted Honderich and Timothy Bewes, who systematically decode the obfuscations of political language.[26]

To conclude this section, the concept of polyphony helps distinguish between the logics of dissolution and those of disintegration. As Mikhail Bahktin defines it, polyphony is 'the event of interaction between autonomous and internally unfinalized consciousnesses [....] not inserted into the *finalizing* frame

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[22] Griffiths, *Grits*, p. 275, Griffiths's italics. See also p. 481.
[23] Amanda Craig, 'Stuck in the Past', in *The Independent* <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/features/stuck-in-the-past-why-is-modern-literature-obsessed-with-history-1667709.html> [accessed 13 April 2009]
[24] James Curran, *Media and Power* (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 23.
[25] Harvey, *History of Neoliberalism*, p. 13. See also p. 3, which lists the means (including education and the media) through which neoliberalism has 'become hegemonic as a mode of discourse'. This justifies the sense of political continuity after 1997: 'The poverty, the repossessions? All that shite? New fuckin Labour's no bastard better' Griffiths, *Sheepshagger*, p. 1. On New Labour's consolidation of Thatcherite reforms of the media, see Curran, *Media*, pp. 49, 220-1.
[26] Compare the discussions of 'opportunity', 'attitude' and 'initiative' in Griffiths, *Stump*, p. 40, *Wreckage*, pp. 82, 6, 157, 195, with Honderich, *Conservatism*, esp. pp. 24-28, and Bewes, *Cynicism*, pp. 15-19, 68-76.

of reality'.[27] On one level, the polyphony of voices in Griffiths's works record dispossession and conflict.[28] Their linguistic polyphony, on another level, mimetically captures cultural heteroglossia: Liverpool as characterized by its 'hubbub polyglot and motley, pidgin and patois'.[29] This emphasis on language is at once interrogative and celebratory, aware of its ideological contexts while recognizing, together with the linguist Patrick Honeybone, that among 'the many cultural achievements of the people of Liverpool, the formation of a completely new dialect—although not a unique feat—must count as one of the greatest'.[30]

This celebration contrasts with David Peace's logics of disintegration. In temporal terms, polyphony is a linguistic openness to the 'unfinalized' state of consciousness: the endlessness of its becoming. The postapocalyptic language and voices of Peace's works, by contrast, are more discordant than polyphonic: the death of community they recount is their 'finalizing frame' of reality. In terms of delineating the urban problematic, the consequences of this difference are immense. While both authors engage similar themes of conflict, dispossession, and violence, Peace's works map out the interminable death of community through the image of 'dead cities'. By contrast, Griffiths's works address the ongoing state of these battles, recognizing how the construction of the discourse of culture helps shape physical space. The next section emphasizes this difference by using Griffiths's polyphonic Liverpool to help explain several fundamental changes in the organization of contemporary space.

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[27] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, ed. and trans. by Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), pp. 176, 284, Bakhtin's italics.
[28] That is, their value as a 'life affirmation [...] of those voices and people excluded from literature'. Paddy, 'Griffiths'.
[29] Griffiths, *Wreckage*, p. 166.
[30] Patrick Honeybone, 'New-dialect formation in nineteenth century Liverpool: a brief history of Scouse', in *The Mersey Sound: Liverpool's Language, People and Places*, ed. by A Grant and C Grey (Liverpool: Open House Press, 2007), pp. 106-40, p. 139.

The Genesis of Liverpool

> That culture has become a commodity of some sort is undeniable [...] The relation between culture and capital evidently calls for careful probing and nuanced scrutiny.[31]

The second circuit of capitalism that emerged in the 1970s, to recount, led to the increased prominence in the economy of real-estate investments, financial speculation, and the tertiary sector in general. These transformations contextualize Harvey's observations on the spatial impact of the commodification of culture. Where it impacts city centres, the 'relation' between culture and capital unites the interests of tourism, real-estate, and the service sector. Collectively, these circumstances help explain the diminished experiential significance of capital cities to Griffiths's characters. With regards to the new occupiers of Ianto's home in *Sheepshagger*, a 'vague South of England locale' is but a place from which 'none seem to have been or go but from where many originate'.[32] This response demonstrates the diminishing experiential significance of cities within Griffiths's works. As will become apparent, their once-obvious identity can no longer be taken for granted.

In place of the a priori difference of the city-country dichotomy comes an approach which focuses on the social and physical organization of space. The brief history of Liverpool outlined in *Wreckage* contains an important diachronic outline of responses to the city. In the words of the metanarrative:

> The city's soul rises on vast and tattered wings from the flat rust-coloured sea. It rises and soars and hovers and casts shadow over streets and square and gargoyle and cupola and a million different bloods. It pays

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[31] Harvey, 'Art of Rent', p. 394.
[32] Griffiths, *Sheepshagger*, p. 16. The new owners have erased all trace of the former 'character' of the house, transforming it into a 'holiday chalet'.

> witness to despair and design, purpose and futility and the shore warehouses now peopled only by pigeon or preened for the pampered.[33]

This image raises two important issues concerning the logics of dissolution. Firstly, it dispenses with the polarizing logic inherent to utopian and dystopian accounts. Inasmuch as the 'city's soul [...] rises', it is a compromised ascent upon 'vast and tattered wings'. Griffiths's depiction of Liverpool thereby 'pays witness' to numerous competing inscriptions: the object of 'despair' when dystopically inscribed for reasons of political expediency, becoming the 'focus for the wrath of obsessed rulers' and 'paw-thorn for a system built on and devoted to the maintenance of privilege and positional power'. It is subject to utopian 'design' and reactionary 'purpose' alike: 'like a microcosm of the wider country', Liverpool is 'deeply divided' as a consequence of 'unequal distribution' and 'the oppositional aims of Tory rulers and militant left-wing radicalism'.[34] As the final section explains, this resistance to dualist thinking has practical implications for understanding spatial difference.

Secondly, efforts at dissembling an overriding or transcendental identity are thwarted by an insistence upon social history: 'built on and sunk in sumps of blood'. A reference to its historical links to slavery, Griffiths's Liverpool is besmirched by 'a million different bloods', unable to assail its 'genesis in sludge'. From 'oozing pool standing stagnant to world city major mercantile metropolitan capital', the crucial point of note is that the geography and history of Liverpool repeatedly intertwine.[35] This is important aspect of Griffiths's works, which recognize that space, far from being a 'natural' product and neutral medium, is the historical outcome of social processes. *Kelly & Victor* elaborates

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[33] Griffiths, *Wreckage*, p. 70.
[34] Ibid. p. 69.
[35] Ibid. pp. 69, 68.

this point. After 'open[ing] another door at the very top of the house', Kelly's flat is notable for its history: it comprises 'what would've been the roofspace when slave-owners or shipping magnates lived here'. Later, Kelly finds the 'expensive dockland flats' and 'warehouse conversions' around the Pier Head similarly notable because they were:

> Built by the Irish an still, now, maintained by them; only where thee used to come with picks an shovels thee now come with offshore bank accounts an bulgin investment portfolios. Waterfront property is still an investment opportunity just as it was then.[36]

Like the miners' narrative in Peace's *GB84*, the spectral voices from history form an important part of spatial identity in Griffiths's works.[37] By placing Liverpool's current identity athwart previous appropriations, these images reinscribe what Roland Barthes calls the 'historical quality', the 'memory', of the production of identity.[38] Kelly's response to '[a]ll the streets around here, the docks themselves are named after slavers' raises another such memory. As she points out, 'we christen parts of ar cities in ther names, honour them', to the detriment of those which, as *Wreckage* points out, were 'broken to build this city's parts, those enslaved'.[39]

This realization that the act of naming, far from being neutral, is a manifestation of power has important implications for the logics of dissolution.[40]

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[36] Griffiths, *Kelly*, pp. 18, 331.
[37] Chester is described in terms of 'the imprinting of human endeavour into the soil. And the clay. And even into the rock beneath that, black or red layers of earth and ash where and when whole cities were razed. Sunken strata struck with war'. Griffiths, *Stump*, p. 30. See also the description of Liverpool's docks awaiting gentrification, with their 'ghosts of gone commerce', and the history of a modern-day car-park traced back to the 'hidden capillaries built to the orders of Joseph Williamson' in the nineteenth century, '[h]is money made from the harrowing of hearts on this earth turned tarmac'. *Wreckage*, pp. 187, 70.
[38] Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, p. 142.
[39] Griffiths, *Kelly*, pp. 331-2, *Wreckage*, p. 187.
[40] As Kelly remarks, '[t]hrough the rise an fall of economies, whole fuckin countries, deeds are remembered [and] pardons ar conferred'. Griffiths, *Kelly*, p. 331.

David Harvey uses Liverpool Docks as an illustrative and substantive example of:

> The struggle to accumulate marks of distinction and collective symbolic capital in a highly competitive world [...] But this entrains in its wake all of the localized questions about whose collective memory, whose aesthetics and who benefits.[41]

Harvey's essay concerns the spatial effects of globalization and the commodification of culture. Briefly stated, cities are increasing traded as commodities in order to create and maintain monopoly rents. Particularity and uniqueness are especially sought-after characteristics. In a period marked by increased regional competition and the retrenchment of municipal investment, the accumulation of 'marks of distinction' is seen to provide a means of raising the cultural and financial capital of cities.

Kelly & Victor illustrates this process through its descriptions of The White Star pub.[42] Taken from the 'name of a shippin company or somethin', the pub is filled with nostalgic props. 'Yellowed pictures' of 'massive ships, taken when this city was a thriving port' adorn its walls while 'Hey Jude' plays in the background. 'Always the bleedin Beatles in this pub', Victor remarks, 'but I suppose thee do it to entice the tourists in after they've visited the Beatles museum further up the road'.[43] Consistent with the commodification of culture, the 'cartoon' nature of 'pubs like this'—their 'too friggin...Scousey' feel—plays on a host of familiar clichés: 'The Beatles an that/The great port we once were/Jerry

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[41] Harvey, 'Art of Rent', p. 407.
[42] The White Star Line was founded in Liverpool in 1845, and its most famous ship was the Titanic. The nostalgia enshrined in the pub is pointedly for a past failure. On the history of company, see 'The White Star Line: Beginning Years', in *White Star Line* <http://www.titanic-whitestarships.com/History_WSL.htm> [accessed 7 September 2010]
[43] Griffiths, *Kelly*, p. 76.

an the fuckin Pacemakers/Stan fuckin Boardman'.[44] In common with the experiences of King's characters in Westminster or Soho, those of Griffiths view gentrification as synonymous with the interests of tourism, which in turn promotes a discourse of authenticity. By the point Liverpool is transformed into what Kelly calls 'one giant theme park', so 'this pub'll be the one marketed as offerin thee "Authentic Liverpool Experience"'.[45]

One more important point to note is that gentrification and the commodification of culture are not ineluctable processes, as Griffiths's reaction to Liverpool receiving the 2008 European Capital of Culture award demonstrates. It brought, on one level, 'a renewed energy, an optimism, [and] a new kind of buzz' to Liverpool.[46] Conversely, it attracted 'money into the city' only on condition that it would yield a profit for the investors. This latter point comes from a conversation between Griffiths and James Kelman regarding Glasgow's tenure as European Capital of Culture in 1990. As Griffiths recounts their conversation, Kelman reasoned that investment was attracted at the cost of intensifying Glasgow's social problems, 'because the so-called scummy people got pushed out to the estates which never got cleaned up'.[47]

Griffiths's works accommodate both perspectives. The earlier 'authentic Liverpool experience' of a gentrified city centre compares with 'the estate behind the Coronation Buildings' in *Wreckage*, wherein 'the corporation houses [are] all identical'. After leaving the estate, Darren notices:

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[44] Ibid. p. 79.
[45] Ibid. p. 257.
[46] Americymru, *Interview*.
[47] Taylor, *Griffiths Interview*. Kelman's perspective recalls Engel's critique of the bourgeoisie's response to the housing question: the problem is perpetually '*shifted elsewhere*'. Friedrich Engels, *The Housing Question* (1872) (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1970), p. 71, Engels's italics.

> Some old terracing cross-hatched around patches of wasteground that once held buildings either obliterated by *Luftwaffe* bombs or razed in the riots and never built on again, left fallow for dandelion and nettle or as dumping grounds for unwanted household appliances or old mattresses or on occasion burnt-out cars sinking into mud and bracken like mastodons.[48]

The bleak sterility of the estate combined with the old terracing creates an abject state of 'fallow wasteground' beyond the purview of regeneration. It represents, in short, a figurative space for those elements forced out by gentrification. Bearing the imprint of war and social disturbance such that they are 'never built on again', these 'patches of wasteground' are abject spaces, physical and social 'dumping grounds' whose organic life extends only to dandelion and nettle.[49]

Its plight bears remarkable similarity to Griffiths's autobiographical account of his childhood home in Netherley. The dire need for municipal housing contributed to a lack of infrastructural development, leaving 'a ten-year gap between the first wave of residents and the completion of the main shopping and leisure facilities'. This disregard for the welfare of its residents was reflected in layout of the buildings. The scarcity of lifts and staircases, which made 'the project imposing and repetitive', meant 'the cluster of mid-rises quickly became known as Alcatraz'—the same metaphor Ballard uses in *High-Rise*.[50]

Like King's descriptions of Slough, however, Griffiths differentiates between the meaning of physical and social geographies. 'Never entertain the notion for one second', Griffiths writes of Netherley, 'that in any way was it a

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[48] Griffiths, *Wreckage*, pp. 212-3, Griffiths's italics.
[49] The double significance of the 'unwanted household appliances', 'old mattresses', and 'burnt-out cars' becomes clear when they coalesce 'into mud and bracken like mastodons'. In other words, they reaffirm the culturization of nature.
[50] J.G. Ballard, *High-Rise*, p. 52.

bad place to spend most of a childhood'.[51] This crucial distinction is one aspect of Griffiths's logics of dissolution, whose characteristic recognition of space as a fundamentally social product demonstrates how the socioeconomic processes associated with globalization are not synonymous with spatial homogenization. In *Wreckage*, the chapter 'Crackhouse' traces the history of the eponymous building and ends by speculating on the effects of Liverpool's tenure as European Capital of Culture.[52] Following the 1981 Toxteth riots, the flat was considered to be 'unlettable', occupied by various squatters until the council sold it to an Irish developer. In preparation for those 'drawn there by the City of Culture celebrations and the global attention they will receive', the house is renovated and sold.

While the renovation of the house is directly attributable to private finance, whose primary concern is profitability, the privatization of space is not viewed as an ineluctable process. The chapter concludes by forecasting the 'Peace Riots' of 2011, to the effect that 'the house and its immediate neighbours will be firebombed and will be so damaged as to warrant demolition and they will be flattened and will be no more'.[53] In other words, the only areas which appear attractive to privately-financed renovation are those deemed profitable.

The commodification of culture forms an inherent part of determining profitability, hence the heightened importance of the discursive battles surrounding the definition of culture in the future production of space. While culture 'is not just art galleries and restaurants' but also 'graffiti and terrace

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[51] Niall Griffiths and Paul Farley, 'Netherley', in *Granta* <http://www.granta.com/Magazine/102/Netherley> [accessed 15 February 2010]
[52] Griffiths, *Wreckage*, pp. 248-251.
[53] Ibid. p. 251.

chants', Griffiths notes that the only culture of interest to developers 'is acceptable and saleable, the kind of stuff they talk about on the fucking *Late Review*'.[54] This distinction occupies what Harvey calls the 'space' opened by the commercial interests underlying the commodification of culture.[55] By trading on locality, history, culture, and collective memory, the 'acceptable and saleable' notions of culture inevitably raise questions of definition. Such questions are, by their very nature, social. They consequently unfold a space for political thought and action, as is implicit in Kelly's response to the naming of Liverpool's streets.

This section offers two important conclusions with respect to the logics of dissolution. Firstly, gentrification and the privatization of space are not inevitable processes. By discerning an important correlation between a gentrified city centre and abject municipal housing estates, Griffiths's representations emphasize spatial and cultural difference. That neither appears homogeneous nor wholly commodified is partly due to the fact that commercial interest is volatile.[56] As the crackhouse demonstrates, what is presently deemed culturally significant may in the future 'be flattened'. The homogenizing effect often attributed to globalization is therefore a misnomer. As the second chapter demonstrates, the definition of Brand London is at least partly attributable to the pejorative meaning attached to post-war developments such as new towns and overspill estates.

This raises a second and related point. The spectral voices from history and the diachronic chain of inscription characteristic of Griffiths's

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[54] Taylor, 'Griffiths Interview'.
[55] Harvey, 'Art of Rent', p. 411.
[56] See, for example, Griffiths, *Stump*, p. 118; *Kelly*, p. 17.

representations of Liverpool posit space as a social process. By insistently wedding past and present, the relationship between the definition of culture and the production of space appears inextricable.[57] It follows that the discursive battle surrounding Liverpool, where Griffiths views '[t]he UK's histories of colonial oppression and multi-culturality and slavery and defiance [...] in [...] microcosm', is a fight over the past, present, *and* the future.[58] The following section applies this principle to the task of delineating a contemporary urban landscape among Griffiths's representations of Wales.

Towards Something Else

> This endless drama of tiny deaths played out in miniature among mountains.[59]

It would be a mistake to follow the example of Shakey, '[a]nother Scouser who left the city to find something else', in thinking that moving to Wales is tantamount to an escape from violence.[60] For, as the metanarrative in *Sheepshagger* describes it, the Welsh landscape is an *'endless drama of tiny deaths'* played out between mountains. Illustrated in the previous section by the use of inscription, Griffiths's logics of dissolution move beyond dualist approaches to the understanding and representation of space. Another important feature thereof involves working athwart traditional literary tropes of the countryside, whose insufficiency highlights that of the city-country dualism.

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[57] In other words, this addresses the 'fundamental dialectical question of how processes and cultural entities relate'. Harvey, *Justice, Nature, and Difference*, p. 352.
[58] 'Americymru: An Interview with Niall Griffiths', <http://americymru.blogspot.com/2009/02/interview-with-niall-griffiths.html> [accessed 21 April 2009]. This can be said to constitute 'the city's buried memories of war'. Griffiths, *Wreckage*, p. 69.
[59] Griffiths, *Sheepshagger*, p. 6.
[60] Griffiths, *Stump*, p. 40.

