MOBILE TEXTS BETWEEN THE TWO WORLD WARS:

TRANSPORTATION, LEISURE, AND LITERATURE IN INTERWAR BRITAIN

by

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Thesis directed by Associate Professor Jane Garrity

This dissertation highlights the historical intersections of mobile technologies, leisure, and British literature of the period between the two world wars. During this time, Britain faced political turbulence in Europe, imperial unrest in India, and social and economic crises at home, but it also witnessed an unprecedented increase in mobility due to higher wages, greater leisure time, and expanded access to rail, bus, and automobile transport. This study explores the ways in which interwar texts respond to and are molded by a mobile and unsettled Britain. Applying the history and theories of transportation and human movement, this dissertation aims to pursue in literary studies what has been called the "mobility turn" in the social sciences. It examines such works as Arnold Bennett's *Accident*, J. B. Priestley's *English Journey*, George Orwell's *Coming Up for Air*, Graham Greene's *Brighton Rock*, and Virginia Woolf's *The Waves* to argue that modernist literature features "mobile texts" that are marked by shifting perspectives, anxious narratives, and generic blending. The first chapter treats authors who represent the railway as a trope for a conventionally linear model of narrative that is disturbed or modified during a time of social crises and rapid transport. The next chapter examines Woolf's deployment of the railway as a figure for both linear progression and circulation in *The Waves*. This double mobility has implications for the characterizations, imperial and political shadings, and narrative structure of the novel. Chapter 3 analyzes shifting perspectives in travelogues and travel-themed novels that seek to recuperate or define Englishness in rural regions. Finally, the fourth chapter deals with interconnections of mobility, leisure, and housing in Greene's fiction, which subverts the ideal home as it was imagined in interwar advertisements, town planning, and housing policies.

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INTRODUCTION

"Mobile Texts" and Interwar Britain

In his 1925 memoirs, former British foreign secretary Edward Grey claims to have declared at the beginning of the First World War: "The lamps are going out all over Europe; we shall not see them lit again in our lifetime" (qtd. in Crowson 17). Nevertheless, there were certainly those of Grey's generation and the next who attempted to relight those figurative lamps—whether they were social, political, economic, or cultural in kind—after the Armistice was signed on November 11, 1918, in a French railway carriage. The events of the next two decades, though, hardly made their relighting a simple matter, as Britain suffered an identity crisis between the two world wars. Forced into a mediatory role between a retaliatory France and an economically pinched Germany after the Treaty of Versailles in 1920, Britain grew increasingly uncomfortable with its intervention in continental affairs. According to N. J. Crowson, "Britain hoped it could turn its back on Europe" once the threat of war was dissolved and instead "seek safety in an imperial vision" (18). Yet the British Empire was far from a secure, stable organism. The Balfour Declaration of the 1926 Imperial Conference pronounced that Great Britain and its Dominions were "autonomous communities within the British Empire, equal in status, and in no way subordinate one to another in any aspect of their domestic or external affairs"[1] (qtd. in Darwin 69). Yet this assessment was belied by the 1919 Amritsar massacre, in which imperial troops opened fire on Indian demonstrators. Also, the Government of India Acts of 1919 and 1935 increased the political authority of Indian nationalists. Britain's imperial grasp was further

weakened by the Troubles in Ireland, which led to the formation of the Irish Free State in 1921, and by the Arab Revolts in Iraq and Palestine in the 1920s and 30s. These events evidence an interwar Britain losing its grip over its imperial constituents and identity, and by the late 1920s, Crowson relates, the nation remained "uncertain where to place her loyalties: was she an imperial power? The primary ally of the French? . . . And was she still an international player, especially given her declining global economic influence?" (28).

Interwar British national identity was also disturbed as it confronted a series of social and economic crises that certainly dimmed the domestic lights which reformers, policymakers, and others wished to brighten. Generally, wages for manual laborers, middle-class workers, and professionals doubled from 1913-14 to 1922-24 but rose only slightly over the next decade.[2] Dennis Hardy points to a "shortlived boom" directly after the war but notes "there were never less than a million people out of work" during the interwar period. Labor unrest was frequent as miners and industrial workers, including those in transportation, demanded, often jointly, better pay and conditions. In May of 1926, the General Strike temporarily paralyzed commercial and transportational networks throughout Britain. Due to the impact of the 1929 Wall Street crash, unemployment figures rose "to a peak of nearly three million in the winter of 1932-1933" (Hardy 190). If, as Robert Boyce contends, the "great Victorian era of globalization" was restored in the 1920s, the depression ended re-globalization (202). In 1931, Britain "abandoned the gold standard and turned to a National government dominated by Conservatives who were committed to ending 90 years of free trade in favour of a policy of imperial protectionism" (Boyce 5). To these economic instabilities was added an ongoing housing crisis. As Matthew Taunton elaborates, a prewar housing shortage became "chronic" after the war, when "there was a housing deficit of 600,000 to 800,000" (52). The official solution, put forth in the Housing,

Town Planning, &c. Act of 1919, was the empowerment of local councils to construct general purpose housing estates, but the need for adequate housing persisted into the 1930s and 1940s. These social and economic instabilities placed tremendous pressure on the conventional ideas of England and Englishness that the nation sought to restore after the First World War.

Yet after the war the British public gained more opportunities to travel in search of the England that it hoped to recover. As historians and commentators have often observed, interwar Britain experienced a remarkable expansion of mass transportation. Writing on the rise of mass tourism in the period, Jeffrey Hill explains that the "transportation system had expanded by the inter-war period so that in addition to an extensive railway network, there was a growing provision of motor transport (buses, coaches, and private cars and motor-cycles), together with the ubiquitous bicycle" (79). These technologies not only permitted more Britons to relocate from urban to suburban or rural districts—a decentralizing process that had begun well before the war but intensified afterward due to greater access to transport—but also enabled more of the populace to venture into the countryside to relax, exercise, rejuvenate, or tour the nation for themselves. These two parallel phenomena did not, of course, originate in Britain between the world wars, but during this period they acquired a particular appeal and urgency due, on the one hand, to a general sense of having endured the devastating European conflict and also, in the 1930s, to apprehensions about a nation that was economically depressed and politically erratic as the European situation worsened. Transportation was ambiguously charged as it offered both an escape from and a confrontation with the myriad complications that plagued interwar Britain.

Modernist authors register in their work the shock waves of these domestic and global crises in interwar Britain. Social-historical contexts can, of course, filter into texts in a variety of ways. On a stylistic or generic level, reverberations might (implicitly or explicitly) be encoded in,

for example, authorial choices of setting, uses of allusion or figurative language, deviations from narrative conventions, shifts in tone or perspective, or mixtures of disparate modes of writing. Thematically, external pressures might (bluntly or obliquely) be represented through crime or deviance, wandering or journeying, or failure or futility. In this study, I examine how the social and political climate of interwar Britain is reproduced, negotiated, and challenged in fiction and nonfiction that integrates transportation into their plots, their formal structures, and, in some cases, their very production. I use the term "mobile texts" to describe literature that appropriates transportation for these purposes and in this manner. Mobile texts in the interwar period respond, and in some ways contribute, to the greater role that transport technologies played in mobilizing a British public seeking to define an unsettled nation between the two world wars and to discover its own tenuous place within it. As these definitions imply, my conception of a "text" in this study gives primacy to the printed word, and in particular the book, although certainly this is not the only type of "text" to respond to interwar conditions in Britain.[3] As I will show in the following chapters, mobile texts are themselves destabilized and attenuated, featuring narratives that anxiously progress, like the technologies represented in them, toward hectic, unresolved, or precarious conclusions. Thus, mobile texts reflect an interwar Britain deeply conflicted about its identity and future.

My study aims to show that mobile texts engage with transportation in two main ways. First, they feature representations of technologies of speed in order to scrutinize the conditions and effects produced by interwar crises that have, in some cases, been facilitated by the spread of mobile systems across Britain. This mimetic function may at first appear fairly mundane, for surely novels from Charles Dickens's *Dombey and Son* (1848) to E. M. Forster's *Howards End* (1910) operate in a similar manner and therefore qualify as mobile texts. However, I am

specifically interested in literature during the 1920s and 1930s because this period captures, I believe, the mobile text at its height or fullest potential given the dynamic but highly unstable series of events which, as I have outlined above, are bookended by the two world wars. A progressively mobile Britain combines with disordered social and political conditions to produce a richly evocative, ambiguous literature that absorbs its circumstances and reproduces them in novel ways. Transportational representations in interwar literature function as means of confrontation and catharsis, invitations to "see it through to the bitter end," a commonly invoked phrase during the First World War.[4] An example is Arnold Bennett's 1928 novel *Accident*, which I treat at length in my first chapter. Depicting a train journey and wreck in France, Bennett initially uses the railway to recall the 1926 General Strike, but once the collision occurs his language and imagery shift to evoke the trauma of war. Bennett's (middle-class) readers, who virtually travel alongside the main character on the express train, are thus prompted to confront their memories and anxieties about industrial stoppage and global conflict, and then, like the main character, achieve some measure of emotional release by the end of the narrative. Bennett's novel illustrates the modus operandi of mobile texts in interwar Britain. Some texts implicitly work in this way, while others from later in the period more pessimistically foreground confrontation with a violent but nugatory attempt at cathartic release.

The second way in which mobile texts engage with transportation is through formal or stylistic impression, by which I mean that transport systems in some way impress or imprint themselves on the very structure or texture of literature. The most conspicuous instances can be found in mobile texts that feature railway mobility. By the 1920s, nearly a century after the inauguration of mass rail transport, the British public had become accustomed to the train as a conventional, if outmoded, form of conveyance. Nevertheless, as I elaborate in the next chapter,

it became an ambiguous figure in literature as a result of recent innovations—from the expansion of the underground to the electrification of trains to the operation of high-speed, streamlined locomotives—and of associations with the death and destruction of war. This external ambiguity, I argue, penetrates literature in the form of agitated narratives that run parallel to rail transport in literature. Interwar Britain witnessed a wealth of texts whose narratives metaphorically run along railroad tracks: Bennett's *Accident*, Virginia Woolf's *The Waves* (1931), Graham Greene's *Stamboul Train* (1932), Agatha Christie's *The Mystery of the Blue Train* (1928) and *Murder on the Orient Express* (1934), Noel Coward's *Still Life* (1936)—on which David Lean's 1945 film *Brief Encounter* is based—and Cecil Roberts's *Victoria Four-Thirty* (1937). Far from being a relic of a bygone era, as H. G. Wells famously asserted in *Anticipations* (1901), the railway is purposefully appropriated by authors to convey suspense, romance, crime, and anxiety in the forward progress of narrative. In the first half of this study, I investigate railway-narrative couplings in Bennett's *Accident* and, in chapter 2, Woolf's *The Waves*.

While the train continued to shuttle commuters between suburban residences and urban workplaces or transport holidaymakers to rural and coastal regions, the automobile and motor coach competed to provide the middle classes with more leisurely and extensive access to areas around Britain. Ben Knights shows that "between 1919 and 1939 the number of motor vehicles in Britain multiplied by three (330,518 to 3,148,600), and cars by 20 (109,715 to 2,034,000)," so that the country has become "the second largest producer of cars in the world (after the United States) by the early 1930s" (169). This growth of the motor industry helped, as Knights suggests, "to place the individual, the couple, or the family group at the centre of experience of travel" (169), unlike railway travel in which passengers were perceived to be passively transported to their destinations. In *Mobilities*, John Urry argues that automobility altered conceptions of time

so that desynchronization—the substitution of an "individualistic timetabling of many instants or fragments of time" for "the official timetabling of clock-time" (121)—permitted drivers to "assemble complex, fragile and contingent patterns of social life, patterns that constitute self-created narratives of the reflexive self" (122). Interwar mobile texts represent automobility as an opportunity to assemble fragments of British history or social experience and produce a coherent narrative or picture of the nation. Yet, as I argue in chapter 3, the reorientation of the traveling subject in a car or bus—i.e. the development of a more creative and intimate connection with the landscape—contributed to the spread of a distinctly middle-class spectatorship across Britain, but one that importantly confused or conflated fantasies and realities about England and Englishness. In interwar writings, this tendency translates into narratives with marked shifts in perspective or tone. Hence both fictional and nonfictional mobile texts that feature automobility are formally and fundamentally unsettled. In travelogues such as J. B. Priestley's *English Journey* (1934) and novels such as Graham Greene's *Brighton Rock* (1938), which I treat separately in chapters 3 and 4, automobility is linked to the problems of assembling a cohesive narrative of England.

As the previous paragraphs suggest, my methodology in this study involves applying precise historical research and cultural studies to a close analysis of interwar literature. There are, I believe, several advantages to this approach. First, placing literature in direct conversation with not only a history of developments in transportation but also key social and political moments of the interwar years allows me more productively to extract the implications of certain thematic elements or textual features than would be possible by applying a broader theoretical or cultural lens. Once these finer and more subtle, but no less vital, readings are undertaken, a text's aspect can be considerably widened. Many of the mobile texts that I examine have traditionally been read (or not read) according to different critical agendas. *Brighton Rock*, for instance, is

commonly understood as a Catholic novel about sin and damnation, a reading that unfortunately neglects the ways that these concepts are interwoven into an examination of middle-class mobility, housing reform, and the marketing of ideal homes. Narrative structure in *The Waves*, on the other hand, is often taken to resemble the motion of waves, but Woolf clearly also sees the railway as central to her characters' individuation and collectivization as well as her narrative's tensions between circularity and linear progression. These alternative readings are made possible by more effectively situating mobile texts in their specific social-historical circumstances.

My approach also brings to literary studies what John Urry has called the "mobility turn" in the social sciences. In *Mobilities*, Urry senses within these academic disciplines a paradigm shift such that new perspectives on human relations are "mobilized" in their aim to "connect[] the analysis of different forms of travel, transport and communication with the multiple ways in which economic and social life is performed and organized through time and across various spaces" (6). Roughly paralleling this "mobility turn," my study proposes to connect an analysis of transportation with the multiple ways in which British literature is produced and organized between the world wars. In *Mobile Lives*, co-authors Anthony Elliott and Urry maintain that "the rise of an intensively mobile society reshapes the self" (3). They adopt the phrase "*portable personhood*" to express that "[i]dentity becomes not merely 'bent' towards novel forms of transportation and travel but fundamentally recast in terms of capacities for movement" (3). In the literature that I scrutinize in this study, we will notice evidence to support the notion that the identities of characters mobilized by technologies of speed are in significant ways modified by them. However, I am also interested in how an intensively mobile society reshapes literature, and thus for "portable personhood" I substitute the term "mobile text." It is not my intention, though, to insist that a kind of technological determinism is at work here, whereby literary content and

forms are to some degree dictated by the mechanical innovations that preceded them. Rather, I lean more toward a constructivist perspective that sees literature and technology as artifacts or products of particular social-historical contexts. In bringing together history, technology, and culture, I aim to show their various contributions to the making of interwar mobile texts.

Recent literary scholarship has also begun to turn in this direction. In a collection of critical essays on the railway and literature, Stephen D. Baldwin and Benjamin Fraser endorse mobility studies as "an approach that prioritizes shifting relations over static objects" and "has its roots in an intellectual tradition that sees modernity itself in terms of movement" (ix). A seminal study that brings together transportation and literature is Andrew Thacker's *Moving through Modernity*. Thacker sees mobility as a "key feature of modernism" and proposes that analysis of transport technologies "enables us to understand the spaces of modernity in a more materialist fashion" (7). The analysis of mechanical mobilities, however, is subordinated to Thacker's larger concern with spatial theories and geographical studies. He is drawn to transportation insomuch as it advances his objective to "develop a more nuanced account of the spatial history of modernism" (7). Our projects are similar—we both wish to advance critical discussion on the interconnection of transportation and modernism—but I de-emphasize spatiality and instead foreground mobility in my readings of modernist texts. Yet it would be a critical misstep to interrogate mobile texts solely in relation to transport technologies. Hence historical contextualization adds a crucial dimension, nudging transportation, history, and literature into productive intercommunication.

Interwar Britain was quite eventful, however, and the stylistic range of texts produced between the wars was broad, from the experimental work of "high" modernists in the 1920s to the political novels of 1930s writers on the left to the detective fiction of Dorothy Sayers and Agatha Christie. Rather than surveying the entire period, I narrow my purview somewhat to the

years from 1926 to 1939, which might be called the long nineteen-thirties. Concentrating on these fourteen years allows me to examine a span that commences with the May 1926 General Strike and closes with the Nazi invasion of Poland in September 1939. In "Last Words" (1939), written for the final edition of *The Criterion*, T. S. Eliot reflects, "Only from about the year 1926 did the features of the post-war world begin clearly to emerge . . . From about that date one began slowly to realize that the intellectual and artistic output of the previous seven years had been rather the last efforts of an old world, than the struggles of a new"[5] (271). More recently, Tim Armstrong has stated that the General Strike "can be seen as the symbolic pivot of a turn towards more authoritarian positions" provided by cultural tradition and conservatism in the work of Wyndham Lewis and Eliot, who exemplify the "desire to seek authority outside the turbulent flow of history represents an attempt to master the threat of mass society" (81). As writings about the strike show, a salient threat involved the loss of mobility as transportation networks shut down across the country. Armstrong relates that authors who wrote about the General Strike "stress waiting, interruption," and a "sense of suspended temporality" (81). The period from 1926 to 1939, I believe, captures interwar Britain at its most unsettled, dealing with the Great Depression, the 1931 collapse of Labour and rise of Conservatives led by Neville Chamberlain, the aggressive slum-clearance projects in urban centers, and the rise of fascism at home, even as the government adopted policies of nonintervention in the Spanish Civil War and appeasement toward Germany despite Hitler's open defiance and aggression.

Assessments of this turbulent time have generally been unkind. In "September 1, 1939," published the month after Hitler's invasion of Poland, W. H. Auden unambiguously labels the 1930s a "low dishonest decade" (5). British journalist and outspoken Communist Claud Cockburn titled his memoirs about the thirties *The Devil's Decade* (1973).[6] Additionally, mass

unemployment and malnutrition caused by economic depression prompted some critics to refer disparagingly to the period as the "Hungry Thirties."[7] As historian Andrew Thorpe has observed, "Britain in the 1930s was controversial at the time and has remained controversial ever since" (*Britain*, 1). These epitaphs and assertions cast a pall over the second half of the interwar years, but they also evidence the intense scrutiny that commentators, politicians, authors, and others inwardly focused on the nation then and have since. The mobile texts that I explore in this study reflect this introspective tendency as characters are mobilized by transportation in search of an English national identity.

It is common to remark that Britain became more introverted as the 1920s progressed, turning its critical and contemplative gazes on its own domestic and imperial territories even as it was forced to keep, unwillingly, a watchful eye on Europe. In 1930, Winston Churchill famously spoke for the nation: "we have our own dream and our own task. We are with Europe, but not of it. We are linked but not comprised. We are interested and associated but not absorbed" (qtd. in Crowson 31). In *A Shrinking Island*, Jed Esty identifies an "Anglocentric" or "anthropological turn" in British literature of the 1930s and 1940s (5). According to Esty, the empire's precipitous decline after the First World War generated a perception of "imperial contraction" among modernist authors, who responded in two distinct ways (7). On the one hand, first-generation modernists such as Woolf and Eliot "translated the end of empire into a resurgent concept of national culture" as they "interpreted contraction as an opportunity for cultural repair" (2, 7). On the other hand, "late" modernists like Auden and Greene, having "inherited the cultural detritus and political guilt of empire" without participating in its heyday, instead took "the predicament of a provincial ex-empire" as matter for their work (8). These second-generation modernists rejected the experimental forms and stylistic moves of their forebears, whose aesthetics, Esty

suggests, were linked to "colonial power" (13). While my study does not deal with intertwined erosions of imperialism and modernist art forms, I am interested in the Anglocentric turn toward native predicaments of interwar England in novels by Greene, Orwell, and others and in travel writings by Priestley and H. V. Morton. With the exception of Woolf's *The Waves*, the literary works I examine situate their investigations within contexts of decisive English issues—housing crises, labor unrest, national identity, for example—even when authors mobilize their characters in foreign spaces, as in Bennett's *Accident* and Greene's *Stamboul Train* and *The Power and the Glory* (1940). Morton's *In Search of England* (1927) offers an apt illustration of the introspective gaze. The account begins with Morton (or his first-person narrator) standing on a Palestinian hill, turning in the direction of England, and expressing a deep-rooted desire to revisit and explore his native land. In the mobile texts of interwar Britain, such a yearning to re-view the nation initiates and drives the travels of characters, whether at home or abroad.

One way in which my study aligns with Esty's involves the pervasive but often implicit turning away from Britishness and toward Englishness in interwar mobile texts. Of course, this nativist trend in English culture began well before the First World War, and has continued well after the Second, but it became especially pronounced between the two wars due to, on the one hand, imperial decline and, on the other, the series of domestic crises that I outline above. In *The Making of English National Identity*, Krishan Kumar highlights the problem of distinguishing the labels "British" and "English" due to the "English habit of subsuming British under England" (1). This habit, an indicator of England's hegemonic relation to its neighbors, has led to difficulties for the English "distinguishing themselves, in a collective way, from the other inhabitants of the British Isles" (2). Admitting that interwar texts which investigate Englishness have a certain value, Kumar nonetheless argues that they "have tended to consider the character of 'Englishness'

from within, from inside the national culture. They have scrutinized the past and the present for the evidence they offer of 'English traits,' of distinctive elements of 'the English character' or 'the English people'" (16). This is certainly true in the most solipsistic of interwar English literature. Yet there is also a notable attempt by 1920s and 1930s authors to assimilate foreign settings and even foreigners themselves into the task of defining England and Englishness. In chapter 3, I show that writers such as Edmund Blunden, A. G. Macdonell, and George Orwell construct or imagine foreign perspectives to consider the uniqueness and endurance of a collective English identity. Their texts reveal a self-mobilized nation seeking to define itself by adopting a range of positions that are often intentionally removed from a centralizing London.

This impulse to decentralize a view of England in mobile texts not only coincides with expedited movement away from urban districts via expanding transportation networks but also connects to the diminishment of what Raymond Williams has termed "metropolitan perceptions," a key concept that Esty links to the interwar decline of imperialism and modernist aesthetics. For Williams, modernism arose out of the growth of the city into a metropolis or a "place where new social and economic and cultural relations, beyond both city and nation in their older senses, were beginning to be formed" (44). Williams argues that the "facts of increasing mobility and social diversity . . . led to a major expansion of metropolitan forms of perception" so that the social experience of the metropolis—"its intricate processes of liberation and alienation, contact and strangeness, stimulation and standardization"—was taken to be universal (46, 47). Esty uses the term "demetropolitanization" to denote the "retrenchment, in the thirties and forties, of all that metropolitan perception implies" (3). In the mobile texts I scrutinize in this study, however, there are attempts by certain writers to move away from metropolitan perspectives as well as tendencies to reinforce them. The shifts in spectatorship in interwar travel-themed literature—the

fiction and nonfiction that takes travel as its central theme or figure for narrative progression—illustrate a problematic interweaving of culturally established views of England, molded and circulated in the metropolis, and investigative or realist modes of seeing. Travelers who set out from the metropolis or other urban centers tend to export particular ways of seeing that have been cultivated in those centralized areas.

Tensions between imagined and "real" Englands form an undercurrent in many of the mobile texts I discuss in the following chapters. Armstrong has proposed that modernism, being "inextricably linked with the emergence of the modern nation-state from late Victorian imperialism," charts "a progress in which the notion of an imagined community is constantly invoked and revised" (44). Benedict Anderson describes a nation as an "imagined community" that is "conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship" (7). Anderson demonstrates that this sense of the nation as a community was made possible by evolving networks of communication and transportation—Anderson singles out "print-capitalism" (45)—which were used to disseminate the cultural capital and facilitate the linguistic unity that would ensure the nation's prosperity. The contradictions that surface in interwar mobile texts demonstrate how transportation can be both a facilitator of and a threat to the imagining of England and Englishness. Interrogating the modernist novel in the context of the decline of liberal politics, Pericles Lewis stresses "the increasingly problematic role of the narrator" that "is no longer the instrument of justice, divine or earthly" as in earlier realist fiction, but "has become a sort of super-ego, a figment of the collective imagination" (10). Whereas realism positions the objective, "sociological perspective" of the narrator in a tensional relationship with the subjective or "ethical perspective" of the main character (26), modernism, Lewis argues, features a "fusion of objective and subjective modes of description" as the narrator is "a projection of the individual and idiosyncratic perspective of the

protagonist himself" (44, 43). The abandonment of a "God's-eye-view" allows modernist writers to put forth the nation as a unifying and redemptive possibility for characters (210). In mobile texts, there is also a strong impulse in narrators and characters to recuperate an imagined nation as a community, but this desire is predicated upon their mobilization and attempts to consolidate the disordered fragments of a postwar Britain that is perceived to be continually in flux.

My concern with literature that primarily fixates on England may seem to go against recent work, such as Rebecca L. Walkowitz's *Cosmopolitan Style*, that endeavors to broaden the outlook of modernism. In her study, Walkowitz maintains that modernist writers such as Virginia Woolf, Joseph Conrad, and James Joyce "sought to measure various experiences of thinking and feeling globally, especially in the contexts of imperialism, patriotism, and world war" (5). More importantly, Walkowitz argues, these authors incorporate "cosmopolitan styles" to "privilege the ability to see and think mistakenly, irreverently, trivially, and momentarily over the necessity to see and think correctly or judgmentally" (18). This approach allows Walkowitz to demonstrate the ways in which modernist texts that are conventionally read as isolated from political concerns in fact engage with them through the "tactics" of "naturalness," "triviality," and "evasion" (27). The mobile texts I treat in this study are less characterized by indirectness or "cosmopolitan style" than by an explicit challenging of perspectives in the Anglocentric turn to the social conditions of interwar England. The literature subverts and criticizes the ambition to see and think correctly by exposing the contradictions and inconsistencies of such a prospect. This undertaking is evident when, in chapter 3, I juxtapose travelogues of the 1920s and 1930s with their novelistic counterparts. There is a prevalent discrediting in mobile texts of leisurely, middle-class perspectives on England between the world wars.

The 1920s and 1930s witnessed the rise of mass tourism and leisure in Britain. This rise

was largely facilitated by the expansion of transportation systems across the nation. In addition to bicycles and the railways, motor coaches, private automobiles, and motorcycles allowed urban and suburban residents to venture farther into rural regions. Jeffrey Hill has shown that the "holiday industry" prospered after the war so that in the 1930s "the entertainments industry, to which seaside towns contributed significantly, grew by almost 50 per cent – a greater rate than in any other industry" (80). Brett Bebber connects this "increase in public leisure" to a "recover[y] from the tragedies of global conflict" (4). As mass migration to the suburbs persisted, Hugh Cunningham relates, the middle classes "looked to the home environment for their leisure" or "escaped in the summer to rented seaside houses, recreating there the weekend life of the suburbs" ("Leisure and Culture," 298). Thus, as the nation become more mobilized, leisure activities were further separated from the workplace and urban settings, and the development of recreation into a national culture—a process that had begun in the nineteenth century—was further advanced.