In *Grits*, the house of incidental character Bill is 'scary', according to Paul, since it lacks electricity, a toilet, heating, running water, and a telephone.[61] Their absence, in conjunction with the remote location of the house, demonstrates for Bill how he is 'not a part of tha greedy, money-grabbin, petty-minded an materialistic world tha exists on the valley floor'. Contrary to his pastoral rhetoric, of having 'moved up yer partly t'get away from people and their petty competitions', however, Bill is reliant on the very networks of consumption and communication he putatively distances himself from. Bill's reliance on Roger for heroin disproves the platitudinous sense that 'I want nothing more than I've got', and leads to his eventual death from an overdose.[62] This episode strikes a cautionary note to those 'minds' which for Griffiths 'can't see phthisis and poverty and self- and substance-abuse and loneliness' in the Welsh valleys.[63]

In short, Griffiths's works scrutinize various assumptions underpinning conventional uses of the city-country dichotomy. Bill's situation displays the pervasive reach of the networks of consumption traditionally associated with the corrupting influence of the city.[64] One particular writer that Griffiths takes issue with is William Wordsworth. What Griffiths deems Wordsworth's typical imagery of 'always rolling hills and this loveliness' is fundamentally at odds with his own account of the Welsh landscape.[65] Their comparison is instructive since it accentuates different approaches to the city-country dichotomy.[66] Consider

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[61] Griffiths, *Grits*, p. 22.
[62] Ibid. p. 353.
[63] Americymru, *Interview with Griffiths*.
[64] See 'Town and Country' in Williams, *Country*, pp. 46-54.
[65] Coillard, *Griffiths*.
[66] As Williams notes of the Wordsworth's *Prelude*, 'Wordsworth saw strangeness, a loss of connection [...] No experience has been more central in the subsequent literature of the city'. Williams, *Country*, p. 150. I read 'Tintern Abbey' as an early example of this perspective.

Wordsworth's poem 'Tintern Abbey'.[67] Its enamelled images of Wales are captured by the:

> Hedge-rows, hardly hedge-rows, little lines
> Of sportive wood run wild: these pastoral farms,
> Green to the very door; and wreaths of smoke
> Sent up, in silence, from among the trees' (14-8)

Wordsworth is in two respects a straw target. The poem, with its 'waters, rolling from their mountain-springs/With a soft inland murmur' (3-5), was composed in 1798.[68] Secondly, Wordsworth's imagery is not as straightforward as Griffiths suggests. Although there is a sense of timeless reconciliation—'[t]he day is come when I again repose/Here' (9-10) in '[t]hese beauteous forms,/Through a long absence' (23-4)—this is tempered by the fact that, while '[t]he picture of the mind revives again' (62), it is 'changed, no doubt, from what I was when first/I came among these hills' (67-8). 'That time is past' (84), the narrator notes:

> For I have learned
> To look on nature, not as in the hour
> Of thoughtless youth (89-91)

In other words, the sense of change detected in nature is predominantly subjective: a change in the viewer and not the land itself. While these observations offer important qualifications to Griffiths's criticism, *Tintern Abbey* nevertheless offers a by-now conventional account of the relational basis of identity between the city and the country. The River Wye—'[h]ow oft, in spirit,

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[67] 'Composed A Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey, On Revisiting The Banks Of The Wye During A Tour, July 13, 1798', in William Wordsworth, *The Major Works*, ed. by Stephen Gill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 131-5. All subsequent references are to this edition.

[68] For one thing, the effects of the Industrial Revolution were yet to be fully felt. While Hobsbawm dates the onset of the Industrial Revolution to the 1780s, its cultural effects were not experienced in a uniform or straightforward fashion. See 'The Industrial Revolution' in Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution: 1789-1848* (1962) (London: Abacus, 1985), pp. 42-72. See also p. 321, where Hobsbawm contextualizes the *Lyrical Ballads*, which first contained Wordsworth's poem Tintern Abbey, in terms of a wider cultural movement which sought to 'return' to the 'simplicity and virtue' of the 'pre-industrial peasant or craftsman' that 'exemplified [...] uncorrupted virtues'. Wordsworth's descriptions of Tintern Abbey and the city fit into this pattern.

have I turned to thee,/O sylvan Wye!' (56-7)—provides an antidote to '[t]he dreary intercourse of life' (132) that originates 'in lonely rooms, and 'mid the din/Of towns and cities' (26-7).

These assumptions contrast sharply with Griffiths's representations of Wales. Early in *Stump*, Darren and Alastair drive through 'another village' which is:

> Little more than a hamlet, a handful of old stone whitewashed houses and a general store/post office. Characterised by leaf and bark, this small place built among trees, a forest once large. Shadow and harbour and hiding place and anchorage and sanctuary.[69]

The first point to note is the generic connotations of 'another village', which undermine the idealized terms of what Geraint previously calls 'Fudge box Wales'.[70] This latter image alludes to the interests of tourism, for which Wordsworth provides a powerful source of brand identity.[71] The next point concerns the use of inscription which, in common with the earlier descriptions of Liverpool, posits this village as an unstable signifier and so undermines forms of critical distance predicated upon the difference between the country and the city. Finally, the remarkable last sentence accordingly provides a diachronic account of literary investments in the city-country dichotomy.

Inasmuch as it has long functioned as the obverse of the city, the village is a 'shadow'. This is the meaning of Wordsworth's contrast between the 'silence' of trees (18) and the 'din/Of towns and cities' (26-7), which exemplifies

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[69] Griffiths, *Stump*, p. 58.
[70] Griffiths, *Grits*, p. 367. See also p. 350, which disputes the imagery of *'Homes an[d] Gardens'*. Griffiths's 'generic village' recalls Dylan Thomas's fictional *Llangerub*. While it parodies a common Welsh place name (*Llan-*, meaning church), Thomas's village is virtually an anagram of 'bugger all'. Dylan Thomas, *Under Milk Wood: A Play for Voices* (London: Dent, 1954).
[71] See, for example, 'Travel Search UK: Wales, in *UK Travel Bureau* <http://www.uktravelbureau.com/regions/uk-travel-search-engine-wales/southwales2.cfm> [accessed 16 August 2010]

the etymological derivation of country from *contra,* meaning against and/or opposite.[72] The 'shadow' is also a penumbra, an eclipse or 'hiding place' in respect of the country having long provided 'sanctuary' from the city. In this respect, Wordsworth's 'wild secluded scene' (6) of 'this green pastoral landscape' (159) provides 'harbour' and 'anchorage' inasmuch as it provides a metaphorical retreat.

Griffiths's generic village, by contrast, is no longer the 'sanctuary' of the city, no more its innocent, idyllic 'shadow'. Whether of Liverpool or Wales, the points of comparison in Griffiths's representations are greater than the sum of their differences. Each chapter in *Grits* is prefaced by an extract from a fictional geological account of west Wales. Its insistence upon a 'susceptibility to erosion' and recognition of the 'commonality of slow disintegration' offers a prescient overview of Griffiths's logics of dissolution, which espouse a common 'restlessness which will allow no permanence'.[73] Griffiths's representations of Wales, in other words, reiterate the pervasive violence that marks his accounts of Liverpool, and so collapse models of critical distance based on the sum of their difference. Typified by the 'creeping necrosis' of a sheep's corpse, 'blight and canker [...] putrefaction [and] decay', the 'unifying principle' of these landscapes is, in Colm's words, that 'in the mountains, these places uv past massacres an ghosts an fields uv ber bones [...] pain and horrer's in every blade uv grass'.[74]

Recalling the previous descriptions of Liverpool, this spectral voice of history leaves the landscape repeatedly mired in blood: 'the ground here [is]

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[72] The etymology of country is extrapolated from Williams, *Country*, p. 307.
[73] Griffiths, *Grits*, pp. 195, 49.
[74] Griffiths, *Sheepshagger*, pp. 83, 27; *Grits*, pp. 387, 293.

fertile still with this spilled blood and mulched flesh and fuming bones', populated with sheep reduced to 'pabulum for worm' and 'rabbits stumbling around' with 'bloody froth in their ears, eyes like pus-filled eggcups'.[75] This far-from-romantic view offers an interesting point of comparison and contrast with Wordsworth. Where '[i]n nature and the language of the sense' (109), Wordsworth's poem finds '[t]he guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul/Of all my moral being' (111-2), so Griffiths's representations are informed by an equally moral insistence on violence. As the latter understands it, the Welsh landscape constitutes 'a wet necropolis for man and for beast'.[76]

This reference to necropolis, the Greek word for city of the dead, neatly draws together the various strands of the critique of the city-country dualism to date. Partly though the chains of inscription that reinsert the memory of its historical genesis, the violent production of space in Griffiths's works impels the death of the city as defined by its contrast with the country. The 'very possibility of the idea of the city', Elizabeth Wilson maintains, 'implies its contrast to nature, rural life, or the wilderness', as '[t]he city cannot exist without its opposite'.[77] Griffiths's representations of Wales and Liverpool collapse the 'very possibility' of their 'contrast' not only by insisting on their common genesis in violence but also, as will be demonstrated, through the presence and effects of modern technologies.

This resistance to polarizing approaches is directly informed by Griffiths's rejection of 'what many commentators [...] like to call the "real Wales": the green and mountainous heart of the country'. This, he argues, forms:

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[75] Griffiths, *Sheepshagger*, pp. 199, 83; *Stump*, p. 19.
[76] Griffiths, *Sheepshagger*, p. 26.
[77] Elizabeth Wilson, *Sphinx in the City*, pp. 16-7.

> A place utterly "Other" to the Anglocentric mindset [...] It suited the Enlightenment to present such a place as serene and beautiful, where men and nature lived in harmonious interaction, but the reality is what confronts you here every single day: mud, bone, shit, blood, rot, hawks hunting overhead, death always adjacent. It's alien and threatening to the suburbanised soul; it's the cancer in the Little Englander's body politic.[78]

The point of note is that Griffiths attributes the otherness of the 'real Wales' to a particular 'Anglocentric mindset', not a putative physical difference. Mike Parker is therefore correct to note that Griffiths's works are exemplary because they have 'detected the cultural contexts woven into the landscape'.[79] In these works, the distinction between cultural and physical landscapes is untenable. Beneath the 'serene and beautiful' veneer of the landscape lies the spectre of history, 'the cancer in the Little Englander's body politic'.

This subject is explored at greater length towards the end of *Wreckage*, where the chapter 'Ferdia Maguire and Family (what's left of it): 1849' addresses the socio-historical relationship between Ireland and Liverpool.[80] From the vantage point of nineteenth-century Ireland, Ferdia:

> Can only see a heaving metropolis somewhere over the sea where those of his blood will [...] never suffer in this way again or want for anything other than perhaps what the blight and breaking of this world can never give [...] the city [Liverpool] where there is a life to be lived and money to be made and food to be eaten.[81]

From this perspective, the 'heaving metropolis somewhere over the sea' provides an escape from the numerous social problems attributable to British rule. This functionalist perspective, which is particularly salient from the perspective of Irish history, typifies the political sensibility underlying Griffiths's representations of space. 'A landscape traced through the historical scars of

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[78] Griffiths, *England's Oldest Colony*.
[79] Mike Parker, *Neighbours from Hell: English Attitudes to the Welsh* (Ceredigion: Ylolfa, 2007), p. 88.
[80] Griffiths, *Wreckage*, pp. 241-248.
[81] Ibid. p. 247.

famine, deprivation and dispossession', Terry Eagleton writes, 'can never present itself to human perception with quite the rococo charm of a Keats, the sublimity of a Wordsworth, or the assured sense proprietorship of an Austen'.[82] Eagleton's point ties in with Griffiths's critique of the 'middle-class concept' of pastoralism. 'The Enlightenment Humanists painted it all rosy', Griffiths contends, 'and it's not like that. It's essentially reductive, a reality-denier. There is blood and pain in cottagey valleys just as there is in city alleys'.[83]

In terms of the logics of dissolution, this 'blood an pain' in the Welsh valleys and Liverpool's alleys undermines the literary dissociation of the city and the country. *Stump* provides a contemporary rebuttal of this 'reality denier' in an episode midway through the novel that re-examines the boundaries between culture and nature. During their journey from Liverpool to Aberystwyth, Darren and Alastair encounter the 'dark approaching miasma' of a funeral pyre. This 'scene from fever or nightmare' consists of:

> Tongues, tendrils of sticky smoke busy with motes ash grey and pink-frilled, lap at the windscreen [...] a cloud of smuts and soots and fume reeking burnt from hide and horn and flesh and bone [....] charred chips of bone and horn steaming in boiled-blood slurry. Fat-marbled offerings to these vast surrounding scavengers.[84]

Contrary to the 'rosy' picture of pastoralism, this 'scene from fever or nightmare' introduces the effects of humanity through the burning of cattle. This coded reference to the foot and mouth epidemic of 2001 exemplifies Griffiths's stylistic intertwining of environmental, historical, and social concern within the act of spatial representation.

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[82] Terry Eagleton, *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger: Studies in Irish Culture* (London: Verso, 1996), p. 6.
[83] Brockway, 'Interview with Niall Griffiths'.
[84] Griffiths, *Stump*, pp. 92, 93-4.

An official report concluded that the epidemic was caused by the consumption of infected meat and meat products at Burnside Farm, Northumberland, 'which was licensed to feed processed waste food under the Animal Byproducts Order 1999'.[85] The language of the remedial legislation is instructive. 'No person shall feed to any pig or poultry, or allow any pig or poultry to have access to, any catering waste to which this Part applies unless it has been processed in accordance with this Part' becomes, in the Animal Byproducts (Amendment) (England) Order 2001, '[n]o person shall bring catering waste to which this article applies onto any premises where any livestock are kept'.[86]

This reference to the processing of animals and its consequences, an act of instrumental rationality that recalls the outbreak of Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) in the 1980s, attests to the artificiality of what Griffiths calls the 'Anglocentric mindset' underlying images of the '"real Wales"'.[87] Beyond contesting the validity of the city-country dichotomy, its wider relevance to the logics of dissolution concerns the social and physical organization of space. Those networks of communication and consumption fundamental to the urban problematic not only contributed to the outbreak, and aided the transmission, of foot and mouth disease; they also exacerbated its local effects.

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[85] 'Origin of the UK Foot and Mouth Disease epidemic in 2001', Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, 2002, p. 3. Available at <http://www.defra.gov.uk/footandmouth/pdf/fmdorigins1.pdf> [accessed 29 April 2009]
[86] Transcripts of the legislation are available at <http://www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si1999/99064602.htm> and <http://www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2001/20011704.htm> [accessed 29 April 2009]
[87] For a comprehensive discussion of the BSE epidemic, see Patrick van Zwanenberg and Erik Millstone, *BSE: Risk, Science, and Governance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005). As they demonstrate, the presentation of scientific 'fact' was repeatedly compromised by the government's policy objectives of reassuring consumers that British beef was safe.

Designed to curb the spread of infection, the ensuing restrictions on movement had profound social and economic consequences for affected communities.[88]

'Distressing media portrayals' of burning pyres 'compounded' the problem, an official report observes, by turning the forecast economic hardship into a self-fulfilling prophecy. By frightening off potential tourists, the media intensified the 'hardship and anxiety' of those 'running visitor-oriented businesses [...] demonstrating the delicate interrelationship between these particular constituencies'.[89] The report also points to the lasting effects on the 'lifescape' of affected areas. Since pyre-sites had yet to return to pasture, they formed a 'constant reminder' of the transformation of 'inner and outer landscapes'.[90]

This combination of social, economic, and physical factors in the image of the cattle pyre provides a new means of understanding the mediated landscapes of Griffiths's works.[91] In common with those of Ballard, King, and Peace, Griffiths's works help delineate a changing understanding of space through the trope of culturized nature. Unlike the 'technological landscapes' of Ballard's Concrete and Steel Trilogy and Peace's figurative Yorkshire Moors,

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[88] See, for example, Dr Maggie Mort et al, 'The Health and Social Consequences of the 2001 Foot and Mouth Disease epidemic in North Cumbria', in *Foot and Mouth Study.org* <http://www.footandmouthstudy.org.uk/?id=129> [accessed 16 August 2010]. The total costs of the epidemic were estimated to be around £9 billion: 'at least' £3 billion to the public sector and £5 billion to 'tourism and the rural economy'. See Professor David Campbell, Professor Robert Lee, Tamara Egede, 'The UK Foot and Mouth Epidemic of 2001: A Research Resource', in *The ESRC Centre for Business Relationships, Accountability, Sustainability & Society* <http://www.fmd.brass.cf.ac.uk/> [accessed 23 August 2010]
[89] Mort, 'Health and Social Consequences', p. 13.
[90] Ibid. p. 44.
[91] Griffiths's works frequently draw attention to the remediation of space. While his characters occasionally perpetuate certain powerful myths such as those of rural innocence and urban corruption (compare *Grits*, pp. 116, 353), his works more generally draw attention to the ways tourism shapes space. See *Stump*, pp. 77-8, 198, and his account of Laugharne, Dylan Thomas's home town. Niall Griffiths, 'Reading, Writing and Reeling', in *The Guardian* <http://www.guardian.co.uk/travel/2008/mar/01/laugharnefestival.wales> [accessed 30 March 2010]

both of which use (albeit to very different ends) technological agency to connote a new spatial form, Griffiths's cattle pyre points to a more specific, literal example of the social and physical reorganization of space.[92] This difference is partly attributable to the respective geographical contexts of their fiction. Consider Ianto's view upon alighting at Corris:

> This ravaged place, a settlement, a civilisation entirely decimated not by bomb from air or land nor by any flame from man's hand but by the immeasurable barrage of time itself, its patient picking and pulling, and the slow drift and shift of the mountains and the artillery wet and electric from the never-brightening sky.[93]

Such a vista would be literally unthinkable in Peace's works, not least because of their conspicuous absence of specific physical characteristics.[94] The point of their contrast is to emphasize how Griffiths's works represent a figurative and literal landscape. Although this 'ravaged place' appears on first inspection to be beyond the purview of humanity, 'decimated not by bomb' or 'man's hand' but by the 'immeasurable barrage of time', Griffiths's works more generally reinscribe the effects of 'man's hand' firstly through images of polluted violation. Where 'the slow-poisoned rivers and earth here leached from the local lead mine, now long disused but still steadily sweating its sly venom' compromise the fertility of *mother* nature, so the 'top of a disused quarry' creates 'blasted craters' that form 'great gouges in the earth'.[95]

Another means of reinserting the effects of 'man's hand' involves the use of colouration. As against Wordsworth's 'green pastoral landscape' (159),

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[92] Ballard's works do not simply constitute an abstract 'landscape' (see Chapter One) whereas those of Peace (Chapter Three) pointedly do. The generic death of the Moors in the latter is part of a wider waning of affect which figuratively maps the effects of deindustrialization.
[93] Griffiths, *Sheepshagger*, pp. 196-7.
[94] Compare, for example, the 'sunshine shining silver, the dark patches of sudden cloud, the unmarked graves' of Peace's Moors with Griffiths's descriptions of sunsets. Peace, *Seventy Seven*, p. 41 and Griffiths, *Sheepshagger*, pp. 14, 58.
[95] Griffiths, *Sheepshagger*, pp. 82, 198.

Griffiths's typical colours are the darker, more tainted hues of a '[b]ruise-coloured sky', a 'brown and swollen river', and the sun that 'rises to shine a tarnished silver'.[96] Marked by 'scraped and skytorn mountains', 'oily harbour pools', and 'dark and oily waters', Griffiths's landscapes seldom if ever constitute a scene of contemplation.[97] This thoroughgoing emphasis on the social and physical organization of space forms an important part of Griffiths's logics of dissolution, which refute the commonplace dissociations of the city-country dualism.

Its insufficiency is redoubled by the fact that Aberystwyth appears, like Liverpool, replete with indices of a technological modernity. Where a helicopter 'disappears ova tha hill inta tha mountains' at Devils Bridge, Ceredigion, so its 'overhead clatter' typifies 'all the city noises' of Liverpool.[98] The point about these 'screeching machines which shred the sky hourly' is, firstly, that they form an inherent part of 'this wairld uv screaming war machinery an noise', and secondly, that they are part of a world for which the distinctions between the city and the country appear increasingly arbitrary and irrelevant. 'Ye can nevurr get away from thum', Liam explains partway through *Grits*. 'Ye think yer miles uway like, beautiful fuckin scenery, lakes, forests, an then wan uv those cunts screams ovurr'.[99] In spite of frequently provoking disdain, these machines are a fundamental part of the urban horizon.[100]

This use of aircraft recalls the realignment of the horizon discussed in Chapter One, where the culturization of nature corresponded partly to the

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[96] Griffiths, *Wreckage*, p. 197; *Stump*, p. 164; *Sheepshagger*, p. 150.
[97] Griffiths, *Sheepshagger*, p. 196; *Wreckage*, pp. 166, 254.
[98] Griffiths, *Grits*, p. 447, *Kelly & Victor*, p. 23. The helicopter is a repeated image: see *Sheepshagger*, pp. 175, 245; *Kelly*, pp. 152, 153, 327.
[99] Griffiths, *Stump*, p. 74; *Grits*, pp. 248, 141.
[100] See Griffiths, *Grits*, pp. 28, 43, 113, 321, 323, 396, 470, 481; *Stump*, pp. 8, 193, 194.

changes in mobility symbolized by the airport. Presently, the Tornado jet that makes 'a noise louder than the tyrannosaur in *Jurassic Park'* midway through *Grits* connotes the culturization of nature and, more pointedly, the militarization of space.[101] As distinct from Peace's works, those of Griffiths do not associate modern technologies with the death of nature. While a jet represents 'a vast chainsaw shredding the sky', and traces of a technological sublime exist in the 'quite awesome' sight of these 'amazin things', this militarization of space represents its latest appropriation.[102]

Towards the end of *Sheepshagger*, the 'warplanes which shriek on manoeuvres' accordingly 'tear but do not open that sky, which contains and will never yield all that flexes outside ourselves, flexes always, never-ending'.[103] Such technologies are not simply perceived as destructive, but as factors which open up new forms of perception. Though the warplanes 'tear' the sky their manoeuvres 'do not open' it. Put differently, though the sky 'flexes outside ourselves', it helps shape, and is shaped by, a recursive, 'never-ending' relationship with *us.*

This open-endedness discloses much of the character of Griffiths's logic of dissolution. Griffiths's critiques of pastoralism and the 'Anglocentric mindset', the characteristic use of inscription in his novels, the presence of spectral voices from history, the image of the cattle pyre, and the ubiquity of helicopters—all these recognize the ongoing social production of space that invalidates the city-country dichotomy. The culturization of nature offers another

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[101] Griffiths, *Grits*, p. 248, Griffiths's italics. On the militarization of space and the changing concept of 'battlespace', which 'erode[s] and collapse[s] legal and geographical boundaries' between nation states, see Stephen Graham, 'The Urban "Battlespace"', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 26, 7-8 (2009), 278-88.
[102] Griffiths, *Stump*, p. 199; *Grits*, p. 30.
[103] Griffiths, *Sheepshagger*, p. 227.

way of approaching this subject. Take, for example, the descriptions of the sky as 'gunmetal', 'cast-iron coloured', and as a 'Tarmac-coloured ceiling', the lakes of 'molten lead', the 'meandering river the colour of strong coffee', 'litterfruited bushes', the 'bus like a lone pike of minnows', and a 'thin exhaust-soot skin'.[104] These descriptions attest to changing modes of being in, understanding, and representing space. The 'tall white windmills of the windfarm' that 'star the far hills' and comprise a '*forest* of these long-legged machines' disclose a new language of landscape conversant with recent technological developments.[105]

Ianto elaborates this latter point towards the end of *Sheepshagger* when he returns to:

> The house in which he spent his childhood [...] a small whitewashed cottage there like an illustration for a fairy tale, orange firelight flickering in its quartered windows, a satellite dish bolted to the gable end like some giant fungus.[106]

Since 'satellite communications effectively take television and therefore a certain view of the world' with them, the 'giant fungus' symbolizes the process by which television, in the words of Richard Skeates, 'urbanises every space it reaches'.[107] With this, an urban weltanschaaung permeates consciousness such that there is no outside from which to secure critical distance. Where 'the TV [is] always on', and sleep is punctuated by 'images [...] unspooling in front uv me like a film [....] a film in me ed', so the view across a valley is 'jes like tha fuckin programme *Twin Peaks'*, a beach is compared with 'tha Ingmar Bergman fillum', and Liverpool is likened to '*Brookside*'.[108] Such analogies attest to

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[104] Griffiths, *Stump*, pp. 73, 156; *Wreckage*, p. 85; *Grits*, p. 123 and *Stump*, p. 81, *Sheepshagger*, p. 195; *Wreckage*, p. 56; *Sheepshagger*, p. 61; *Stump*, p. 32.
[105] Griffiths, *Sheepshagger*, p. 59, my italics.
[106] Ibid. p. 211, my italics.
[107] Richard Skeates, *Infinite City*, p. 10.
[108] Griffiths, *Stump*, p. 126; *Grits*, pp. 469, 237, 95, 113, Griffiths's italics.

changing ontological and epistemological conditions, ways of being in and understanding the world whose metaphoric stock is drawn from the technological unconscious of the satellite era.

This section has presented several key points. Through the images of the cattle pyre, the windfarm, and the 'fairy tale' cottage, Griffiths's works connote the social and physical organization of contemporary space. That his characters make sense of and coordinate the world through always-already mediated images is a response to the changing organization of capitalism from the 1970s onwards. The concluding section considers how these various factors lead to a revised understanding of spatial difference.

Conceptualizing Difference after the Urban Revolution

> The production of places of difference continues in a world in which the process of "accumulation for accumulation's sake" continues unabated, no matter what the political, social, or ecological consequences.[109]

Until now this chapter has emphasized how Griffiths's oeuvre problematizes dualist models of understanding and conceptualizing space. It would be mistaken to characterize this critique as exclusively anti-foundational, however, as these works point to a deeper understanding of how the urban problematic affects the production and articulation of difference. This section delineates a model of spatial difference that moves beyond dichotomous approaches such as 'the country' and 'the city'.

The first point to note is the effects of automobility, as illustrated in the repeated experiences of 'the passing world, flat, featureless fields and houses,

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[109] Harvey, *Justice*, p. 323.

outside the car'.[110] This allusion to the means by which technologies extend the range of personal mobility and communication informs the various descriptions of Aberystwyth as an 'abrupt town at land's end', an 'unexpected buffer of the sea' where 'people drift through [...] like nowhere on urth', and as 'Europe's terminus' at the 'end uv-a train line'.[111] Midway through *Grits*, Margaret addresses the relationship between this emphasis on movement and a realigned experience and definition of space when she describes her home town of Shrewsbury as 'a no-place rairly, a buffer zone'.[112]

Shrewsbury, on one level, represents a 'no-place' inasmuch as it is a 'buffer zone' between England and Wales. It is, however, important to qualify this sense of 'no-place'. The concept of 'non-place' is most clearly associated with Marc Augé:

> While we use "space" to describe the frequentation of *places* which specifically defines the journey, we should still remember that there are spaces in which the individual feels himself to be a spectator without paying much attention to the spectacle [...] The traveller's space may thus be the archetype of *non-place*.[113]

One of the problems with Augé's account is its definition of place. 'If a place can be defined as relational, historical and concerned with identity', Augé writes, 'then a space which cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity is a non-place'.[114] Griffiths's Shrewsbury is not a 'non-place' in respect of the fact that it remains a destination in its own right. The point, however, is similar to that raised in Chapter Two. In John King's descriptions of the Thames Valley, the modern networks of consumption and communication

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[110] Griffiths, *Stump*, p. 10.
[111] Griffiths, *Stump*, pp. 188, 197; *Grits*, p. 427, 155.
[112] Griffiths, *Grits*, p. 249.
[113] Marc Augé, *Non-Places*, p. 86, Augé's italics.
[114] Ibid. pp. 77-8.

(which encompass automobility) fundamentally bring into question traditional models of place predicated on the city-country dichotomy.[115] Unlike the 'traveller's space' that is for Augé the archetypal *non-place*, the identity of which 'derives from the opposition between place and space', King's and Griffiths's works dispense this dualist logic.[116]

Contrary to Augé's 'non-places' and Peace's dead Moors and cities, Griffiths's description of Shrewsbury as a 'no-place' does not connote the terminal breakdown of place. It details, on the contrary, an urbanized lebenswelt which recognizes the changing relationship between technology, mobility, and the production of space.[117] This explains the changing descriptions of Chester, which for Darren and Alastair 'begins behind the moving windows' in *Wreckage* before 'get[ting] smaller behind them' as 'Wrexham gets bigger in front' in *Stump*.[118] Between these points, Chester represents neither the city's boundary nor the city as boundary. It is a 'no-place' only insofar as it raises the insufficiency of dualist approaches to representing space. As the most obvious examples, Griffiths's use of inscription and the image of cattle pyre depict what Augé calls a 'relational' space concerned with history and identity. A fundamental difference, however, is that Griffiths's images of Aberystwyth and Liverpool are not defined by their contrast with 'non-places', but instead illustrate the technological and infrastructural networks that link one place to another within the urban fabric.

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[115] What for Augé are the indices of non-places—air, motorway, and rail links—prompt in King's works the overhaul of the city-country dichotomy as the privileged means with which to understand the *place-ness* of the new towns. See Augé, *Non-Places*, p. 78.
[116] Ibid. p. 79.
[117] See, for example, the descriptions of car and train journeys in Griffiths, *Grits*, pp. 226, 481, 482; *Stump*, p. 15.
[118] Griffiths, *Wreckage*, p. 62; *Stump*, p. 37.

The importance of rethinking boundaries resurfaces towards the end of *Wreckage*, where 'Wrexham spreads and scatters into low brown council estates and these soon too dissolve, absorbed by the surrounding green'.[119] This 'spread' and 'scatter' challenges the ontological hygiene of the city-country dichotomy: Wrexham disperses into contrasting—not opposite—'brown council estates', which are in turn '*absorbed* by the surrounding green'. Drawing upon a different etymological root of *contra* (meaning with and/or together), this sense of yielding, combined with the dissolving contrast between colours, undermines the polarization of the city-country dichotomy, which derives from a more commonplace definition of contra (meaning against or opposite, see above).[120] Where municipal brown dissolves and is absorbed into surrounding green, so neat lines of distinction dissipate.

Griffiths's autobiographical account of Netherley elaborates this changing understanding of space. The disjuncture he identifies between childhood memories of an 'urban upbringing' and, upon returning thirty years later, 'the proximity of the green fields and the brooks and the copse of trees still standing, unconcreted', is a counterintuitive experience that prompts an important reappraisal of language:

> Netherley feels urban, undoubtedly, with the almost palpable pulse and pull of the big city [Liverpool] a few miles away to the south, and images of the estate removed from the surrounding green belt would certainly suggest atypical inner-city housing developments, but I can remember a dawn chorus and can smell, here and now, cow dung and grass. *This is borderland, where the urban becomes the rural; the zone between ways of life, between specialized vocabularies, two localized lexica.*[121]

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[119] Griffiths, *Wreckage*, p.287.
[120] Douglas Harper <http://www.dictionary.reference.com/browse/contra> [accessed 15 May 2007]
[121] Griffiths and Farley, 'Netherley', my italics.

With its binary of 'urban' and 'rural', this 'borderland' appears at first glance anything but counterintuitive. A more subtle process of decoding is, however, at work. The nominal emphases of two 'localized'—not generalized—'lexica' rebuke the absolute lines of distinction found in dualist models of difference. The production of spatial difference is an inherent part of the urban problematic. Griffiths's localized 'lexica' recognizes this fact by articulating difference as a posteriori. The identity of Netherley is generated by the social production of space, not conferred by the a priori difference of the city-country dichotomy. Netherley is a 'borderland' in that it is neither the city nor the country. This does not, however, make it a 'non-place'. Place here combines a sensuous phenomenology of direct experience (the respective sights, sounds, and smells of 'grass', a 'dawn chorus', and 'cow dung') with Netherley's relational position among the wider networks of communication and consumption ('the palpable pulse and pull' of Liverpool).

Griffiths's novels develop this notion of 'borderland' through the important metaphor of mirrors. A third of the way through *Wreckage*, the chapter entitled 'Drizzle' provides the following image of the sky above Liverpool:

> [It] appears one cloud only, simply a grey and murky ceiling spread from horizon to horizon over the city entire from the brown lappings of the Dee and the Mersey and out to the vast thick splat of the Celtic Sea as featureless and monochrome as the sky itself so that the city could be wedged in an envelope or between two mirrors reflecting each other's emptiness [...] no shadow and no difference just this single spread and light tarpaulin turning all similar, robbed of depth.[122]

The common denominator between the sky that 'appears [as] one cloud only', the 'featureless and monochrome' Celtic Sea, and the 'brown lappings of the Dee and the Mersey' is their lack of absolute distinction. Akin to the previous

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[122] Griffiths, *Wreckage*, pp. 85-7, p. 85.

description of 'another village' and Liverpool, this image provides a metadiscursive overview of the production of space. Contrary to the city-country dichotomy, the microcosm of Liverpool reflects in upon itself, leaving the city with 'no shadow and no difference [...] turning all similar, robbed of depth'. This figurative lack of 'depth' posits spatial difference as a contingent product of social relations. Like Ballard's description of Shepperton addressed in Chapter One, the 'two mirrors reflecting their own emptiness' in the above image of the sky over Liverpool form a new spatial problematic. They do not reflect the city and the country, but instead connote the insufficiency of dualist models of spatial representation. Far from preceding its existence, difference is hereafter viewed as an inherent part of the production of space.

The metaphor of the mirror resurfaces near the beginning of *Kelly & Victor*. When travelling to Aberystwyth with a couple of friends, Victor encounters:

> A large town [...] spread out an lit up below us. At its farthest end the lights mirror themselves, watery flickerin reflections; the sea, bouncing the lights back. Like a long string of pearls or diamonds. Like two long strings of pearls or diamonds.[123]

Using the metaphor of a 'spread' previously associated with Wrexham, the dispersed morphology of this 'large town' is reiterated by the 'long string' of lights, which are in turn redoubled by their reflection in the sea. Like the 'mirrors' and absence of 'shadow' and 'difference' in the image of the sky above Liverpool, this play of reflections has no 'Other' against which to define its identity. The play of surfaces, 'bouncing the lights back', suitably captures the all-inclusive rubric of the

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[123] Griffiths, *Kelly*, p. 52.

urban problematic, an all-encompassing, self-referential term cognizant that 'any contradictions that do occur no longer take place between city and country'.[124]

With this, Lefebvre insists upon the continuing validity of the dialectic as privileged means of interpreting capitalist spatial forms. The urban problematic 'cannot achieve closure', for its 'very concept precludes our ability to mandate anything that reduces or suppresses differences'.[125] In other words, the production of spatial difference, and the recognition thereof, is an inherent part of the urban problematic. This difference does not, however, manifest in the absolute terms of the city-country dichotomy. Like Ballard's later works (see Chapter Five) and those of King, Griffiths's novels posit a spatial dialectic of a gentrified inner city and a dispersed outer region that is consistent with the spatial effects of the second circuit of capitalism. To recall, the heightened economic significance of real-estate speculation was paralleled by the rise of out-of-town developments such as science parks. Deindustrialization, gentrification, and the privatization of municipal housing in the 1980s radically changed the social and physical composition of cities.

This is the point at which Griffiths's 'borderzone', a synthesis of 'specialized vocabularies', marks an original contribution to the logics of dissolution. On their return journey to Liverpool from Aberystwyth towards the end of *Stump*, Darren and Alastair drive through the 'bottom' of a 'wide valley' and enter:

> The housing estate [...] spilling down into that valley to join the town proper, the spread orange pepper of its light in the sudden dusk [...] The illuminated brick barns and warehouses of the retail park at the outskirts

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[124] Henri Lefebvre, *Urban Revolution*, p. 170.
[125] Ibid. p. 174.

> and then further still the huts and cabins and hangars of the industrial estate, the skinny chimneys and rotund cooling towers steaming. And flanking the whole habitation the opposite high side of the valley, the big dark humps of the carved land elbowed by the ice that once sought the sea now spread at town's edge like the vast lapping tongue of the town or its drool.[126]

The sense of yielding first encountered in the 'spread and scatter' of Wrexham resurfaces in the 'spread' of lights into 'sudden dusk', a suggestive commingling of culture and nature that informs the culturized terms of the 'orange pepper' of the town. This 'spread' complements the morphology of the housing estate, 'spilling down' into the valley and joining the 'vast lapping tongue of the town' that is the sea. Another way of understanding this image is in terms of delineating the social and physical production of space. The 'cabins and hangars' of the industrial estate combined with the 'skinny chimneys' and 'rotund cooling towers' attest to the decentralization of industry. Similarly, the 'warehouses of the retail park' on the 'outskirts' of the town register the effects of urban entrepreneurialism.

The proximity of these various uses of space to the town illustrates what Lefebvre calls a *'differential'* conception of space, wherein 'each place and each moment exist only within a whole, through the contrasts and oppositions that connect it to, and distinguish it from, other places and moments'.[127] Put simply, the various forms of residential, industrial, and commercial activity—in short, the aggregated networks of consumption and communication—that form Griffiths's 'whole habitation' map out the 'contrasts' inherent to differential space without reifying these differences in the absolute terms of the city-country dichotomy.[128]

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[126] Griffiths, *Stump*, pp. 210-1.
[127] Lefebvre, *Urban Revolution*, p. 37, Lefebvre's italics.
[128] For examples of Griffiths's characteristic representations of differential space, see Griffiths, *Sheepshagger*, pp. 11, 59, 198, 211; *Wreckage*, pp. 8, 30, 186-7; *Stump*, pp. 49-50, 188.