The relevance of this growing separateness of leisure to my readings of mobile texts can best be articulated through the concept of heterotopias in Michel Foucault's "On Other Spaces." Foucault submits that we live in a world in which "our experience . . . is less that of a long life developing through time than that of a network that connects points and intersects with its own skein" (22). In this epoch of "anxiety," Foucault maintains, space is no longer conceived as emplacement but as "relations among sites" (23). Yet there are certain spaces in a society that "have the curious property of being in relation with all other sites, but in such a way as to suspect, neutralize, or invert the set of relations that they happen to designate, mirror, or reflect" (24). Foucault calls such "counter-sites" heterotopias, as they absorb all "real sites" in such a way that the sites are "simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted" (24). Places of "temporary relaxation," such as beaches and theaters, or of transportation, such as railway interiors and ships,

can function as heterotopias. One of Foucault most intriguing "principles" of heterotopias is his concept of "heterochrony," or an "absolute break with . . . traditional time" in order to assert a kind of timelessness through the "accumulation of time" (26). Museums and libraries, for example, claim to secure collections of human history, information, and ideas in "an immobile place" that exists apart from external time (26). Yet there are also heterotopias such as festivals and fairgrounds that are "absolutely temporal" in that they offer only momentary isolation from public or social time. Transportation and recreational sites qualify as temporal heterotopias, though they may be marketed or idealized as heterochronic or timeless in some manner. Finally, Foucault suggests two heterotopian types: the first "create[s] a space of illusion that exposes every real space . . . as still more illusory"; and the second "create[s] a space that is other, another real space, as perfect, as meticulous, as well arranged as ours is messy, ill constructed, and messy" (27).

In mobile texts of interwar Britain, I argue, there is an underlying tension of these two types of heterotopias, the one of illusion and the other of compensation. The mobilized sites—trains, buses, automobiles—that narrators or characters temporarily inhabit not only constitute heterotopias themselves but also provide access to other sites which are themselves heterotopias or are attributed heterotopian characteristics. Interwar England, marked by social, economic, and political crises, was driven to create real spaces of compensation—model factories and villages, garden cities and suburbs, ideal homes featuring labor-saving devices, places of rural recreation and relaxation, tourist sites—that would in some way alleviate the anxieties produced by disordered conditions. These heterotopias were circulated through advertising and media, brochures and travelogues, a print culture that could assist in redeeming the postwar nation by reconstituting it in the likeness of imagined pasts, communal presents, or possible futures. If we

take literature itself as a heterotopia, a discursive "site" within which "real sites" are represented, contested, and inverted, then the mobile texts in this study can also function as heterotopias of illusion, exposing "real sites" as even more illusory, or of compensation, offering alternatives to a disjointed interwar England. This idea that mobile texts are doubly heterotopian— heterotopias representing heterotopias—underpins my contention that literature reproduces, negotiates, and challenges the social and political climate of interwar Britain by integrating transportation, as well as leisure, into their narratives and formal structures.

My first chapter looks at three texts from the 1920s to argue that authors exploit the railway as a narrative trope and to explore how conventionally linear models of storytelling are disrupted or modified as the texts reflect a troubled interwar Britain. A history of transportation reveals that many of the anxieties of railway travel in the nineteenth century did not recede into the past by the twentieth century. Rather, the railway's increased speed, which contributed to more catastrophic accidents, and its associations with death after the First World War meant that it continued to be an unsettling technology in the 1920s. In Arthur Ridley's popular play, *The Ghost Train* (1923), the sights and sounds of railway transport are amplified to the extent that the train takes on a fearful, supernatural quality that culminates in a collision that yields catharsis for an audience reminded of the recent war. This use of the railway is furthered in Bennett's *Accident*, which supplements memories of the war with anxieties following the General Strike. As a heterotopian site, Bennett's railway carries a middle-class passenger whose unrelenting fear of collision reflects Britain's fears about industrial stoppage and the total destruction of war. Yet the railway also parallels the progress of the narrative, both proceeding in fits and starts, and hinting that narrative structures themselves have become unstable in postwar Britain. Finally, I examine Graham Greene's *Stamboul Train* (1932), a thriller following a collection of characters

who journey across Europe on the Orient Express. In the heterotopian train, Greene's characters invert external social or political conditions, constructing phantasmal, self-fulfilling narratives that hold together within the mobile space of the train. Thus, Greene sets in motion on a singular track a multiplicity of interwar themes and identities. Drawing from Johan Huizinga's theory of play in *Homo Ludens* (1938), I argue that Greene uses the train to render the novel as a heterotopia in which the grave social and political issues facing interwar Britain are assembled and circulated for both entertainment and edification. In *Stamboul Train*, Greene shows that mobile texts can, like transportational systems, be at once playful and serious.

I continue my analysis of railway mobility and narrative form in chapter 2, which treats Woolf's deployment of the railway in *The Waves* as a figure for her characters' maturation and her novel's trajectory. I show how rail transport, similar to the waves, implies both linearity and circulation, just as the narrative structure is simultaneously progressive and recursive. Reading the novel alongside Wolfgang Schivelbusch's *Railway Journey* and other social-historical writings on the train, I show how Woolf conceptualizes railway spaces as heterotopian sites of transition, spatiotemporal contraction and expansion, and linear progression. These associations allow Woolf to appropriate the train as an expression of identity formation and artistic experimentation. Drawing from Benedict Anderson's notion of an imagined community, I argue that characters struggle with asserting individualities and participating in a collective. The tensions that arise in railway spaces are transferred to the novel's main heterotopian sites of communion during the two dinner episodes, during which they attempt to circulate their own identities in union to a triumphalist, linear imperial narrative. As this narrative declines, however, characters are forced to confront the railway as a temporal figure for the inexorable progression toward death. I further argue that these tensions are played out on the level of narrative, as

Woolf's novel embodies the conflict between the linear progression of narrative and the experimental recycling of themes, images, phrases, and characters throughout. Placing *The Waves* in its historical context, I also suggest that it reflects an interwar Britain struggling with its own identity, wavering between European integration and imperial protectionism as it negotiates a global presence in the interwar period.

Chapter 3 focuses on mobile spectatorship in travel writing and travel-themed fiction in the interwar period. These texts, I argue, feature tensions between varying perspectives as their traveling narrators or characters seek to redefine and recuperate Englishness in the countryside. Popular travelogues such as H. V. Morton's *In Search of England* (1926) and J. B. Priestley's *English Journey* (1934) exploit automobility to assist in the spread of middle-class spectatorship across the nation as they ostensibly record the condition of England in the aftermath of global war and depression. I argue that travel literature between the world wars circulates differing and often competing ideas of England as authors direct touristic, critical, or nostalgic gazes on the landscape. Consequently, travel writing features shifts in perspectives and conflicts between "real" and "imagined" Englands that are further explored in travel-themed fiction. A. G. Macdonell's *England, Their England* (1933) conceives of Englishness as "team spirit," which is comically or nostalgically manifested in sports such as cricket and in model estates in the countryside. Macdonell's novel exposes how the interwar search for England is problematic in its focus on Englishness as national "character." Yet, in the end, Macdonell attempts to repair disorder through a totalizing rural fantasy of England as a "nation of poets." Composed at the end of a tumultuous decade, Orwell's *Coming Up for Air* (1939) charts a mobile protagonist's attempts to recuperate an idealized countryside in which a prewar identity might be regained. Rural England, in Orwell's novel, is associated with the leisurely activity of fishing, and thus it

represents the countryside as an environment rather than a landscape—a site for active participation rather than detached observation. However, Orwell's protagonist instead confronts a rural England altered by suburban sprawl and commercialized leisure, forcing him into a disengaged, critical perspective. I argue that Macdonell's and Orwell's mobile texts are unsettled in their spectatorship, alternating between conflicting, and often conflicted, perspectives on England they merge elements of travel writing with literary narrative.

In my final chapter, I examine mobility, leisure, and housing in Graham Greene's interwar fiction. Situating *The Power and the Glory* (1940) and *Brighton Rock* (1938) in the context of mass housing development, slum-clearance policies, and ideologies of the home, I show how Greene subverts the ideal home as it was imagined in interwar England, thereby exposing insecurities about viable homes. In his writing, Greene depicts a climate that is averse to home-making and in which people are continually on the move—essentially homeless—in their efforts to secure housing and ensure a "proper" mode of dwelling. In *Brighton Rock*, housing, transportation, and leisure are valued as middle-class attainments, but Greene undermines the dominant assumption that improved, sanitary housing guarantees fitter homes. His interwar novels, I argue, implicitly contradict commonly circulated views of housing and domesticity to hint that the modern home is beyond redemption or recovery, already damned by postwar trends too prodigious to be reined in or reversed. As with Orwell's response to the interwar search for England, Greene's mobile texts set characters in motion in the long and ultimately futile search for a defining English home.

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[1] The Balfour Declaration was in effect recast as a parliamentary act in the 1931 Statute of Westminster, which granted legislative power to the Dominions while also uniting them in a bond of allegiance to the Crown.

[2] See Thorpe, *Britain in the Era of the Two World Wars*, 83.

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[3] See, for example, Bownes and Green's *London Transport Posters* or Cole and Durack's *Railway Posters* for critical analysis of interconnections between transport posters and Britain between the World wars.

[4] See H. A. L. Fisher's *The War: Its Causes and Issues* (1914), 8.

[5] Literary critics such as Tim Armstrong have also distinguished the "politicization of writing in the 1930s, with the rise of fascism and mass unemployment," from the landmark achievements of "1920s modernism" (84).

[6] In *Red Letter Days: British Fiction in the 1930s*, Andy Croft notes that the period has been called the "Red Decade" on account of "the early work of a small number of young upper-middle-class poets who once joined the Communist Party" before becoming disillusioned with it and the influence of its ideologies on their writing (21). Contesting the critical commonplace that the 1930s was a decade of failures in terms of uniting literary aspirations with political ideas, Croft argues that the political novels of the period had a significant influence on the public, helping to pave the way for the emerging Left in British politics.

[7] See, for example, Charles Webster's article "Healthy or Hungry Thirties?" in which he concludes, "For those substantial sections of the population in a position of disadvantage it is difficult to maintain that the interwar period was marked by any meaningful improvement in health" (125).

CHAPTER 1

Wrecks and Recreation:

Railway Speed, Play, and Narrative in Interwar British Literature

> Scarcely a week passes without the papers bearing in large type
> 'Terrible Disaster to an Express,' or 'Fatal Collision.'
> —Archibald Williams, *The Romance of Modern
> Locomotion* (1923)[1]

> [T]he railway networks have made the world smaller and offered it,
> like a plaything, to be passed around and looked at, to every single
> citizen.
> —F. T. Marinetti, "The Necessity and Beauty of Violence"
> (1910)[2]

If the railway has had a formidable and well-documented impact on British history, its imprint in

English literature has been considerably less studied and secured. Routinely, discussions of trains

and literature invite allusions to popular genres such as the thriller, juvenile fiction, or perhaps

film. Historians Jeffrey Richards and John M. MacKenzie observe that "popular culture rather

than serious literature . . . has most enthusiastically taken up the railways" (343). In *The Oxford

Companion to British Railway History*, Jack Simmons and Gordon Biddle maintain that during

the Victorian era, which oversaw the railway's growth from infancy to maturity, no canonical

author stepped forward as a "staunch admirer or sympathetic defender" of trains, even though

novels by Dickens, Trollope, Eliot, and others often feature them (267). Ian Carter, in his study

of *Railways and Culture in Britain*, echoes this presumed "lack of a single major railway novel

in the nation where modern railways were born"[3] (6). Foregoing celebration, British literature

has generally highlighted the menace of locomotion and railway expansionism, a tendency no

doubt fueled by broader cultural anxieties about industrialization as a whole. In *Dombey and Son* (1848), for instance, Dickens's hellish imagery amplifies the death of the insidious Mr. Carker as he is run down by a demoniacal train. As Michael Freeman points out, nineteenth-century fiction often represents the railway through "images . . . of flight, cataclysm and inhuman powers" (42). An inhumanly industrial England, Freeman continues, becomes "overwhelming" for readers when trains tunnel "deep through the earth," tracing "a flight into the underworld, a terrible experience of the infernal regions" (43-44). These railway associations, fraught with fears of industry, were exploited on the Victorian stage and in sensation novels to incite nervousness, as Nicholas Daly has shown. Even if trains were lauded by some commentators as icons of technological advancement, rarely in literature were they portrayed in a receptive manner.

Yet it is commonplace to assume that the railway in twentieth-century Britain was more stably interwoven into the nation's social and culture fabric. Certainly, by 1900 the railway had made giant strides in terms of speed, comfort, and safety. Nevertheless, ambivalence persisted—the railway could be perceived as an inconvenient and outmoded machine even as it continued to emblematize progress. In his futurological treatise *Anticipations* (1902), H. G. Wells proposes that the "nineteenth century, when it takes its place with the other centuries in the chronological charts of the future, will, if it needs a symbol, almost inevitably have as that symbol a steam engine running upon a railway" (6). Indeed, twentieth-century authors and historians have often sided with Wells. In the first volume of *Wheels: An Anthology of Verse* (1916), Nancy Cunard's "From the Train" questions the legacy of Victorian England's vast network of production and circulation: "Steamers, passengers, convoys, trains, / Merchandise travelling over the sea; / Smut-filled streets and factory lanes, / What can these ever mean to me?" (ll. 5-8). More recently, Michael Freeman has regarded the train as a "cultural metaphor" that "was enmeshed in the spirit

of the [Victorian] age, an undiminishing zest for bigger and better, for an all-pervasive machine technology" (19). Surely, after decades of usage, improvements, legislation, and publications, the novelty of the railway had subsided, yet the devastation of the First World War cast industrial machinery in a whole new light. As much as Cunard and others felt distanced from rail transport as an emblem of Victorian capitalism and globalization, other twentieth-century authors found new meaning in old machines.

If inquiries and anxieties related to the railway do not simply dissipate at the turn of the twentieth century, perspectives on the railway are complexified by new threads of significance. Discussing the railway in English literature, Simmons and Biddle observe that especially during the interwar period the "railways started to become romantic, an element in a vanishing past" (268). As new transportational forms, namely the automobile and airplane, began to compete for patronage, the railway acquired a nostalgic aura, particularly in rural settings. John Betjeman's poem "Distant View of a Provincial Town" (1937) offers an apt illustration. Betjeman, who became a railway preservationist and founder of the Victorian Society after the Second World War, imbues his poem's train with nostalgia and recasts it as a redemptive mode of transport. Passing a series of English churches that recall a more robust era of spirituality, the speaker finds that "The old Great Western Railway shakes / The old Great Western Railway spins— / The old Great Western Railway makes / Me very sorry for my sins" (ll. 21-24). While the railway still "shakes" and "spins"—verbs that suggest a disorienting motion to the train—the liturgical thrust of the poem, with its hymn-like stanzas and repetitions, frames a new sense of railway meaning that joins the decline of the Great Western Railway to feelings of national and spiritual loss. Moreover, the poem reveals a subtle irony found in other literary representations of rail transport. From the nineteenth century, the train was a primary agent in the urbanization and

industrialization of Britain and hence a contributor to the secularization of the people as they moved away from provincial towns built around the moral center of the church. Yet the railway also moved in the opposite direction, contributing to decentralization as middle- and working-class families with sufficient means vacated urban centers for new suburban and rural communities. Hence the train might assist in the recovery of religious, national, or recreational values. Betjeman's train is not quite a heterotopia of compensation, for remorse outstrips revival in the still "distant view" from the train. Even so, the mix of associations—industrial anxiety, technological progress, and nostalgic sentiment—makes the railway an evocative and uniquely ambiguous figure in interwar British literature.

Manifestly, the paradoxes and ambiguities of interwar rail transportation are reflected by instabilities or incongruities in the literature of the period. While early modernist writing in interwar Britain is distinguished by experimentation, an increased output of such genres as the crime thriller, the travelogue, and socially or politically informed fiction marks the latter half of the period. These genres are often not singular in form and content but involve combinations of themes, styles, or modes of writing. As mobile texts, they cross conventional generic boundaries or invade other literary or thematic territories, resulting in the unsettled perspectives and narratives that become a defining feature of interwar literature. In this chapter, I establish how this aspect of the literature closely allies with postwar mobility and transportation. First, I look at the popular play *The Ghost Train* (1926), which shows an interwar public still processing the railway as an ambiguous, anxious means of transportation. Then, examining Arnold Bennett's 1928 novel *Accident*, I show how apprehension and uncertainty produced by the General Strike and the First World War are brought together in the accident and serve to destabilize the very progress of narrative itself. Bennett, I argue, exploits public concerns about the reliability of

transportation to play with his readers' expectations about narrative. Although his novel, like the train, follows a predictable route, the shocks and jolts along the way suggest that the crises of the early twentieth century have complicated narratives. Finally, I turn to Graham Greene's thriller *Stamboul Train* (1932), which, I argue, presents the Orient Express as a mobile heterotopia in which illusory narratives are played out, only to collapse once passengers exit the train and confront interwar realities. Greene offers intersecting and competing fantasies of work and play that parallel the novel's own fluctuations between "entertainment" and "seriousness." Just as the Orient Express crosses frontiers, so, I argue, *Stamboul Train* becomes mobile in its transgressions of genres. This chapter seeks to illustrate the ways that rail transport and mobility intercommunicate, thematically and stylistically, with interwar fiction.

An Interwar Railway Riot: Acceleration, Games, and Funeral Trains

Critics have pointed to a thematic shift in relation to railway mobility from Victorian to twentieth-century literature. In his study of literary representations of the London underground, David Welsh examines a crucial transition from the infernal but "lifelike context and apparatus of the steam underground" in George Gissing's late-Victorian realist novels to the "fragmentary and contingent, the ephemeral and momentary features of the electric tube" in the work of Woolf and other modernists (148). From Cubism to Futurism, speed and fragmentation were embraced as indicative of modern existence and thus appropriate for artistic expression. Yet modernist literature retains the darker shades of railway transportation that Gissing and other writers exploited. Woolf's 1917 short story "The Mark on the Wall" is frequently referenced for its image of "being blown through the Tube at fifty miles an hour—landing at the other end without a single hairpin in one's hair!" Woolf's narrator thus captures the "rapidity of life, the perpetual waste and repair, all so casual, all so haphazard" (78). While Woolf's story confirms Welsh's

argument that modernist authors saw the tube as a figure for modern urban experience, it also hints at lingering fears about the precariousness of rail transport. Stephen D. Spalding and Benjamin Fraser have acknowledged that the idea of the train "as a contradictory symbol of both modern anxiety and potential freedom" persists in literature well into the twentieth century (x). We might further contextualize this contradiction by focusing more closely on railway speed and accidents in the twentieth century before turning to the literature of interwar Britain.

While accidents were common and shocking in the early years of railway travel, by the twentieth century greater efficiency and safety had drastically reduced their number. In 1889, the Regulation of Railways Act gave the Board of Trade the authority to compel railway companies to implement the block system of signaling trains running along the same line and, in addition, to fit all trains with continuous brakes (a mechanism that uniformly brakes all wheels). Following the act, Simmons and Biddle relate, the "numbers of train accidents . . . fell strikingly" (3). Even so, due to the increasing rapidity of rail service and the proliferation of express routes, accidents tended to be even more spectacularly disastrous when they occurred, usually the result of human error. Catastrophic accidents often made headlines in the early twentieth-century. For example, a five-train collision in Quintinshill, Scotland in 1915, which Simmons and Biddle suggest was "the worst British railway accident in terms of casualties," left around 227 killed and 245 injured (4). Such incidents, as the literature I examine below also attests, helped to maintain connections between the railway and fatality in the minds of Britons.

Indeed, the acceleration of trains continued to be an industry preoccupation as well as a public attraction in the twentieth century. The "railway race" between rival companies stayed at a high level of intensity until the nationalization of the railways after the Second World War. In 1904, according to Simmons and Biddle, competition for the delivery of transatlantic mail from

Plymouth to London led to "the first steam locomotive to reach 100 mph" (465). In 1923, the Great Western Railway introduced an express service for tourists traveling between the spa town of Cheltenham and Paddington Station in London. The train was later dubbed the Cheltenham Flyer as it "was accelerated to become the fastest train in Britain" and to produce "the first 70-mph schedule in the world" (Simmons and Biddle 465). Moreover, the 1930s became known as "the 'streamline' era," the Big Four railway companies exploiting speed "as a means of publicity" (Simmons and Biddle 465). In 1935, the London and North Eastern Railway launched the Silver Jubilee express between King's Cross Station and Newcastle. Its boldly colored advertising poster, designed by Frank Newbould, accentuated the locomotive's sleek contours and boasted an average speed of 67.08 miles per hour.[4] This interwar obsession with speed, coupled with frequent reports of railway collisions, correlates with modernist representations of rail transport as both exhilarating and disconcerting. Underlying Woolf's references to the train, for example, is a noticeable anxiety about the precariousness of being rushed along without agency, of being entirely under the influence of a powerful and potentially calamitous machine ensemble. One of the "defining features of modernism," Tim Armstrong proposes, is "the *dynamization* of temporality" such that the "past, present, and future exist in a relationship of crisis" (9). As the railway advanced its capacity for acceleration, a sense of crisis, of being suspended between fixed points—one in the past, one in the future—and uncertain of the integrity of machine, grew to reflect the experience of modern Britain.

This fixation on accelerated transportation finds cultural expression in popular games of the interwar period, games we might call heterotopias of confrontation and catharsis. Universal Publications Ltd. (UPL), a manufacturer of party games based in Queensway, London, capitalized on the demand for transport-themed entertainment. One product, *Railway Riot*, was

first published in the 1930s and is touted on its cover as "an exciting outdoor and indoor game for 5 – 500 players of all ages." The game features "key cards" that list stations, destinations, and departure times, distributed randomly around a sizable area. Players receive "journey cards" with a starting point and a blank table for recording stations and times as they proceed toward their (unknown) destinations. Game play involves moving from key card to key card in order to piece together itineraries and finally arrive at the "home" station. *Railway Riot* thus transfers the frenetic experience of rail travel to a nonthreatening, recreational environment, a heterotopia in which players rush about the play-space from card to card, or station to station, having to quickly but precisely read schedules and make connections. We can imagine harmless collisions as players become caught up in the speed necessary for winning the game. Such accidents momentarily obstruct the mobility of players but leave no physical or psychological damage.[5]

Another railway-themed game, *Rail Race, A Novel Travelling Game*, produced by J. W. Spear and Sons following the Second World War, features a board showing Britain's railway network and a pack of destination cards. Players receive cards and plan their routes as they race to complete itineraries and return to their home stations first. Progress is determined by dice but complicated by incident cards displaying natural disasters and mechanical accidents that halt or reverse movement along the board. *Rail Race* is advertised as a "game of skill and chance," its box picturing a streamlined locomotive and a pair of dice rushing along parallel tracks that emerge from a player's dice cup. This juxtaposition couples calculated speed and comfort with randomness, reminding players that no amount of careful planning and strategy can eliminate accidents. In *The Oxford History of Board Games*, David Parlett suggests that components of chance in games can be seen as "elements of reality, since, in everyday life, no outcome of any significance is determined entirely by will and by skill, or is entirely influenced by other 'players'

or elements beyond our control" (20). The heterotopian illusion of the board game thus reminds players of the illusive fixity of transportation—its timetables, stations, rails. *Rail Race*, like *Railway Riot*, reproduces, as well as illustrates on its cover, the nervousness that continues as part of the interwar railway experience. Riding the rails, these games imply, is at best as uncertain as drawing a card or rolling the dice. Yet, as in the writings of Woolf and other authors, confronting anxieties about transportation in the isolated and desynchronized heterotopias of games allows people to discharge those negative impressions of speed and collision.

These games show, then, that apprehensiveness about disaster and the unpredictability of railway travel persists in twentieth-century Britain, even though it is commonly assumed to be a special concern of the previous century. In his influential study *The Railway Journey*, Wolfgang Schivelbusch claims that "pre-industrial catastrophes were natural events," produced by storms, floods, and other environmental disasters (131). Mechanized transport, however, gave rise to the "technological accident" in which the "technical apparatus destroyed itself by means of its own power" (131). This new destructive force, of course, generated considerable bodily and mental trauma in early passengers, even in those not perceptibly injured. The disintegration of the train ensemble produced a condition initially identified as "railway spine," "a supposed microscopic deterioration of the spinal cord" (135). By the end of the nineteenth century, this pathological condition was redefined as a "psychopathological one, according to which the shock caused by the accident . . . affected the victim psychically" (136). Even those, like Charles Dickens in 1865, who walked away from minor accidents, apparently unhurt, were haunted by memories of the collisions. On the whole, though, Britons became habituated to rail transport as it evolved, developing what Schivelbusch, by way of Freud, calls a "stimulus shield"—a layer of psychic insensitivity to the concussions of the train—and overt fear of accidents dissipated.

The growth of the stimulus shield had an industrial parallel in the upholstered seating installed in railway carriages by the end of the nineteenth century. The seating was at first, Schivelbusch explains, "functional" in nature, designed "simply to protect the human body from the mechanical shocks caused by machinery" (122). Yet once cushioned furniture began to appear in middle-class living rooms, "the jolt to be softened was no longer physical but mental: the memory of the industrial origin of objects" (123). Memories of railway accidents, absorbed by layers of apparent comfort and luxury, could be reactivated by the sight or news of a fatal or devastating collision. When accidents did occur in the twentieth century, they represented, as Schivelbusch puts it, a "reawaken[ing of] the memory of the forgotten danger and potential violence: the repressed material returned with a vengeance" (130). The traumatic effects of accidents could be all the more distressing as railway travel was assimilated by the British.

As one might expect, residual anxieties about the railway as a destructive force were exacerbated by the annihilative machinery of the First World War. Especially for the soldiers, the relation between the war and the railway was unmistakable. Carter explains that the railway's status as a progressively communal technology was contradicted by the "dense networks of lightly laid narrow-gauge lines on the Western Front," which "allowed defensive positions to be reinforced" more rapidly and thereby "doom[ed] millions of men to death and injury in set-piece battles along static trench lines"[6] (16). The railway fed the destruction of war, as Wilfred Owen expresses in his 1918 poem "The Send-off," which he wrote at Ripon Army Camp as he was due to return to France for a second (and fatal) tour. The poem's war-weary speaker watches a group of singing recruits as they "line[] the train with faces grimly gay" and move "[s]o secretly, like wrongs hushed-up" toward the front (ll. 3, 11). The narrator closes by questioning whether the soldiers will "return to beatings of great bells / In wild trainloads," although the war has taught

him that only "a few, too few for drums and yells, / May creep back, silent, to still village wells / Up half-known roads" (ll. 16-20). Owen's railway is complicit in the annihilation of war, forging a direct link between rural England and the Western front to transport men by "trainloads" to their deaths. Owen further implies that the railway is a culpable agent in the disgracing of a vital, pastoral England, whose life-giving "wells" will be stilled by bereavement and shame for the wrongs committed against humanity. In Owen's representation, the train becomes an instrument of regression rather than progression. It does not convey England toward an improved future, but rather to a more brutal, industrialized existence. Like much twentieth-century literature, "The Send-off" is laden with anxieties about not only about the destructiveness of war but also the continued threat of industrialization to traditional and cherished spaces of rural Englishness.