This differential approach informs a fundamentally different take on vegetative myth from that of T.S. Eliot and Peace (see Chapter Three). The 'vast lapping tongue' of the town seeks the dual-edged hydration of the sea, essential to its life but the point of its eventual demise. 'Freefall, in thrall, all returns to water's call: the town is sliding, subsiding into the sea'.[129] Far from being an index of deprivation à la Eliot and Peace, the 'water's call' recognizes that the production of space is an ongoing process.

This chapter has analyzed, in terms of Griffiths's fiction, a very different logics of dissolution from those previously encountered. Unlike Ballard and King, for whom the formerly 'natural' world is encountered only while driving, Griffiths's works demonstrate how the urban problematic does not simply lead to the 'death' of nature witnessed in Peace's dead Yorkshire Moors. Through the cattle pyre, the 'forest' of wind turbines, the militarization of space, 'another' Welsh village, and the spectral voices of history that permeate Liverpool and Wales alike, Griffiths's novels exhibit new ways of understanding the extensive contemporary networks of dependence that belie the city-country dichotomy. Immiserated council estates and polluted rivers exist beside gentrified factories and tourist pubs to create highly-nuanced, often disparate visions that form the latest round of discursive battles surrounding the definition of Liverpool. Equally, whitewashed cottages and the ruins of Glyndwr's parliament building are characteristically juxtaposed with carcasses, wind turbines, industrial and housing estates to depict a Wales very different from that of Wordsworth. Together, they literally and figuratively comprise an urban landscape.

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[129] Griffiths, *Grits*, p. 157.

Chapter V. Reappraising the Real: Welcome to J.G. Ballard's 'Virtual City'

> Regionality, the dynamics of place and space, [and] the relationship between the local and the global, are all in flux, making the uneven geographical development of the physical, biotic, social, cultural, and political-economic conditions of the globe a key pillar to all forms of geographical knowledge (David Harvey, *Spaces of Capital*, p. 226)

> The concept of the city no longer corresponds to a social object (Henri Lefebvre, *The Urban Revolution*, p. 57)

> The triangle formed by the M3 and the M4, enclosing Heathrow and the River Thames, is our zone of possibility, far from the suffocating city politics and self-obsessions of the metropolis (J.G. Ballard, *Welcome to the Virtual City*, p. 33)

As this thesis delineates the urban problematic through the works of J.G. Ballard, John King, David Peace, and Niall Griffiths, a similar consensus emerges regarding the insufficiency of traditional models of place based upon the city-country dichotomy. Their 'social space'—which cannot be conventionally described as city, country, or suburbs—establishes the insufficiency of entrenched binary approaches to understanding space. Following David Harvey's reading of globalization as 'flux' in the first epigraph, these works illustrate how the 'dynamics of place and space' can no longer be understood in traditional ways.

The closing logics of dissolution are traced in Ballard's later (post-1988) works, the analysis of which seeks to reappraise the concept of the real through—and develop the spatial consequences of—the 'virtual city'.[1] Referring

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[1] J.G. Ballard, *Running Wild* (1989) (London: HarperCollins, 2002); *Cocaine Nights* (London: Flamingo, 1996); *Super-Cannes* (London: Flamingo, 2000); *Millennium People* (London: HarperCollins, 2003); *Kingdom Come* (London: Harper Perennial, 2007). The 1994 novel *Rushing to Paradise* is not addressed since the geographical focus on Saint-Esprit, a 'nondescript atoll six hundred miles south-east of Tahiti', does not directly address the dissolution of the city-country dichotomy. It is, nevertheless, relevant for its representations of the atoll, which are inserted within modern networks of accumulation and consumption by dint of their ecological effects. Protagonist Dr Barbara Rafferty's dream, to 'hand to the next Millennium a small part of this terrible century that we've redeemed and brought back to life', is set against the backdrop of the French government's plans to conduct nuclear tests on the island. J.G. Ballard, *Rushing to Paradise* (1994) (London: Flamingo, 2001), pp. 10, 42.

to one of his essays from 2001, this concept represents the logical conclusion of Ballard's representations of space from the final twenty years of his career.

'Suburban Futures' explores the significance of gated communities and defensible space in the novella *Running Wild* (1989). The second and third sections, 'Urban Migrations' and 'The Fourth World', respectively use *Cocaine Nights* (1996) and *Super-Cannes* (2000) to address the relationship between 'the global' and 'the local' inherent to Harvey's definition of globalization as it informs Ballard's representations of Spain and France. 'The Eclipse of Heritage London' interprets *Millennium People* (2003) as an extended critique of the social, ideological, cultural, and material relevance of Central London. This provides an important backdrop to the final section, 'Welcome to the Virtual City', which uses Ballard's essay of the same name and his last novel *Kingdom Come* (2006) to provide a coherent and systematic understanding of the urban problematic that is not simply couched in terms of 'non-place'.

Suburban Futures

As his early short stories demonstrate, Ballard's fictional imagination was long exercised by questions of space.[2] While this characteristic interest was to encompass the city-country dichotomy as a response to the growing magnitude of the suburbs, Ballard's 1973-5 Concrete and Steel Trilogy represented a threshold moment in delineating the urban problematic (see Chapter One). As this chapter demonstrates, Ballard's later works mark the full realization of this urban *revolution*. The present section uses the 1989 novella *Running Wild* to

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[2] See 'The Concentration City' (1956), 'Chronopolis' (1960), and 'Billennium' (1961) in Ballard, *Short Stories*, I, pp. 30-50; 202-227; 362-78.

explore the development of Ballard's recasting of suburbia after his 1979 novel *The Unlimited Dream Company*, and addresses its relationship to wider socioeconomic trends.

Running Wild attempts to explain, from the perspective of forensic psychiatrist Dr Greville, serial parricide in an exclusive Berkshire estate. In terms of genre, the novella exhibits elements of the gothic without simply conforming to the more recent serial killer narrative, where 'the effort is made to provide one or two easily identified scapegoats as root causes of the violence, or to give contemporary fears of Others a narrative structure for the purpose of making them somewhat manageable, if only by proxy'.[3] Inasmuch as its 'fictional space' can be defined by an unresolved tension between the pleasures of irrationality and a more general scepticism of 'naive forms of credulity' such as the supernatural, *Running Wild* can be said to be gothic.[4] That the murderers are children, however, subverts the serial killer genre, which posits murderers as 'generically supernatural'.[5] *Running Wild* more closely resembles the gothic genre to the extent that Greville fails to realize that the murders are only outwardly a rejection of the social order: 'in another, deeper sense, they are this order's most perfect expression'.[6]

The novella's thematic interest concerns attempts to rationalize and constrain human behaviour by creating defensible spaces through the use of

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[3] Philip L. Simpson, *Psycho Paths* (Illinois: Southern Illinois Press, 2000), p. 18.
[4] Markman Ellis, *The History of Gothic Fiction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), p. 14.
[5] Simpson, *Psycho*, p. 4.
[6] Andrzej Gasiorek, *Ballard*, p. 165. The disjuncture between Greville's rationalizations and the events the novel narrates is emphasized by the reference to the 'mutilated copy of Piaget's classic text on the rearing of children', which rebuts the progress-oriented philosophy with which Greville's rationalizations are associated. Ballard, *Running Wild*, p. 47.

modern surveillance technologies.[7] Consisting of thirty-two acres of land 'ringed by a steel mesh fence fitted with electrical alarms' and 'regularly patrolled by guard-dogs and radio-equipped handlers', Pangbourne Village is an exclusive gated community in Berkshire, approximately forty miles west of London. Entry to the village 'was by appointment only': its 'avenues and drives were swept by remote-controlled TV cameras'. Greville's overview of Pangbourne Village provides an early indication of the localized spatial effects of the global networks of capital:

> Secure behind their high walls and surveillance cameras, these estates in effect constitute a chain of closed communities whose lifelines run directly along the M4 to the offices and consulting rooms, restaurants, and private clinics of [C]entral London. They remain completely apart from their local communities.[8]

The offices and restaurants of Central London connote the second circuit of capitalism, for which these estates accommodate its management. This connection advances the discussion in Chapter Two of John King's representations of Westminster, which gauged the effects of gentrification and the privatization of municipal housing in the 1980s. As one of a 'chain of closed communities' whose 'chief attraction' is the 'proximity of the M4 motorway, and the ready access it offers to Heathrow Airport and [C]entral London', Pangbourne Village moves beyond the purview of King's account.[9] Put simply, it

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[7] The protagonist's surname, which recalls Elizabethan dramatist Fulke Greville and Harold Pinter's Greville Press, creates an overlap between literary and physical spaces while connoting sterility and mass production (grey-ville).
[8] Ballard, *Wild*, pp. 13, 12. As regards Pangbourne Village being 'completely apart' from the local community, two observations apply. Pangbourne is a real and exclusive village in Berkshire: in this respect, Pangbourne Village bears closer resemblance than Greville suggests to the place from which its name originates. As regards Ballard's 'inspiration', Pangbourne Village bears remarkable similarity to St George's Hill estate in Weybridge, Surrey. It is adjacent to Brooklands, the setting of Ballard's final novel, which is described as 'bask[ing]. Prosperity glowed from every roof shingly and gravel drive, every golden Labrador and teenage girl riding her well-trained nag'. Ballard, *Kingdom*, p. 13.
[9] Ballard, *Wild*, p. 12.

links the gentrification of city centres with the creation of outlying defensive spaces.

Ballard was not the only writer at this time to discuss the significance of surveillance technologies and defensive space. In *City of Quartz*, a seminal sociological analysis of Los Angeles, Mike Davis views the 'universal and ineluctable consequence' of the 'crusade to secure the city' in terms of the 'destruction of public space'.[10] Pangbourne Village appears to confirm Davis's fears, being 'remarkable only for having advanced [...] general trends towards almost total self-sufficiency'.[11] This degree of similarity ostensibly extends to the significance each attaches to the 'general trends'. In concluding his assessment of L.A.'s affluent neighbourhoods, Davis 'realizes how merely notional, if not utterly obsolete, is the old idea of the "freedom of the city"'. In an age marked by 'a new epistemology of policing', Davis reasons that 'genuinely democratic space is all but extinct'.[12]

Again, Pangbourne Village conforms to type, with the children's rebellion illustrating Davis's new epistemology. In appropriating the computers and cameras ostensibly designed to safeguard their existence to kill thirty two people, the children embody the logic of *High-Rise*: 'an environment built, not for man, but for man's absence'.[13] Through the children's actions, the previously 'unconscious conspiracy to shut out the external world' becomes manifest in the gated community of Pangbourne Village.[14] In this respect, *Running Wild* elicits a

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[10] Davis, *Quartz*, p. 226.
[11] Ballard, *Wild*, p. 13.
[12] Davis, *Quartz*, pp. 250, 227, 251.
[13] Ballard, *Wild*, p. 32; *High-Rise*, p. 25.
[14] Ballard, *High-Rise*, p. 77.

connection with Ballard's previous and later works that surpasses the common Alcatraz metaphor.[15]

There is, however, more than an intertextual logic at work.[16] The dubious 'success' of the village, which 'had led to plans for the construction of similar estates nearby', raises a fundamental difference between Ballard's and Davis's account. 'Within two or three years' Greville notes, 'these would be amalgamated in a super-Pangbourne'. Its deeper significance, Greville reasons, is that:

> Despite its title, the Pangbourne Village estate was not built near the site of any former or existing village. Like the numerous executive housing estates built in the 1980s [...] Pangbourne Village has no connections, social, historical, or civic, with Pangbourne itself.[17]

In terms of the logics of dissolution, this extrapolation raises the important question of conceptualizing spatial difference. Like Davis's account, it recognizes a break with traditional ideas of the city. The crucial difference concerns the conclusions drawn from such estates.[18] By emphasizing the contrast between inside and outside, these defensive spaces accentuate spatial difference. In terms of understanding and representing space, the fact that Pangbourne Village 'has no connections [...] with Pangbourne itself' does not

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[15] Compare Ballard, *Wild*, p. 40; *High-Rise*, p. 52; *Super-Cannes*, p. 110.
[16] Pangbourne is a recurrent name in Ballard's oeuvre. In *High-Rise*, a 'gynaecologist named Pangbourne' is one of a 'new generation of gynaecologists who never actually touched their patients, let alone delivered a child'. From this initial therapeutic function, the relationship between Pangbourne and technology is linked to the cultivation of a paranoid privatism in the 1978 short story 'Motel Architecture', where the protagonist Pangborn, after a decade alone, murders his new cleaning lady before committing suicide. Ballard, *High-Rise*, p. 83; 'Motel Architecture' in *Short Stories*, Vol. II (London: Harper Perennial, 2006), pp. 502-516, pp. 503, 504-5, 512.
[17] Ballard, *Wild*, pp. 85, 11-2.
[18] Davis notably does not universalize L.A. as a symptomatic postmodern 'geography'. Compare Davis, *Quartz*, p. 260 ('Until the final extinction of these last real public spaces [...] the pacification of [L.A.] will remain incomplete') with Fredric Jameson, 'Postmodernism; or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism', *New Left Review*, I (1984), 59-92, and Edward Soja, *Postmodern Geographies*, esp. 'It All Comes Together in Los Angeles' and 'Taking Los Angeles Apart: Towards a Postmodern Geography', pp. 190-221 and 222-48.

amount to the homogenization of difference. On the contrary, the fact that Pangbourne Village accentuates spatial difference illustrates the 'flux' and 'uneven development' central to Harvey's definition of globalization. The village highlights the commodification of heritage without simply collapsing the dialectical tension between global and local relations. Theirs is a relationship which, while it engenders spatial difference, pointedly does not do so conventionally in terms of the city-country dichotomy.

To conclude, the conceptual openness of spatial relations is an inherent feature of the logics of dissolution. Following Lefebvre's concept of 'differential space', and unlike Peace's dead cities, Pangbourne Village does not evoke the urban problematic through the homogenization of space. By focusing on the social and physical organization of space, the present section has shown how the city-country dichotomy does not account for the spatial complexities of *Running Wild*. The next section considers how the spatial dialectic of relations—global, local, and intertextual—informs Ballard's representations of mid-1990s Spain.

Urban Migrations

Set in Spanish resort of Estrella de Mar, *Cocaine Nights* is narrated in the first-person by Charles Prentice.[19] As a travel writer—a vocation that exemplifies Ballard's interest in the extended spaces of the networks of consumption and communication underlying the urban problematic—Charles investigates the

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[19] Ballard's subtle variations on the spellings of these resorts create a defamiliarizing distance between his representations and the Spanish themselves. Ballard's Estrella de Mar is misspelt: the real Estrella del Mar is on the Costa Blanca, as are the references to Benalmadena (which is correctly spelt Benalmádena).

ambiguous circumstances of his brother's admission of guilt to a murder charge. Determined to prove Frank's innocence, Charles scrutinizes the fire at the Hollinger family mansion that resulted in the deaths of five people.

In terms of its literary conventions, *Cocaine Nights* seemingly belongs to the genre of detective fiction.[20] A common feature among these works, which maintains a characteristically Ballardian tension within the categories of genre, is that the identity of the perpetrator never seems to be in doubt. The plot hinges on keeping elusive the identity of an alternate culprit before implicating the protagonist in the very networks he seeks to decode, thereby subverting the conventions of the detective genre.[21] 'Inasmuch as deterministic systems have always figured prominently in Ballard's texts', Andrzej Gasiorek points out, 'in these later works the power of such systems appears to be all-embracing'.[22] For David Cunningham, this is precisely the 'power' of Ballard's fiction. Their subordination of 'narrative modes to the contemporary forms of a present-tense "information loop"' captures what for Cunningham 'characterizes a global commodity culture'.[23]

The concern of this chapter is not with the 'power' of such 'systems' as they affect Ballard's narrative modes, but with how they inform his representations of space. Charles's descriptions of the Costa del Sol are a good starting point:

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[20] One exception is *Rushing to Paradise*, which this chapter does not address (see above).
[21] Ballard, *Nights*, p. 328.
[22] Gasiorek, *Ballard*, p. 174.
[23] David Cunningham, *Re-Placing the Novel*. Such readings are consistent with Ballard's own views on the effects of the extension of the media: see, for example, the 1995 'Introduction' to *Crash*. The pervasiveness of the mass media, Ballard argues, is such that it is a categorical error to question the degree to which people are *influenced* by it. The task is instead to determine the degree to which the conceptualization and rationalization of *reality* has been structured by the media. Ballard, *Crash*, pp. 4-6.

> The coastal strip was a nondescript plain of market gardens, tractor depots, and villa projects [....] a zone as depthless as a property developer's brochure [...] lack[ing] even the rudiments of scenic or architectural charm [while] Sotogrande [a large resort and privately owned residential development] was a town without either centre or suburbs, and seemed to be little more than a dispersal ground for golf courses and swimming pools.[24]

The initial significance of Sotogrande, a 'dispersal ground' which lacks 'even the rudiments' of 'scenic' contemplation, is that the financial interests of the residential complex supplant the aesthetic function of the landscape as a scene of contemplation.[25] As an example of the culturization of nature, it is no coincidence that Prentice's likening of Sotogrande to a 'property developer's brochure' coincides with its description as a 'town without either centre or suburbs'. In other words, the link between the culturization of nature and the dissolution of the city-country dichotomy is precisely the restructuring of capitalism in the 1970s, which Ballard's works frequently connote through the indices of the media (see Chapter One).

The Estrella de Mar development continues this overhaul of the ontological character of place as defined by the city-country dichotomy. 'Purpose-built in the 1970s by a consortium of Anglo-Dutch developers,' Estrella de Mar was:

> A residential retreat for the professional classes of northern Europe. The resort had turned its back on mass tourism, and there were none of the skyscraper blocks that rose from the water's edge at Benalmadena and Torremolinos. The old town by the harbour had been pleasantly bijouized, the fishermen's cottages converted to wine bars and antique shops.[26]

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[24] Ibid. pp. 15, 16.
[25] The repeated depthlessness and illusion in the novel's representations of space recalls the insufficiency of traditional literary concepts of the landscape (see Chapter Four) and reiterates Ballard's view of the media. See Ballard, *Nights*, pp. 16-7, 29, 46, 88, 151.
[26] Ballard, *Nights*, pp. 35-6.