In literature, the railway's association with devolution and death infiltrates urban spaces during and after the war. Welsh explains that the war showed "London's inevitable progress towards modernity" to be "increasingly flawed" and that it "exposed the contradictions embodied in the ever-increasing mechanization of society" (164). The tube, a model of convenient and efficient urban transportation, takes on an infernal aspect, especially as it was used as an air raid shelter during the war.[7] In Woolf's *The Waves* (1931), a novel to which I return in the next chapter, Jinny stands in the Piccadilly Circus tube station after the war contemplating aging and mortality. To her, the crowded station becomes an embodiment of the loss and grief felt by the nation: "Millions descend those stairs in a terrible descent. Great wheels churn inexorably urging them downwards. Millions have died" (141). The tube station thus doubles as a tomb, which Foucault identifies as a heterotopia linked to all inhabited spaces. The movement of cemeteries outside city centers in the nineteenth century was due to fears of contagion, but Woolf transports the tombs back into London and consequently defiles the metropolis. It is a reversal of the

progress of civilization, and Woolf, like Owen, couples the railway with a mechanical advance toward death, accentuated by a global conflict with an unprecedented number of casualties.

Similarly, for Londoners the link between the railway and mortality was embodied in the funeral train. According to Simmons and Biddle, the necessity of trains to carry the dead from the metropolis to outlying cemeteries began after the 1848-49 cholera epidemic and the closing of inner-city graveyards in 1851 due to overcrowding and sanitation concerns. In 1852, a Parliamentary act founded the London Necropolis and National Mortuary Company, which partnered with the London and South Western Railway to transport corpses to the new Brookwood Cemetery near Woking. Between 1854 and 1900, trains carrying both the dead and mourners traveled from London to the burial site seven days a week, and after 1900 the funeral service was offered only on weekdays. In 1941, the London Necropolis railway station was destroyed during an air raid, ending the service (Simmons and Biddle 78). The link between rail transport and funerals appears in the "Hades" episode of *Ulysses* (1922), when Leopold Bloom travels across Dublin in a funeral procession composed of traditional horse and carriage. Bloom, however, proposes that "municipal funeral trams like they have in Milan," which "[r]un the line out to the cemetery gates," would be "more decent" (81). While Joyce humorously uses this episode to suggest Ireland's technological backwardness compared to the rest of Europe, the conversation linking the railway and death may have resonated with postwar audiences despite the novel's being set in 1904.

In this section, I have attempted to show glimpses of the broad spectrum of associations the railway evoked in interwar Britain. From the fascination with the speed of new streamlined locomotives to the solemnity of regular funeral trains, from the anxious but playful entertainment of railway-themed party games to the dreadful transportation of England's young men to their

fates in the trenches, rail transport summoned a variety of responses and thus offered a rich metaphor to be appropriated by artists and authors. In "Of Other Spaces," Foucault mentions that the train is "an extraordinary bundle of relations because it is something through which one goes, it is also something by means of which one can go from one point to another, and then it is also something that goes by" (23-24). As we turn to the literature, we will see how representations of rail transport are, in a sense, mobilized for different purposes, effects, and destinations. In the theater and cinema, the train functions to build suspense while it simultaneously allows spectators to recall and face submerged fears of the industrial catastrophe. In literature, on the other hand, the railway aligns with narrative itself, transferring to it the shocks and jolts of the train ensemble as both train and narrative progress toward a common destination—the novel's end. In this way, mobile texts featuring trains highlight the speed, leisure, death, and destruction of the railway experience to apply pressure on the capability of narrative to reach a conclusion.

Raising the Dread: Ghost Trains and Sensational Wrecks in Theater and Film

Associations of the railway with industrial speed, collision, and catastrophe converge in popular interwar literature, in which trains are appropriated as vehicles to heighten crime, intrigue, and suspense. Such appropriations, of course, are not exclusive to the 1920s and 1930s but have roots in Victorian fiction and theater. In *Literature, Technology, and Modernity, 1860-2000*, Nicholas Daly demonstrates how stage melodramas such as Dion Boucicault's *After Dark* (1868), which features a climactic rescue of an unconscious woman in the path of a menacing locomotive, produce "scenarios in which a human agent can beat a mechanical agent; the human for a moment comes to enter and master the temporal world of the machine" (23). This interplay of passivity in the form of nervousness or helplessness and agency in the form of mastery, Daly argues, is reproduced in sensation novels such as Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White* (1859)

and M. E. Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862). While these novels do not consistently foreground railway travel, the train nevertheless has "something like a determining absence" in the dependency in their narratives on precisely manipulated time for carefully orchestrated suspense (46). Hence, Daly argues, the sensation novel helped "retool" the modern subject who otherwise ran the risk of "being overwhelmed by modernity," particularly in the form of technologies of rapid acceleration (52). However, Daly assumes that by the end of the nineteenth century the "railway/sensation phase of modernity is over," and he directs his study to other machines (the cinematograph and the automobile) that articulate and condition subjectivities in twentieth-century literature.

Yet railway-related sensation remains a feature of interwar British literature and cinema. Two examples that yoke railway travel to anxieties about technological modernity are Arnold Ridley's plays *The Ghost Train* (1923) and *The Wrecker* (1924). After having been severely wounded in the Battle of the Somme, Ridley achieved fame as a playwright of comedic thrillers and mysteries in the 1920s and 1930s, and *The Ghost Train* and *The Wrecker* became renowned for their elaborate stage effects reproducing the sight and sounds of the railway accident. Ridley's plays had extended theatrical runs and were filmed multiple times, the 1929 production of *The Wrecker* becoming a seminal disaster movie for its then-spectacular crash involving a decommissioned locomotive and a steam-powered truck. This scene was reworked in the 1936 crime mystery *Seven Sinners*, scripted by the same team that wrote Alfred Hitchcock's *The Lady Vanishes* (1938) and Carol Reed's *Night Train to Munich* (1940). Hitchcock also exploited rail transport to heighten suspense in *The Thirty-Nine Steps* (1935). Indeed, as Simmons and Biddle point out, the "coming of talkies intensified the trend towards railway-based movies, now with the added bonus of the sound of steam locomotives" (82). The success of these theatrical and

cinematic works evinces an interwar fascination with realistic reproductions of railway travel and accidents. Like the UPL games, these filmic heterotopias functioned as reflections of railway catastrophes that could be consumed and processed in the nonthreatening, leisurely, communal space of the theater. In *Parallel Tracks*, Lynne Kirby points out that in silent films "the train became a self-contained stage for romance, seduction, and crime, all encouraged by the 'in-between' nature of the train journey" (83). Additionally, the heterotopian in-betweenness of cinema as a site that representationally projects the mobile spaces of social anxiety onto a single screen allows spectators to confront the menace of railway technology and fortify their defensive stimulus shields in response.

Interwar British culture conflated the real and the fantastic in its representations of the railway, a trend which is illustrated through the close relationships between trains, films, and literature. Kirby argues that the cinema and the railway are doubles. If the cinema "finds an apt metaphor in the train, in its framed, moving image, its construction of a journey as an optical experience, the radical juxtaposition of different places, the 'annihilation of space and time,'" the railway "is a mechanical double for the cinema and for the transport of the spectator into fiction, fantasy, and dream" (2). Kirby further discusses the ways in which the cinematic and railway experiences contribute to the unstable position of the passenger-spectator, whose perception is altered by a technologically mediated orientation to the series of "real" landscapes passing outside a compartment window or the sequences of images projected onto a screen. Kirby's focus can be widened to include literature and theater, which also transport the reader-spectator to realms of fiction and fantasy. As I show below, the integration of railway elements into novels or plays leads to a destabilized or anxious confrontation between the text-stage and the reader-spectator. Indeed, as Schivelbusch proposes, the expansion of rail transport and the rise of mass-

marketed fiction are closely intertwined. Early rail passengers disengaged from the derealized scenery outside their carriage windows and instead directed their gazes to "imaginary surrogate landscape[s]" in books (64). Stalls selling cheap paperbacks appeared in stations, and reading on the train "became almost obligatory," even if it was, as Schivelbusch insists, an "exclusively bourgeois occupation" (66). Just as upholstered seats absorbed the shocks of the train ensemble and encouraged passengers to submerge fears of a catastrophic collision, railway representations in literature, film, and theater allowed fears to resurface as readers or spectators experienced the suspense of the technological mishap without harmful physical or psychological aftereffects. Having evolved a stimulus shield, readers-spectators who encountered representational railway accidents could momentarily lower their guard while perhaps also building up resistance for future confrontations with accidents.

This function of the popular railway accident in the interwar period is captured in *The Ghost Train*. Ridley's play is set entirely within a rural railway station, where a group of travelers are stranded after missing their connection.[8] The stationmaster is at first reluctant to allow the passengers to spend the night in the station, telling them the story of an accident that happened exactly twenty years before, when a special train, under some supernatural influence, plummeted into a ravine, killing six. This story purposefully recalls the prewar trains of Dickens and Gissing—hellish, menacing, insatiable in their lust for casualties. The travelers, however, elect to stay, but as the night progresses the events of the stationmaster's tale repeat until the ghost train rushes past the station, light and smoke flooding the interior as "the red flare of the fire flashes by" (73). At this point, Ridley's play has successfully resurrected the repressed past of railway literature and history. However, in the end one of the travelers reveals that he is a detective from the Scotland Yard and exposes the ghost story as a ruse by smugglers who exploit

an actual accident to keep the local population away as they transport drugs from the coast. The detective and his associates shoot the train as it returns to the station, and Ridley's stage directions call for a "loud explosion as the train is blown up, together with the crash of the train, the hiss of the escaping steam, and the red flare of the explosion" (91). The climactic collision happens, but for the onstage characters (as for the audience) it becomes a thrilling spectacle rather than a life-threatening crisis.

Ridley's explicit and lengthy stage directions emphasize the chaotic, demoniacal sights and sounds of the ghost train, the theatrical effects clearly designed to saturate the hall and overawe the audience. Because entire action takes place in the station interior—upstage is a wall with a door and grimy windows that prevent actors and audiences from actually seeing the track—the train never has a physical presence on stage. In name and essence, it remains a ghost train. Its existence is synecdochically conveyed by light from a headlamp, visible smoke, and sounds of a whistle blowing and brakes screeching, all of which prompt spectators to visualize the invisible locomotive. If a ghost, by definition, is a materialization of a deceased or absent entity or a visitation from the past, the ghost train in Ridley's play is a memory train. When the visual and auditory cues that signal the train's presence (or absence, since there is no *real* train) overwhelm the stage, creeping in the backstage windows and door like a spectral presence, the audience recreates the accelerating engine and the collision from a collective memory of railway mishaps. Boundaries between reality and fantasy or fiction are continually undermined in a play in which both characters and audience are manipulated into seeing the unreal as real. In the theater, as in the cinema and literature, ghosted memories of railway accidents can materialize in powerful, albeit benign and entertaining, ways.

Given the early twentieth-century histories of fatal railway collisions and the First World

War—in which Ridley fought and was wounded—these representations of railway menace show a fascination with the spectatorship and collective remembering of disasters. As a potent heterotopia of illusion, the space of the theater isolates the audience from real-time imperilment even as it heterochronically accumulates a history of railway mishaps implicitly figured in the singular absence/presence of the train. Ridley conveys the powerful allure of the technological disaster through the character of Julia Price, who appears in the second act as a mentally unbalanced local claiming to have seen the ghost train. Ignoring attempts to convince her to leave the station, she explains that she is compelled to stay by a wild desire to revisit the spectacle: "I can't help it . . . It's that train. I've got to see it again—I don't want to see it, but I've got to see it. . . . That train won't let me go" (59-60). The play again underscores the aural effects of the collision, as Julia is haunted by memories of the train "thundering down the valley, and then the brakes jammed on—jarring—tearing! . . . And then the roar—louder—louder—and then crash!" (71). Even though the audience discovers at the end that Julia is in fact the smugglers' ringleader, putting on an act to frighten the travelers away, her obsession with the ghostly spectacle and agitated recollection of its former manifestation give a bodily onstage presence to the mixture of expectation and apprehension felt by the unaware characters and those in the auditorium.

Julia thus mediates between the characters/audience and the unviewable train behind the upstage wall (she throws open a grimy window as the train passes and promptly faints). Julia's delirium, while feigned, facilitates the audience's interpretation of the theatrical effects—the light, smoke, and noises—as a fatal railway accident. But these signifiers are, in the fictional world of the play, both real (they are produced by a *train*) and illusory (they are not produced by the *ghost train*). Likewise, Julia's insistent desire to see the wreck is both "real" (it mimics the

audience's dread and fascination) and illusory (it is performed). When she is exposed as an imposter and the ghost train is shown to be a hoax, the audience is released from the spell, having experienced emotional discharge from the suspense of a simulated railway mishap. Yet during the performance, the audience, like the characters on stage, proceeds on unsure footing, as Ridley's play purposefully confuses absence and presence, memory and reenactment, illusion and "reality." In this way, *The Ghost Train* instantiates the characteristics of heterotopian mobile texts in the interwar period and sets an example for the literature I examine throughout this study.

Accident! The Threat of Industrial/Narrative Stoppage in Bennett's Strike Novel

The Ghost Train illustrates the powerful impressions that representations of the railway mishap could have on audiences in the twentieth century. An interwar novel that confronts anxieties of rail transport head-on is Arnold Bennett's *Accident* (1928). As the laconic title suggests, there are no supernatural entities or criminal conspiracies. Like much of Bennett's fiction, *Accident* is a work of social realism, tracing the route of Alan Frith-Walter, a wealthy, conservative, middle-aged industrialist from London, as he travels on the Rome Express to meet his wife on the Italian Riviera. His daughter-in-law, Pearl, also happens to be on board, fleeing a failing marriage with Alan's son, Jack, who has converted to socialism and intends to donate his savings and stand for Labour. In a last-ditch effort to salvage his marriage, Jack engages an airplane to overtake the train at Aix-les-Bains. In a basic, melodramatic manner, the narrative delineates this Frith-Walter family drama, underscoring Alan's concern about the shame that a divorce and a son in Labour might attach to his name and business. Parallel to these fears, though, runs a constant apprehension about the possibility of a railway mishap, a dread that intensifies when passengers hear reports of several accidents around France. Their anxiety is realized when the express train collides with another just before reaching the French-Italian border, and while

Alan survives, he becomes confused and traumatized. Once they resume the journey, Jack and Pearl's argument builds, but the novel ends, rather predictably, with reconciliation in Italy and tentative reassurances of future family harmony.

The interwar context of *Accident* is crucial to understanding Bennett's representations of the railway. Bennett began the novel in 1926 following the General Strike, serializing it as *Train de Luxe* in the *Daily Express* before publishing it in book form in 1928. One of Bennett's last novels before his death in 1931, *Accident* failed to garner the same popular and critical enthusiasm as his earlier fiction did. It has remained a neglected work, even though Carter refers to it as "a more penetrating, and a more convincingly canonical, British 'railway novel' than any competitor ever managed"[9] (158). Carter rightly notes that "[p]assengers' lapses into unreason" during unexplained delays or after hearing news of accidents "undercut railways' long-standing cultural status as exemplars for reliable mechanical reason" (158). Their agitation, I would add, arises from unexpected breaks in mobility, causing temporary immobility, breaks that play out not only on the level of transportation but also in relation to the progress of narrative. If, by the 1920s, many Britons had grown accustomed to and increasingly dependent on public transportation, then any interruption of that mobility undoubtedly seemed all the more surprising and disquieting. Railway collisions were one type of interference that contradicted expectations of uninhibited speed and mobility. Another was the 1926 General Strike.

Broadly speaking, a strike represents an effort by or on behalf of workers to use industrial stoppage as a means to wrest some measure of control, previously denied or limited, over labor relations or conditions. The General Strike began as an action by coal miners (who had been locked out by owners after the union refused a wage reduction) but expanded into a sympathy strike that included, among others, workers in transportation. For a time, rail and bus service

across England was halted, until volunteer strike-breakers recruited from among automobile owners and university students helped to restart the flow of traffic and goods. In *Classes and Cultures: England 1918-1951*, Ross McKibbin explains how the socioeconomic divide was reinforced by the strike. During the 1920s, "the middle classes identified themselves as the constitutional classes, the 'public,' and the 'public' was increasingly seen as directly opposed to the organized working class" (58). The middle classes, naturally, felt obligated to safeguard the rights of the "public," and the General Strike was seen as a violation of those rights, particularly the privilege of mobility. The freedom to move—as producers and consumers—about England was threatened by the forced immobilization by the working class. In *The Long Week-End: A Social History of Great Britain 1918-1939*, Robert Graves and Alan Hodge share the "extreme middle-class reaction to the strike" as represented in the *Daily Mail* (165). A planned editorial titled "For King and Country," while blocked by typesetters sympathetic to the strike, expressed the typical stance: "A general strike is not an industrial dispute. It is a revolutionary movement intended to inflict suffering upon the great mass of innocent persons in the community" (qtd. in Graves and Hodge 165). Bennett, as a member of McKibbin's "public," conveyed similar sentiments when he remarked during the strike that the general mood at the Reform Club was "gloomy," but it would remain "uncompromising" in its position against the strikers (qtd. in McKibbon 58). Stephen Baldwin's conservative government and the mining industry refused to capitulate to the union, and the strike ended without advancement for the working classes.

Nevertheless, the General Strike had a profound effect on politics as well as on literature, with many commentators seeing it as a pivotal moment in interwar history. Both T. S. Eliot and Wyndham Lewis argue that, in the words of the latter, the strike "began a period of a new complexion" (qtd. in Ferrall and McNeill 1). In his autobiography of the interwar years, Leonard

Woolf refers to the strike as "the most painful, the most horrifying" of domestic crises he faced in his lifetime (qtd. in Ferrall and McNeill 1). In an important recent study, Charles Ferrall and Dougal McNeill treat extensively the literary response to the General Strike. Surveying a range of texts, they find that literature about the strike is varied and ambiguously oriented, "neither solely populist nor simply elitist. It is engaged *and* autonomous, committed and discontinuous, British literature in a divided Britain" (8). Ferrall and McNeill argue that Bennett, along with Wells and G. K. Chesterton, was "'fixed' by the Strike, put in an ideological and aesthetic position at odds with the general tenor of their work," which was devoted to a resolutely Liberal "affiliation to the individual over the collective" (43). Focusing on Alan's recurring readings of Wordsworth's *The Prelude* as he journeys across France, Ferrall and McNeill argue that Bennett proposes a "Romantic nationalism inoculating against private despair and public disorder" as Alan retreats into poetry to cope with his fears of industrial stoppage (59). I take an alternative approach, spotlighting instead the connections between Alan's anxieties and the circumstances of the strike as well as the First World War. *Accident* reveals, I argue, that middle-class worry about immobilization or industrial stoppage penetrates to the core of conventional narrative.

From its beginning, *Accident* reflects social anxiety about the freedom of mobility and the threat of immobility. The first chapter, appropriately titled "Worry," depicts Alan as a man in a perpetual "state of mental disquiet" on his way to board a boat train and escape his hectic routine in the metropolis. Bennett at once applies what Peter J. Rabinowitz calls the "most basic rule of appearance" in literature: "that we are to judge characters by their exterior, until the text gives us sufficient reason to judge them in some other way." Not only a character's physical traits but also the external settings filtered through his or her perspective "can be assumed to stand metaphorically for inner quality" (86). In *Accident*, Bennett intimately intertwines Alan's

personality and mindset with the exterior realm of rail transport, sustaining this interconnection throughout the novel. The "bustling hall" of Victoria Station parallels Alan mental state, with its "continuous stream of travellers" who "jostled and pushed one another as though . . . they were escaping from a building on fire" (2). This opening scene suggests that uneasiness is commonplace when traveling by rail, and the railway station establishes a mood and outlook for the novel. If commuters generally worry about catching trains, making connections, and arriving safely at their destinations, Bennett's first chapter agitates his middle-class readers into identification with Alan as a typical (post-strike) rail passenger. Readers embark on the narrative as Alan boards his first train, both anxiously wondering if or when the titular accident will occur.

Like much railway fiction, *Accident* uses the train as a figure for the linear progression of its plot toward the resolution. As Peter Brooks writes in *Reading for the Plot*, "the dynamic aspect of narrative" is precisely "that which makes a plot 'move forward,' and makes us read forward, seeking in the unfolding of the narrative a line of intention and a portent of design that hold the promise of progress toward meaning" (xiii). However, in *Accident*, I contend, the progressive mobility of narrative is frustrated, as the novel fails to move steadily along its conventional tracks. These frustrations, of course, represent the conflict, but they purposively bring into alignment transportation and narration. The novel is a mobile text, and the disquiet that infiltrates the story at the beginning starts to invade its language and structure as the story moves forward. In this way, Bennett's novel plays out a struggle between conventional narration—which predictably travels along prefabricated tracks to its resolution—and the confusion and restlessness that arise when chronological mobility is threatened or halted. The expected accident, I argue, represents a moment when the narrative is disrupted or, more to the point, derailed. The chaos and trauma that abound in the wake of the railway mishap connect to

both the First World War and the 1926 General Strike, but, more importantly, they reveal a deep concern about the English narrative in the socially and politically unstable interwar period. In *Modernism*, Tim Armstrong observes that modernist writers who describe the strike "stress waiting" and "interruption"—the "sense of a suspended temporality" (81). If we approach *Accident* in this way, we might see it as Bennett's anxious engagement with postwar Britain as well as with modernist writing.

If the start of the novel introduces unease into its plot and main character, that unease heightens when the progress of Alan's train is unexpectedly stopped in the Kentish countryside. Another of Bennett's tersely titled chapters, "Halt," opens with the lines: "Shock. The stop was very sudden, and, despite the resilience of Pullman springs, liquids spilled out of glasses and cups; something fell from a rack, and a fork slid off a table on to the thick-carpeted floor" (18). While hardly a catastrophe, the stoppage nonetheless causes a shock expressed as a disturbance of the social custom of dining, the progress of the meal violently halted. In the heterotopian space of the carriage, Bennett presses a link between daily routine and transportational mobility, a link that it further pursues as the Frith-Walters family drama unfolds on the railway. This interdependency means that any stoppage in the forward motion of the train causes or exposes disharmonies and incongruities in the lives and expectations of the passengers. Stoppage also impedes the progress of the narrative, as characters start to circulate aimlessly in a disordered environment. When Alan exits the train, he sees that it is "arrested and . . . moveless as though under an enchantment" (21). The narrative, too, remains immobilized, temporarily suspended without a sense of forward propulsion, as characters become "bolder in wrongdoing" and deviate from the machine ensemble which also drives the plot (22). Bennett's readers are forced to wait, just like the passengers stranded without explanation in the in-betweenness of their travels, or

like the British "public" whose mobile routines were obstructed by the General Strike.

The luxury of mobility and the "shock" of immobility are highlighted when, like the General Strike's disturbance of commuters, the train delay exposes the dependency of the middle classes on those of lower socioeconomic rank. In its immobile state, the "train de luxe was no better than a common goods-train or a third-class excursion-train. All luxury seemed forlorn, pathetic, comic, fragile as a bride-cake; for ever under threat of destruction" (22). Bennett lays bare the passengers' assumptions about transportation (its ready-at-handness and unobstructed mobility) and class (express trains operate according to passengers' expectations). Impatiently, passengers in Alan's Pullman car "join in a concerted game of ringing the bell" to demand an explanation for the stoppage (19). When an attendant—a "serf" who was "suave but firm"— finally appears, he refuses to clarify the situation, instead mocking the passengers as "only parcels, and the convenience of parcels is not entitled to attention" (19, 20). Bennett here alludes to John Ruskin's claim that the railway transforms travelers into "parcels," but the implication is that the middle-class passengers have become passively circulated entities, having limited authority or control over their own mobility. The anxiety and annoyance of the passengers mirror the middle-class mindset during the General Strike: the pervasive distrust of those who operate the networks of speed and mobility and who can instantly transform the nation into a state of disorder and disorientation.

Yet Bennett may also be playing with his readers, who, like the train's passengers, must confront and try to understand the stoppage in forward progress of the novel. In his discussion of "rules of notice" in conventional narratives, Rabinowitz identifies "intratextual disruptions," or "breaks in continuity," through which "the surface of the text is ruptured" (66). Such disruptions can stymie readers if they fail to discern any meaning or consequences. In such moments, I

would add, the reader's position vis-à-vis the narrative might shift to a more passive rather than active engagement as he or she feels distanced from the plot. In *Accident*, Bennett's strategy opposes that of Dion Boucicault in *After Dark* (1868), which Daly suggests permits its protagonist and audience to "enter and master the temporal world of the machine" (23). In "Halt," the train delay coerces passengers into realizing they are not masters of the machine, just as the break in continuity forces readers to confront their own lack of control of the narrative's forward movement. The resultant shift to a more passive relationship to transportation or narrative correlates with the shock of immobility brought about by the General Strike. Bennett's novel emphasizes waiting and interruption on both the intradiegetic and extradiegetic levels.

In this scene, too, the passengers' mobility is, apparently, under the control of the railway workers, unmasking a middle-class tendency to take transportation for granted and view mobile systems as black boxes. At the close of the chapter "Halt," when the train finally moves, the omniscient narrator comments, "why it had started people knew no more surely than why it had stopped. The sinister secret was sternly kept" by those who operate the railway (25). This information is frustratingly withheld not only from passengers but also from readers so that they, too, have at best restricted access to reasons for the narrative delay. In his discussion of "rules of balance" in literary texts, Rabinowitz proposes that there are "antecedent/consequent patterns" that guide reading (134). When, for example, "a strange event is narrated, it is normally a signal for the narrative audience to look forward to an explanation of its causes" (138). Like Alan and his fellow passengers, readers must "wait for the text to tell [them] the causes" (138). If waiting proves fruitless, however, readers may begin to distrust the text, just as Alan and others distrust the railway.[10] If *Accident* makes clear that mobility is not guaranteed or subject to middle-class authority, readers are also on insecure ground, as Bennett targets their anxieties about rail

transport and (momentarily) disrupts their expectations of the *luxury* of narrative: that it is an unbroken, orderly progression toward its destination or end. *Accident* represents mechanical *and* textual transportation as precarious—readers, like travelers, are not assured of safe passage to the end of the narrative, nor can they be certain about whether future shocks will halt its advance and strand them in a kind of limbo, moving neither forward nor backward.

These anxieties, unexpected shocks, and immobilizations become more pronounced the more luxurious and accelerated the railway. In France, Alan feels elated and "safe" because he "had caught the Rome Express. On every carriage of his train shone the immortal name of Rome, and glittered in gold the impressive words: 'Grands Express Européens'" (52). As we have seen, the speed and comfort of interwar express trains made a significant impression on the interwar public. The naming of streamlined locomotives in the 1920s and 1930s—the "Cheltenham Flyer," the "Silver Jubilee," the "Coronation"—deliberately reimagined railway mobility in terms of the gracefulness of flight and the longevity of the British royal line. The Rome Express similarly invokes an enduring (imperial) narrative to instill a sense of safety and comfort in its passengers. These trains are heterotopias of illusion that attempt to advertise their reliability and continuation by attributing to themselves the supposed expansiveness and timelessness of empire. At the same time, given the novel's interlacing of rail transport and narrative, Bennett raises the possibility of a conventionally streamlined narrative, one which might swiftly and assuredly convey Alan to reunite with his wife at a leisure spot (also a heterotopia) on the Italian Riviera. However, any assurance is undermined when Alan overhears news of "[o]ne of those disasters which give a major thrill to the readers of every daily paper in the world and which become historic in the annals of railway travelling" (55). As in *Ghost Train*, the news initiates a mix of dread and fascination that haunts the trip across France. Passengers begin to register the motions of the

train: whenever it "swerved violently, swaying human bodies," they "thought of the railway accident, and had qualms about the imminence of another accident" (90). These qualms are also transferred to readers, who read in a perpetual state of suspense. The expectation of a smooth, streamlined journey gives way to anticipation of a catastrophic event, and Bennett keeps both the train's interior and the narrative tense, as travelers and readers alike are moved toward the inevitable, predictable, but still undetermined collision.

The pall cast by the accident over the railway journey begins to have a degenerative effect on the passengers. In *Degeneration* (1895), Max Nordau controversially claims that modern subjectivity is characterized by unprecedented physical and mental decay, for "[e]ven the little shocks of railway travelling, not perceived by consciousness . . . cost our brains wear and tear" (qtd. in Kern 125). The nervousness and fears of the travelers in *Accident* provoke them to interpret sights and sound irrationally. When the express passes another wreck, for instance, people excitedly count what they assume to be corpses and speculate on the cause of the collision. Their interpretations are contradicted, though, when they learn that it was a "shunting accident" involving a cattle train that may have killed a few animals (96). The voyeuristic passengers "one by one returned into the [dining] car, sheepishly," their behavior summed up in the phrase, "Mob psychology" (96-97). Once again, Bennett manipulates narrative expectations. The travelers, having been prepared by the news of an earlier accident, are led to assemble or *read* the signs outside the train as a narrative of a catastrophic accident with human casualties. Furthermore, by not having his omniscient narrator provide any insider information about the accident to readers, Bennett constrains them into reading the scene from the same perspective as the passengers. The novel supplies no opportunity for readers to notice dramatic irony or reposition themselves on a moral high ground until after the passengers learn of their mistake. Hence readers are

unknowingly complicit with the passengers' misreading of the accident. Bennett's title for this chapter is "Cattle," and while it names the actual victims of the accident, it also indicates the passengers (and, implicitly, readers) whose collectively misinformed reading produces false meaning. Like *The Ghost Train*, *Accident* criticizes the voyeuristic desire to see disasters, but it also exposes the way that narratives can maneuver readers into distorted interpretations. Rabinowitz's "rules of notice" in a conventional narrative "tell us where to concentrate our attention" and "serve as a basic structure on which to build an interpretation" (53). However, "communication can fail" when "the irrelevant . . . appear[s] to be prominent, or the crucial . . . pass[es] by unnoticed" (54). Elevated expectations of, in this case, a catastrophic accident, Bennett suggests, induces readers to overinterpret a text or scene. Nervous mobile texts such as *Accident* can thus be degenerative in the sense that they "cost our brains wear and tear" by frustrating our expectations about conventional plots.

Although Bennett toys with narrative fits and stops along its tracks, eventually his novel delivers what readers expect. The passengers' fears are realized when the Rome Express collides with a special train from Turin. Despite its halts and false alarms, the narrative builds to this climax, and Bennett, like Ridley, invests the accident with a supernatural quality that heightens its impression on Alan as well as on readers. The collision is announced by "an unusual thunderous sound from the invisible world beyond the boundaries of the train," and Alan endures "a frightful bump of the whole carriage, a bump which seemed to prelude the end of the world, a horror-inspiring bump unlike any other bump in his experience" (168). The apocalyptic imaging of the accident, the event and aftermath of which Bennett extensively treats across three chapters, does not stem from some demoniacal industry or criminal conspiracy but from an anticipated but shocking destiny that arrests forward mobility and grimly announces an "end." A mere "parcel,"

Alan feels helpless and attempts to distanciate the accident as having originated without the boundaries of the train's confined, mobile interior. In his fragile passiveness throughout the journey, Alan is mostly an impotent bystander. He attempts, for example, to mediate the dispute between his son and daughter-in-law—an effort that is halted by the collision—but he largely remains a detached spectator. He overhears news of several railway accidents, but he cannot steer himself clear of the impending danger, unlike an American couple who exit the train early to avoid any possibility of collision. Indeed, Bennett continually characterizes Alan as a man disengaged from and apprehensive about circumstances over which he has little or no control. He is a middle-class passenger embedded in but disconnected from the transportation upon which he depends for his mobility.

Alan's passivity, coupled with the violence of the railway accident, has important roots in the First World War. Bennett deploys language and imagery frequently used in the context of the war, with Alan's terrifying experience in the train echoing that of soldiers in the trenches. Like shells, the "awful shocks [of the collision] succeeded one another without end," and the "entire carriage seemed to be in pain, in the agony of final extinction. Alan wished for death to end it." Alan expects that the train will "go up in roaring flames" with the "[s]mell of burnt flesh! Alan's flesh! Writhings!" (171). At this point, narrative descriptions of Alan's disordered thoughts become truncated and fragmented, as if language also fractures and scatters during the collision of the trains. Paul Fussell has observed that the First World War produced a "collision between events and the language available—or thought appropriate—to describe them" (169). According to Fussell, the "mechanisms of the psychology of crisis" prompted soldiers to concentrate on details in their writing, given that "[f]ear itself works powerfully as an agent of sharp perception and vivid recall" (327). This concept also applies to Bennett, who was both a victim in a railway

accident in France before the war and a visitor to the front in 1915.[11] In a July 8, 1911 journal

entry, Bennett writes that he "found [himself] in a railway accident in Mantes," his phrasing

underlining his passivity.[12] When he describes the collision, his sentences take on a flat,

disengaged tone, narrowing their focus to fragments of detail: "The windows broke. The corridor

door sailed into the compartment. My stick flew out of the rack. The table smashed itself. I clung

hard to the arms of my seat, and fell against an arm-chair in front of me. There was a noise of

splintering, and there were various other noises. An old woman lay on the floor crying. I

wondered: 'Shall I remain unharmed until the thing stops?'" (9). Like those of Alan and soldiers

of the First World War, Bennett's curt language barely masks the overpowering fears and

helplessness aroused by the incident. Clearly traumatized by the collision, he writes that his

"recollection of appearances quickly became vague" and that his "chief impression is of a total

wreck brought about in a few seconds" (10). More than fifteen years later, Bennett reproduces

that ordeal in *Accident*, although his experience has evidently accumulated significance by

passing through the stress and confusion of the intervening war.

Consequently, the psychological impact of the accident on Alan echoes the trauma

produced by the First World War. After the collision, Alan discovers that he is unhurt but has "a

sensation of extraordinary fatigue" corresponding to both railway trauma and shell shock (174).

The strains and concussions of the train ensemble as it wrecks are absorbed by Alan's body and

mind. According to Schivelbusch, the clinical study of war trauma had its basis in railway

neurosis: "Shell shock can certainly be seen as a successor to the railroad shock of the nineteenth

century. In both cases the victims are psychically traumatized by a sudden and violent release of

energy, without being demonstrably damaged in the physical sense" (148). This railway-war link

in Bennett's novel is solidified after the collision, as Alan struggles to confront it: "He walked

uncertainly on, by the edge of the track, towards the spectacle. He walked more slowly, then stopped. He could not proceed. He had plenty of physical energy: but some moral inhibition had affected his legs" (189). Alan physically immobility stems from a "moral" or mental paralysis, which also renders him verbally inept, unable to speak aloud his brush with death because he is "sickeningly afraid of a danger past and finished with . . . more afraid now than he had been in the moments of worst peril" (190). This later aphasia contradicts his immediate elation at being alive, when he feels a "sensation of pride at being in a first-rate spectacular railway accident" that he "would [often] be asked about . . . and often he would refer to" (183). There is a desire to narrate, to convert the significant event into a compelling and coherent story, but Alan cannot escape the stress and anxiety that the accident has stamped on his psyche. The jolts and fits of language that describe the collision are the limit of his capabilities. If *Accident* is Bennett's General Strike novel, then the added impact of the First World War serves to drive home the point that stoppage, whether caused by labor unrest or mechanized warfare, is to be expected in modern Britain, so that the conventional narratives of work, family, and leisure—figured by the Frith-Walters on the train—proceed erratically and discontinuously.

Thus, as Alan resumes his journey and the narrative continues its forward progress, both are conspicuously affected by the trauma of the collision. Whenever the train enters a tunnel on its route to Italy, Alan is overcome by a "ridiculous but genuine fear" so that he "clenched his teeth savagely and clutched at the seat, nerves still ungoverned" (200). This fear is transferred to the language, which also halts and jerks: "He sweated in spite of the cold. He was in an anguish of fear. The carriage jolted, and stopped with a hideous thud. Absurd, this fright! . . . Yes, absurd!" (201). A passive, older figure, Alan has had, in a way, twentieth-century modernity thrust upon him, and as he journeys on the express train he must learn to accept nervousness and

uncertainty as part of the postwar experience. Turning his attention to the political-marital conflict between Jack and Pearl—the younger generation—Alan acquiesces to its likely end: "Disaster was ahead. . . . Disaster might be splendid—it would be. . . . The train, sweltering in the subterranean arcana of the terrific mountain, obstinately rasped and rattled its way forward, bearing the battle along with it. And in Alan's heart happiness and misery were fused into a single sensation transcending the sum of both" (260). This is perhaps Bennett's attempt to update the Romantic sublime to fit a technologized contemporary world—the train is tunneling under the Alps instead of climbing them—but the emphasis remains on the forward progress of the train-narrative. Having "seen it through"—a phrase commonly used for those who survived the First World War[13]—Alan discovers that the accident has restructured his perspective. While he is still overwrought with nervousness, he has developed a stimulus shield of sorts to protect against further shocks and halts by recognizing their "beauty" (263). *Accident* shows that progress in postwar, post-strike Britain, whether it be in the form of human betterment, the functionality of the family unit, or the viability of conventional narration, is no longer assured, and only by translating stoppages, jolts, and collisions into some kind of transcendent "beauty" can the negative emotions of the railway journey be purged. Although the novel ends optimistically with the family's arrival and reconciliation in the Riviera, Alan understands that "[n]ew strength [is] required daily" to cope with the "storms" of the future (315). Proper maintenance of a stimulus shield is the subject's only defense against the onslaught of a technologized modernity.

Perhaps *Accident*, published a few years before Bennett's death, represents the author's coming to terms with, if not wholly committing to, the impact of postwar modernity on literature. In the wake of a devastating global war and an immobilizing General Strike, narratives must necessarily be mobile and anxious to reflect a troubled interwar Britain, for people's and readers'

expectations are readily thwarted or subverted. In a recent study of Ford Madox Ford, Rob Hawkes has argued that Ford, Bennett, and others might be classified as "misfit moderns": those whose works "are characterised by a form of 'in-betweenness' which constitutes an acute and exemplary responsiveness to the conditions of modernity" (3). After the First World War, Hawkes argues, the "misfit moderns" struggled to develop narratives that might "bridge the gap between pre-war past and post-war present." and they instead "frequently frustrate[d] whilst simultaneously activating the reader's desire for narrative coherence" (138). Bennett's *Accident* can be read as another such attempt to bridge the gap. Narrative coherence, made possible by the luxury express, is repeatedly imperiled by the halts and shocks in its forward mobility.

Heterotopian Play-Grounds and Work-Places in *Stamboul Train*

As Alan waits in the Gare de Lyon and "exult[s] in the grandeur of the Rome Express, and all that it symbolised of romance," he is troubled by a suburban train "with a common locomotive and many narrow compartments marked with a '3'" for third-class (53, 51). In Bennett's post-strike, class-conscious novel, Alan starts to question the "structure of society" in which the "salt of the earth" has the money, means, and leisure—or surplus "network capital," in Anthony Elliott and John Urry's terminology (10)—to travel in luxury while lower-class commuters form a "pathetic procession" in their haste to board overcrowded trains (52, 53). The narrator, in which Bennett focalizes Alan's point of view, does not delve too deeply into its social and political themes. Yet the juxtaposition of "grandeur" and "romance" with the "common" and "pathetic" in the station reveals an important doubleness by which the train might be a symbol of luxury and romance (when mobility is a form of leisure) or a perfunctory means of transportation (when mobility is necessary for employment). Both work and play could be embodied in the train in interwar fiction, even as traditional distinctions between upper-class

leisure and lower-class labor were significantly deteriorating.

British railway history is punctuated by class division and conflict. Freeman suggests that rail transport sparked class consciousness since "the term 'class' appears to have had no currency" previously, when passengers on stagecoaches and boats could choose between "'inside' and 'cabin' accommodation, or 'outside' and 'deck,'" while the lower classes generally travelled on foot or by wagon (109). As John R. Kellett explains in *The Impact of Railways on Victorian Cities*, one of the most pressing issues in the early years of rail transport was low-cost tickets for working-class commuters. It was more profitable for railway companies to keep prices high, and opponents of reducing them argued that the poorer classes had no time for travel, might more wisely use their money, or should be discouraged, in the Duke of Wellington's words, from "uselessly wandering about the country" (qtd. in Kellert 91). Working-class patrons were labeled as unhygienic and unkempt, coarse in language and manners, and artful in dodging fares.[14] By 1900, though, working conditions had vastly improved—hours were shortened and wages were raised—and as a result third-class travel increased. Yet, as Kellett notes, despite "the impressive total numbers of passengers conveyed *per annum*, railway travel remained too expensive to be part of the daily life of the urban working class, even in the late 1890's"[15] (92-93). In his monumental *Life and Labour of the People in London*, Charles Booth writes that "[i]t is only the man whose position is assured . . . who can treat railway or tram fares as a regular item of his daily budget" (qtd. in Kellert 95). However, these conditions changed rapidly in the twentieth century. By 1911, Freeman relates, "the third class accounted for almost 96 per cent of total passenger carryings" (118). While Freeman admits that the railway helped to highlight class difference and thereby force the middle and upper classes to see an England of wider socioeconomic range, he contends that "this did not necessarily reduce or erase affiliations of

class" (116).

Instead, as the workers became more mobile and acquired more leisure time, they were seen as encroaching on landscapes and sites that the wealthier classes wished to preserve for private consumption. According to Simmons and Biddle, special "monster trains" designed for leisure outings gained popularity and notoriety from the early years of rail transport. One such monster train in 1844 was "said to have conveyed 6,600 passengers in 240 carriages hauled by nine engines," though it was "probably not in a single train" (150). Monster trains conveyed workers to such heterotopian sites as seaside resorts, sporting venues, racetracks, and other holiday locations away from Britain's urban centers. Their popularity led the *Railway Chronicle* to write in 1844 that they were "becoming our chief national amusement" (qtd. in Simmons and Biddle 150). Yet there was controversy about whether or not excursion trains were socially acceptable or merely another way for railway corporations to encourage "the poor to waste their money" (150). By the interwar period, monster trains had been replaced by smaller, inexpensive excursion trains for the working classes. The middle and upper classes, on the other hand, looked to coaches, cars, and luxury trains as more exclusive means to access leisure sites in Britain and Europe. Consequently, the train continued to be an ambivalent and contentious mode of transportation as it conveyed a wider range of passengers into urban and industrial centers for work as well as away from those centers for play and relaxation.

The interplay of work and leisure is expressed in *Stamboul Train* (1932), which won Graham Greene success as writer of popular thrillers that he later called "entertainments."[16] The novel's entertainment value was immediately highlighted. Alluding to a popular Hollywood film of the same year, the *Saturday Review* stated that *Stamboul Train* "is *Grand Hotel* all over again, only in this case Mr. Greene has used a train instead of a hotel" (qtd. in Thomson 58). Later

critics have followed suit by equating the novel with the film, a melodrama involving guests at an upscale Berlin hotel. Greene acknowledged the influence, yet an important difference has not been fully considered: Greene uses a train instead of a hotel. *Stamboul Train* was the first in a series of 1930s novels in which a diverse array of passengers travel on an international express train: others include Agatha Christie's *Murder on the Orient Express* (1934) and Cecil Roberts's romance *Victoria Four-Thirty* (1937). These mobile texts take Bennett's idea of interconnecting a railway journey and narrative progression and mobilize it on an international scale. Unlike *Accident*, which spotlights a single protagonist, these 1930s novels assemble and transport on a single track an array of characters with disparate identities, nationalities, histories, and objectives. Nevertheless, the thematic elements remain centralized on interwar British concerns. Yet, in the heterotopian space of the train's interior, these elements are detached from their immediate contexts and idealized, challenged, or subverted as the characters seek the fulfillment that they believe exists at the end of the line. If Greene offers an assembly of shifting characters, his mobile text also mixes in a single, forward-moving narrative various "serious" and "entertaining" styles and forms. Merging romance, suspense, and economic and political commentary, the train is a heterotopia of illusion that encloses a bundle of relations and collects multiple "real" sites which are inverted as fantasies. In its conflicts between serious employment and playful entertainment, the Orient Express functions both as a commuter train—offering characters a possible route to realizing or transacting obligations or business—and a leisure or excursion train—allowing them to temporarily escape, through the amusement of illusion, from their realities. I argue that *Stamboul Train* is a mobile text in that Greene's narrative purposefully alternates between the *work* of a serious novel and the *play* of popular entertainment. In other words, just as work is inverted as play in the heterotopian space of the train, so the novel

muddies distinctions between the two in its narrative. Written at a time when the expansion of transportation systems widened the distance between workplaces and leisure sites, *Stamboul Train* seeks to narrow the gap once more.

Historians have commonly remarked on how the interwar period continued the expansion of leisure time initiated in the nineteenth century, and with it grew an increasing sense of the necessity and separateness of "play." In *Britain in the 1930s*, for example, Andrew Thorpe relates that shorter hours and higher wages after the First World War led to "an unprecedented degree" of access to "time, money, and [leisure] provision" (102). Moreover, with the greater accessibility and enlargement of transportation networks, leisure spaces became further removed from workplaces and homes. Challenging the customary view of the 1930s, Thorpe asserts that the "sheer expansion of the range and output of leisure activities must temper, or even destroy, any view that the thirties was a decade of depression" (102). Thorpe here assumes the mutual exclusivity of work and leisure that became more pronounced in interwar Europe and was theorized by Dutch historian Johan Huizinga in *Homo Ludens* (1938), the influential book that effectively launched the modern study of play. Huizinga first stresses that "play is the direct opposite of seriousness" (5). For adults, it is "voluntary," "superfluous," and "done at leisure"; therefore, it is easily distinguishable from work and other social commitments, representing a "stepping out of 'real' life into a temporary sphere of activity with a disposition all of its own" (8). In this way, Huizinga's definitions of play closely mirror Foucault's principles of heterotopias. Like heterotopias, there are "certain limits of time and place" in play is "played out" (9). These "play-grounds" are notable for their "secludedness" and "limitedness" as well as for having their "own course and meaning," (9). Play-grounds include, for example, card tables, temples, stages, screens, law courts, arenas, and other types of "forbidden spots, isolated, hedged

round, hallowed, within which special rules obtain" (10). For Huizinga, all such play-grounds can be regarded as "temporary worlds within the ordinary world, dedicated to the performance of an act apart" (10). Heterotopias of play in literature are representational sites which exist apart from functional, everyday spaces and in which the active and temporal qualities of those spaces are contested, inverted, reversed in some manner.[17]

In *Stamboul Train*, the Orient Express is a mobile play-ground that inverts work as play, for, as I show below, within the train distinctions between the two are undermined. Characters on the train take up the idea of work and mobilized it as play, for when play "is in progress all is movement, change, alternation, succession, association, separation" (Huizinga 9). However, when work becomes play, it must lose value, since, Huizinga stipulates, play is "an activity connected with no material interest, and no profit can be gained by it" (13). Moving within but isolated from an exterior world dependent on production and consumption, politics and borders, the Orient Express affords illusions of work-as-fulfillment but does not allow it to become profitable once characters attempt to carry those illusions outside the interior space of the train. Hence the unprofitability of spiritualized work within the train—Huizinga frequently refers to play as "sacred"—translates to unproductivity outside where a disordered, chaotic, and materialistic world insists on its own reality. Written at time of global depression and of financial hardship in Greene's career as a novelist, *Stamboul Train* is deeply pessimistic about the possibility of fulfilling work. The dispiriting circumstances are registered, I suggest, in the novel's tension between "serious" work and "entertaining" play.

From the start of the novel, Greene sets up the mobile interior of the Orient Express as a play-ground for his main characters. One is Richard John, a mysterious British schoolteacher with a foreign accent who is actually an exiled Serbian communist named Dr. Czinner. His

double life immediately suggests a simultaneous distancing and blending of work and play: the dull seriousness of the conventionally English name Richard John is set against the more exotic wordplay of pseudo-Balkan name Dr. Czinner. An occupational identity opposes a revolutionary one even as they are united in one man. Embittered by a mundane existence in England, to which he fled when his work as a socialist agitator failed, Czinner boards the train to return to Belgrade and incite a proletarian revolution, thereby reviving his younger, radical, nonconformist identity. The Czinner/sinner pun becomes apparent as he travels (in a luxury train, no less!) to atone for his sin of betraying the workers by retreating to the safety of an English middle-class life. However, Czinner's plans are threatened when Mabel Warren—an awkwardly stereotyped homosexual journalist—recognizes him and decides, playfully perhaps, "to nail Czinner once and for all to the bill page of the paper, an exclusive crucifixion" (44). Mabel tries to discourage Czinner by reading an article about a failed communist plot in Belgrade the previous night.[18] The sobering news of external events momentarily spoils Czinner's vision of a triumphant return, reducing him to being "old and hopeless" as the "ghost of Czinner" (61). However, in the play-ground of the detached, heterotopian train, which seems to propel him toward his destination in spite of Mabel's interference, Czinner conjures up a courtroom in which he will eloquently speak his defense and inspire the proletariat to rise and follow him. Czinner's unfinished work again has forward momentum, and "the ghost of Czinner" feels once again "close to life" (62), yet his renewed prospect only has the potential for fulfillment in the enclosed, mobile railway car.

Naturally, Czinner neither reaches Belgrade nor does he reignite the revolution. If he remains committed to his vision of fulfillment within the Orient Express, his fantasy ends once he exits that "temporary sphere of activity" (Huizinga 8). At Subotica, just across the Hungarian-Serbian border, Czinner is arrested and imprisoned in the station, where he awaits a court-martial

for treason. Having been separated from his means of mobility, Czinner's identity and purpose deflate. Under trial, he nevertheless delivers the inspired and defiant speech originally envisioned for Belgrade, but "[h]is words halted; there was no audience to bear him up; and he became conscious of the artificiality of his words which did not bear witness to the great love and the great hate driving him on" (148). Whereas his train-bound imaginations of political employment hold an illusive promise of actualization, outside that mobile site they are rendered artificial. Immobilized within the transitional space of the station—between the fantasy of the express train and the reality of Belgrade—Czinner finds no possible outlet for his work. Although he briefly escapes and is once again mobile, he is shot and takes shelter in a dark, windowless shed, as the only exterior space available to him is marked as a void. The "ghost" of Czinner, which acquires an illusory materiality in the train, fades. As he lies dying, Czinner sees "the express in which they had travelled breaking the dark sky like a rocket," reasoning that his "faithfulness" to his revolutionary ideals has meant an inability "to retain his foothold on what was sometimes a ship and at other times a comet, the world itself, or only a fast train from Ostend to Istanbul" (167, 168). Put another way, he cannot match the world of his vision on the train, based on prewar political ideals, with the current realities he confronts outside of it. The interwar political climate, Greene's novel suggests, is not conducive to socialist ambitions, which remain realizable only in the imaginative play-ground of the express train. Brian Diemert explains that Greene's "scepticism about the aims of the Left" during the 1930s did not preclude him from espousing "a kind of ideal socialism able to guard and preserve the rights and dignity of the individual" within the collective (49). In Czinner, Greene confines idealizations of socialism within the train, while outside skepticism is given free rein.

Significantly, Czinner dies at a frontier, his body becoming a part of it. When he is

detained in the station, he knows that he will "be quickly tucked away in earth at the frontier station after dark, without publicity" (146). Also, during the trial, borders are a prominent theme. In his defiance, Czinner claims that he is not "fighting for . . . new territory but a new world" in which class boundaries are erased (148). He accuses the Serbian government of being "old-fashioned . . . with your frontiers and your patriotism. The aeroplane doesn't know a frontier; even your financiers don't recognize frontiers" (149). Czinner's rhetoric has little effect on the authoritarian Serbian officers, and yet its themes resonate with the novel. Czinner's speech idealizes a socially destratified, politically deterritorialized world, although his fatality suggests that borders, whether constructed along political, economic, or social lines, do not readily dissolve even in an age of advanced global mobility. As David R. A. Pearce states, "The 1930s was a decade of frontiers. Europe was at the same time both more accessible and more uneasy. Patrols, passports, politics, police. Frontiers imply both engagement and escape" (31). Greene surely draws attention to the hazards of a politically divided Europe—at a time when Britain was attempted to partition itself off from the continent—but his emphasis on frontiers also applies to his work as a novelist. Diemert argues that "Greene's texts exist on and investigate the border or the frontier of genre. Whether 'entertainments' or not, they embody a process of reflexive investigation that scrutinizes critical distinctions, between entertainment and novel, popular genre and literary genre, popular fiction and canonical literature, by challenging our methodology of reading" (12). In *Stamboul Train*, Greene generic play merges the "serious" and the "entertaining," or "high" and "low" culture, the separateness of which F. R. Leavis and others believed to be in crisis and wished to maintain. In Czinner, Greene unites the playful—his double identity, his fantasies of fulfillment—with the serious issues of English socialism, thus blending undisguised entertainment with apparent social-political commentary.