The gentrification of the 'old town by the harbour' reflects the historical parallels between the construction of the resort and the onset of the second circuit of capitalism. By converting fisherman's cottages into wine bars and antiques shops, and so transforming a space of production into a site of consumption, Estrella de Mar figuratively transposes the principal circuit of industrial production with the second circuit of real estate speculation.

The contrast with Benalmadena and Torremolinos underlines this sense of periodization. While restating the social, economic, and cultural exclusivity of Estrella de Mar, the contrast renounces the high-rise, a form closely associated with Ballard's Concrete and Steel Trilogy.[27] It amounts to a break with what Ballard previously called the '3,000-mile-long linear city that stretches from Gibraltar to Glyfada Beach'.[28] In his 1947 book *Concerning Town Planning*, Le Corbusier refers to a 'network of linear cities' he associates with 'certain eternal and fateful centres established by geography through all time'.[29] As the very different principles of Estrella de Mar's spatial organization demonstrate, the break from the 'skyscraper blocks' of Benalmadena and Torremolinos is also a move away from ideas of 'eternal' centrality associated with the Corbusian linear city.

Consider the 'residential complexes' that 'stood shoulder to shoulder along the beach', which for Charles symbolize how the 'future had come ashore here, lying down to rest among the pines'. The features of Estrella de Mar

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[27] In this respect, *Cocaine Nights* differs from 1970s representations of Spanish holidays, which typically satirize the working class. See Monty Python's travel agent sketch <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hcCuBWXd-hc&feature=fvw> and John Cooper Clarke's poem 'Majorca' <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YYY_1UHbG5Y> [accessed 19 May 2010]
[28] Ballard, *Vermillion Sands*, p. 7.
[29] Charles Le Corbusier, *Concerning Town Planning*, trans. by Clive Entwistle (London: The Architectural Press, 1947), p. 122.

Charles notes—'comfortable villas [standing] behind the palms and eucalyptus trees', a 'harbour lined with bars and restaurants, a crescent of imported white sand, and a marina filled with racing yachts and cruisers'—are all part of a tertiary economy, and not usually associated with the city.[30] In terms of the urban problematic, the contrast is at once geographical and temporal. The skyscrapers of Torremolinos are forms of high-volume accommodation which Le Corbusier links to 'eternal' centres: the industrial cities of the first circuit of capitalism. Through its low-density accommodation and links to tourism, Estrella de Mar meanwhile is geographically and socioeconomically part of the second circuit of capitalism.

Read together, *Running Wild* and *Cocaine Nights* qualify Charles's remark about Estrella de Mar being the point at which 'the late twentieth century ran into the buffers'.[31] In Bobby Crawford's brief history of the region:

> Estrella de Mar was built in the 1970s—open access, street festivals, tourists welcome. The Residencia Costasol is pure 1990s. Security rules. Everything is designed around an obsession with crime [....] This is Goldfinger's defensible space raised to an almost planetary intensity—security guards, tele-surveillance, no entrance except through the main gates, the whole complex closed to outsiders.[32]

Pangbourne Village fits in with this account since it occupies the interstitial period in Crawford's narrative: the 1980s. Within this reworked and comparative narrative, important trends are discernible. In spite of its financial and social exclusivity, Estrella de Mar theoretically retains 'open access' to tourists with the requisite disposable income. This compares with Pangbourne Village's closure from the outlying community. An important link, however, surmounts this

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[30] Ballard, *Nights*, pp. 35, 33.
[31] Ibid. p. 235.
[32] Ibid. pp. 212, 211.

theoretical difference. Since its construction postdates that of Estrella de Mar by around a decade, the 'general trends' for which Pangbourne Village was 'remarkable only for having advanced [them]' are international in origin.[33]

In terms of Harvey's account of globalization, the dialectic of global and local relations explains the filiation between Estrella de Mar and Pangbourne Village: the former provides the 'general trends' manifest in the latter. As in *Running Wild*, however, the resulting spatial form is not homogeneous. Instead of collapsing the dialectical 'flux' between the global and the local, important vestiges of difference remain. In spite of their proximity—the Residencia Costasol is 'a mile to the west of Estrella de Mar'—Crawford's account raises their inherent differences.[34] In addition, Prentice acknowledges that while '[t]he Residencia Costasol may look homogeneous', it nevertheless 'has the class structure of Tunbridge Wells'.[35] Like John King's Slough, Ballard's representations of the Costasol admit a depth of social signification that underlies its surface appearance.

Between *Running Wild* and *Cocaine Nights*, the following spatiotemporal narrative emerges. The 1970s appear as a breaking point, with an economic and geographic shift of emphasis away from traditional concepts of cities. By the mid-1980s, this shift becomes associated with a decline in civic society and the maintenance of defensive space. When read alongside King's works, this is also the period when the effects of gentrification and the commodification of culture become visible. These trends culminate in the 1990s with the Costasol

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[33] Ballard, *Wild*, p. 13.
[34] Ballard, *Nights*, p. 210.
[35] Ibid. p. 250.

Complex, whose 'obsession with crime' ratifies the increasing privatization of space.

The novel, however, tacitly acknowledges the dangers of reductionist accounts of space, using the friction between Crawford's and Prentice's perspectives to explore the specious logic of universalizing readings. On the one hand, Crawford views the Costasol '[a]s a prison [...] We're building prisons all over the world and calling them luxury condos. The amazing thing is that the keys are all on the inside'. For Crawford, the Costasol is indicative of 'the way the world is going', a vision of:

> The future [...] The Costasols of this planet are spreading outwards. I've toured them in Florida and New Mexico. You should visit [the] Fontainebleau Sud complex outside Paris—it's a replica of this, ten times the size. The Residencia Costasol wasn't thrown together by some gimcrack developer; it was carefully planned.[36]

Crawford's extrapolation of global trends from America parodies cultural critics like Fredric Jameson.[37] This similarity extends to the conclusions Crawford draws: '"[t]own-scapes are changing. The open-plan city belongs to the past—no more ramblas, no more left banks and Latin quarters. We're moving into an age of security grilles and defensible space"'.[38] There is an element of truth in this reading. Gentrification has structurally altered the social and physical geography of the city, while the post-1970s trend of urban entrepreneurialism explains how local administrations responded to increased 'intra-urban' competition by standardizing certain spatial trends.[39] The novel's comparative

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[36] Ibid. pp. 220, 218. See also p. 210.
[37] See Jameson, 'Postmodernism', esp. p. 57. See also the account of Los Angeles as 'a *prototopos*, a paradigmatic place' in Soja, *Geographies*, p. 191.
[38] Ballard, *Nights*, p. 219. This closely resembles the concept of 'postmodernization' developed in Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, p. 188, and recalls the discussion of Mike Davis (above).
[39] These include the serial reproduction of science parks, world trade centres, and shopping malls. See David Harvey, 'Urban Entrepreneurialism', pp. 359-360.

geography, however, is at odds with Crawford's indiscriminate approach. Charles's response therefore sounds an important cautionary note: Bobby's argument appears as 'an amalgam of alarmist best-sellers, *Economist* think-pieces, and his own obsessive intuitions'.[40]

To conclude, *Cocaine Nights* advances Ballard's logics of dissolution by providing a narrative of spatiotemporal change while cautioning against the dangers of generalization. A notable feature of Ballard's later works is their resistance to posing the results of the dissolution of the city-country dichotomy as an undifferentiated and homogeneous *space*. Like Harvey's model of globalization, their representations of contemporary space are framed around a dialectic of global *and* local relations. The next section considers how this model of differential space informs Ballard's representations of a science park in France.

The 'Fourth' World

Many of the structural and thematic features of *Cocaine Nights* resurface in *Super-Cannes*, which recounts Paul and Jane Sinclair's move from Maida Vale to the French business park Eden-Olympia following her appointment as a resident doctor. The move, which coincides with Paul's recuperation following an aircraft accident, fails to cement their marriage. Following Jane's increasing institutionalization, Paul investigates the hazy circumstances surrounding the death of her predecessor, David Greenwood, after he killed several senior Eden-Olympia executives. Paul's investigation, like that of Charles Prentice, is

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[40] Ballard, *Nights*, p. 219, Ballard's italics.

little more than a ruse. In spite of uncovering extensive links between senior Eden executives and paedophilia, prostitution, drug trafficking, and racist violence, Sinclair relinquishes several opportunities to report his findings to the relevant authorities. The novel concludes with Sinclair assuming Greenwood's vigilante role, thereby becoming the proxy of resident psychiatrist Wilder Penrose.

Like those of Prentice, Sinclair's actions demonstrate that behind each of Ballard's later protagonists 'hovers an alter ego who lives out the former's hidden dreams', a proxy for 'wider networks of power'.[41] In spatial terms, the novel evokes such 'networks' through a pastiche aesthetic. Following a trend that previously began with the resemblance between Estrella de Mar and 'Chelsea or Greenwich Village in the 1960s', Sinclair likens a 'small single-storey building' near Cannes Airport to 'a mock-up of a Wild West frontier town'.[42] While these images in themselves recall the 'pseudo-historical depth' Jameson associates with the pastiche aesthetic, their broader significance relates to the privatization of space.[43] One of the more insidious elements of the pastiche form, Ballard's works suggest, concerns its role in dissimulating the privatization of space. On Sinclair's first impressions, Eden-Olympia's 'glass and gun-metal office blocks' are:

> Separated by artificial lakes and forested traffic islands where a latter-day Crusoe could have found comfortable refuge. The faint mist over the lakes and the warm sun reflected from the glass curtain-walling seemed to generate an opal haze, as if the entire business park were a mirage.

The reality that underlies this 'mirage' soon becomes clear:

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[41] Gasiorek, *Ballard*, p. 191.
[42] Ballard, *Nights*, p. 43; *Super-Cannes*, p. 149. See also *Nights*, pp. 33-5, 42, 81, 140-1; *Super-Cannes*, pp. 5, 7-8, 12, 21, 140, 191, 276.
[43] Jameson, 'Postmodernism', p. 67.

> Intimacy and neighbourliness were not features of everyday life at Eden-Olympia. An invisible infrastructure took the place of traditional civic virtues [...] Civility and polity were designed into Eden-Olympia [...] Representative democracy had been replaced by the surveillance camera and the private police force.[44]

This foregrounding of the political significance of the pastiche aesthetic helps make sense of Sinclair's following offhand remark: 'Nature, as the new millennium dictated, was giving way for the last time to the tax shelter and the corporate car park'.[45] As Chapter Two demonstrates, Sinclair's allusion to the effects of the automobile on conventional ideas of 'nature' is appropriate: automobility plays a prominent role in the urban problematic. His reference to the 'tax shelter', more specifically the contribution of governments to the breakdown of the city-country dichotomy, can be traced through his references to the 'forested traffic islands' and *Robinson Crusoe*.

These latter images, which recall *Concrete Island*, establish an important intertextual link. The thematic spaces of gated communities (*Running Wild*), tourist resorts (*Cocaine Nights*), science parks (*Super-Cannes*), and shopping centres (*Kingdom Come*) are set against the transformation of city centres into spaces primarily dedicated to consumption (*Millennium People*).

In terms of the logics of dissolution, Harvey's concept of urban entrepreneurialism and the critique of Brand London developed in Chapter Two contextualize the thematic spaces of Ballard's later works.[46] In response to the economic problems of the 1970s, the investment priorities of local governments changed. Compared with the managerial practices of the 1960s, characterized by wide-scale economic projects designed to improve the living and/or working

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[44] Ballard, *Super-Cannes*, pp. 7-8, 38.
[45] Ibid. p. 356.
[46] See Harvey, 'Entrepreneurialism'.

conditions of those within a particular jurisdiction, the entrepreneurial practices of 1970s onwards sought to promote regional development through place-specific infrastructural investments. The resulting developments, which include business parks and shopping malls, provide the spatial contexts of *Super-Cannes* and *Kingdom Come*. Anticipating the argument of the next section, the hollowing out of Central London in *Millennium People* is a response to deindustrialization, gentrification, and the commodification of culture. As the final section demonstrates, these factors collectively precipitate the 'virtual city'.

In such ways, Ballard's works traverse the interstices of fiction and social theory.[47] Viewed accordingly, Sinclair's 'latter-day Crusoe' is part of a systematic repositioning of the urban problematic within various cinematic, literary, and sociological tropes. 'Eden-Olympia' is the pastiche par excellence, a fabulation of biblical reference and Greek myth. Penrose's contrast between Eden-Olympia and 'Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*' adds an additional layer of cultural significance, which is in turn overlaid by Sinclair's rebuttal of Penrose's vision of the future. 'It sounds like a ticket to 1984', Paul reflects. 'I thought organization man died out in the 1960s'.[48] This jarring of utopian (Sinclair's 'new Eden' and 'suburb of paradise') and dystopian (Orwell, Whyte) references is important because it refuses moralizing positions on, and dualist representations of, the urban problematic, which Ballard's works characterize as neither an historical zenith nor a nadir.[49]

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[47] See Ballard, *Super-Cannes*, p. 88: 'the young French waitress, who wore jeans and a white vest printed with a quotation from Baudrillard'.
[48] Ibid. pp. 28, 95, Ballard's italics. Sinclair alludes to George Orwell's famous novel *1984* and William H. Whyte, *The Organization Man* (1956) (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), esp. pp. 266-7, 330 for Whyte's derogatory remarks on suburbia.
[49] Ballard, *Super-Cannes*, pp. 12, 20. See also pp. 8, 134, 206.

The comparative terms of Ballard's 'Foreword' underline the need for an adjusted conceptual framework to understand the differential organization of contemporary space. Super-Cannes is a 'luxury enclave on the heights above the Croistette': part of a 'whole terrain of science parks and autoroutes' that collectively constitutes 'Europe's silicon valley' and which Ballard deems to be 'a world away from the casinos and *belle époque* hotels that define the Riviera of old'.[50] Sinclair accentuates their differences when contemplating how '[t]he France of the 1960s, with its Routier lunches, anti-CRS slogans and Citroen DS' had:

> Been largely replaced by a new France of high-speed monorails, MacDo's [...] And Eden-Olympia was the newest of the new France. Ten miles to the north-east of Cannes, in the wooded hills between Valbonne and the coast, it was the latest of the development zones that had begun with the Sophia-Antipolis and would soon turn Provence into Europe's silicon valley.[51]

Given Ballard's usual periodizing use of railways as a vestige of the past (see Chapter One), it is interesting that Sinclair associates the 'new France' with 'high-speed monorails' while linking a car to an outmoded way of being. This inverted logic, however, is not supported by the economics of Eden-Olympia. Among the principal investors Penrose mentions are Sumitomo and Elf Aquitaine, both with extensive links to the car industry.[52] With its camouflaged car parks, list of investors, science parks, and development zones, the 'new France' continues to be shaped by the networks of automobility.

An alternative way to read the Citroen reference is through its figurative association with Fordism. From this angle, the 'new France' of high-speed

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[50] Ballard, 'Foreword', in *Super-Cannes*, Ballard's italics.
[51] Ibid. p. 5.
[52] Ballard, *Super-Cannes*, p. 15. Mazda Car Corporation is affiliated with the Sumitomo Group, which includes Sumitomo Rubber Industries. The French oil company Elf Aquitaine later merged with other companies to form Total in 2003.

monorails becomes a synecdoche for the extended networks of mobility which enable Charles Prentice—as Ballard's archetypal narrator of the urban fabric—to traverse with greater ease 'those strips of no-man's land between the checkpoints [that] always seem rich zones of promise'.[53]

As the intertextual relationship between Pangbourne Village and Estrella de Mar implies, these changes are not localized. Their connection substantiates what Crawford calls the '*fourth* world [...] [t]he one waiting to take over everything'.[54] Crawford's comments originate in the context of the pastiche aesthetic. Contrary to Crawford's generalizing use of the term, however, this 'fourth world' is correctly viewed not as a homogenizing force but as an allusion to the overlapping networks of the global and the local. Penrose elaborates the temporal and spatial changes implicit in this term, the '*fourth world'*, when he describes Eden-Olympia as:

> The face of the future. Already there are hundreds of business and science parks around the world. Most of us—or at least, most professional people—are going to spend our entire working lives in them [....] You've watched the future break out of its egg. The Greenwich line of this millennium runs through Eden-Olympia.[55]

In socioeconomic terms, business and science parks are an inherent part of the 'new pattern of development' opened up in 'advanced capitalist countries' by urban entrepreneurialism.[56] The majority of science park employees are high-tech research and design personnel associated with the tertiary and quarternary sectors. Crucially, Penrose's reference to 'most *professional* people' tempers Sinclair's prediction that '[t]he whole world will soon be a business-park

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[53] Ballard, *Nights*, p. 9.
[54] Ibid. p. 216, Ballard's italics.
[55] Ballard, *Super-Cannes*, pp. 254, 362-3.
[56] Harvey, 'Entrepreneurialism', p. 359.

colony'.[57] Read together, Sinclair's prediction and Penrose's repositioned 'Greenwich line' do not problematically assert the universality of a post-industrial economy (see Chapter Three) so much as connote the obsolescence of the city-country dichotomy.

Masao Miyoshi argues that the economic benefits of science parks, which include the creation of jobs and the increased tax and local business revenues concomitant with the 'inflow of high-wage researchers', are offset by the associated impact of 'rapid urbanization'. The presence of such professionals prompts 'a steep climb in real-estate values, leading to sprawling housing developments and resulting in traffic congestion', followed by a vicious circle of 'further sprawl, traffic jams, and, above all, environmental deterioration'.[58]

Super-Cannes registers this 'environmental deterioration' in the following way. Consistent with the chief of police Pascal Zander's remark that '[a]t Eden-Olympia even nature knows her place', the French landscape is replete with the indices of automobility.[59] Evoked by 'the RN7, the brightly lit coastal highway from Cannes to Golfe-Juan' and 'the amber glare of the sodium lights', the notable scenic features consist of 'closed filling stations and supermarkets' such that '[i]t's like Los Angeles, the car parks tend to find you, wherever you are'.[60]

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[57] Ballard, *Super-Cannes*, pp. 344-5.
[58] Masao Miyoshi, 'Ivory Tower in Escrow', in *Learning Places: The Afterlives of Area Studies*, eds. Masao Miyoshi and H.D. Harootunian (Durham, Duke University Press, 2002), pp. 19-60, p. 37.
[59] Ballard, *Super-Cannes*, p. 83. Compare with pp. 7, 9, 17, 37, 59, 133, 154, 194, 356.
[60] Ibid. pp. 308, 317, 111.