Stamboul Train also claims to cross socioeconomic and ethnic borders through the relationship between Coral Musker and Myatt Carleton. Coral boards the train to seek work as a music-hall dancer in Istanbul and, Greene implies, to escape economic depression in England, for she has "never been out of England" and is anxious about the "unwanted, dreaded adventure of a foreign land" (8). Her indigence and the forced mobility resulting from her financial state contrast with the situations of other passengers, especially Myatt, a prosperous Jewish currant trader traveling to Istanbul to enrich his business. As Elliott and Urry write, traveling can open up "a world of new threats" for women moving in predominantly "male (mobile) networks for global advancement" (4). In her second-class compartment, Coral is groped by the man seated next to her, and she escapes to meet Myatt, who offers her his coat and a berth in his first-class sleeper, a gesture she interprets as a commercial transaction requiring sexual favors for repayment. Yet Coral's expectation of being habitually sexualized by men pairs her with Myatt, whose Jewish ethnicity automatically determines how others treat him. Before boarding the express at Ostend, Myatt must hide beneath the "shade" of "grey nomad tents" formed by the locomotive's smoke in order to escape the "'*Juif, Juif,*'" of an anti-Semitic French customs officer (5). Thus concealed, Myatt "required no longer the knowledge of his fur coat, of his suit from Savile Row, his money or his position in the firm to hearten him" (5-6). These material objects, which are publicly read as markers of Jewishness rather than commercial skill or competence, are Myatt's means of coping when he emerges from seclusion and is "again in the centre of a hostile world" (6). If, at times, the novel sympathetically turns toward Myatt as a stigmatized other, it also evokes and reinforces the very stereotypes and prejudices to which it draws attention. Greene alludes to the Christian myth of the Wandering Jew, for example, when Myatt finds comfort within the Orient Express because "the route was familiar to him; the names

[of the places they pass] travelled back at the level of his eyes, like the spires of minarets, cupolas, or domes of the cities themselves, offering no permanent settlement to one of his race"[19] (6). In its representations of Myatt, the novel repeatedly traverses the line separating racial typecasting and sensitive depiction, Greene apparently being unable to commit to any stable perspective on his alterity. Therefore, *Stamboul Train* is an unsettled text that fluctuates between anti-Semitism and sympathy toward Jews as victims of racial prejudice. Nevertheless, Greene purposefully brings Coral and Myatt together as socially victimized characters even as he underscores the economic distance between them.

On the train, however, Greene presents an isolated heterotopia of illusion in which Coral and Myatt play out a relationship relatively free of social prejudices, although it is troubled in certain ways. While Myatt does not press Coral for sexual repayment, he chooses to "be princely on an Oriental scale, granting costly gifts and not requiring, not wanting, any return" (22). Ethnic identities are confused in the train, whether deliberately or inexpertly by Greene is not entirely clear, but Myatt draws from formulaic Orientalist discourse to explain his decision to "wash the feet of beggars and feed them from his own dish" (22). Still retaining a sense of his socioeconomic superiority, Myatt nonetheless seizes the opportunity to help Coral as a way to extravagantly contradict inculcated Western ideas of Jewishness. Similarly, Coral struggles against the "hard admonishments of old dry women of experience" that have taught her such platitudes as "There's only one thing a man wants" and "Don't take presents from a stranger" (38). Initially, Coral cannot see Myatt as more than just a "moneylender," having been warned by Mabel Warren that "Jews are not to be trusted" (65, 47). Yet once they overcome socialized notions of sexuality and race, Myatt and Coral carve a relationship outside of custom and experience in the mobile space of the train, even if that union still bases its value on financial and

social stability. Coral sleeps with Myatt because she envisions "a flat in Constantinople and her own bedroom and going to bed at ten," while Myatt sees in Coral a chance for social validation (111). As a "rich man's mistress," Coral believes she will have "comfort and permanence," and if she has a moment of "disbelief" it becomes "lost in the whistle of steam and the grinding of the wheels into motion" (132, 112). An interrogation of the serious issues of racism, sexism, and economic prosperity in a time of depression is yoked to a lightweight romance narrative that holds Coral and Myatt together as long as the Orient Express is in motion and the couple is on board. The heterotopian play-ground of the train allows them to continue a fantasy that temporarily negates class boundaries, racial compartmentalization, and gender discrimination.

As in Czinner's case, this fantasy ends when the train stops in Subotica, and the romance-narrative uniting Coral and Myatt diverges once again. Outside the train, Coral invites Czinner to a wedding celebration to be held in the train, but Serbian soldiers arrest her as the socialist doctor's accomplice. Imprisoned in the station, Coral tries desperately to return to the express and resume her romance-narrative. However, Myatt does not rescue her, the train leaves the station, and the racial and gender distinctions reassert themselves. Coral attempts to remain committed to Myatt, but it "was not long before she began to question [Myatt's] difference from all the other Jews she had known" (136-137). Like Czinner's revolutionary ideals, Coral's visions of fulfillment and financial stability dissipate when she leaves the train, and she becomes "frightened of the world outside, not of the soldiers, but of the agents, the long stairs, the landladies, the old life" of an impoverished chorus girl (168). But this reality of interwar Europe means the romance-narrative created and sustained within the train carries no value outside it. Coral's end is ambiguous, as she may have a heart attack, "fighting desperately at last against pain, against breathlessness, against a desire to cry out, against a darkness of the brain" (175).

Outside the train, Coral lacks purpose and mobility, depending upon Myatt to deliver her and once again mobilize their joined narrative. The gender-biased romantic fantasy on the train unambiguously conveys that a woman's fulfillment comes through heterosexual marriage and financial dependency on a male, but with Coral's demise all the social progressiveness of the novel comes to a grinding halt.[20]

Within the Orient Express, Myatt is faced with two apparently irreconcilable narratives. The first traces a route to financial gain through sound commercial decisions and international mobility; the second, as we have seen, charts a romance momentarily freed from social and class prejudice. The pairing of these two narratives in Myatt is problematic, and by the end of the novel the romance-narrative is subordinated to the one of commercial gain. Like Czinner's, Myatt's railway experience opens up a mobile space in which he can construct and maintain fantasies of work. In this safe, isolated play-ground away from the "hostile world," Myatt experiences "the moments he cherished, when he felt alone with himself, and feared no rebuff," as he "multiplied, divided, subtracted, seeing the long columns arrange themselves down the window, across which the transparent bodies of customs-officials and porters passed unnoticed" (138). In one sense, Myatt's calculated figures projected onto the compartment window transcend or supersede geopolitical frontiers—they mobilize Myatt across borders. However, Myatt's commercialized fantasy occurs while the train is stopped at Subotica, and the mentally projected figures on the window blind him to Coral's misfortune outside in the station. As a result, Myatt becomes lost, unable to follow through on the romance-narrative he begins with Coral. Once he realizes she is not on the train, Myatt hires a car to return to Subotica to find her, but when he arrives at the station his way is blocked by a Serbian soldier in whose "small hungry eyes shone hatred and a desire to kill" him because of his Jewish identity (155). Outside the play-

ground of the express train, Myatt again confronts a "hostile world" and is forced to give up his future with Coral, his only opportunity to pursue an alternative narrative to his commercially constructed one. As Brian Lindsay Thomson argues, Greene's readers are made to see that Myatt's "sense of self has become contingent upon the only system of relations available to him: the commercial sphere, the universe of 'figures'" (52). Greene's novel offers him a divergent track, but his work, playfully projected onto the interior of the train, disrupts his domestic fantasy.

Stamboul Train's alternations between serious social-political themes and entertaining suspense and romance form the blueprint for Greene's later thrillers. This combination of play and seriousness is illustrated when Mabel, investigating Czinner, steals "an old Baedeker published in 1914"[21] from Czinner's suitcase (48). Leafing through the travel guide, Mabel notices "lines and circles and triangles drawn in ink over the text" (49), markings which she discovers have revolutionary import when superimposed over a tourist map of Belgrade. This palimpsest aptly reproduces the work of Greene's novel in its merging of play (the tourist map and the marks, which resemble "a child's scribble") and seriousness (the text, which provides information about "an obscure town in Asia Minor") (49). For Mabel, the guide, the map, and the markings are all, in a sense, playthings that help her to decipher Czinner's employment. These play-markings correspond to two of Rabinowitz's narrative features: "rules of notice," which "give priority to certain kinds of details"; and "rules of signification," which "tell us how to recast or symbolize or draw the significance from the elements" highlighted by rules of notice (44). Mabel's reading of Czinner's Baedeker is analogous to the reading of Greene's novel. The playful act of detection that excites Mabel as she uncovers the political stratagem behind the seemingly whimsical symbols in the text mirrors the reader's engagement with the plot and details of Greene's narrative, which provide keys to what Stephen K. Land calls the "unified

underlying pattern of ideas at the heart of [Greene's] fiction" (2). In this way, *Stamboul Train* becomes itself a kind of heterotopia that represents the external act and space of reading fiction. The work of interpretation is inverted in the novel as a form of play.

After writing *Stamboul Train*, Greene saw the need to distinguish play from work in his own writing by separating his "entertainments," often thrillers, from serious "novels," which generally dealt with Catholic themes and were perceived as superior. This need was at least in part shaped by popular and critical responses to his work. Greene did not classify *Stamboul Train* as his first "entertainment" until several years after its publication and adaptation as a film. As Diemert explains, "Greene's selective use of the label 'entertainment' implies a difference between two kinds of texts," a difference that is often regarded as "both generic and qualitative" (6-7). Diemert cites critics who have traditionally maintained that "the novels express 'the serious preoccupation with religious and ethical problems' while the 'secular' entertainments subordinate these concerns to 'plot, action, and melodrama'" (8). This view has recently been expressed by Murray Roston, who excludes from his study of Greene's narrative strategies the "entertainments" because they "did not deal with the concerns confronting [Greene] as a serious novelist" (12-13). Roger Sharrock, however, has opposed facile categorization of Greene's work, noting that the author "eventually and properly . . . dropped the distinction" (12). In Sharrock's view, Greene's "greatest technical achievement has been the elevation of the form of the thriller into a medium for serious fiction" (12).

Regardless of Greene's intentions or later capitulations to widespread critical views of his work, *Stamboul Train* is unique in its endeavor to merge the work of serious writing in the 1930s with the entertaining features of the thriller genre in the play-ground of the heterotopian train-novel. Yet the conversion of serious social and political issues into play in the Orient Express

does not devalue those issues or the novel. Instead, it illustrates the value of the railway as a metaphorical device in interwar British literature, one which allows simultaneous evasion and confrontation with an external world marked by disorder and turmoil. As Tyrus Miller suggests, late modernist writers did not abandon social contexts; rather, their "literary structures tottered uneasily between vexed acknowledgement and anxious disavowal of social facts" (32). Aligning narrative with the railway, *Stamboul Train* as a mobile text is unsettled in its representations of interwar Europe, alternating between restorative illusions and frustrating realities.

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[1] See p. 200. The quotation comes from a revised edition of Williams's book originally published in 1904.

[2] In *Critical Writings*, 65.

[3] Carter stipulates that "such a novel would have to be canonical: admired, discussed and taught by academic literary critics" (6).

[4] For a reproduction of the poster, see Cole and Durack 25.

[5] In 1932, UPL also published *Rush Hour*, which promised "unceasing thrills and fascination." The objective is to collect sets of six identical cards and shout out "home." However, "Obstruction cards" such as "Fog" and "Breakdown" can be played to block another person's turn. This game also illustrates the interplay between the thrill of speed and progress and the anxiety when mobility is impeded.

[6] Furthermore, as Paul Fussell points out in *The Great War and Modern Memory*, "Directional and traffic control signs were everywhere in the trenches, giving the whole system the air of a parody modern city, although one literally 'underground'" (43). Such correspondences between the war landscape and the cityscape seem to transform the concept of transportation—particularly rail transport—into a form of sinister and imprisoning mobility. A major at the front wrote that the "trenches are a labyrinth, I have already lost myself repeatedly. . . . you can't get out of them or see anything at all but two muddy walls on each side of you" (qtd. in Fussell 51). It is no wonder that, as Welsh reports, the London Underground took on hellish connotations following the war.

[7] Welsh relates that "4.25 million people used [the underground] in the four years of the war in response to 31 aerial attacks" (159).

[8] The edition that I use in this chapter is the Americanized version of the play, first published in 1931. While the plot and characters remain the same, some of the dialogue was altered to create

a New England setting and to give characters more American occupations and mannerisms. Unfortunately, the original English version is not readily available in the United States.

[9] Carter concedes, though, that *Accident* is "no masterpiece" and that it "may be less satisfying than Arnold Bennett's best work" (157). But he insists that it deserves more critical respect than it currently receives.

[10] Readers of *Accident* may infer that Bennett includes the stoppage to set up the later collision, since Alan hopes that a "train misfortune in England would somehow render less likely an accident in France" (20).

[11] Bennett visited France in June and July of 1915. In his journals, he carefully and succinctly jots down the details of a country clearly altered by war. For example, he notes "[s]cores and scores" of makeshift graves in fields, "Always a small white flag. Not always a name" (137). At Ypres, Bennett sits "in a shell-hole to do sketch" of the mostly destroyed Ypres Market Square, where he records "[a]eroplanes overhead" and "English guns booming. Fitments in houses creaking and rattling and cracking. Houses full of disordered belongings" (139).

[12] This passivity in the face of uncontrollable destruction is also apparent in Bennett's journal entries during the war. He repeatedly reports stories about Zeppelin raids on London. One memorable entry details his wife's experience in a June 13, 1917 air raid in which more than 150 were killed and over 400 injured. Marguerite is in a train when the attack destroys the rear, and she "remembered nothing more till she 'found herself' near underground lavatory, where people were taking refuge" (200).

[13] See, for example, the first chapter of Erich Maria Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1929) as well as H. G. Wells's wartime novel *Mr. Britling Sees It Through* (1916). For Alan's thoughts about having seen it through, see pp. 182-183.

[14] Freeman, however, explains, "Railway proprietors ran third-class trains only as a concession 'for the advantage of the poorer classes,' not as a source of profit," especially after the 1844 Railway Regulation Act "compelled the running of cheap trains with fares of no more than one penny a mile (henceforth these were commonly known as 'Parliamentary trains')" (110, 111). Additionally, class segregation extended to "ancillary railway facilities" such as "separate entrances, booking-halls and waiting-rooms," or even, later on, "different classes of refreshment room, lavatories and other standard offices" (111). Based on this evidence, Freeman concludes that "although the railway station might be seen as a spatial arena in which the different orders of society came face to face, very deliberate efforts were actually made to keep them apart" (111).

[15] Kellett adds, "In London itself at the turn of the century there cannot have been, on the most generous estimate, more than 250,000 commuters by rail out of a population touching six and a half million" (95).

[16] The novel was published under the title *Orient Express* in the United States. In this chapter, I quote from the 2004 Penguin edition, which takes the American title. However, I continue to use the original title of *Stamboul Train* in my analysis.

[17] Interestingly, Huizinga admits that the distinction between play and seriousness breaks down at times. Although aware that play implies pretending, players may still move forward "with the utmost seriousness, with an absorption, a devotion that passes into rapture" (8). In other words, play might transport players to a point where seriousness and play become indistinguishable or even synonymous. The terms Huizinga uses—"devotion," "rapture"—suggests that play can be raised to quasi-religious importance for a circle of participants. Huizinga continues: "Any game can at any time wholly run away with the players. The contrast between play and seriousness is always fluid. The inferiority of play is continually being offset by the corresponding superiority of its seriousness. Play turns to seriousness and seriousness to play" (8).

[18] For commentary on Greene's novel in relation to the historical context of British relations with Serbia, see Andrew Hammonds's book *British Literature and the Balkans: Themes and Contexts* (2010).

[19] Thomson admits the "troubling influence of Shylock" in the novel but believes "the use the narrative makes of Myatt hinges on both the reader's awareness of the stereotype of the Jew and his willingness not to judge Myatt on the basis of his ethnic background" (51).

[20] As if to underscore and satirize the breakdown of meaningful heterosexual relationships, Greene introduces a counternarrative to Coral's dependency on Myatt. At the last moment, Mabel Warren shows up and finds not only a story (Czinner's death) but also an opportunity to rescue Coral. The section ends with Mabel's imagining "Coral in pyjamas pouring out coffee, Coral in pyjamas mixing a cocktail, Coral asleep in the redecorated and rejuvenated flat" (176). Greene's portrayal of Mabel as a predatory lesbian is certainly disturbing, and he seems to add this scene as a way to implicitly condemn Myatt for not saving Coral and providing for her. The sexual and gender politics of the novel are often ill-fashioned and entrenched in hegemonic masculinity. Greene seems to suggest that any alternative to a conventionally monogamous, opposite-sex marriage is as outrageous as his characterization of Mabel.

[21] The date of the travel guide, of course, marks the start of the First World War, when Austria invaded Serbia after Archduke Franz Ferdinand's assassination in Sarajevo. That year also marks the decline of Marxist Social Democratic politics in Serbia and is presumably around the time when Czinner flees the country.

CHAPTER 2

"Across the Misty Spaces of the Intervening World":

Railway Mobility, Circulation, and Empire in *The Waves*

> But surely it is time that someone should sing the praises of express trains. Their comfort, to begin with, sets the mind free, and their speed is the speed of lyric poetry, inarticulate as yet, sweeping rhythm through the brain, regularly, like the wash of great waves.
> —Virginia Woolf, "Chateau and Country Life" (1908)[1]

> Lifts rise and fall; trains stop, trains start as regularly as the waves of the sea.
> —Jinny in *The Waves* (1931)[2]

> How strange to feel the line that is spun from us lengthening its fine filament across the misty spaces of the intervening world.
> —Bernard in *The Waves*[3]

Railway mobility and speed, as I argue in the first chapter, are purposefully aligned with the rhythms of narrative in interwar fiction. Unlike authors such as Arnold Bennett, who highlight the shocks and vibrations of the machine ensemble, Virginia Woolf attributes a distinct lyricism and cadence to the railway, which she playfully invests with a sense of rapture or becoming in her fiction. David Harvey has proposed that "modernity is about the experience of progress through modernization, [and] writings on that theme have tended to emphasize temporality, the process of *becoming*, rather than *being* in space and place" (205). Indeed, transportation regularly exhibits aspects of fluidity and change in Woolf's novels. In *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), for instance, Elizabeth's impromptu excursion in London occurs on one of the buses that "swooped, settled, were off," transport mimicking the avian imagery that frequents Woolf's writing (131).

As she contemplates professions for women, Elizabeth's unwritten future is figured in the exploratory connotations of the vehicle: "to each movement of the omnibus the beautiful body in the fawn-coloured coat responded freely like a rider, like the figurehead of a ship" (132). In *The Years* (1937), Eleanor travels by rail, observing that "things were moving past her as she lay stretched on the bed. . . . But it's not the landscape any longer, she thought; it's people's lives, their changing lives" (200). Woolf reiterates this link between transportation and biography when Kitty translates the "perpetual faint vibration" of her train into a "passing from one world to another . . . a moment of transition" (256). These examples illustrate that the rhythms of transportation in Woolf's fiction are closely intertwined with the patterns and motions of human existence.

In this chapter, I examine the "sweeping rhythms," the rises and falls, stops and starts, of the train in *The Waves*, which Woolf transforms into much more than a mere vehicle or mobile setting, for it is, as in the railway novels of the previous chapter, deliberately interwoven with the very fabric and structure of the narrative. I propose that the train's mobility and speed propel the lives and objectives of Woolf's characters, both as individuals and as a community, even as its paradoxically linear and circular motion hints at the formal qualities of the narrative. My first proposition connects, I believe, to the historical context of Woolf's novel, a time in which a declining empire and a politically tenuous Europe caused Britain to question its global identity as it debated forms of collectivization—in the League of Nations and European integration—and individualization—in a turn to protectionism and domestic policy. My second proposition, on the other hand, contends that for Woolf, as she suggests in the above epigraphs, the railway stands alongside the waves as a controlling figure for the dynamics of her narrative. In *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Michel de Certeau relates that in Athens "the vehicles of mass transportation are

called *metaphorai*," and hence, when one commutes, "one takes a 'metaphor'—a bus or a train" (115). Similarly, de Certeau argues, "[e]very story is a travel story," and regardless of whether stories are "everyday or literary," they "serve us as means of mass transportation, as *metaphorai*" (115). If the train in *The Waves* operates as a unifying vehicle that conveys and weaves together the lives of the six main characters, it is also a narrative trope, a form of mass transport that also carries readers across the intervening space between the beginning and conclusion of the novel.

If transportation, as is apparent in the previous and next chapters, is predominantly aligned with male perspectives, Woolf convincingly appropriates the technologies for women's mobility. In "Chateau and Country Life," Woolf reviews Mary King Waddington's account of her travels by rail as a foreign diplomat's spouse, a situation that allowed Waddington to cross boundaries that had been largely closed to women of previous generations. In her recent study of nineteenth-century women writers in Germany, Beth Muellner maintains that "the introduction of railway travel ended the elitism of Grand Tour travel," not only expanding the mobility of the growing middle and working classes but also offering to women (who had the means and leisure to travel) the opportunity to become "[s]ome of the shrewdest and most attentive travel writers" (29). Woolf's enthusiasm for railway speed in "Chateau and Country Life" surely stems from this unprecedented mobility for women, an enthusiasm that frequently carries into her fiction as she links transportation to careers for women, as when Elizabeth rides the bus, and to fluidities of gender, identity, temporality, as when Orlando "jumped into her motor car, pressed the self-starter and was off" (219). Given that Woolf wrote at a time of rapid social, artistic, and technological unsettlement and change, it is no surprise that the theme of mobility recurs as she depicts characters and events in transition. There is a significant amount of traffic in Woolf's fiction: transportation circulates themes within and between texts; draws characters together and

moves them apart, connecting them by "spider's thread[s] of attachment" (*Mrs. Dalloway* 112); merges pasts with presents; and shapes narratives and dissolves language. Although Woolf may not always sing the praises of express trains, her treatment of mobile, transitional subjects finds in the railway an apt *metaphorai* for the rhythms and speed of twentieth-century modernity.

Additionally, railway mobility creates pathways to modernist forms of artistic expression in Woolf's fiction. In the short story "The Mark on the Wall" (1917), the narrator recollects the previous occupants of her house, a couple who values "an old picture for an old room" (77). When the man proposes that "art should have ideas behind it," the narrator feels "torn asunder, as one is torn from the old lady about to pour out tea and the young man about to hit the tennis ball in the back garden of the suburban villa as one rushes past in the train" (77). As the collision of aesthetic principles in this scene is refigured in the static Englishness of the suburb and the fluid motion of the railway, Woolf plays one artistic style or narrative form against another. On the one hand, the narrator's simile pits inert bourgeois taste (signified by the tableau of the middle-class suburban villa) against the dynamic, vaguely Cubist, fragmenting of the mobile subject.[4] Furthermore, the railway's urgent movement away from the implied fixity of the suburban landscape suggests a transitional and unsettled, if linear, narrative in contrast to the conventional, stable story of the leisured, middle-class pair. Woolf thus borrows railway mobility in order to express her impatience with outmoded forms and styles and to show that the modern artist must dislocate herself from conventionality. Yet, importantly, in any argument for change or depiction of transition, that which is being discarded cannot be eliminated. The suburban garden is as integral to the picture as the passing train—without it transition has no meaning. In her frequent uses of transitional mobility, Woolf cannot help but convey this ambivalence. For this reason, the railway is an especially vital transportational metaphor in her fiction. It is, as I show below, both

linearly progressive and complicatedly circular, and hence it allows Woolf simultaneously to express her indebtedness to the past narrative forms that she wishes to transcend and to capture the dynamism of speed and circulation that is appropriate to modern subjectivities and art. As heterotopias that represent and contest British social, imperial, and literary history, railway sites in *The Waves* offer spaces for various forms of play.

Many critics view modernist fiction in the context of the mechanization of social activity, and some have addressed the relevance of transport technology to Woolf's work. In *Moving through Modernity*, Andrew Thacker notes that a "key feature of modernism" was transportation, which "emphasised a sense of movement" and was integrated into "some of the experimental forms of modernist writing" (7, 8). While he discusses certain types of transport—buses, trams, the tube, automobiles—Thacker's approach relies more on the spatial theories of Henri Lefebvre, de Certeau, and others to understand the representational spaces in which and through which mobility occurs in literature. While he acknowledges the train as a "speeding symbol of the experience of modernity itself" (153), Thacker spotlights the automobile, which, as a vehicle with exploratory possibilities, "symbolises an absolutely modern experience" (175). Likewise, in "Virginia Woolf and the Age of Motor Cars," Makiko Minow-Pinkney argues that the motorcar is a superior "metaphorical device" due to its "liberating power" and "flexible, individualistic, and self-destined" mobility (162). Minow-Pinkney insists that Woolf privileges the car over the train, whose "linear railway tracks, time tables, and fixed destinations" make it unsuitable as a "liberatory trope for non-linear thought and narrative forms" (162, 163). Stephen Kern has also suggested that Woolf "believed that it was the writer's obligation to go beyond 'the formal railway line of a sentence,'" which he connects to Woolf's denigration in her diary of the "'appalling narrative business of the realist'" (31). Even Rachel Bowlby, who reads the railway

as a positive trope in Woolf's essay "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown" (1924), admits that by the 1920s "the imagery of public transport had become literally a commonplace for suggesting the repetitive and banal 'types' of realist fiction" (4).

While these arguments may have certain validity, Woolf is far less dismissive of the railway, which, as I have shown above, holds much thematic and formal potential for her writing. In *The Waves*, Woolf does not simply represent the railway in terms of linear movement and standardized time. Instead, I propose that because of complementary notions of linearity and circulation associated with the train, railway spaces in Woolf's novel become creative heterotopias social and textual play and resistance. If the railway, as Wolfgang Schivelbusch insists in his influential study *The Railway Journey*, was perceived as an "[a]nnihilation of time and space" and a mode of transportation that "created its own new spatiality" (10), then it offers Woolf a vehicle in which she can represent, invert, and subvert the themes of her novel. While Schivelbusch is primarily concerned with the railway experience in the nineteenth century, his work is central to my readings of *The Waves*. Contrary to the common assumption that the significance of railway travel diminished as people became habituated to its spatial and temporal effects, Woolf's novel evidences that many of its initial social implications and physical and psychical pressures, though internalized by twentieth century, were indeed still relevant to interwar Britain. It is Woolf's focus on her characters' interiorities that allows her to extract, as if by hypnosis, these repressed impacts and responses to railway mobility. In *Mobilities*, John Urry argues that "modernity" properly begins with the steam engine, "that moment when enormously powerful machines are imbricated within human experience" (93). Woolf's novel demonstrates that, nearly one hundred years after the introduction of mass rail transport, human subjectivities continue to be inextricably enmeshed with railway travel.

In *The Waves*, Woolf centralizes her representations of railway interiors—compartments, carriages, and stations—on social interactivity and individualized play, which have particular significance in the heterotopian in-betweenness of these spaces. Urry calls these interior spaces "new sites of sociability" that raised the problem of "maintain[ing] appropriate social distance" (104, 106). As Lynne Kirby has shown, the notion of the train compartment as a "self-contained stage for romance, seduction, and crime" was exploited in silent films at least up to the 1920s (83). Within the circumscribed boundaries of railway spaces, Woolf's characters can experience exhilaration as well as anxiety as they move between places, people, moments, events, epochs, and even life and death. In *Feminist Destinations*, Bowlby recognizes that the train in "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown" has an "ambiguous status as a form of communication between two points, whether they be historical moments, novelistic conventions, the two sexes, the two ladies (who never speak to one another), or the writer and the readers to whom the communication of Mrs Brown is no straightforward manner" (4). For Bowlby, Mrs. Brown's railway journey opens up a multitude of possible significations, revealing an orientation in Woolf's work away from coercive (masculine) narration and toward feminist modes of writing.[5] While Bowlby is concerned with the destinations afforded by the metaphorical train, my purpose in this chapter is to investigate the various forms of communication that occur in *The Waves* in relation to the railway and between two points of the novel's beginning and ending. In the in-between space of the novel, the railway becomes a potent vehicle for interrogating interwar Britain's national and imperial identity, economic viability, and role in European politics. Woolf's characters are continuously on the move in *The Waves*, and the railway epitomizes their frustrations in finding lodgment, representing and contesting the anxieties of an unsettled interwar Britain.

Crossing Thresholds: Mobility and Play in and between Railway Stations

In *Underground Writing: The London Tube from George Gissing to Virginia Woolf*, David Welsh regards the two named authors in his title as the premier "cartographer[s] of the Tube" in British literature (9). Welsh suggests that Gissing routinely depicts the London underground as a dark and demonic figure: "a metaphor for the psychological inferno into which Gissing pitched characters that were condemned to travel in endless circles" (1). Woolf, on the other hand, represents the tube "to explore ideas about alienation, personal space and debates around individual and collective identity" (9). Her keen interest in railway and underground travel, Welsh suggests, must be placed in the context of an early-twentieth-century cultural and artistic movement that he labels "Tubism," which was "an aesthetic cluster that brought together ideas, images, literary and visual genres and the technology of electric power in a shifting and often contradictory form," and which "signified that the underground was a machine for travelling in, a vast and unified public space through which travel, everyday communication, cultural exchange, business and pleasure could be routed" (144-145). Drawing on the Futurists, Welsh explains that in the interwar years the tube was closely identified with London and its future as a modern metropolis. Penetrating deeper into subterranean urban space, the railway acquired fresh cultural significance for twentieth-century Britons, again becoming an evocative figure of modernization and progress. While certainly true, Welsh's reading is somewhat forced, as many of Woolf's representations of the railway in *The Waves* are, in fact, above-ground trains, which share the same characteristics that Welsh defines as unique to "Tubism." Nevertheless, it may be that the Tubist mentality evolved from earlier perspectives on railway travel even as it contributed to new attitudes toward the old technology. From the first representations of the railway in *The Waves*, it becomes clear that trains function as heterotopias in which "travel,

everyday communication, cultural exchange, business and pleasure" are mobilized as playful but unsettled concepts while the main characters progress through their lives.

Woolf's second set of monologues, delivered as the six characters pass from nursery to boarding school, captures their second wave of development, and the train becomes Woolf's vehicle to transport her characters (and the narrative) through their sequence of stages. As they move between stations, Woolf uses the in-between space to elicit subtle modulations in their identities and the personal and social crises they face as they mature. Thus, railway stations constitute important transitional sites in the novel. Kirby sees the station as "the most visible and monumental cultural mask for the railroad," forming a "microcosm of society in its channeling of bodies and its regulation of crowd flows" (82). Similarly, Schivelbusch defines the train station as a "gateway" connecting "two entirely different realms" with "two very different kinds of traffic and traffic space": the traditional urban districts and the industrialized avenues of transport (173, 174). Entering a station to board a train could thus suggest a transition from urban to industrial space as well as a temporal link between the past of one's starting point to the imagined future of one's destination. If we consider mass travel in terms of distinct spatiotemporalities, the station funnels people with many pasts and from many spaces into the single, mobile present space of the train, until another station reverses the flow, dispersing the temporarily unified mass of people to their separate destinations and futures.[6] Urry puts it more matter-of-factly, seeing stations and trains in films and literature as "places of unexpected social interchange as people's lives from distant parts are continually brought together, often only for 'brief encounters' before the characters move away (or home) again" (109). As an entrance to railway space, then, the station is a heterotopian site where time-space as well as social relations are in flux.

Keeping these characteristics in mind, we can better understand Bernard's transition to boarding school as he stands within the "awful portals of the station," which marks a narrowing passage from the free play of the nursery to the precise obligations of the school (21). Yet in the station Bernard momentarily occupies an in-between space that allows him to match his verbal play against the controlled movement toward greater social responsibility. To resist this passage into a more standardized spatiotemporality, Bernard begins to jest, inventing the phrase "the moon-faced clock regards me" to creatively transform the station clock, signifier of railway time and hence of social order, precision, and duty, into a plaything, a lyrical object (20). Bernard neutralizes the authoritarian gaze of the clock, temporarily mastering it by imprisoning it in the realm of language. His gaze trumps his enforced mobility—his forward spatiotemporal progression—and asserts a momentary sovereignty. According to Harvey, "Any system of representation," such as language, "is a spatialization of sorts which automatically freezes the flow of experience and in so doing distorts what it strives to represent" (206). In the railway station, Bernard freezes time in language, thereby distorting and subverting the scheduled narrative of life, if only momentarily, by de-facing its temporality. For the young Bernard, verbal play turns the station into a heterotopia of compensation: "I must make phrases and phrases and so interpose something hard between myself and the stare of housemaids, the stare of clocks, staring faces, indifferent faces, or I shall cry" (20). Railway station and interiors offer Bernard sites in which he might resist the authority that compels him to move (toward death, he eventually realizes), an in-between space in which to "interpose" language.

The centrality of time to this scene points to Henri Bergson's conceptualization of human consciousness as the interplay between *temps* (time) and *durée* (duration). In *Time and Free Will*, Bergson explains the difference between time, which is quantifiable and therefore measurable,

and duration, which we experience as extensity. Bergson suggests that if one watches "on the dial of a clock the movement of a hand," one does "not measure duration" but "merely count[s] simultaneities, which is different" (107-108). The externality of clock time means that it can only exist, on the level of pure observation, as "a single position of the hand" (108). Yet against this external time there is within the human mind "a process of organization or interpenetration of conscious states . . . going on, which constitutes true duration" (108). Because the observer internally "*endures*," he or she can summon memories to supplement the present moment (can conjure mental pictures of past positions of the clock hand, for instance) and give it duration. As this example suggests, Bergson opposes *temps*, which is perceived as a spatial progression (i.e. the movement of the clock hand) and *durée*, which is the extension of consciousness in time. In *The Waves*, then, we see in the station Bernard's resistance to *temps*, which is spatiotemporally figured in the railway. Against this imposed external time, communicated spatially by the clock, Bernard mentally creates his narrative, which adds duration to standardized time by extending the moment in the form of a story. In *Matter and Memory*, Bergson suggests that the "real, concrete, live present" involves "both a perception of the immediate past and a determination of the immediate future" (176, 177). The body, Bergson argues, is "the place where impressions received choose intelligently the path they will follow to transform themselves into movements accomplished . . . it indeed represents the actual state of [one's] becoming, that part of [one's] duration which is in process of growth" (178). Bernard, like the other characters, has tracks laid down for him that follow certain social obligations and expectations, and the primary tensions as he and the others grow arise from their resistance or acquiescence to those routes. These tensions are routinely confronted and contested in the heterotopian spaces of the railway.

Additionally, as Bernard matures, railway stations become sites in which confrontations

of the collective and the individual, thematically integral to Woolf's novel, are replayed and scrutinized. While London stations are featured throughout the novel, one that Woolf specifically names is Euston Station (81), which, until the 1960s, was a British landmark with its influential blending of classical and industrial design. Its dominant feature was Euston Arch, a monumental gateway designed in 1837 by railway architect Philip Hardwick and based on Greco-Roman styles traced back to the Acropolis. Euston was further modernized in 1907 when the City and South London Railway built a tube station underneath. In *The Waves*, as the underground train enters Euston Station and the passengers exit, Bernard observes, "Hurry and confusion and the wish to be first through the gate into the lift assert themselves. But I do not wish to be first through the gate, to assume the burden of individual life" (81). Woolf clearly renders Euston Station as a transitional gateway between collectivization inside the train and individualization in the metropolis. Bernard wishes to delay this move from the railway carriage, a confined, communal heterotopia that unifies passengers in their "one desire—to arrive at the station" (80). Urban London, on the other hand, is a diffuse, commercial space where inhabitants "assume the burden of individual life" and are ruled by their myriad desires, identities, and obligations. The heterotopian railway carriage thus inverts external space, giving, for a while, a collective coherence to an otherwise disordered and differentiated public. However, like heterotopias the train and the station are representational and transitory—unsettled sites that are only passed through or temporarily occupied. The pull of social obligation carries Bernard through Euston Station and into the disordered circulation of individualized identities and desires. Importantly, though, Bernard's passage through Euston Station is also necessary to reach Percival's farewell dinner in the restaurant—another heterotopian space that is, in fact, an extension or replica of the railway interior as the six characters temporarily unify in Percival's presence, only to disperse

again into separate individualities (after Percival's death). Woolf strategically opens the chapter with the railway in order to frame the restaurant meeting in terms of the fragility and impermanence of maintaining an imagined community.

Like Bernard, Susan resists institutionalized time and space, and instead identifies with the assumed genuineness of a conventionally English agricultural and maternal existence. To her, school is "false" and "meretricious" (22). A source of her agony, like Bernard's, is an institutional spatiotemporality, a forced emphasis on *temps* spatially figured by the calendar from which she "tear[s] off the old day . . . and screw[s] it tight into a ball" (27). Not having Bernard's verbal creativity, though, she attacks the calendar "vindictively," resolving to "revenge myself upon the day" and to "wreak my spite upon its image" (27). If Bernard challenges public time and social obligation with phrase-making, Susan counters them by retreating into an imagined rural England, a pastoral site where "the hay waves," "the summer air puffs along," a "petal drops," and "farm wagons strew the hedges with tufts of hay" (28). But the school immobilizes Susan as her crumpled calendar forms "a weight in my side. They have been crippled days, like moths with shrivelled wings unable to fly," a perverse grounding of her rural selfhood (37). Clearly, Susan requires the English countryside to stand apart as a signifier of genuineness, a place where she can recuperate a local identity or *aura*. Yet to reach that rural England, where she might attain self-fulfillment, Susan depends on the train, symbol of industrial England. Rail transport is thus reshaped to provide passage to an idealized rural England many in interwar Britain felt had been lost in the process of modernization, a context that I explore further in the next chapter. From her train compartment, Susan observes that "men in these fields are doing *real* things; they fill carts with *real* hay; and those are *real* cows, not school cows" (43, emphasis added). Susan assumes an authenticity to a rural existence that remains isolated from the

artificiality of institutional time and space in London.

These two supposed antithetical realms thus imply two distinctive temporalities. Drawing from writings by Emile Durkheim, Kern notes that "[s]ocieties organize their lives in time and establish rhythms that then come to be uniformly imposed as a framework for all temporal activities. Thus 'a calendar expresses the rhythm of the collective activities, while at the same time its function is to assure their regularity'" (19-20). Susan's defacement of her calendar might then be seen as a reactionary exercise against what she perceives to be an unnatural temporality brought about not only by industrialization but by collectivization. But, ironically, Susan's recovery of a "real" existence in rural England is predicated upon a collectivizing technology and coercive timetable. Susan's movements in public transportation between London and her rural home allow Woolf to subvert polar opposites such as country and city, settlement and mobility, and organic and inorganic identities. These polarities are examined in relation to railway themes and spaces. For example, Susan anticipates her journey home from school by expressing it in terms of the calendar and timetable, which she has already rejected as signifiers of artificial spatiotemporality. Susan states, "There are only eight days left. In eight days' time I shall get out of the train and stand on the platform at six-twenty-five. Then my freedom will unfurl, and all these restrictions that wrinkle and shrivel—hours and order and discipline, and being here and there exactly at the right moment—will crack asunder" (37). In these lines, Woolf underscores Susan's paradoxical hostility towards and dependency on devitalized time. Kern also writes that "as the railroads destroyed some of the quaintness and isolation of rural areas, so did the imposition of universal public time intrude upon the uniqueness of private experience in private time" (34). Susan's desire to retreat from urban England and its restrictions reveals that her deep-seated fear in the novel is of the "universal public time" that destroys "uniqueness" and replaces

it with a uniformity that dissolves the individual in the social collective.

While Susan's passage between the city and the country via the railway exposes tensions between the urban-industrial and the rural, it is important also to note links between the train and empire. Jane Marcus has famously argued that "*The Waves* is about the ideology of white British colonialism and the Romantic literature that sustains it" (145). In representing and critiquing the rise and fall of the British Empire—signaled by the celebration and death of Percival, the development and demise of Bernard as white, male author, and the progression from sunrise to sunset in the interludes—Woolf's novel, Marcus maintains, "investigates the origin of cultural power in the generation or group formed by the British public school and in its values" (142). Patrick McGee, however, has cogently questioned Marcus's claim that *The Waves* primarily critiques Bernard's role as (white) male poet and celebrant of an imperialist Britain. While acknowledging that the novel scrutinizes the cultural production of empire, McGee counters that the novel "presents the European subject as a differentiated structure of relationships that are irreducible to a unitary or transcendental signifier," an "impossibility" that is expressed in the voiceless figure of Percival (644). My reading suggests that Bernard may commemorate empire by eulogizing Percival and participating in the community built around him, but his resistance to authoritarian structures (which predates his introduction to Percival) and his stories caricaturing Percival reveal a more complex figure than a mere advocate for imperial hegemony. Nevertheless, Bernard's desire to maintain an imagined community and unitary purpose in railway spaces is at first aligned with the imperial figure of Percival, whose death signals the demise of that community.

Yet it is Neville, poet, scholar, and Arnoldian protector of the best that has been thought and known, who intimately identifies with Percival and the cultural capital of an imperial ethos.

On his approach to a London railway station, a gateway to the next stage of his education, Neville feels both "fear" and "exultation" (51). His sublime emotional response appears to stem from a perceived spatial extension as the "train slows and lengthens" in the London station, which sits at the "centre of the civilised world" (51, 50). Neville's anxiety and disorientation in the hub of British Empire reproduces the railway's spatial illusion of the the nation's—or, as Woolf makes clear, the empire's—"contraction into a metropolis," a shrinkage that also "conversely appeared as an expansion of the metropolis" (Schivelbusch 35). As Ronald E. Robinson has shown, British expansionists regarded "the locomotive as the main engine of imperialism" in its capacity for subsuming distant and often resistant territories into the imperial apparatus (3). While Neville anticipates some "extraordinary adventure," he "feel[s] insignificant, lost, but exultant" while waiting to "emerge into that chaos, that tumult" of the station and the metropolis to which it leads (51). If for Bernard passage through the station signifies the unwanted dispersal of a unified collective into separate individualities, for Neville that passage means transitioning from the train's interior space, which contracts empire to a point, to the exterior space of the metropolis, which expands empire into a diffusive array of peoples, cultures, and locales. Like Bernard, Neville is able to create a fantasy of wholeness and unity in the heterotopian space of the railway.

Woolf purposefully recalls the waves crashing on the shore—a motif of the interludes—in her description of Neville's arrival in London. As it enters the station, the train causes a "huge uproar" that "sounds and resounds under this glass roof like the surge of a sea" (51). This is an explicit coupling of the train and the waves, and Woolf emphasizes the violence and disintegration of self as the speed and mobility of the train are suddenly arrested: "We are cast down on the platform with our handbags. We are whirled asunder. My sense of self almost

perishes; my contempt. I become drawn in, tossed down, thrown sky-high. I step out on to the platform, grasping tightly all that I possess—one bag" (51). Woolf's imagery in this passage conflates a railway accident and a shipwreck or near-drowning.[7] The phrases "cast down," "whirled asunder," and "tossed down, thrown sky-high" convey a complication of movement that unsettles the linear mobility of the train. As I show in the first chapter, public anxieties about railway collisions were exacerbated by the advanced acceleration and luxury of trains in interwar Britain. In *The Waves*, Woolf implicitly but repeatedly equates the technological advances of railway travel with British imperial expansion, an equivalence that allows her to figure (or prefigure) the empire's precipitous decline as a train accident. If there is evidence of a modernist fragmentation or dissolution of self in this passage, it is in service of this larger critique of empire. The imagery suggests not only the conflict between selfhood and its dissolution in the collective but also a disharmony of forward mobility and circular motion—Neville's sense of being "whirled asunder" as if by a centrifugal force.

This conflict between linearity and circulation, which I examine more closely in the next section, is foundational to Woolf's novel and is manifested in three distinct but interrelated ways. First, on the level of character, it represents a critical struggle and a source of agony for the six main characters as they move from station to station (from one set of monologues to the next) in their development from childhood to maturity and old age. They each attempt to transport some key component—figured in Neville's "one bag"—that might guarantee them a measure of self-possession and achievement amid the swirl of entities, identities, and ideas that challenge forward progress through life. Second, relevant to late imperialism, the confusion of linearity and circulation encapsulates the disintegration of a narrative of the empire's ascendancy and advancement, a narrative assumed to have endurance but instead being pulled apart by

mismanagement and unrest. Following the death of Percival and the failure of empire, this confusion modulates into a questioning of Englishness or an English national identity as a centralizing concept, paralleling the "Anglocentric turn" that Jed Esty underscores in late modernist fiction (5). Finally, the conflict between linearity and circulation evolves in relation to the structure of Woolf's narrative, which is simultaneously progressive, as it chronologically charts the maturation of her characters, and recursive, as ideas, themes, images, and language are consistently recycled throughout the novel, challenging the reader's sense of forward movement. Hence *The Waves* itself becomes a heterotopian play-ground in which Woolf represents and contests the multiple sites of nation, empire, and narrative. It is the railway, as much as the waves, that affords her the representational spaces in which to accomplish her task.

Pirouettes and Sequences: Jinny's Forward Progress and Circulation

Of course, Woolf titled her novel *The Waves* and not *The Trains*. Features of the novel are often wave-like: the flow of the whole narrative, resembling a wave cresting at Percival's farewell dinner, crashing at the news of his death, and spilling into the cumulative wash of Bernard's closing monologue; the diurnal rhythm and seasonal cycle of the interludes; and, more locally, the pulse and motion of each set of monologues, a wave rising, falling, and crashing by its end. Yet even Woolf's emphasis on waves reveals a deeper tension between circulation and linearity. In the novel's prelude, Woolf evokes the painterly yet steadily linear spatiotemporality of the waves, which are "thick strokes moving, one after another, beneath the surface, following each other, pursuing each other, perpetually"[8] (3). This forward momentum is complexified, though, at the shore, where "each bar rose, heaped itself, broke and swept a thin veil of white water across the sand. The wave paused, and then drew out again, sighing like a sleeper whose breath comes and goes unconsciously" (3). As rhythmic as the ostinato of breathing, the crashing

waves also fold back into themselves at the shoreline in a kind of feedback loop. Linearity becomes recursive, as each individual wave collapses into the one behind, so that the waves collectively repeat the same action. This interplay of linearity and circulation is frequently expressed within the monologues through the characters' experiences and interactions in railway spaces. If the railway implies a linearity in its movement between two geographically distant points (which were perceived to be brought close together by the velocity of the train), it is also part of a circulatory system that transports both goods and passengers around its extensive networks. As Schivelbusch puts it, "localities were no longer spatially individual or autonomous: they were points in the circulation of traffic that made them accessible" (197). Once humans become caught up in this revolving world of traffic, they become "increasingly similar to the commodities that were part of the same circulation system" (197). Within the network of interactivity and intercommunication that Woolf creates in *The Waves*, and which is expressed in the railways spaces of the novel, characters embrace the exhilarating possibilities and confront the agonizing complications that are produced by simultaneous linear (individually focused) and circular (collectively oriented) mobility.

Bernard's railway journeys, for example, show that his narrative play is not solitary but interactive, dependent on his ability to navigate spaces between a self and an other. Bernard senses that he will "fail, unless talked to" (25), for he requires an audience to focus his verbal agility. His phrase-making is thus a collective endeavor, dependent on the circulation of language between speaker and audience, but it also relies on linear or sequential continuity as a means of ordering and controlling narrative. This is apparent when Neville comments on Bernard's proclivity for narration: "Let him burble on, telling us stories. . . . Let him describe what we have all seen so that it becomes a sequence" (25). Yet burbling, or bubbling, implies

fragility and insubstantiality, and as the novel continues Bernard's sequences begin to decay or disassemble. Neville again draws attention to this problem: "Bernard is a dangling wire, loose, but seductive" (26). Bernard's phrases are electrifyingly appealing, but Neville senses disruption or looseness in sequentiality. Indeed, Bernard's verbal play loses focus when his "power fails him and there is no longer any sequence" (26). His individual talent is problematically oriented toward expressing the collective in narrative form.

In the heterotopian interior of the train, Bernard finds a play-ground for phrase-making, a communal space in which his "words at once make smoke rings" to bind fellow passengers in a singular story (48). Bernard affirms that he "do[es] not believe in separation" but "wish[es] to approach" people[9] (48), to annihilate, like the railway, the intervening space between distant points. Thus, Bernard is able to create "new sites of sociability" in the train (Urry, *Mobilities*, 104). However, the slippage within sequences undermines his ability to collectivize the railway, as is evident, for example, when he "approach[es] a junction; at a junction I have to change" (49). Transferring between trains suggests, in this context, an act of linking sequences. Moreover, if the station represents a transitional space, then successfully changing trains maintains continuity between the stages of life. Yet Bernard "cannot precisely lay fingers on this fact—it lodges loosely among my thoughts like a button, like a small coin" (49). That Bernard cannot "lay fingers on"—cannot actively shape or creatively control—the obligation to transfer betrays the elusiveness or uncontrollability of both language and sociality. This moment is not so much an act of resistance—as his playful engagement with clock time is—but a failure to connect. Bernard's very identity is bound up with the railway in this section, revealing his dependency on the train-narrative for physical and creative mobility. His failure to transfer foreshadows a fatal disruption of narrative continuity (an individualized act of creation) and fluid circulation (the

collective participation of disparate people, objects, and sequences in that single narrative).

Jinny most overtly and ebulliently embodies the concept of circulation in the novel. At school, she envisions her introduction into London society as a rite of passage that proceeds linearly to a moment of self-fulfillment: "Then when the lamps were lit, I should put on my red dress and it would be thin as a veil, and would wind about my body, and billow out as I came into the room, pirouetting. I would make a flower shape as I sank down, in the middle of the room, on a gilt chair" (23). The fluid sequence of material and bodily images in this passage charts a playful transition from desire to attainment, ending with her "gilt chair" as a marker of an almost sexualized sovereignty. The linear progression of this vision, though, involves the circular motion of her pirouetting. Indeed, throughout the novel Jinny delights in being mobilized and unsettled. She resists fixity, remarking that "[t]here is nothing staid, nothing settled in the universe. All is rippling, all is dancing; all is quickness and triumph"[10] (31-32). Jinny captures the rhythms and oscillations of a complex, mobile self.

However, Jinny's mobility remains embodied and is therefore temporally bound, subject to both appreciation and depreciation in society. At boarding school, Jinny celebrates her body as it is reflected in a mirror: "Look, when I move my head I ripple all down my narrow body; even my thin legs ripple like a stalk in the wind. . . . I move, I dance, I never cease to move and to dance" (28-29). While Jinny's mobility depends on an embodied allure and agility, the mirror suggests that it *is* disembodied: represented in the heterotopian space of the mirror, her bodily movement and wholeness are illusions. Foucault writes of the mirror as a heterotopia because it "makes this place that I occupy at the moment when I look at myself in the glass at once absolutely real, connected with all the space that surrounds it, and absolutely unreal, since in order to be perceived it has to pass through this virtual point which is over there" (24). This

confusion of reality and unreality becomes central to Jinny's development in *The Waves*. Woolf uses the mirror to prompt readers to question the real spaces in which Jinny's mobility might thrive. In the mirror, Jinny beholds an in-between self that is complicated by her desire to circulate that virtual image within the real world she physically inhabits. Circulation becomes a source of agony when it conflicts with the linear progression of time. Jinny's mobility is then thrown into confusion, and her objective of being seated in a "gilt chair" proves as elusive as the pure motion of her image in the derealized space of the mirror.

Jinny's desire for pure mobility and circulation is further explored as she travels on the railway. Just as the mirror reflects an image of wholeness and pure mobility, Jinny's railway trip from boarding school offers a heterotopian space for eroticized play. Her description of the train tranforms it into a sexualized object that annihilates space: she sits "in this roaring express which is yet so smooth that it flattens hedges, lengthens hills. We flash past signal-boxes; we make the earth rock slightly from side to side. The distance closes for ever in a point; and we for ever open the distance wide again. . . . Now we roar and swing into a tunnel" (44). The train's movement is magnified until it becomes overtly maculinized, both "roaring" and "smooth," before entering the femininized tunnel. The mobility of the train is made to reflect the uninhibited, pure mobility of the mirror. For railway passengers, Schivelbusch relates, the "motion of the railway, proceeding uniformly and in a straight line, was experienced as abstract, *pure* motion, dissociated from the space in which it occurred" (47). While Jinny's railway journey assumes a streamlined and unobstructed forward progress toward her sexual fulfillment, the image is complicated by the unsettlement of the intervening space, as "distance closes for ever in a point" but then is "open[ed] . . . wide again." The simultaneous contraction and expansion of space by railway mobility destabilizes the notion that speed and smoothness lead to pure mobility.

It is apparent that Jinny appropriates the train as a masculinized technology to exercise control over erotic play, but play in the tunnel becomes problematic. Jinny travels with an unknown "gentleman," who becomes the object of her sexual play—her play-thing, in a sense (44). Lynne Kirby writes of European "compartment dramas" in early twentieth-century cinema, films that depicted the train as a "self-contained stage for romance, seduction, and crime" in which women were particularly at risk (84, 83). In the 1920s, female characters in railway films were "largely passive," "swept up in the pull of photography, the still image, the nonnarrative delay, pause, or freeze" (121). In contrast to the immobilization or ostracization of women within or from film narratives, male characters "tend to be associated with the twin drives of narrative and cinematic force" (121). In *The Waves*, Woolf grants Jinny an active participatory role in the train's motion and, by association, the forward progress of her own narrative. She assumes control of the masculine forces of railway mobility and then, in the compartment, turns her gaze onto the male passenger. In her fantasy, Jinny erases the space between them as effortlessly as the locomotive cuts through the landscape. Yet Woolf then returns to the mirror. When the man closes a window, Jinny "see[s] reflections on the shining glass which lines the tunnel." The gentleman "smiles" at the reflected Jinny, and her "body instantly of its own accord puts forth a frill under his gaze" (44). The approving male gaze, focused on the mirror image, deflates Jinny's assumed authority in the train. In this heterotopian combination of the idealizing mirror and inverting railway interior, Jinny's sexual sovereignty and bodily mobility are shown to be simultaneously real and unreal. Woolf thus draws attention to the limits of Jinny's identity, which, despite her fantasies, is irrevocably tied to social valuations in a patriarchal world.