Like King's Thames Valley, automobility informs a *fourth world* aesthetic of filling stations and car parks, supermarkets and sodium lights.[61]

By reading *Super-Cannes* in terms of the wider social and physical geographies of the urban problematic, this section provides a more nuanced reading of science parks than Miyoshi's vague reference with 'sprawl'. This term, Robert Bruegmann points out, is typically used to describe 'unplanned, scattered, low-density, automobile-dependent development at the urban periphery'. Like '"urban blight", the "slum", or many other terms connected with urban development', Bruegmann explains, sprawl is 'not so much an objective reality as a cultural concept'.[62] Although their works reject the notion of an 'urban periphery', the recognition of sprawl as a cultural concept unites Ballard with King. Together, their works demonstrate the need for new tropes of the urban, new 'cultural concepts' no longer indebted to vague definitions of an urban 'periphery' which occupies the supposed interstices of the city-country dichotomy. Their use of the *urban* is not simply as a cognate of the city.

To recognize that Ballard's works do not use the city as an organizing spatial reference is not tantamount to observing a homogeneous urban 'space'. Compare the present discussion with Malcolm Waters's definition of globalization as the end-of-geography. 'Territoriality', Waters contends, 'will disappear as an organizing principle for social and cultural life'. The result is that:

> It will be a society without borders or spatial boundaries. In a globalized world we will be unable to predict social practices and preferences on the

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[61] See King, *Human Punk*, p. 257. Compare with Ballard, *Super-Cannes*, p. 201: 'The future is going to be like a suburb of Stuttgart'.
[62] Robert Bruegmann, *Sprawl*, pp. 2-3.

> basis of geographical location [....] economies' trend towards liberalization [...] polities' trend towards democratization [...] and culture towards universalization.[63]

Ballard's works ostensibly illustrate Waters's predictions. The degree of concordance between Pangbourne Village, Estrella de Mar, and Eden-Olympia seemingly demonstrates waning territoriality. While Ballard's works exhibit a palpable sense of spatial change with respect to the city-country dichotomy, they do not herald the 'disappearance' of the social and cultural effects of territoriality. Space, to be sure, is a social product. As regards '[u]rban space-time', Lefebvre writes of its '*differential*' character. 'Each place and each moment' exists only 'within a whole, through the contrasts and oppositions that connect it to, and distinguish it from, other places and moments'.[64] When read with Harvey's account of globalization, Lefebvre's differential space provides a powerful means of understanding the interrelations between Pangbourne Village, Estrella de Mar, and Eden-Olympia. While they collectively attest to the ontological and epistemological insufficiency of the city-country dichotomy, this does not demonstrate a 'globalized world' as Waters understands it.

Lefebvre's dialectical account of space helps clarify a fundamental difference between the readings of Ballard and Waters. There is, for Lefebvre, an inherent tension between 'representations of space'—scientific conceptions of space; abstract and homogeneous accounts 'produced' by capitalism—and the 'representational space' of individual perceptions. 'In *spatial practice*'—the third component of Lefebvre's spatial triad, which refers to the ensemble of social activities that reveal a particular society's conception of space—'the reproduction of social relations is predominant'. Space, in other words,

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[63] Malcolm Waters, *Globalization* (London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 3, 159.
[64] Lefebvre, *Urban Revolution*, p. 37, Lefebvre's italics.

reproduces the social relations—the distinctions and contradictions—that generates it. This reproduction has two inevitable consequences: the 'dissolution of old relations' and the 'generation of new relations'. It follows that 'a new space cannot be born (produced) unless it accentuates differences'.[65]

In terms of the logics of dissolution, the embedded defensive tendencies of Pangbourne Village convey the dissolution of 'old relations' while accentuating spatial difference. On one level, the gated community connotes the breakdown of traditional concepts such as civic society commonly associated with the city.[66] At another level, Pangbourne Village accentuates the difference between spaces *within* and *without* the estate. In such ways, Ballard's Pangbourne both is and is not a paradigmatic space. It is a paradigmatic space inasmuch as it partly illustrates the characteristic morphology of the urban problematic—namely, a development that cannot be categorized simply as city, country, or suburb. Conversely, and contrary to Waters's notion of 'universalization' as the diminution of social, cultural, and spatial differences, Pangbourne Village is not a paradigmatic space because it accentuates the spatial difference between the gated community and the outlying regions. It is a vision of a globalized space not as an undifferentiated aggregate but—pace Waters—of what Harvey calls 'a geographically articulated patterning of global capitalist activities and relations'.[67]

Such relations are engendered in the city though gentrification and the extension of what Lefebvre calls 'highly populated peripheries' and 'banking,

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[65] Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, pp. 50, 52, Lefebvre's italics.
[66] See, for example, the discussion of the Platonic (or 'ethical') concept of the polis discussed in Chapter Three.
[67] Harvey, 'Art of Rent', p. 403.

commercial, and industrial networks and of housing (second homes, places and spaces of leisure, etc.)'.[68] Ballard's works contribute to the understanding of the urban problematic by illustrating the close link between gentrification and the growing importance of such 'peripheries' (Pangbourne Village; suburbia more generally). Their concern for the social and physical organization of space, which appreciates the 'local' effects of 'global' networks without collapsing the one into the other, fundamentally informs their representations of the urban problematic.

Witness the plan for 'Eden-Olympia Ouest, better known as Eden II', which represents '[t]he future [...] almost twice the size of the original'. In spite of the preparations for this future, which include 'clearing the holm oaks and umbrella pines that had endured since Roman times, surviving forest fires and military invasions', important traces of difference remain.[69] *Super-Cannes* juxtaposes Eden-Olympia with the 'industrial suburb of La Bocca', suggesting the uneven development of the second circuit of capitalism. In *Cocaine Nights*, the Hollinger mansion, '[c]enturies older than Estrella de Mar', overlooks 'an observation post constructed during the Napoleonic wars'.[70] The point is that the dialectic of these residual spaces and developments such as the 'Antibes-Les-Pins apartments', one of the 'security-obsessed compounds that were reshaping the geography and character of the Côte d'Azur', means the latter 'geography' has yet to become a totalizing force.[71]

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[68] Lefebvre, 'Industrialization and Urbanization', p. 72.
[69] Ballard, *Super-Cannes*, pp. 355, 356.
[70] Ibid. pp. 149, 153; *Nights*, p. 167. See also *Super-Cannes*, p. 309; *Kingdom*, pp. 72, 75.
[71] Ballard, *Super-Cannes*, p. 133.

Such overlapping geographies illustrate Lefebvre's contention that 'the urban considered as a field is not simply an empty space filled with objects', for 'no urban place is identical to another'.[72] Like Griffiths's use of inscription and King's extrapolated vision of the M25, Ballard's differential representations of space recognize the contingent nature of spatial organization. '"For ever"', Sinclair ruminates, 'was a difficult concept to grasp along this ever-changing coastline'.[73] To conclude in terms of the logics of dissolution, the science park symbolizes a fundamental break with metropolitan centres. With the exception of *Millennium People*, Ballard's literary focus does not encompass the great cities of industrialization (Manchester) or modernism (Paris), but gated communities in Berkshire, the tourist region of the Costa del Sol, a science park among the Côte d'Azur, and a shopping centre in the Home Counties. The one exception is the subject of the next section.

The Eclipse of 'Heritage London'[74]

Millennium People closely resembles its predecessors in that it, too, is a detective novel of sorts, organized around David Markham's investigation of his ex-wife's death during a bomb attack on Heathrow Airport. Similarly, the protagonist's enquiries lead him to a charismatic Svengali figure: Dr Richard Gould, who seeks 'meaning in the most meaningless of times' through 'meaningless terrorist act[s]'.[75] The parallels continue when, after establishing

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[72] Lefebvre, *Urban Revolution*, p. 40.
[73] Ballard, *Super-Cannes*, p. 139.
[74] Ballard, *Kingdom*, p. 101.
[75] Ballard, *Millennium*. p. 292.

Gould's culpability, Markham becomes implicated in a number of terrorist attacks on prominent London locations.

There are, however, at least three important differences. Firstly, the eschatological connotations of the title imply a sense of ending which this chapter links to Ballard's logics of dissolution. This informs the second, geographical, difference. By addressing Central London, *Millennium People* engages the geographical 'centre' long absent from, or only tangentially referenced by, Ballard's works over the previous twenty five years. The third difference concerns the novel's denouement. Instead of continuing Gould's work, Markham laments how 'Chelsea Marina was a place of real promise, when [Gould] persuaded the residents to create a new republic, a city without street signs'.[76]

This attempt to create a 'new republic' represents a significant development in Ballard's logic of dissolution by substantiating the previously implicit critique of Central London. Set in Chelsea Marina, an exclusive estate built on 'the site of a former gasworks' amid the 'vast metropolis', *Millennium People* rejects the typical Ballardian gambit of a symbolic and material move from Central London.[77] As its increasing preoccupation with the 'duller suburbs, the grim and bricky enclaves around Heathrow and Gatwick' suggests, Ballard's penultimate novel consolidates the recasting of the city-suburb relationship that began in *The Unlimited Dream Company* (1979) by concluding the dialectic of Central London and the 'duller suburbs'.[78] Markham initially broaches this

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[76] Ibid. p. 294.
[77] Ibid. pp. 51, 5. See *Nights*, p. 14; *Super-Cannes*, pp. 43, 235; *Kingdom*, p. 38.
[78] Ibid. p. 204. To recount: Shepperton as 'the everywhere of suburbia, the paradigm of nowhere'. Ballard, *Unlimited*, p. 35.

subject in his journey from 'the stucco silences of South Kensington with its looming museums, so many warehouses of time' and:

> Westwards along the Cromwell Road. Inner London fell behind us when we left the Hammersmith flyover and Hogarth House, joining the motorway to Heathrow. Twenty minutes later, we entered the operational zone of the airport, a terrain of air-freight offices and car-rental depots, surrounded by arrays of landing lights like magnetic fields.[79]

As with the 'new France' of *Super-Cannes*, the terms of contrast are important. Markham's journey concludes that of Dr Laing in *High-Rise*, whose relocation from Chelsea represented a 'move forward fifty years in time'.[80] In departing South Kensington's 'warehouses of time', whose 'stucco silences' capture the solemnity of received history (London as an historic *centre*), for the bustle and transit of the airport, Markham enters a wholly distinct 'territory'. Its 'magnetic fields' suitably recalibrate the directional, ontological, and thematic compass.

The novelty of the present move concerns the increasing social, ideological, and symbolic irrelevance of Inner London. In the 'age of bricky piles [...] copied throughout the world'—an extrapolation Markham draws from his childhood memories of Guildford—the history attached to those 'looming museums' is obsolete.[81] Ballard elaborates this point in a little-known yet important article, 'Airports', published in 1997. 'By comparison with London [Heathrow] Airport', Ballard maintains:

> London itself seems hopelessly antiquated. Its hundreds of miles of gentrified stucco are an aching hangover from the nineteenth century that should have been bulldozed decades ago. London may well be the only world capital—with the possible exception of Moscow—that has gone from the nineteenth century to the twenty-first without experiencing

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[79] Ibid. p. 128.
[80] Ballard, *High-Rise*, pp. 8-9.
[81] Ballard, *Millennium*, pp. 86-7.

all the possibilities and excitements of the twentieth in any meaningful way.[82]

If this all-encompassing reference to London is to be more than a 'perverse metaphor'—a term Peter Marcuse applies to readings of 'the city' which conflate specific observations with generalized and misleading conclusions—it requires contextualization.[83] *Kingdom Come* delimits the scope of this critique through the notion of 'heritage London', which consists of 'Parliament, the West End, Bloomsbury, Notting Hill, [and] Hampstead'.[84] In conjunction with the 'stucco silences' of South Kensington, the real *target* of Ballard's critique is Central London.

Consider the burning edifices of the Millennium Wheel and the National Film Theatre that result from Markham's terrorist attack.[85] Both are part of the South Bank, proximate to the Houses of Parliament and London Waterloo railway station. These associations with centrality explain why Markham justifies his attack as an attempt 'to build something positive' and 'break down the old categories'.[86] With the millennial and millenarian echoes of its title, *Millennium People* represents a quantitative and qualitative watershed in Ballard's logics of dissolution. Its figurative attack on Central London is a response to the social and physical changes discussed in Chapters One and Two. In this respect, Ballard's recasting of suburbia, thematic interest in gated communities and science parks, and concept of the 'virtual city' all make sense of—and respond to—the 'hundreds of miles of gentrified stucco'.

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[82] Ballard, 'Airports'.
[83] Peter Marcuse, '"The City" as Perverse Metaphor', *City*, 9, 2 (2005), 247-54.
[84] Ballard, *Kingdom*, p. 101.
[85] Ballard, *Millennium*, p. 141
[86] Ibid. p. 273.

These changes also explain why Ballard's later works repeatedly associate Central London with dissimulation. Far from revealing to Markham a languid air of historical provenance, London's 'dealing rooms were a con' whose:

> Money was all on tick, a stream of coded voltages sluicing through concealed conduits under the foreign exchange floors. Facing them across the river were two more fakes, the replica of Shakespeare's Globe, and an old power station made over into a middle-class disco, Tate Modern.[87]

Belying the 'looming museums' of South Kensington and 'heritage London' more generally are, firstly, the networks of the second circuit of capitalism, and secondly an important sense of deceit. Contrary to the discourse of authenticity associated with the interests of tourism, central London is a 'fake': a hollowed out remnant which Ballard's works associate with experiential paucity.[88]

The history of Markham's second 'fake', the Tate Modern, highlights the convergence between financial and tourist interests around the subject of culture in a global economy. Originally built in two phases between 1947 and 1962, Bankside Power Station was decommissioned in 1981, and later opened as the Tate Modern in 2000.[89] Originally built to service the material needs of the populace, the power station is an apt metaphor for the restructuring of capitalism. Like the fishermen's cottages in *Cocaine Nights*, it was transformed from a site of production into a space of consumption. That other 'fake' which is geographically adjacent, Shakespeare's Globe, re-emphasizes the connection

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[87] Ballard, *Kingdom Come*, p. 180.

[88] See the descriptions of the Millennium Dome, the South Bank, and St. John's Wood in J.G. Ballard, 'Despite huge advances in science and technology, the 20th century will strike us as a barbarous time', in *New Statesman* <http://www.newstatesman.com/199912200005> [accessed 25 September 2009]. See also *Millennium*, pp. 61, 268; *Kingdom*, p. 108 and Airports.

[89] 'History', <http://www.tate.org.uk/modern/building/history.htm> [accessed 13 October 2009]

between cultural discourse and material geography heightened by the 'global' and 'local' relations of globalization.[90]

In terms of the logics of dissolution, Ballard's works overlap with and build upon John King's representations of central London. The sacrifice of Central London landmarks in *Millennium People* and the notion of 'heritage London' from *Kingdom Come* codify the alienation King's characters experience in Kensington, Chelsea, Fulham, and Soho. Each author's representations of space are informed by—albeit to different degrees—the social effects of gentrification, the privatization of municipal housing, tourism, and the highly geared investment in housing as a commodity aimed at the middle classes.[91] Set against this backdrop, Markham identifies the 'tableaux of a second city' after crossing Chelsea Bridge and turning:

> Into the darker streets that led to the King's Road. The headlights picked their way through a maze of turnings, drawing us past shop windows filled with kitchen units and bedroom suites, office furniture and bathroom fittings, tableaux of a second city ready to replace the London that burned behind us [....] Heathrow approached, a beached sky-city, half space station and half shanty town. We left the motorway and moved along the Great West Road, entering a zone of two-storey factories, car-rental offices and giant reservoirs.[92]

By association with nineteenth-century literary geographies, the '*maze* of turnings' temporally and spatially link Chelsea Bridge with 'the [central] London

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[90] See Harvey, 'Art of Rent', and Lefebvre, 'Industrialization and Urbanization', p. 73: 'urban cores'—a term Lefebvre uses instead of city centres—survive after the urban revolution largely because of their 'double role: as place of consumption and consumption of place'. In other words, city centres exist both as the site of institutional headquarters and as 'a high-quality consumption product for foreigners, tourists, people from the outskirts, and suburbanites'.

[91] While King's works place a greater emphasis than of Ballard on characterization (one consequence of which is a more explicit political awareness), the next section considers how Ballard's 2001 essay Welcome to the Virtual City clarifies this sensitivity to social geography.

[92] Ballard, *Millennium*, pp. 128, 25.

that burned behind us'.[93] This pyre appositely captures the symbolic sacrifice of past *form* and *content*. The organicist conception of space associated with the nineteenth-century industrial city in the first chapter is replaced by the 'tableaux of a second city', a representation that reveals much about the *first* city. Both are shaped by the imperatives of consumerism, yet the shop windows of these 'tableaux' are filled with kitchen units and bedroom suites, office furniture and bathroom fittings instead of tourist memorabilia and 'fakes'.[94]

The relationship between the first and second cities raises the significance of the simulacrum, and so concludes Markham's process of realignment. For Gilles Deleuze, the simulacrum provides a means of 'challeng[ing] and overturn[ing]' the 'very idea of a model or privileged position'.[95] Markham's 'tableaux' are not only the end point of his journey, but of the concept of the city as defined in terms of its contrast with the country or suburbia. *Millennium People* does not simply revise the terms of the city-country dichotomy, for example by offering a binary of the 'fake' city centre versus the suburban 'real'. While the second city emerges from the ossification of the city centre, it is not defined *against* it.

Roger Silverstone's acute reading of suburbia helps clarify this point. The 'suburban imaginary', Silverstone writes, is 'a virtual space no longer visible

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[93] The research on this subject is too immense to catalogue here. For instructive introductions, see 'Into the Labyrinth', in Elizabeth Wilson, *Sphinx in the City*, pp. 1-11, and Richard Lehan, *City in Literature*, pp. 84-91. More generally, see Judith Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight* and Julian Wolfreys, *Reading London*, Vol I.

[94] This brings to mind what the protagonist in *Kingdom Come* calls 'a more real Britain of Homebase stores, car-boot sales and garden centres, amateur sports clubs and the shirt of St George'. Ballard, *Kingdom*, p. 225.

[95] Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition* (1968), trans. by Paul Power (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), p. 69. Deleuze's reading markedly differs from Jean Baudrillard's negative account. Compare with Baudrillard, *Simulation*.

either on the planner's drawing board or on the margins of cities'.[96] Markham's move to the second 'tableaux' marks his entry into a new spatial problematic. No longer defined by the contrast with the city, the 'suburban imaginary' neither occupies the 'margins of cities' nor inhabits the 'planner's drawing board'. It *challenges* and *overturns* the very idea of the city, consolidating the previous logics of dissolution by realizing that the urban problematic cannot be posed in dualist terms. Consider the notional pivot around which Ballard's works have long revolved: Heathrow is, in Markham's words, 'a huge illusion, the centre of a world of signs that pointed to nothing'.[97] To call this a 'centre', let alone an 'illusion', is far from straightforward. As Ballard explains:

> Airports have become a new kind of discontinuous city [...] the true city of the next century. The great airports are already suburbs of an invisible world capital [...] a centripetal city whose population forever circles its notional centre, and will never need to gain access to its dark heart [...] the light industrial and motel architecture that unvaryingly surrounds every major airport in the world [...] constitute the reality of our lives, rather than some mythical domain of village greens, cathedral closes, and manorial vistas.[98]

This 'new kind of discontinuous city' highlights several conceptual discontinuities between the urban problematic and the city. Airports, those 'suburbs of an invisible world capital', exemplify the extended networks of communication and consumption that characterize the urban problematic.[99] Ballard's 'centripetal city' ties in with Lefebvre's description of the 'explosion-implosion' of the urban phenomenon insofar as both evoke an extended and

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[96] Roger Silverstone, 'Introduction', in *Visions of Suburbia*, ed. by Roger Silverstone (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 1-25, p. 13.
[97] Ibid. p. 251.
[98] Ballard, 'Airports'.
[99] Where the 'urban phenomenon tends to overflow borders' and is 'made manifest as movement', so Ballard's Heathrow appears as its archetypal metonym. Lefebvre, *Revolution*, pp. 169, 174.

decentred realm that follows the 'fragmentation' of the 'classical city'.[100] This leads to the revised sense of a 'notional centre', a 'huge illusion' in that it is neither a centre nor an illusion in any conventional sense. Like the 'suburban imaginary', it is not conceptualized in the dichotomous terms of the centre-periphery or of reality-illusion. With its echoes of Joseph Conrad, this forms the 'dark heart' of Ballard's works.[101]

Like King's and Griffiths's logics of dissolution, those of Ballard reject a 'mythical domain' of village greens, cathedrals, and manorial vistas. This imagery is instructive since it recalls John Major's 'invincible green suburbs' discussed in Chapter Two. Major's suburbs rhetorically create a timeless sense of community which denies Britain's increasing social polarization, and espouse a pastoral ideal that elides the effects of automobility. Ballard's account conversely illustrates the profound changes this thesis addresses, forming a coherent and systematic contribution to understanding the urban problematic that is at odds with a common trend of interpreting his works as making an *aesthetic* virtue out of praising the unloved.[102] The light industrial and motel architecture respectively convey the socioeconomic changes associated with science parks and the spatial effects of automobility, while the airports connote the extended networks of communication and consumption. Collectively, this forms a fundamentally different image of England from that of Major's suburbs.

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[100] Ibid. p. 169.
[101] Conrad's works differ from those of Ballard in respect of its centre-periphery epistemology. Marlow's London, 'the biggest, and the greatest, town on earth', is defined by the contrast with 'the heart of an immense darkness' that is Africa. Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (1902), ed. Robert Hampson (London: Penguin, 1995), pp. 15, 124.
[102] For example, Ballard's works were 'a lifelong experiment in imaginative alchemy, the transmutation of senseless dross into visions of beauty'. Alternatively, their 'trick' was to 'forge a poetic out of that which contains least poetry'. John Gray, 'Appreciation: J.G. Ballard', in *New Statesman* <http://www.newstatesman.com/books/2009/04/ballard-work-life-world> [accessed 25 September 2009] and Iain Sinclair, *Crash: David Cronenberg's Post-mortem on J.G. Ballard's 'Trajectory of Fate'* (London: British Film Institute, 1999), p. 77.

To conclude, this section has codified Ballard's responses to central London in terms of 'heritage London'. This concept engages the social and physical effects of gentrification, the privatization of municipal housing, and the commodification of culture that collectively informs Ballard's critique of central London. Ballard's recurrent interest in the 'notional centre' of Heathrow was used to demonstrate how the urban problematic—read through the 'suburban imaginary'—cannot be understood in conventional dualist terms. In the concluding section, Ballard's final novel and his concept of the 'virtual city' represent the logical conclusion of the logics of dissolution.

'Welcome to the Virtual City'[103]

Set in 'a bosky English suburb' in Surrey, the 'impossible destinations' of the 'outer London suburbs' are the context of *Kingdom Come.*[104] Both its narrative structure and geographical gambit continue timeworn Ballardian motifs. The unemployed advertising executive Richard Pearson moves from his Chelsea flat to the 'suburban outlands' of Surrey—'the real centre of the nation'—to investigate the mysterious murder of his father at the Metro Centre shopping mall.[105] The identity of the killer is once again not in doubt, and subsequent events take another familiar turn when Pearson becomes embroiled in the political activities he and his father sought to decode.

The novel also continues Ballard's interest in the effects of the 'media landscape' through Pearson's interaction with the television presenter David

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[103] J.G. Ballard, 'Welcome to the Virtual City' in *Urban Myth. Tate, The Art Magazine*, 24, (Spring), p. 33.
[104] Ballard, *Kingdom Come*, p.5.
[105] Ibid. p. 4.

Cruise.[106] Pearson's new job is to promote Cruise's 'brand of ideological consumerism', which involves organizing a political campaign around the conviction that '[c]onsumerism is the air we've given [people] to breathe'. Reworking Marshall McLuhan, Cruise contends that '[t]here is no message. Messages belong to the old politics', while '[t]he new politics is about people's dreams and needs, their hopes and fears'.[107]

In terms of the logics of dissolution, the relationship between the mass media, consumerism, and the hollowing out of politics mediates Ballard's concept of the 'virtual city'. Like the 'notional centre' of Heathrow, Pearson's 'real centre of the nation' is an exercise in defamiliarization. With echoes of Walter Benjamin, Pearson leaves 'the jittery, synapse-testing metropolis' for the 'Thames Valley towns—Chertsey, Weybridge, [and] Walton': a 'terrain of inter-urban sprawl' and 'geography of sensory deprivation'.[108] To consider this 'zone of dual carriageways and petrol stations, business parks and signposts to Heathrow' as a 'real centre' is seemingly ridiculous. If the 'disused farmland filled with butane tanks, [and] warehouses clad in exotic metal sheeting' constitutes a 'centre', it begs the question: centre *of what*?[109]

This is precisely the dialectical process that informs the logics of dissolution. In its apparent unremarkableness, Pearson's 'real centre' is remarkable for the relationship it posits between 'bosky Surrey' and Chelsea Harbour, an allusion to *Millennium People* which resurfaces as 'Millionaire's

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[106] Ibid. pp. 137, 156, 168, 189.
[107] Ibid. pp. 191, 165, 146.
[108] Ibid. pp. 4, 6. See Walter Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire*, p. 131: 'Fear, revulsion, and horror were the emotions which the big city crowd aroused in those who first observed it'.
[109] Ballard, *Kingdom Come*, pp. 4, 6.

toytown'.[110] In a collection of essays entitled *Urban Myth*, a volume conspicuous for its generally uncritical response to the concept of the city, Ballard offers a solitary dissenting voice. In his overlooked and important essay, Welcome to the Virtual City, Ballard finds it telling that:

> The cities that tourists most enjoy are those in long-term decline—Venice, Florence, Paris, London, New York. The last two are gigantic money-mills, churned by a Centurion-card elite who are retreating into gated communities in Surrey and the Upper East Side. Already their immense spending power has distorted social life in London and New York, freezing out the old blue-collar and middle classes.[111]

This passage raises an important similarity between the works of Ballard, King, and Griffiths: their responses to city centres. Each author rationalizes the 'distorted social life' which results from 'freezing out the old blue-collar and middle classes' by highlighting the social and physical effects of gentrification, tourism, and the commodification of culture. The unifying thread between Ballard's 'heritage London', King's 'London of Shakespeare', and Griffiths's 'Authentic Liverpool Experience' is that the dialectic of global and local relations has fundamentally altered the social and physical geography of city centres such that they have become increasingly irrelevant.[112]

Ballard's 'gigantic money mills' allude to the role of real estate speculation in the second circuit of capitalism as a privileged form of accumulation, while the cities in 'long-term decline' gauge the social effects of these speculative practices. These observations raise two important and related questions that directly broach the subject of globalization. In the words of David Cunningham:

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[110] Ibid. pp. 5, 105, 63.
[111] Ballard, 'Virtual City', p. 33.
[112] Ballard, *Kingdom*, p. 101; King, *Trash*, p. 246; Griffiths, *Kelly*, p. 257.

> What happens to *place* as a spatial variable in such a new global economy of a capitalist modernity? [And] what critical 'role' can cultural forms and practices that have been historically associated with the specificities of place and localized traditions, realistically hope to play at such an historical moment?[113]

In response to the first question, this thesis understands that the urban problematic surmounts the city-country dichotomy—which has long informed traditional models of place—without simply yielding a homogeneous urban *space*. As regards the second question, the 'critical "role"' of cultural forms in the various logics of dissolution is to delineate aspects of the urban problematic that purely theoretical and analytical approaches may overlook. Ballard's later works are in this regard important because they constitute the most sustained logic of dissolution. They offer, in other words, the most systematic account of the spatial form that follows on from urban problematic.

In respect of Cunningham's first question, the point is not simply to redefine the terms of the city-country dichotomy, but to overhaul the ontological and epistemological premises of dualist approaches. *Kingdom Come* exemplifies this point, and so addresses Cunningham second question, by not replacing the city-country dichotomy with a dualism of 'heritage London' and 'bosky Surrey'.[114] Their relationship is not one of negative contrast: the latter is not the antidote to the former. Contrary to its bucolic overtones, 'bosky Surrey' consists of a 'roadside microclimate of petrol and diesel fumes', a 'terrain of dual carriageways and industrial estates' shaped by consumerism and automobility.[115] A similar principle applies to the relationship between the city

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[113] Cunningham, *Re-Placing the Novel*, Cunningham's italics.
[114] Ballard, *Kingdom*, pp. 101, 105. Compare with the working through of utopian and dystopian cultural references in *Cocaine Nights* and *Super-Cannes*.
[115] Ibid. pp. 16, 97. Such is the scale of change that a reformulation of critical distance is inevitable, as Pearson's need 'to pace [around] a car park somewhere to clear my head'

and suburbs in *Millennium People*, which does not merely oppose the 'fake' artefacts of central London with a suburban 'real'. To resist the entrenched binary perceptions that have long informed representations of space, Ballard eschews a fake-real binary in favour of a more complex, 'virtual city'.

Before engaging with the specifics of Ballard's essay, it is worth considering the theoretical significance of this concept. *'The virtual'*, Rob Shields summarizes, *'is real but not concrete'*. An upshot of this distinction is that the modified concept of the virtual 'troubles any simple negation because it introduces multiplicity into an otherwise fixed category of the real'.[116] In disrupting this 'fixed category' by introducing multiplicity, the definition of the real solely as the actual and tangible gives way to an emphasis on 'virtual' processes of becoming and emergence. With respect to the urban revolution, Lefebvre follows this line of reasoning by distinguishing between 'two opposing movements: *regressive* (from the virtual to the actual, the actual to the past) and *progressive* (from the obsolete and completed to the movement that anticipates that completeness, that presages and brings into being something new)'.[117]

The question this discussion prompts is not one of defining the reality of the virtual, but of creating a more sophisticated account of the real: of considering how the real and the concrete relate to one another.[118] Ballard

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illustrates. This recalibration makes sense of what Cruise calls 'the real England. If you can smell the motorway you're in real England'. Ballard, *Kingdom*, pp. 56-7, 176.

[116] Rob Shields, *The Virtual* (London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 2, 21, Shields's italics. The 'fixed category' of the real is the product of an ontological binary of existent versus non-existent, whose roots lie in a reductionist division between the materialism of empirical reality and the idealism of abstract thought.

[117] Lefebvre, *Revolution*, p. 24, Lefebvre's italics. Lefebvre's distinction adapts Deleuze, *Difference*, esp. pp. 208 ('[t]he virtual is opposed not to the real but to the actual'), 244 ('[t]he possible is opposed to the real; the process undergone by the possible is therefore a "realization". By contrast, the virtual is not opposed to the real; it possesses a full reality by itself').

[118] This is what I take Lefebvre to mean in the second epigraph: '[t]he concept of the city no longer corresponds to a social object'.

offers some clues as the terms of this relationship when, after discussing 'the great dying city centre dinosaurs', he answers the following question:

> So where to find a more astringent, a more challenging and a more real world? [In the] hundreds of virtual cities [that] exist at this very moment [...] They surround London, Paris, Chicago, and Tokyo, and, as it happens, I live in one of them. "Shepperton", some of you will say, appalled by the thought. "My God, suburbia. We went to London to get away from that". But Shepperton [...] is not suburbia. If it is a suburb of anywhere, it is of London Airport, not London. And that is the clue to my dislike of cities and my admiration for what most people think of as a faceless dead-land of inter-urban sprawl.[119]

The first point to consider is the apparent outmodedness of Ballard's terms of address. That 'world' to which he seeks to relocate appears simplistically to be 'more real'. Nevertheless, appearances are deceptive. In social terms, the 'dying city centre dinosaurs' have become moribund chiefly as a result of gentrification, the privatization of municipal housing, and the commodification of culture. While they continue to have a material existence—and so are part of the *real* world—their social relevance is waning. Ballard's terms, however, carry an underlying importance. Instead of simply representing suburbia as the *real* alternative, Ballard focuses on the numerous 'virtual cities' which surround cities such as London, Paris, Chicago, and Tokyo.

Reframed in terms of the logics of dissolution, these 'virtual cities' form a 'more astringent' world when compared with 'heritage London'—a discourse of authenticity inextricably associated with creating a brand identity (see Chapter Two). While considering the ongoing 'discursive battles' surrounding the definition and commodification of culture, Harvey writes that 'advocates (in the media and academia, for example) gain their audience as well as their financial

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[119] Ballard, 'Virtual City', p. 33.

support in relation to these processes'.[120] Ballard's essay extends this critique to encompass both the subject of the city itself and a wider range of ideologues: painters, novelists, and film-makers. In spite of their 'long-term decline', the 'distorted social life' of London and New York is so pervasive that artists propagate— often unwittingly—an outmoded and politically significant ideal. 'It's not their ambition that corrupts today's artists', Ballard contends, 'but the subject matter facing them'.[121]

The 'virtual city' is accordingly part of a 'more challenging' world for two reasons. Firstly, it involves overcoming a number of powerful ideological interests that sustain particular ideas of the city. Those 'hurrying back from Heathrow or a West Country weekend to their ludicrously priced homes in Fulham or Muswell Hill carefully avert their gaze from this *nightmare terrain'* in order to protect their financial interests.[122] The second reason is that the virtual requires a fundamental overhaul in conceptualizing space.

Lefebvre's distinction between regressive and progressive movements in the urban dialectic explains why Ballard's Shepperton is 'not suburbia'. The regressive dialectic moves from the virtual to the actual, the actual to the past. In Ballard's terms, this would involve moving from the virtual cities to suburbia, and then to define suburbia in relation to the city. Ballard's Shepperton, however, is aligned with Lefebvre's progressive dialectic movement. Like the 'notional centre' of Heathrow, it moves from the obsolete and completed ('city

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[120] Harvey, 'Art of Rent', p. 409.
[121] Ballard, 'Virtual', p. 33.
[122] Ibid. p. 33, my italics. What 'most people think of as a faceless dead-land of inter-urban sprawl' is in Ballard's essay attributable to those who live in 'Fulham or Muswell Hill'. This contextualization of the 'nightmare terrain' of the urban problematic is an implicit repudiation of Ballard's previous use of the uncanny (see conclusion, Chapter One) and recalls King's critique of John Betjeman in Chapter Two.

centre dinosaurs') through to that which portends something new: the virtual city as the conclusion of Ballard's logics of dissolution.

'The virtual is not opposed to the real', Deleuze writes. 'It possesses a full reality by itself'.[123] Like Silverstone's 'suburban imaginary'—that 'virtual space no longer visible either on the planner's drawing board or on the margins of cities'—Ballard's virtual city possesses a *full reality by itself*. This explains the importance of working through utopian and dystopian reference points in Ballard's works.[124] The virtual city is neither a utopian design on the 'planner's drawing board' nor a dystopia occupying 'the margins of cities'. It is a virtual phenomenon inasmuch as this term 'involves a modification of understandings of locatedness and the relations between distinct places and of inside–outside relationships, and specifically of the disappearance of the outside, and of outsidedness, as part of new spatializations and iconographies of social interaction'.[125]

To understand its full impact, Ballard's account prompts a significant modification in the notion of the virtual as '*"that which is so in essence"* but not actually so'.[126] Rob Shields uses this (Proust-inspired) definition to explain the capacity of memory and modern technologies to create images and entities which exist in essence but not in form. The virtual city conversely exists in essence *and* in form: it is 'actually so' inasmuch as it amounts to a reformulation of reality consonant with the present inquiry. To recognize this fact requires a

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[123] Deleuze, *Difference*, p. 244.
[124] See Ballard, *Kingdom*, p. 151: 'The orbital cities of the plain, as remote as Atlantis and Samarkand to the inhabitants of Chelsea and Holland Park, were learning to breathe and dream'. The 'cities of the plain', Sodom and Gomorrah, were destroyed by fire and proverbially associated with vice. The city of Atlantis, conversely, was destroyed by water and is often depicted as a utopia.
[125] Shields, *Virtual*, p. 49.
[126] Ibid. p. 43, Shields's italics.

new understanding of the production of space: a logic of dissolution that is sensitive to the effects of gentrification and tourism on the social makeup of city centres, and aware of the growing importance of suburbia.

The spatial logic of *Kingdom Come* demonstrates these points. Pearson's various descriptions of the 'Heathrow towns' as 'the suburbs of nowhere', 'these invisible suburbs', and 'this nondescript town', combined with the sense that 'Brooklands seems to be off all the maps', damningly admonish conventional thinking. [127] They are reminders of the continuing interests in perpetuating the idea of great cities, and the precursor to a new approach. Consider Pearson's emphasis on a virtual state of becoming: a 'suburban town had conjured itself from the nexus of access roads and dual carriageways', just as a 'nearby town [...] materialized out of the empty air'.[128] On this reading, Pearson's departure from the historic citizenry of central London ('my Chelsea flat') to the state of becoming 'a temporary resident of Brooklands' is akin to the theoretical move from conventional ideas of the real and the rhetoric of great cities to the concept of the 'virtual city'.[129]

That none of the secondary literature has, to the best of my knowledge, to date addressed *Welcome to the Virtual City* reveals a lack of critical dexterity with regards to Ballard's works specifically, and to the production of space more generally. Gasiorek argues that Ballard's later novels represent 'postmodernity as end-game and terminal zone [...] the future as an interminable present that

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[127] Ballard; *Kingdom*, pp. 151, 137, 155, 151, 34.
[128] Ibid. pp. 6, 7.
[129] Ibid. p. 52. On the history of the rhetoric of great cities, see Wilson, *Urban Space*, esp. p. 153.

cannot be imagined as other, the future as post-history'.[130] Gasiorek's reading is flawed on several counts, as *Kingdom Come* illustrates a tripartite logic of dissolution which identifies *what* is said (the representation of space), by *whom* (the subject position), and to what *end* (the ideological interests of spatial representation).