After her interaction with the gentleman, Jinny remarks that "we have exchanged the approval of our bodies" (44), reproducing the language of the marketplace. Jinny's self-

fulfillment through social-sexual mobility depends not only on societal (male) valuation but also on a perpetual circulation of bodies. Ruth Hoberman has shown that the growth of advertising and of department stores in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries contributed to "a valuation of pleasure over labour; of spending over saving" (450). *The Waves*, Hoberman finds, "is steeped in the language of the marketplace" (453), and Jinny especially "delights in spending rather than saving" (455). Elizabeth Outka, on the other hand, argues for the circulation of the "commodified authentic" in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century. Department-store goods and architectural styles, for instance, deliberately counterfeited nostalgic designs and histories even as they were marketed as thoroughly modern, and hence they "promised to deliver a vision of stability and permanence at the same time that they promised equally to be endlessly exchangeable" (7). Jinny's desire to enter and attain sovereignty in the "great society of bodies" suggests a kind of historical continuity that legitimizes her embodied mobility (44). At the same time, though, she asserts that "I shall not let myself be attached to one person only. I do not want to be fixed, to be pinioned" (39). Her body becomes, in a sense, a "commodified authentic" as she circulates it in a social marketplace that depends on the perpetual exchange of many reproducible bodies. Hence, at her debutante party, when Jinny playfully interacts with suitors, if the "moment of ecstasy" passes, she understands that the "door goes on opening," new suitors enter, and the cycle endlessly repeats (75). Yet, as Jinny states, this circulation is her "risk" and "adventure" (75). Complications arise, naturally, when detachment and circulation devalue her commodified authenticity, or when aging threatens the pure mobility of the mirror image.

In particular, after Percival's death the linear progression of time disrupts Jinny's compulsion to endlessly circulate within the "great society of bodies." Woolf examines her crisis in the heterotopia of "the Tube station where everything that is desirable meets" (140). In the

"heart of London," Jinny contemplates all transportational networks above and below ground, the "great avenues of civilisation" that radiate out from the metropolis (140). Jinny's body and mobility are thus positioned in relation to empire, but their vitality has diminished in wake of Percival's fall. Welsh understands this scene at Piccadilly Circus station to represent "a state of mind, a location for one part of a complex relationship between individual consciousness and the shifting world of modern London" (179). However, Woolf's allusions to London as an imperial center hint that Jinny's individuality to this point must be reviewed as participating in a collectivizing imperial narrative that has failed. Importantly, Woolf returns to the mirror, the heterotopian space reflecting an image of wholeness and pure mobility. In the transitional heterotopia of the station, however, the mirror acquires new significance: "But look—there is my body in that looking glass. How solitary, how shrunk, how aged! I am no longer young. I am no longer part of the procession. Millions descend those stairs in a terrible descent. . . . Millions have died. Percival died. I still move. I still live. But who will come if I signal?" (140-141). Unlike the earlier mirror, which promises an atemporal pure mobility, the station mirror is filled with Bergsonian *temps*, spatially representing the chronologically embodied process of aging. Setting Jinny's epiphany in an underground station, a luminal space between life and death, Woolf also references the First World War, during which tube stations were used as shelters during air raids. Ian Carter argues that the "caesura" of the war altered perceptions of the railway, which lost the "smooth security" it had offered and hence "ceased to be modernity's epitome"[11] (17). Awareness of the violence enacted on real bodies during the war divests Jinny of her ideal body and its circulation as a valued commodity. The "great society of bodies" that demands the mobility of ageless, reproducible bodies as the "commodified authentic" becomes instead a procession of disposable bodies descending into death. The underground station thus captures

Jinny's agonizing transition from a perpetual, illusory circulation to a time-bound progression toward death.

Anti-Circulation: Rhoda, Louis, and the Great Beast Stamping

Focusing on material culture in *The Waves*, Hoberman observes that "Rhoda, Louis, Susan, and Neville all seek some version of what Rhoda calls 'a world immune from change,' a world defined against the modern marketplace . . . and evoked by the missing figure of Percival" (456). As my reading of Jinny suggests, the collective marketplace in Woolf's novel is characterized by the production of individual identities through the circulation of associated currencies: Jinny's mobile body, Bernard's sequential phrases, Louis's commercial figures, Neville's cultural capital, and Susan's traditional countryside. Rhoda, as I show below, is a non-circulating figure. The circulation of these currencies depends upon access to rail transport, which conveys characters from their separate locales to centralizing sites in London. If certain characters seek private spaces, away from the marketplace, in which to individuate, they nevertheless depend upon the market—represented in various communal heterotopias, such as the railway and the restaurant—to assert, evaluate, and contest individual currencies. The two dinner gatherings—one before and the other after Percival's death—function as forums in which the six characters collectively interact and circulate. These two events are set in heterotopian spaces—a French restaurant and Hampton Court—both of which are accessed by the train and become, in a sense, extensions of railway space. At the center of each exchange is the present/absent Percival, who, I argue, unifies the circulating individualities of the six characters and assigns to them market values. When confronted with linear time, after Percival's death, their circulation becomes a source of agony and the marketplace is thrown into disarray.

In contrast to Jinny, Rhoda is manifestly a non-circulating body, immobilized rather than

mobilized by others. At the debutante party, Rhoda fears the social mobility that Jinny craves: "The door opens; the tiger leaps. The door opens; terror rushes in; terror upon terror, pursuing me" (75). Others attempt to commodify and circulate her as they "seize" her and compel her to "stand burning in this clumsy, this ill-fitting body" (75, 76). Rhoda's resistance to the "great society of bodies" makes her, in Bernard's view, one of the "authentics" who "exist most completely in solitude" and "resent illumination, reduplication" (83). She rejects the "commodified authentic," and if Jinny's unwillingness to be "tied down" puts her at the risk of devaluation, Rhoda's self-constraint puts her at the risk of having "no face" to present to the world (29). Rhoda's dilemma—to circulate a marketable face and body, or to withdraw and preserve an unmarketable genuineness—finds expression in her railway journey home from school. The train's interior does not offer a rapturous moment of being as it does for Jinny, but instead it reproduces the shock of forced mobility and death. As the train "detach[es]" Rhoda from school and moves her to the next stage of life, it assumes the figure of a great primordial beast: "With intermittent shocks, sudden as the springs of a tiger, life emerges heaving its dark crest from the sea. It is to this we are attached; it is to this we are bound, as bodies to wild horses" (45). Gillian Beer proposes that Woolf utilizes prehistoric imagery in her fiction to represent "time without narrative, its only story a conclusion. That story is extinction" (9). Through prehistoric imagery, Beer suggests, Woolf shows an "awareness of the simultaneity of the prehistoric in our present moment," which allows her to devise a counternarrative to those that make claims for perpetual human progress and civilization in the post-Darwinian world.

While for Woolf prehistoric imagery suggests a kind of duration—an extension of human existence by collapsing past epochs into the present moment—for Rhoda the prehistoricized train pares existence down to a basic linear temporality, a sequential progression to death. Rhoda

perceives the train, like the beast emerging from the waters but destined for extinction, to inexorably transport her toward its terminus. Focusing on this inexorability, Rhoda sees the in-betweenness of her journey as a void or annihilated space-time. Landscapes, viewed from within the train, Schivelbusch suggests, may seem "evanescent" or derealized as the traveler is accelerated to the destination (55). Throughout the novel, Rhoda's sense of identity is as evanescent as the intervening time-space annihilated by the train: she is always "seen through in a second" (29). Thus, Rhoda's railway journey illustrates how she is spatially immobilized—in the sense that she traverses a void, covering no distance—but temporally mobilized—forced to passively progress through time toward death. De Certeau writes of railway travel as a "travelling incarceration. Immobile inside the train, seeing immobile things slip by. . . . The unchanging traveller is pigeonholed, numbered, and regulated in the grid of the railway car" (111). De Certeau's is thinking strictly spatially, but Rhoda's imprisonment in the train is a consequence of space collapsing into time so that progress is illusory. Woolf emphasizes this spatiotemporal disorientation by having Rhoda recall on the train her "humiliation at a garden party," where, "in the middle, cadaverous, awful, lay the grey puddle in the courtyard. . . . I came to the puddle. I could not cross it. Identity failed me. We are nothing, I said, and fell. I was blown like a feather. I was wafted down tunnels" (45). In her unfinished memoir "A Sketch of the Past," Woolf recalls a very similar "moment of being" that prompts her to see "the whole world" as "unreal" (78). Woolf uses the railway, then, to illustrate Rhoda's forced incarceration in life and her disengagement from the interplay of linearity and circulation that drives the other characters' mobilities. Unable to invest the intervening space with solidity or significance, Rhoda can only see life as spatially derealized and purely time-bound.

For Louis, too, the railway has prehistoric overtones, although his experience markedly

diverges from Rhoda's. Traveling to school, Louis regards his train as a "very powerful, bottle-green engine without a neck, all back and thighs, breathing steam" (20). Yet unlike Rhoda, whose railway journey is a series of "intermittent shocks," Louis's train moves "without an effort, of its own momentum"[12] (45, 20). If Woolf's prehistoric imagery implicitly undermines the railway's association with a triumphalist narrative of human progress, Louis does not reject that narrative but seeks to appropriate it to stabilize his forward movement in Britain as an Australian colonial subject. The train begins by signaling Louis's dislocated self: "Now I hang suspended without attachments. We are nowhere. We are passing through England in a train. England slips by the window, always changing from hill to wood, from rivers to willows to towns again. And I have no firm ground to which I go" (46). The evanescence of the landscape closely mirrors Louis's self-anxiety. On the train, he sees himself as "the ghost of Louis, an ephemeral passer-by" who is "disembodied, passing over fields without lodgment" (47). However, unlike Rhoda, Louis at least has a space through which to travel—an England of "hill" and "wood" and "fields" that are not yet solid but have the potential to be. Rail transport, then, offers Louis opportunities to establish "firm ground" and find fulfillment.

Throughout *The Waves*, Louis attempts to forge a spatiotemporal presence by seeking lodgment in institutional spaces and practices. At school, for example, he finds "orderly progress" in the chapel where boys "put off . . . distinctions" (23). Institutions such as the Anglican church and university offer Louis a set of narratives and conventions that might solidify the derealized landscape through which his train travels so that he can feel "the earth under me, and my roots going down and down till they wrap themselves round some hardness at the centre" (23). Rootedness for Louis involves tapping into enduring traditions and "forg[ing] certain links" between friends, thereby "reduc[ing] . . . to order" the "flux . . . disorder . . . annihilation and

despair" of London (41, 67). Thus, Louis strives to impose linearity on circulation, to channel experience in a delimiting and definable direction. However, due to his middle-class colonial background, he cannot, like Neville, insert himself into a stabilizing academic tradition, but instead he shifts focus to global networks of commerce and communication. In his office, Louis is "half in love with the typewriter and the telephone," instruments that reduce places and objects to a symbolic order of language and annihilate space between distant geographical points (121). In this heterotopian space, Louis reproduces and inverts empire, from which he and Rhoda are excluded, by "lac[ing] together" the "different parts of the world" and "spreading commerce where there was chaos in the far parts of the world" (121, 122). Louis thus becomes a circulator instead of being circulated, an imperializer instead of being the imperialized. Louis's commercial success comes after Percival's death, suggesting that circulation, instead of ending with the demise of empire, shifts from an imperial to a global economy.

The Romance of Percival: Imperial Narrative in the Imagined Community

As I have argued, characters in *The Waves* are intricately intertwined in terms of their circulating and non-circulating identities. What perhaps has become apparent is that individual identities and the collective community depend on circulation *and* non-circulation, inclusion *and* exclusion. Susan's rural spaces, for instance, are unavailable to her friends, and she tries to individualize a self by evoking rural signifiers of nature and maternity. Neville reserves his study for academic thought and personal longing, eschewing public circulation to privately accumulate cultural capital and preserve a literary tradition.[13] Jinny transforms the drawing room into a separate social space in which she reigns from her "gilt chair" (23). Through phrase-making, Bernard "lay[s] hands upon the world" (48), creating personalized narratives that allow him to handle, shape, and collectivize others. Louis sees commerce as a means to "inherit a chair and a

rug; a place in Surrey . . . which other merchants shall envy" (123). Rhoda, on the other hand, is isolated in space-as-time, focused only its inevitable end in death. Aside from her, the characters have in common the will to control—or imperialize—their delimited spaces in which they attempt to assert, maintain, or mobilize individuated selves. Their railway journeys throughout the novel open up mobile, heterotopian sites in which the characters' anxieties, ambitions, and interactions are represented and challenged. At the same time, trains function as facilitators for the formation of an imagined community when the six characters come together in London. As Julia Briggs has proposed, the "central episodes of the book consist of communal occasions: the farewell dinner before Percival leaves for India, and the reunion supper at Hampton Court, creating eddies of movement and reflection within the characters" ("The Novels," 76). These two central episodes represent the apices of the novel's exploration of circulation and linearity, reproducing the concepts introduced in railway spaces and creating a kind of marketplace in which they can be circulated, evaluated, and exchanged. They are also, in a sense, mirror images of each other, one occurring before Percival's death, and the other after.

Benedict Anderson has suggested that a nation "is imagined as a community because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship" (7). In *The Waves*, Woolf expresses this concept through the sets of monologues and communal meetings between the six characters, who, despite their individualities and inequalities, have a persistent awareness of one another and define themselves and their activities in relation to the others. This awareness, according to Anderson, is made possible by simultaneity, or "homogeneous, empty time,"[14] which is characterized "by temporal coincidence, and measured by clock and calendar" (24). Technologies such as the telephone, telegraph, newspapers, films, and, of course, the railway and other modes of

transportation contributed to the modern sense of simultaneity, by which, as Kern puts it, the extended "present was no longer limited to one event in one place, sandwiched tightly between past and future and limited to local surroundings" (314). For Anderson, a crucial technology that fostered nationalism was "print-capitalism, which made it possible for rapidly growing numbers of people to think about themselves, and to relate themselves to others, in profoundly new ways" (36). In *The Waves*, Woolf stresses the centrality of language and technology to collectivization primarily through her male characters: Bernard's phrase-making, Neville's literary canon, Louis's poetry, and, later, his typewriter and telephone, are all instruments to reduce the flux of a diverse and circulating nation to order. Yet Percival is the focalizing figure through which the six characters attempt to compose a narrative to define their imagined community. Anderson also hints at the importance for a nation to conceive of itself in terms of narrative: "The idea of a sociological organism moving calendrically through homogeneous, empty time is a precise analogue of the idea of the nation, which also is conceived as a solid community moving steadily down (or up) history" (26). This mobility of a nation through time is powerfully suggested in the railway spaces of Woolf's novel, and those journeys are reflected in the restaurant scenes centered on Percival.

The unifying characteristic of the imagined community in *The Waves* is the adoration of and devotion to Percival, who thus binds the six friends together. When they gather for Percival's farewell dinner at the restaurant, they are retrieved from the "sunless territory of non-identity," as Bernard phrases it, to unite as a collective (84). Before Percival's arrival, the six characters participate in an antagonistic circulation of individualities, Neville recognizing that without Percival "there is no solidity. We are silhouettes, hollow phantoms moving mistily without a background" (88). Weaving the six together into meaningful coexistence, Percival

supplies them with order and purpose, essential to the forward progression of an imagined community. Thus, Percival "has imposed order" so that they "issue from the darkness of solitude" and "love each other and believe in our own endurance" (88, 89). This belief in endurance—as opposed to being immobilized, like Rhoda, in *temps*—is facilitated by the cultural weight lent by the Perceval legend. In Chrétien's romance, an ignorant Perceval encounters the Fisher King in his castle but fails to ask the proper questions about the grail ritual, questions that might heal the king's wounds and restore his land to prosperity. In later iterations of the story, Perceval is revealed as the king's heir and a grail knight, promising the grail's security and continuance of its ritual. This narrative—reproduced during Woolf's lifetime in T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922) and Richard Wagner's *Parsifal* (1882)—concerns the rejuvenation and continuation of the state. Hence we can think of the restaurant in which Percival binds the six characters into a unified collective as a heterotopia of compensation, mythically linked to a narrative of healing and endurance of the imagined community (whether it be the nation or empire) in the face of disorder and dispersion. Hence the collective desire to "hold it for one moment . . . this globe whose walls are made of Percival" (105). The endurance that they sense in Percival's presence is paradoxically impermanent, for when the leave the restaurant they are return to their dispersed individualities.

Thus, the community centered on Percival is an illusion enduring as long as the global walls, which suggest a fortified empire, remain intact. During the dinner, Bernard attempts to memorialize their imagined community as "a red carnation in that vase. A single flower as we sat here waiting, but now a seven-sided flower, many-petalled . . . a whole flower to which every eye brings its own contribution" (91-92). This circular image suggests, like the Round Table in Arthurian romance, equivalence among all members of the community, an ideology that

Anderson argues is integral to the nation, in which each person has "complete confidence in [the] steady, anonymous, simultaneous activity" of all others (26). The circular flower also connotes wholeness and timelessness, the renewing cycle of the seasons. But Bernard's metaphor is complicated by Louis's later introduction of death "woven in with the violets . . . Death and again death" (102). In her inquiry into elegiac modalities in Woolf's fiction, Jane Fisher finds, "Whatever closure death provides is achieved by disrupting rather than continuing an accepted order. In Woolf's novels, death demonstrates the limits of human power; it becomes the paradigm for uncontrollable loss, absence, and silence" (90). The group in *The Waves* attempts to ensure the endless circulation of its imperial fantasy by invoking continuity and duration, but linear time reasserts its finitude and finality. Death exposes the limits of the power of the six characters' imagined community.

Woolf again uses the railway as a destabilizing, linearly progressive technology to undermine the supposed endurance of Percival's unifying narrative. Traveling by train to London for the farewell dinner, Bernard observes, "We are about to explode in the flanks of the city like a shell in the side of some ponderous, maternal, majestic animal" (80). Bernard's imagery not only alludes to the annihilative machinery of the First World War but is also consistent with the often repeated observation that travelers "experienced [the train] as a projectile, and traveling on it, as being shot through the landscape" (Schivelbusch 54). Bernard's journey into London links a potentially catastrophic railway with the linear narrative of imperial duration aligned with Percival at the dinner. The train's being aimed as a projectile at the metropolis—Britannia figured as an oversized, feminized animal—suggests the wreck of the patriarchal and imperial narrative. Bernard sees himself as "part of this speed, this missile, hurled at the city," and "numbed into tolerance and acquiescence" (80). The formation of an imagined community

requires co-operation and complicity among its members through their collective adherence to its rules and administration. For Bernard, connotations of rail transport begin to shift. Instead of facilitating a unified collective and opportunities for verbal play, the train suggests mechanical routine, social conformity, and imminent catastrophe, connotations brought about by imperial decline as well as the approaching global conflict. These suggestions unsettle the dinner episode and call into question the continuation of empire.

Yet Bernard does not fully submit to the imperial narrative associated with Percival and prefigured in the train-projectile. Bernard parodies Percival's Indian post by creating a playful narrative that undercuts Percival's position as a colonial official as well as a unifying center for the imagined community. Bernard narrates: "Percival advances; Percival rides a flea-bitten mare, and wears a sun-helmet. By applying the standards of the West, by using the violent language that is natural to him, the bullock-cart is righted in less than five minutes. The Oriental problem is solved. He rides on; the multitude cluster round him, regarding him as if he were—what indeed he is—a God" (98). Bernard shapes Percival into an ironic icon of empire. Like Bernard's verbal play as a child in the station, his mock-heroic account is both a frivolous diversion and reproduction of real anxieties of empire in interwar Britain. In the heterotopian restaurant, imperial administration is inverted as parody and contested in terms of efficiency. Marcus rightly argues that "*The Waves* reveals that the primal narrative of British culture is the (imperialist) quest" (144). Bernard's story about Percival in India exposes, in Marcus's view, his "complicity with imperialism" in that his "myth-making capacity" is essential for the continuation of empire (158). This reading accords with Anderson's insistence on the centrality of language and culture to the maintenance of an imagined community, and it also connects to Bernard's phrase-making in and complicity with the railway. Yet Marcus admits the oddity of Bernard's "carnivalization

of racism's master plot," offering a possible correspondence with 1930s colonial exhibitions in London (158). However, if we consider the restaurant as a heterotopia of illusion, then Bernard's narrative operates as a contestation of imperial triumphalism. Through Bernard, Woolf both confronts and evades contemporary debates and anxieties about the British Empire, revealing instead the illusion of empire's endurance. In Bernard's frivolous representation, Woolf exposes imperial ideology and procedure as fiction.[15]

It is Neville, though, who narrates Percival's death, not as a parody but as an elegy: "His horse stumbled; he was thrown. The flashing trees and white rails went up in a shower. There was a surge; a drumming in his ears. Then the blow; the world crashed; he breathed heavily. He died where he fell" (109). In Neville's lament, Woolf filters imperial decline through the First World War shelling of soldiers in the trenches, also alluding to the war in Neville's declaration that the "lights of the world have gone out"[16] (109). Furthermore, Neville's narrative echoes his railway journey earlier in the novel, when his arrival at the London station is depicted as a simultaneous collision and shipwreck. This narrative echo—one of many textual reverberations in the novel—suggests that the six main characters, from the beginning, carry through their lives both the creative potential for empire (culminating in the imagined community in the restaurant) and the destructive capacity for its end. The train is the primary mode of transporting this creative-destructive element forward through the time-space of the narrative. Just as railway speed is perceived to compress the distance between geographical points, the beginning of the imperial narrative encompasses its end.

As in the Perceval romance, what the characters seek after the tragedy is rejuvenation, a collective recycling of individualities (at the reunion dinner at Hampton Court) against the mechanical repetition of everyday life that the train comes to represent more unambiguously in

the final stages of the novel. In despair, Bernard buys, "with all the composure of a mechanical figure, a [railway] ticket for Rome," the "eternal city," where he reflects on life as a linear progression: "Stage upon stage. And why should there be an end of stages? and where do they lead? To what conclusion?" (134, 136). Undoubtedly, Woolf indicates, perhaps with Spenglerian undertones, the rise and fall of the Roman Empire as an antecedent for the disintegration of imperial Britain. The yoking of a progressive, mechanical time with eternity—the endless sequence of stages—suggests the perpetual contraction and expansion of time-as-space, similar to railway mobility. The novel also reflects Woolf's grappling with the legacy of realism and her desire to write "to a rhythm not to a plot."[17] In a November 1928 diary entry, as an inchoate *The Waves* "haunts" her under the working title of "The Moths," Woolf remarks on "the appalling narrative business of the realist; getting on from lunch to dinner; it is false, unreal, merely conventional" (*Diary* 209). Not content to "admit any thing to literature that is not poetry," Woolf wishes to "give the moment whole; whatever it includes" (209-210). Yet *The Waves* enacts a tension between the "narrative business" of progressing individual characters forward through time and the rhythms of the circulating monologues, whose images, sounds, sensations, and phrases are collectively shared throughout. In this way, Woolf reproduces in each set of monologues the imagined community of the six friends who mature, intermingle, and scatter, but always maintain that "deep, horizontal comradeship" which, Anderson argues, unites members of a nation even when they are estranged from one another (7).

At Hampton Court, though, Bernard recognizes that the comradeship based on the consolidating and mobilizing imperial figure of Percival is threatened in his absence: "And we ourselves, walking six abreast, what do we oppose . . . how can we do battle against this flood; what has permanence? Our lives too stream away, down the unlighted avenues, past the strip of

time, unidentified" (167). Without Percival, the six characters lack duration, becoming impermanent, and are unidentified, being deprived of that centralizing idea and purpose signified in Percival. Thus, the novel shifts emphasis to the devalued advance of conventional time. For Woolf's characters, narrative truly becomes an appalling business. By the end of the reunion dinner, the narrative has been overrun by a sound "like the knocking of railway trucks in a siding. That is the happy concatenation of one event following another in our lives. Knock, knock, knock. Must, must, must" (172). The "narrative business" of Woolf's novel is again aligned with railway mobility—not the pure movement or communal flow that characterizes Jinny's and Bernard's earlier journeys, but the shocks and jolts of the forced advance of Rhoda and, to a lesser extent, Louis. Bernard realizes that uniformity best describes the life journeys of the six characters: "we must go; must catch our train; must walk back to the station—must, must, must" (173). If Woolf strives to write to a rhythm in *The Waves*, the dominant rhythm after Percival's death is "must, must, must," as the characters are passively transported like mere parcels to the end of the narrative.

After Percival, though, the separate, circulating voices of the sets of monologues are reduced to a single narrative track, Bernard's summing-up. Instead of the grand imperial narrative supplied by Percival, Bernard secularizes the Biblical story of Genesis—"In the beginning, there was the nursery" (177)—replacing a monopolizing Word with the "arrows of sensation" that expand linear time through the circular impressions of individual consciousnesses. However, the idea of the collective born in nursery ages over the course of the novel. Bernard muses on the consequences of collectivizing individualities that "exist not only separately but in undifferentiated blobs of matter," a uniformity by which "a whole brakeful of boys is swept up and goes cricketing, footballing," an "army marches across Europe," or people "assemble in

parks and halls and sedulously oppose any renegade . . . who sets up a separate existence" (182). Bernard's anxiety about the anonymity of collectivization, given social and political import in this passage, suggests the unsettlement of linearity, when multiple bodies are "swept up" into a unifying, delimiting, mobilized whole, as when Jinny imagines the masses descending toward death in the underground. Throughout his monologue, Bernard evokes rail transport to express the monotony and homogeneity of linear sequences and time: he impassively states, "The train came in . . . the train came to a stop. I caught my train" (200); the reunion at Hampton Court is disturbed by "the rush of wheels" that "became the roar of time" (205); people in London go "past roaring like a train in a tunnel" (207). The dissolution of circulating selves in the post-Percival world means that mobility is also emptied of significance, uniform and tediously linear.

At the end of the final monologue, Bernard prepares to board "some last train," conjuring up a "new desire" to resist once again the linear progression of the railway (220). Yet Bernard's resistance has evolved from that of his younger self in the train station. With his last words, Bernard exclaims, "Death is the enemy. It is death against whom I ride with my spear couched and my hair flying back like a young man's, like Percival's, when he galloped in India. I strike spurs into my horse. Against you I will fling myself, unvanquished and unyielding, O Death!" (220). Percival, the horse, and the primitivist imagery suggest a determined will-to-survive, to revitalize and maintain the imperial fantasy to the end of the line, so to speak, until the death of empire. Marcus believes that "Woolf dramatizes the death of the white male Western author, Bernard . . . while exposing the writer's collusion in keeping alive the myth of individualism and selfhood that fuels English patriotism and nationalism" (137). Hoberman, on the other hand, argues that Bernard discovers that language "is slippery, multivalent, mutable," like commodities in the marketplace, and hence his "quest in the end is not to find the grail or even defeat the

ocean like Cuchulain, but to engage in a ceaseless process of making and unmaking the self"

(458). Rosemary Sumner insists that the actual ending of the novel—"*The waves broke on the*

shore" (220)—"puts Bernard's excited defiance of death into the perspective of the perpetual

continuity of non-human forces" (153). These interpretations reveal the elusiveness of Woolf's

ending, just as narration fails Bernard when language keeps devolving into a "train of phantom

phrases" (213). But against Bernard's "smoke rings" of language runs the immutability of text

set down on a page, reducing language to order like Louis's "rings of steel" (48, 27). De Certeau

suggests that the "organizational system" of the railroad and printed words "is the condition of

both a railway car's and a text's movement from one place to another" (111). If we link narrative

to the railway, then, Bernard's decision to catch "some last train" suggests a somewhat Quixotic

rebellion against the death of narrative, that is, the end of the novel itself. On the final page, we,

like Woolf, are confronted with the fact that novels must end, unlike the ceaseless motion of time

and the waves. In his final monologue, Bernard attempts to re-circulate or re-cycle the whole

novel to resist that invariable fact, but the "appalling narrative business"—"We must go. Must,

must, must—detestable word" (217)—precipitates its progress to the terminus. It is this

obligation to end the narrative that Bernard so animatedly but amusingly defies. If the last line of

the novel reminds us that outside the narrative proper is a time that endures, it also advises us

that narrative itself is finite.