Firstly, Pearson foregrounds the dominant rhetoric of great cities by aping the disparaging terms of the 'motorway flatlands', the 'desert wastes of retail England', and 'these moribund motorway towns'.[131] The second step identifies the attendant subject position. Pearson describes a 'prosperous Thames Valley town, a pleasant terrain of comfortable houses, stylish office buildings, and retail parks' as 'every advertising man's image of Britain in the twenty-first century'.[132] Finally, this 'image' corresponds to what one character calls the 'Hampstead perspective': those who 'look down from the motorway as they speed home from their West Country cottages' and secure their socioeconomic interests by discerning only 'faceless inter-urban sprawl, a nightmare terrain of police cameras and security dogs, an uncentred realm devoid of civic tradition and human values'.[133]

To conclude, Ballard's future is 'post-historical' only from the vantage point of a particular conception of history: that of 'heritage London'. The novel's alternative—'[h]ere, around the M25, is where it's really happening. This is

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[130] Gasiorek, *Ballard*, p. 20. My criticism of Gasiorek's reading is perhaps tempered by the fact that its publication predates that of Ballard's final novel. Nevertheless, it continues a trend in interpreting Ballard's works in terms of the 'death of affect' that originates in Ballard's 1970 novella *Atrocity Exhibition*, p. 108. As the first and present chapters argue, this is not an accurate overview of Ballard's later works. The interpretative links between Ballard and postmodernism can be traced from Baudrillard's seminal reading (though not in these terms) and later in Scott Bukatman, *Terminal Identity*, pp. 6-7, 46.
[131] Ballard, *Kingdom*, pp. 108, 171.
[132] Ibid. p. 13. See also p. 63.
[133] Ibid. p. 85. This repeats almost verbatim Ballard's argument from *Virtual City*, p. 33.

today's England'—disproves Gasiorek's reading of an interminable present.[134] 'Today's England' is precisely an image of the present *imagined as other*: the virtual city. In the attempt to find his bearings '[v]aguely south-west of Heathrow', Pearson offers a concise sense of periodization: 'in one of the motorway towns that had grown unchecked since the 1960s'.[135] Shaped by automobility, deindustrialization, gentrification, the privatization of municipal housing, and associated with the extended modern networks of consumption and communication, these 'motorway towns' encompass the constitutive features of the urban problematic. More than this, however, the dialectical movement from 'heritage London' to the 'virtual city'—a relationship which Ballard's works finally surpass—consolidates the logics of dissolution. It is, in Ballard's own inimitable terms, a move from the 'dinosaur' of city-centres to 'the terrain of business parks, marinas and executive housing that constitutes New Britain'.[136]

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[134] Ibid. pp. 85, 101.
[135] Ibid. p. 7.
[136] Ballard, '20th Century as a Barbarous Time'.

Conclusion: 'Urban Practice' as a 'Virtual Object'

> Can theoretical knowledge treat this virtual object [the urban problematic] as an abstraction? No. From this point on, it is abstract only in the sense that it is a *scientific*, and therefore legitimate, abstraction. Theoretical knowledge can and must reveal the terrain, the foundation on which it resides: an ongoing social practice, an urban practice in the process of formation (Henri Lefebvre, *The Urban Revolution*, p. 17)

Lefebvre's definition of 'urban practice' provides an acute overview of the various 'logics of dissolution' discussed in this thesis. Through various images of cybernetic complexity and neurological metaphors, J.G. Ballard's Concrete and Steel Trilogy illustrates a new means of understanding space that responds to the effects of automobility and contemporaneous social and technological developments. Ballard's subsequent recasting of suburbia establishes a precedent for John King's revisionist approach. Contrary to the alienation his characters experience in central London, King's representations of overspill estates and the Thames Valley are notable because they do not espouse a physical distinction between the city and the country. In response to the effects of automobility, deindustrialization, gentrification, and the branding of the city, King's sense of place emphasizes the human geography that results from these physical changes.

David Peace's works meanwhile mount a critique of Thatcherism around the 'death' of the city and the devivification of the Yorkshire Moors: the resulting urban *space* (not place) is a logic of disintegration which registers the social effects of deindustrialization and the miners' strike. Prompted by the extended networks of consumption and communication synonymous with the urban problematic, Niall Griffiths's novels detail an urban landscape that notably conceptualizes spatial difference by reworking traditional rural-urban divisions. Finally, as a systematic response to the urban problematic which illustrates the

'process of formation' inherent to Lefebvre's 'urban practice', Ballard's later works develop the concept of the virtual city. The resulting, more complex understanding of 'the real' importantly refigures conventional ideas of the relationship between suburbia and the city.

In such ways these works appreciate, in common with Lefebvre, that '[t]he concept of the city no longer corresponds to a social object'.[1] Implicit within this 'social object' is the distinction between social and physical geographies. Alongside recognizing the physical *and* social effects of gentrification, the privatization of municipal housing in the 1980s, and the branding of the city, the similar rubric of Ballard's 'heritage London', King's 'London of Shakespeare', and Griffiths's '"Authentic Liverpool Experience"' demonstrates how the urban problematic constitutes a shared linguistic space.[2] David Harvey recognizes this important connection between linguistic and theoretical *spaces* when he writes of the need to transform 'the language in which the urban problematic is embedded [...] if only to liberate a whole raft of conceptual possibilities that may otherwise remain hidden'.[3] Together with the common trope of culturized nature, an aesthetic response to the effects of modern technologies and modes of production that radically alter the understanding of the 'natural' world, this shared linguistic and theoretical space pointedly does not inhabit what Raymond Williams calls the 'traditional poles of country and city'.[4]

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[1] Henri Lefebvre, *Urban Revolution*, p. 57.
[2] Ballard, *Kingdom Come*, p. 101; King, *White Trash*, p. 246; Griffiths, *Kelly & Victor*, p. 257. See also 'Fudge box Wales' in Griffiths, *Grits*, p. 367.
[3] David Harvey, 'Cities or Urbanization', p. 58.
[4] Raymond Williams, *Country and the City*, p. 1.

A fundamental difference between the approaches of David Peace and the other authors this thesis considers reiterates this point. Unlike the logics of dissolution associated with the works of Ballard, King, and Griffiths, Peace's logics of disintegration do not regard the 'urban practice'—the act of *delineating* the urban problematic—as an 'ongoing social practice'. While Peace's 'dead cities' are, in and of themselves, primarily an evaluation of Thatcherism, they are primarily figurative. In reading the state of the nation through the lens of dead cities, Peace's works utilize a similar rubric to, and so occupy the same linguistic space as, those of the authors previously mentioned. This common 'space', which re-evaluates the culture-nature relationship through the trope of culturized nature, figuratively responds to the new conditions surrounding the production of space in Britain post-1973. On this view, the urban problematic mediates the social and physical effects of deindustrialization, gentrification, the rise of the tertiary economy, the increasing importance of suburbia, and the impact of automobility and ICTs.

This degree of similarity raises another fundamental shortfall in traditional interpretative approaches to literary space characterized by Raymond Williams. Jeri Johnson's article 'Literary Geography', which was discussed in the introduction to this thesis, distinguishes between two approaches to the literary city. Using Williams's example, Johnson defines the first approach in terms of using the literary city as a figurative means of representing 'something else'. The second, less common approach views literary cities as a means of referring to 'at least themselves (or their particular material histories)'.[5] Where the works of Ballard, King, and Griffiths illustrate the limitations of Williams's method in

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[5] Jeri Johnson, 'Literary Geographies', p. 199.

The Country and the City with respect to the *referential* approach to the representational spaces of contemporary British literature, so those of Peace extend this logic to Williams's *figurative* approach. In both referential and figurative terms, such logics of dissolution recognize that to represent the complexity of contemporary British space requires a new language of sociospatial process: the ongoing urban problematic.

Appendix 1: Interview with John King

The following conversation was conducted with John King via email on 3 February 2009. My questions are in bold.

You quote George Orwell in the preface *Human Punk*: the 'germs of the future'. This idea seems to inform the various representations of the Thames Valley, Slough, and new towns in your works, areas which are traditionally rejected by 'Middle England' (such as your example of Betjeman). How do you think new towns have been, and continue to be, represented in the mainstream? How do you feel this relates to issues of class? And how do your works differ?

The new towns are either ignored or dismissed. They are considered ugly places by the elite. If they are thought about at all, the people who live there are belittled and/or sneered at, which I find odd. The term Middle England always interests me. What does it mean? Is it a geographical term; does it represent a middle-of-the-road view of life; does it refer to a certain element within the middle class? I know it is often linked with a conservative *Daily Mail* readership, but again, I think that whole *Daily Mail* versus *Guardian* conflict is upside down. If you compare the adverts in the two papers then it's clear who their readerships are—*The Mail* is full of cheap seaside holidays and cut-price stairlifts while *The Guardian* sells expensive foreign trips and up-market house extensions. I see *The Daily Mail* readership as a section of the working class who wants to be middle class, *The Guardian* as a section of the middle class which wishes it was working class. Personally I don't like either paper. They both deal in stereotypes.

I thought the George Orwell quote was perfect for *Human Punk* and also the other two books in the Satellite Cycle (*White Trash* and *Skinheads*), especially given the time it was written. It was if his predictions have come true. I feel the same about Aldous Huxley and *Brave New World*—I used a quote from that at the start of White Trash. I grew up next to Slough, on the way to Uxbridge. I went to school in Slough, have worked and socialised there and know the place very well. The bus I used to catch to school was the London Country service, running from Uxbridge to Slough and on to Windsor. This was part of London Transport, but green buses instead of red. The term London Country is one I have always liked. It sums things up.

I have always found Slough an interesting place. There was always work on the trading estate when I was young and the population is quite a mix. There were lots of pubs, working-men's clubs, things like that. A rough and ready town in some ways, but I could never work out why it was so criticised and sneered at by the self-appointed elite. Maybe it goes back to the appearance of the buildings, the working nature of the people. Cheap houses, modern factories, miles of warehouses. Of course, the elite can't say they hate it because it is a 'working class town', so they invent a list of other, often contradictory reasons. It is dull... violent... faceless. Drive to the outskirts of Slough and you are quickly into areas of countryside protected by the Green Belt. I used to work in an orchard as a boy, picking fruit with some of the many gypsies to be found in and around the likes of Burnham, Denham, West Drayton. These are not trendy areas. They don't appear in the guidebooks. Like the suburbs, the social commentators would describe them as non-descript, but this is only because their analysis is lazy.

A notable aspect of your works is their lack of anxiety regarding the changing relationship to nature: your characters' experiences of nature appear to be at arms' length (such as travelling on the M25 to find a 'bit of countryside'), a sentiment redoubled in your ironic use of the Blakean images of 'England's green and pleasant land', which is saturated in insecticide as the 'cities have spilt into countryside'. Could you please elaborate on this aspect of your work? More specifically, how do you and your works conceive of nature?

Personally, I don't have a romantic view of the British countryside. Humans exploit the land and animals. Tens of billions of animals are raped, castrated and murdered for the sake of people's tastebuds. I don't think the English countryside is green and pleasant. Of course, the ideal is nice, but I think that romantic view of the country as somewhere to return to one day has faded. Maybe it goes back to a time when rural workers came into the cities to find work, and that old village life has been changed now by unemployment, and later the arrival of television and the phone and the ever-faster road links. Second homes don't help. I think the memories passed down have largely been forgotten. I see it with the old Irish characters now. The English country folk would have come into London and other cities before them. My books don't have that older link with the countryside. The nearest they often get is the Green Belt that runs around London.

Again, the Green Belt is shown in an odd way. It is portrayed as something out of Midsummer Murders. This is rubbish. It is a weird sort of countryside, a place where everything swishes together. There are big houses, small villages, lots of council and new estates. There is a real mingling of

people. Lots of gypsies and passing tinkers. Some of these areas are badlands, full of self-employed chancers, men with lock-ups and yards and allotments. Big houses used to be had cheaply. It is a tangle of opportunity.

I myself find the real countryside sad. The quiet and timelessness of a small village makes me think of death, of the futility of life, of those who lie in the churchyards. I always look around the graveyards if I am in a village. But that is to do with humans and myself. What I like about nature is that although it is used and abuse by human beings it will never be defeated. It buries pods and seeds that spring up decades later. When I see a plant growing out of a brick wall or roof it makes me very happy. Humans are part of nature of course. We are just the most destructive element. The most passive part of nature will come through in the end. I hope so anyway.

The passage from which the reference to Blake originates also notes that England is a 'post-industrial society, but the image of the common people in grainy black and white footage' and that the 'East End has moved out to Essex'. Could you please explain this connection?

The way ordinary people are portrayed is stuck in the past. For a start, most people don't have a clue what class is about. For many it is a division between manual and office work, the difference between blue and white. It is more a case of 'what class do you want to be?' That depends on a person's politics. Most people just don't care. The image of the working-class is still stuck in those grainy films of men in cloth caps and clogs from the Thirties, documentaries of tower blocks in the Sixties, pictures from the Miners' Strike in the Eighties. The common people don't follow one set of beliefs. Alan Sillitoe

writes about this and I remember when I first read his books, how here at last were novels about everyday people who weren't caricatures.

This black-and-white imagery matches the black-and-white definitions applied. People are individuals. Everyone has their own beliefs. The nature of work has changed so much, as has access to goods through easy credit. It reminds me of that song with the chorus 'I owe my soul to the company store'. This current recession has been labelled a 'credit crunch', as if there is nothing wrong in the current system. It has been coming for a long time. It is another way of sedating and controlling the population.

The quote 'the East End has moved out to Essex' is just me talking about the suburban sprawl, the heritage of East London shifting. Interestingly, more recently, through talking to my dad and his friends about their origins, or more accurately the origins of their parents, I found most of their families started off in East London and moved into West London during the housing boom of the 1920s. The later wartime East End I heard about as a child has headed East instead. The older London population moved out to the suburbs for better housing, to escape immigration, and the changes to their own culture, more recently following their children who can't afford to live in their home areas by increased property prices. Maybe there was even a longing for the countryside in some of the earlier generations for a life nearer to their country memories—a long garden, hedges, a patch of vegetables. Allotments are important to people to this day. They must connect with a deeply-buried rural memory.

In all of your works, I detect competing visions of London: Jeffries's heritage London in *White Trash* (the 'London of Shakespeare', etc.) compares with the West London of the Football Factory Trilogy (which

links in with the development of new towns). If this connection is true, how do you think the former relates to the latter?

Yes there are two Londons in my writing—the London of smart terraced houses and monuments and offices and the London of the suburban masses and its jump into the new towns. Football teams are good examples of this in that the London clubs draw the core of their support from the suburbs nearest their grounds. People travel in for a focused sense of identity, in many cases buried in family histories they are hardly aware of. Take Chelsea—the area itself has long been gentrified, yet our support spreads out of West and South London and into the suburbs and new towns. People will fight on the streets for that sense of identity, especially in the Sixties and Seventies when this sense of change must have been very strong. There are still pockets of the old London further into London of course. The Football Factory Trilogy links into these, places like Hammersmith and Acton.

Going back to your question. The former looks down on the latter. It has the power, but in many cases it doesn't have the heritage. It is all about money. The old council estates built in inner London after the war have a different, largely ethnic, sometimes transient population these days. The older London that I connect with comes from the stories and experiences that are passed down over time. It is personal for me. Anyone can buy a million-pound house with a London postcode and say they represent London. There are rootless elites running London who talk about communities but don't have a clue what they mean. For them London means investment and prestige. The London accent is looked down on, laughed at, seen as ignorant. These attitudes spill

out through the suburbs into the new towns where the people feel more like traditional Londoners than they do in the Centre.

I grew up on the edge of the suburbs, right where the M25 runs, and as a child I saw London as the older streets of the city, but even in the Seventies and Eighties large areas had lost their native populations. My experiences growing up showed me that an old-timer who lives in Uxbridge or Slough or a smaller village in between, but who lived in the London of the past, has the memories and the stories—not the buildings themselves and not some banker or media trendy who has moved into his old house on the back of their ability to spend a lot of money. For me the history of London is in the people rather than the buildings.

Finally, in a memorable passage you write of the Thames Valley as one day being covered in concrete, and continue by observing that '[i]n the old days there were city walls around the ruler's towers, and now there's the M25'. What do you consider this new 'myth' of the M25 to be? And in whose interests does it function?

I always think London is a bit like a tree. If you cut a tree down there are all these rings, which become a little wider the further out they go. If you look at London the different eras of house-building match the rings. Today there are the London postcodes, the Greater London areas which have no such 'desirable' postcodes, and then the outer suburbs and then the new towns. Around this area are lots of villages separated by old fields and lanes. It is very interesting. This is the success of the Green Belt, a no-man's land that nobody can explain or really define. The M25 marks this change. Maybe the North and South Circular Roads did the same job in the past. But nowadays the edge of Greater

London is defined as this circle of concrete, yet the population continues beyond this, and it is moving further and further out. Hammersmith, Uxbridge, Slough, Reading. It is all connecting up. The M25 is promoted as a sort of joke boundary by the London elite, another 'monstrocity' to sit next to a place like Slough, but I think it is also a sort of mental barrier they can draw around the city. They have this idea that the suburbs are full of bank managers from the 1930s and maybe that outside the M25 is where the peasants live. I think they are wrong, but I also think the M25 is like their castle wall.

The M25 has linked up the outer edges of London. The margins of North or South or even East London are now only an hour or less away from the edges of West London. It opens things up in a different way, creates new connections between people. The suburbs are always changing. A place such as Southall, which was near-enough totally Asian when I was a boy, has now spread into Hayes. This was a tough white area, but now it is largely Asian also. Even when I was a boy, many of the semi-detached houses with hundred-foot gardens were cheap to buy. I am thinking of Hounslow where my dad grew up. Places such as Feltham. These areas had big football connections. It is the same all around London. The white population has left a lot of these areas, moved further out as more immigration takes place. It seems like a reverse movement of people. Rural workers would have travelled into London for work a hundred or two hundred years before. Gradually their descendants have moved out, further and further out with each generation. Again, I think of family history. Maybe they will return to their original villages. Could it be a subconscious, animal-like instinct? I don't know, but I think the future of the countryside around London depends on the Green Belt. If this remains, the M25 acting as an

imaginary boundary, then maybe the Thames Valley won't end up covered in concrete.

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