Isolation or Integration? European Union, British Protectionism, and *The Waves*

Commentators have frequently read *The Waves* in the context of interwar concerns about

imperial and national identity. Briggs, for example, proposes that "the central story of Percival's

life and death . . . serves to locate the book at a particular moment in world history, that moment

when the British Empire and the ideals that glorified and disguised the nature of its economic

basis were beginning to crumble" ("The Novels," 78). Linden Peach situates Woolf's novel in relation to colonial instability in India during the 1920s and 1930s. According to Peach, "The anxiety that all Percival's friends suffer after his death is exacerbated because they are unable to imagine an alternative to the interconnection of English national identity and Empire with which they have all grown up" (200). On the other hand, Marcus insists that "*The Waves* explores the way in which the cultural narrative 'England' is created by an Eton/Cambridge elite who (re)produce the national epic (the rise of . . .) and elegy (the fall of . . .) in praise of the hero" (137). For Marcus, Woolf's "poetic language and experimental structure . . . are vehicles for a radical politics that is both anti-imperialist and anticanonical" (137). Such critical readings only hint at the tensions between circulation and linearity at the heart of *The Waves*. As a novel, it must advance a linear progression from a beginning to an end, charting the characters' movement from childhood to old age, even as it resists linearity through the continuous recycling of speakers, words, patterns, and images until they are finally subsumed into Bernard's final narrative. Within the novel, the characters unite under an overarching linear narrative that is linked to an imperial Percival and that brings order and meaning to their individually circulating identities. After Percival's death, however, the six characters withdraw from their imagined community and fantasy of wholeness. Neville gives voice to their disillusionment: "Why meet and resume? . . . From this moment on I am solitary" (109). Integration within the imagined community is untenable once Percival's unifying influence has dissolved. While recognizing the above critical assessments, I suggest that Woolf's preoccupation with circulation and linearity, with integration and isolation, further connects to the economic and political circumstances of interwar Europe. I believe readings of *The Waves* are enriched if we place it within public and political debates about European integration and British protectionism that were ongoing as

Woolf wrote the novel.

The relationship between Britain and continental Europe was problematic throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries with the rise of industrialism and globalization due to expanding global networks of transportation. In *Britain and Europe: A Political History since 1918*, N. J. Crowson relates that the word *Europe* in "British usage" has generally implied "a geographical area across the English Channel that does not include Britain" and is thus used "ultimately to denote difference" (1-2). After the First World War, Britain struggled to define itself as a nation in contrast a politically and financially unstable Europe. However, it was compelled to assume an active role in European affairs, often as mediator between Germany and France, and its efforts in the League of Nations, which Leonard Woolf helped to create and promote, were routinely frustrated by a divisive Europe. N. J. Crowson suggests that by 1930, when Virginia Woolf was composing *The Waves*,[18] Britain was still "uncertain where to place her loyalties: was she an imperial power? . . . was she still an international player, especially given her declining global economic influence?" (28). This uncertainty was further magnified by the 1929 Wall Street crash. According to Robert Boyce, "midway through the interwar period the international economic system *and* the international political system simultaneously broke down" (5). Britain was cautious about its presence in Europe while it was increasingly concerned about the economic stability of its own territories in the British Isles and the Dominions.

In the midst of this political debate were the Woolfs. Briggs notes that Virginia and Leonard "were passionately committed to internationalism and the establishment of a League of Nations as the only way to build a better and safer Europe" ("'Almost Ashamed,'" 104). As a member of the Fabian Society and a committed pacifist, Leonard Woolf published influential works during the war, such as *International Government* (1916) and *The Framework for a*

Lasting Peace (1917), in which he sets forth plans for an "international political organization for preventing war" (11). Woolf's writings were later consulted when the Covenant of the League of Nations was drawn up in 1919, and he actively participated in the League of Nations Society and Union during the interwar period. The idea of a European Union gained ground in the 1920s and was first proposed to the League of Nations in September, 1929 by French Foreign Minister Aristide Briand. Many British politicians, however, met the proposal with suspicion and rejection. Crowson explains that "[b]y the 1930s British politicians would repeatedly stress that Britain had no commitments to Europe beyond those entailed in the covenant of the League of Nations" (20). In a 1930 edition of the *Saturday Evening Post*, Winston Churchill wrote that "we have our own dream and our own task. We are with Europe, but not of it. We are linked but not comprised. We are interested and associated but not absorbed" (qtd. in Crowson 31). In a 1929 edition of the *Daily Express*, media baron Lord Beaverbrook argued that the nation was faced with three options: "(1) Europe and deterioration; (2) America and subservience; (3) the British Empire made once and everlastingly prosperous by the unbreakable link of free trade between all its parts" (qtd. in Crowson 31). Britain was pressed to make its choice after the Wall Street crash, which "obliged Britain to abandon its preference for [international] free trade, and instead seek economic strength through imperial unity" (Crowson 35). Like the characters in *The Waves*, Britain was prompted in the interwar period to withdraw from the chaos and disorder of an external world and seek refuge in a fantasy of empire promoted as a timeless, cohesive, imagined community. In place of global free trade, the unrestricted circulation of commodities within the enclosed, protected spaces of the British Empire was held up as the ideal. When the Conservatives took control of the government in the 1931 general election, less than three weeks after the publication of *The Waves*, the nation shifted its economic policy to protectionism.

In *The Waves*, this conflict between British protectionism and international free trade is most notably reflected in Louis's experience. Boyce notes that an important facet of interwar globalization was "the expansion of corporate enterprise. Multinational firms, the great majority American, rapidly extended their global reach, dominating newer industries"[19] (143). Louis's career in international commerce exemplifies this global reach, as he has "fused many lives into one" through "letters and cables and brief but courteous commands on the telephone to Paris, Berlin, New York" (121). The conventional technology of the railway, which is the primary mode of transporting empire through the novel, is replaced by more novel machines for communication—the telegraph, telephone, and typewriter. Although he initially attempts to find rootedness through railway mobility, which carries him to the institutionalized spaces of religion and education, these avenues are ultimately blocked due to his colonial status. In later life, Louis becomes "immensely respectable" and successful in his field, as the "globe is strung with our lines" (146). Throughout the novel, he struggles with integration into the imagined community that centers on the imperial Percival. Meeting at Hampton Court, his "heart yearns towards" his friends, but he admits he is "happiest alone" (161). Woof is perhaps being subversive in having Louis, who originates in a Dominion, resist integration and instead opt for globalization at a time when Britain was conspicuously turning toward anti-globalization. Louis's interaction with the group of friends and his turn to the commercial realm particular captures the British interwar climate as the nation struggled to identify itself as either a global contributor to political and economic affairs or an isolated circulator of wealth and goods among its imperial constituents. Boyce asserts that protectionist tendencies, which commenced prior to the stock market crash before being officially pursued after 1931, are indicative of "a turning point" for Britain in interwar history, as it shifted from being a "champion of globalization" to instigating an "active

retreat" from the rest of the world (195).

It can be productive, then, to read *The Waves* in light of this political and economic crisis. According to Peach, "Reading Woolf as a political novelist requires an approach posited on her oblique use of historical and contemporary events" (193). Although Woolf does not overtly reference European integration and British isolationism, her novel indirectly engages with these issues in its concerns with commerce and the marketplace, and individualization, collectivization, and globalization. Jinny's and Bernard's delight in the free play of bodily or verbal mobility, in compressing the space between distant points, achieving through free play sovereignty in the form of "gilt chairs" in "expectant rooms" or imagined communities in trains or restaurants (73), in analogous to a fantasy, in Lord Beaverbrook's words, of a "British Empire made once and everlastingly prosperous by the unbreakable link of free trade between all its parts." Susan and Neville ride the train (an engine of empire) to retreat to traditional spaces of rural England and Oxbridge. At first, this retreat supports empire, with Susan's valorization of agriculture and reproduction, and Neville's safeguarding of Percival in literature. After Percival's death, though, their retreat mirrors the "anthropological turn" away from empire that, Esty suggests, upheld the "revitalization of England as one national culture among many and . . . of elite literature as one form of expressive culture among many"[20] (164). Additionally, Britain's political and economic clout overseas was threatened by America's rise to superpower status after the war. Louis, as a colonial outsider and later figure of globalization, introduces death into the imagined community focused on Percival, suggesting the imminent demise of the imperial fantasy and the end of its linear narrative. Thus, Louis's shift away from integration into the superstructure supporting empire and toward global commerce signals the expiry of empire, which is also announced by Rhoda's exclusion from imperial space and enchainment to pure time.

Read in the light of Britain's late-1920s and early-1930s dilemma as to whether it should actively participate in European Union and globalization or retreat into imperial protectionism and nationalist isolation, *The Waves* represents not just an explicit critique of empire in general but also an indirect commentary on the particular issues facing imperial Britain at the time of its composition and publication. Woolf seems to suggest that a policy of free circulation within a linearly progressing empire is no more than a fantasy that cannot be sustained in a "real" global context, just as the imagined community of the six main characters disintegrates outside of heterotopian sites such as the train and the restaurant. In the novel, free circulation depends on the linear progression of transportation for its vitality and continuance, but once the symbol that unifies circular mobility is destroyed, forward movement becomes mechanical and meaningless. Given the steep decline of the British Empire in the interwar period, *The Waves* insinuates that placing faith in its perpetuation is a folly. Moving between stages or stations, like the railway, Woolf's novel charts a progression of empire from a fantasy of cohesion to its descent into isolation and discontinuity. Melba Cuddy-Keane has argued that Woolf's "pluralistic" approach to history in her nonfiction "marks a radical departure from dominant nineteenth-century views that . . . increasingly construed history, like religion, as a source of 'intelligible design and purpose'"[21] (60). Woolf repeatedly contests and subverts the "evolutionary or teleological assumptions" in historical discourse, which conforms to a narrative mode of writing that "is, by definition, chronological" (60). In the heterotopian railway spaces of *The Waves*, Woolf critiques the interwar assumption that a British imperial history can be isolated and maintained in an increasingly globalized world.

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[1] Qtd. in Thacker 153.

[2] See p. 142.

³ See p. 63.

⁴ Stephen Kern relates that in 1913 the Cubist painter Fernand Léger "observed that life was 'more fragmented and faster-moving than in previous periods' and that people sought a dynamic art to depict it" (118).

⁵ David Welsh suggests that in "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown" Woolf "choos[es] to include a train journey . . . [in order to] draw[] attention to the solid realities to be found in the popular fiction of Arnold Bennett, John Galsworthy and H. G. Wells" (176). Welsh further claims that Woolf adopts the railway setting to propose that "modern fiction not only needed to break from its realist past but also that the certainties and solidities of that past were giving way to a more fluid and open-ended present" (176). While the railway was undoubtedly associated with a Victorian realism from which modernist writers like Woolf wished to break away, Welsh's reading too severely limits the possibilities of Woolf's railway images in the essay.

⁶ Schivelbusch writes quite differently of the passenger's experience entering the station and boarding a train as "a process of expansion of space, one might even say, of industrialization of space." The disembarking passenger experienced the reverse: "The endless and shapeless space of the railway journey was first delimited by the hall in which the train arrived" (174).

⁷ Ships, of course, were also instrumental in the expansion of the British Empire. Woolf makes this connection at other points in the novel, as, for example, when Rhoda plays with "a fleet" of "white petals" in a "brown basin" that she "rock[s] . . . from side to side so that my ships may ride the waves" (11). Of course, Rhoda's desire to participate in imperial activity is denied, making her an outsider throughout the novel.

⁸ For more on Woolf's incorporation of painterly techniques in her writing, see Jane Fisher's chapter "'Silent as the Grave': Painting, Narrative, and the Reader in *Night and Day* and *To the Lighthouse*." Fisher argues that the "two elegiac media that Woolf most characteristically juxtaposes in her novels and essays are painting and narrative. Painting, both representational and abstract, seems to offer a permanence and unity that elude narrative, a medium that must depend on the unreliable agency of language for its symbolic power" (91).

⁹ Bernard's stated objective is to expand his "collection of valuable observations upon the true nature of human life" (48). He visualizes a "book [that] will certainly run to many volumes embracing every known variety of man and woman. I fill my mind with whatever happens to be the contents of a room or a railway carriage as one fills a fountain pen in an inkpot" (48). Some critics have seen Bernard's struggle to make sequences as indicative of Woolf's desire to break free from realist narrative.

¹⁰ Woolf may allude here to Lucretius's *De rerum natura*, which suggests that the universe is composed of free-falling atoms. When they unpredictably swerve and collide, complex patterns and structures are formed.

[11] During the war, Carter explains, "dense networks of lightly laid narrow-gauge lines" were built along the trenches, "allow[ing] defensive positions to be reinforced quicker than attackers could be gathered, dooming millions of men to death and injury" (16). The railway, formerly an emblem of progress, was now accomplice to mass destruction and death.

[12] According to Schivelbusch, in the early decades of railway travel the "mechanical rigidity" of the train produced jolts and shocks that passengers had "to absorb with their own bodies" (117). As a result, physical and mental fatigue was a common malady. As rail transport advanced, mechanical precision and upholstered seating mitigated the bumpiness. Rhoda, in a sense, moves through life absorbing its blows and vibrations in her struggle for identification. Louis, despite his colonial status as an Australian, has opportunities to cushion his journey through life. Even if Rhoda and Louis are "[co-]conspirators" (102), through their different life experiences are reflected in their divergent railway journeys.

[13] Woolf highlights Neville's resistance to public circulation when he anticipates "reading from a big book, a quarto with margins" on his journey home from school by train (20). However, he finds the third-class passengers—"horse-dealers and plumbers" (50)—distracting and realizes that "it [is] impossible for me always to read Catullus in a third-class railway carriage" (50). Thus Neville learns to separate the circulation of academic knowledge from that of popular (and lower-class) communication. Neville is, in this sense, a Leavisite figure in the novel.

[14] Anderson borrows the phrase "homogeneous, empty time" from Walter Benjamin's 1940 essay "Theses on the Philosophy of History."

[15] Marcus informs readers that Bernard's narrative reworks a similar passage involving righting a cart in Kipling's *Kim* (1901). This suggests both a playful intertextuality as well as an implicit critique of Kipling's (assumed) endorsement of empire.

[16] In his 1925 memoirs, former British Foreign secretary Edward Grey claimed to have said just before the war broke out, "The lamps are going out all over Europe; we shall not see them lit again in our lifetime" (qtd. in Crowson 17).

[17] See *Diary* 316. In this September 2, 1930 entry, Woolf writes that she is "more & more attracted by looseness, freedom, & eating one's dinner off a table anywhere" (316).

[18] Woolf began writing *The Waves* in July 1929, and it was published on October 8, 1931.

[19] Boyce includes a list of "newer industries": "electrical manufacturing and distribution, office equipment, chemicals and motor vehicles, as well as oil extraction, refining and distribution, mining and refining essential base metals such as aluminum, copper, nickel, lead and zinc, and production of rubber, gutta percha and their manufactured products" (143).

[20] Esty explains that this "national culture" and "elite literature" were among many in the sense that the "nostalgic invocations of cultural wholeness" that arose directly after the First World War were "challenged by the dawning recognition that the post-imperial nation would be a

multicultural and heterogeneous place" (165). Esty argues that Woolf's *Between the Acts* (1940) participates in the "anthropological turn" as it, along with Eliot's later work, "redirected attention from tribal and tropical rituals to homespun and folkloric ones" and thereby "shaped a number of important features of literary culture in the thirties" (54). I am not suggesting here that *The Waves* works in the same way as *Between the Acts*, but we can see in that earlier novel the seeds of what blossoms into a fully realized Anglocentrism in the later one.

[21] Cuddy-Keane's quotation is from Peter Allan Dale's *The Victorian Critic and the Idea of History* (1977).

CHAPTER 3

Gazing through "Mists and Fogs" in the Search for England:

Mobile Spectatorship and Englishness in Interwar Travel Literature

> [N]ever before have so many people been searching for England.
> —H. V. Morton, *In Search of England* (1927)[1]

> I had seen England. I had seen a lot of Englands.
> —J. B. Priestley, *English Journey* (1934)[2]

> We admit that it is not always easy to *see* England.
> —Edmund Blunden, *The Face of England* (1932)[3]

If Virginia Woolf in *The Waves* appropriates the railway to critique the formation of imagined communities and the maintenance of a grand imperial narrative in interwar Britain, other writers turn to automobility to shift focus away from urban perspectives and reconstruct narratives of English history and identity. This Anglocentric turn is best encapsulated in the travelogue, which achieved a kind of literary efflorescence in the interwar period. The success of Morton's *In Search of England* advanced the marketability of travel writing, and over the next decade a proliferation of books materialized, from introspective accounts such as Priestley's *English Journey*, Blunden's *The Face of England*, and George Orwell's *The Road to Wigan Pier* (1937), to documents of travel abroad like Evelyn Waugh's *Remote People* (1931), Graham Greene's *Journey Without Maps* (1936), and Robert Byron's *The Road to Oxiana* (1937). In *Radicals on the Road*, Bernard Schweizer relates that "a whole generation of English intellectuals between the ages of thirty and forty traveled compulsively" between the wars, contributing to a singular "'travelling culture'"[4] among the English literati (2). In the 1930s, Schweizer confirms, "the

number of newly published English travel books reached an unprecedented height" (4). Of course, the travelogue was not an interwar invention—Victorian England alone produced a substantial body of travel literature, often to bolster its imperialist ideologies[5]—yet in many ways travel writing was reshaped according to the social and historical circumstances of interwar England. It was a time of labor unrest, as the 1926 General Strike halted industry and transportation, as well as of economic decline, housing shortages, imperial instability, and, later, leftist and fascist organization.

Yet to what extent travel writing was remolded after the First World War seems to be a matter of debate. Manifestly, the genre attracted more novelists and lyricists than previously. As Helen Carr explains, "By the inter-war years . . . the literary travel book had become the dominant form [of travel writing]: many of the best known examples of the genre were written by writers equally or better known for their fiction or poetry" (75). Similarly, Schweizer maintains that travel authors before the war employed a "documentary, pseudoscientific, journalistic method," whereas afterward they "opted for the more imaginative, introspective, essayistic, and argumentative kind of travel book that clearly aspired to be recognized as a form of literature" (3, 4). This shift may be apparent, for example, in *The Face of England*, in which Blunden adopts an impressionistic, lyrical style to represent an aesthetically pleasing England, albeit underscored by an elegiac strain alluding to war and modernization. However, in *The Beaten Track*, a study of tourism in literature and culture up to 1918, James Buzard points out that the modern dichotomy of journalistic and imaginative travel literature grew out of a late-nineteenth-century separation of "mimetic" and "diegetic" modes of writing. This split was manifested in "objective" guidebooks such as those by Baedeker, which performed the "'prosaic' task" of "giving of directions, advice, and description in order to help readers physically reach

certain objects (cities, impressive vistas, works of art, and so forth),” and in “subjective” travel books or sketches, in which the “‘poetic’ involved the prompting of readers in appropriate reactions to [the above objects]” (167). By tipping the balance toward the poetic and diegetic, travel writers were able to “continually renew their genre no matter how beaten the track or hackneyed the sights” (169). Buzard’s analysis suggests that the dominant form of travel writing in the interwar period was in fact the culmination of a decades-long evolution of the genre extending back to the late-nineteenth-century.

With this supposed opposition between the journalistic and the impressionistic styles of writing in mind, I would like to argue that both the interwar travelogue and its novelistic counterpart, or travel-themed fiction, in England is far from settled on one side or the other of this stylistic divide. Instead, I spotlight an ongoing dialogue between fictional and nonfictional travel forms in the period, a dialogue in which imaginative and realist modes of writing, along with touristic and documentarist perspectives on Englishness, are exchanged, interrogated, and contested. In this way, travel-themed literature—a term I use to denote both nonfictional and fictional texts that focalize travel as touristic activity—displays characteristics of Foucault’s heterotopia and Huizinga’s play-ground. In his study of modernist authors who journeyed abroad, David G. Farley argues that “[t]ravel and travel writing transformed literary modernism as surely as they were transformed by it” (1). Farley connects, for example, “the salient and distinguishing features of modernist style and experimentation,” such as fragmentation and stream of consciousness, to “the foreign scenes, exotic locales, wrenching perspectives, and uncanny displacements” that Ezra Pound, Wyndam Lewis, and others experienced (1). Yet interwar travel-themed literature is often inwardly focused, turning its gaze upon a Britain troubled by economic, social, and political instabilities. Carr observes that “one of the most pervasive moods

in travel writing of the inter-war years is a certain world-weariness, springing from disillusionment with European civilisation and dismay at its impact on the rest of the world" (81). As I show below, interwar travel-themed literature offers both confrontation, though often masking diegesis or selective narration as mimesis or realist representation, and compensation, frequently in touristic forms of escape, in response to the unattractiveness of modern England.

Figuratively speaking, travelogues by Morton and Priestley, as well as novels by A. G. Macdonell and George Orwell, reveal a nation intently inspecting itself in a dirtied mirror, desiring to discern there a sharper figure of England, but often facing instead a disturbing reflection, or else recreating an imaginative wholeness to compensate for failure. Consequently, interwar travel-themed literature functions as heterotopias of both illusion and compensation. Foucault's first example of a heterotopia is the mirror, a materially real site in which one sees oneself in a place of non-inhabitance, "in an unreal, virtual space that opens up behind the surface," where one becomes "a sort of shadow that gives [one's] own visibility to [oneself]" (24). Travel-themed literature is fundamentally concerned with such visibility. In the heterotopian play-ground of these introspective but unsettled mobile texts of interwar England, I argue, the formal boundaries between impressionistic and journalistic styles of travel writing break down or become confused as writers attempt to clarify an image of England, even when the possibility of receiving back from the mirror a stable, or stabilizing, visibility is not assured.

Importantly, travel-themed literature is enabled by mobility and underpinned by notions of authenticity—the assumption that the visibility in the mirror, whatever forms it may take, accurately reflects a reality placed before it. Writing on literature itself as a touristic space, Mike Robinson and Hans Christian Andersen point to "complications in identifying, with any sort of precision, the boundaries between real and imaginary worlds" (8). I argue that a defining

contradiction in interwar travel-themed literature is that its pursuit of a fixed, real, historically and nationally integrated England is predicated upon a detached, mobilized, individualized, imagining spectator who implicitly claims to make that England visible and whole for readers. On the one hand, the search for England implies that both the spectator-narrator and the reader are able to move (physically, imaginatively) and have leisure time (and literacy) to take part in the quest. On the other hand, the search presupposes the existence of some other "England" that can be rediscovered. To re-imagine and articulate such a fixed and enduring England, authors must (in most cases) move away from urban and suburban spaces in which modernity—in the form of, for example, mass housing and conveniences, mass-produced goods and entertainment, and technologies of speed—has alienated people from an "authentic" England imagined to exist "out there" in the country. One only has to become mobile to reach it.

Of course, conceptions of "authenticity" are never fixed but continually reconstructed within a given society. In *The Country and The City*, Raymond Williams suggests that from 1880 there was a "dramatic extension of landscape and social relations" as a result of a contracting empire and an expanding, mobile middle class (281). Coupled with this extension was a "marked development of the idea of England as 'home,' in that special sense in which 'home' is a memory and an ideal" (281). Twentieth-century idealizations of the countryside, Williams continues, contrasted its "green peace" and "sense of belonging, of community," with the less inviting spaces of colonial unrest and administration (281). Yet this inward turn amplified the problem of authenticity. Buzard traces the idea of an "'authentic' cultural experience" to the early nineteenth century, when travel was no longer restricted to the social elite, who commenced to define certain practices and perspectives as "authentic" and others as banal or uninformed (6). By 1918, Buzard explains, upper-class "anti-tourism" had filtered to the middle

classes and intellectuals, "evolve[ing] into a symbolic economy in which travellers and writers displayed marks of originality and 'authenticity' in an attempt to win credit for acculturation" (6). Moreover, sites to which it was deemed appropriate to travel participated in a "market-place of cultural goods" where they might be singled out and displayed as "demonstrably appropriatable tokens of authenticity" (6). Thus arose a perceived disparity between "traveller" and "tourist," the former possessing "boldness and gritty endurance under all conditions" and "a superior emotional-aesthetic sensitivity," and the latter being "the cautious, pampered unit of a leisure industry," one of those who "go *en masse*, remaking whole regions in their homogeneous image"[6] (2, 6). The shift to identifying and circulating an "authentic" travel experience as cultural currency forms the foundation on which interwar travel literature is raised and read.

In English travel-themed literature, I argue, mobile spectators—on trains, on buses, or in automobiles—are accompanied by an array of simultaneously mobilized (and hence unsettled) notions and assumptions about England and Englishness. These ideas generally align with certain culturally inscribed or inherited binaries such as the real and the imaginary; the authentic and the inauthentic; and the traveler and the tourist. Especially in the interwar travelogue, privileged forms of spectatorship valorize the practice of properly seeing or discerning an "authentic" Englishness. However, perspectives on England and Englishness, often assumed to be stable when concentrated in rural spaces away from the flux of urban centers, are undercut by a tendency to imagine those spaces as isolated or untainted by interwar realities. "Rural England" becomes, in Huizinga's phrase, a play-ground, both literally for an English public seeking recreation away from the cities and literarily for travel writers and novelists searching for a "real" English identity. Yet this trend raises the problem of "staged authenticity," a misrepresentation and misrecognition of "rural England" caused by problematic forms of spectatorship. In this

chapter, I demonstrate how forms of spectatorship are reproduced, subverted, and even wholly exploded in travel-themed literature. The mobile vantage points from which multiple Englands are viewed and imagined, I argue, have formal repercussions in that the literature becomes marked by shifts in tone and narrative, creating unsettled texts even as writers, through their traveling narrators or characters, search for visibility in interwar England.

Surveying Travelers and Gazing Tourists: Real and Imaginary Englands in Interwar Travelogues

The conflict between the real and imaginary, and the traveler and tourist, is exemplified by recurring fogs in interwar travel-themed literature. As his epigraph at the start of this chapter suggests, Blunden recognizes that precise seeing is not guaranteed. In his chapter "Mists and Fogs" in *The Face of England*, Blunden imagines a "wanderer" sitting in the British Museum while writing to his "far home" (139). This foreign tourist bemoans "a certain yellowness in the vapour overhead" that veils the "upper windows of buildings" which are "not much more cheerful . . . than the eye-holes of a skeleton to one in a haunted house" (139). The tourist travels to the country, expecting to see a much-praised rural England, but inclement weather and mists again interfere. Blunden commiserates and concedes that it can be impossible to see England at times, especially for the tourist who, we can infer, is not as intimately connected to the land as a native Briton. Later in the chapter, Blunden reconstitutes the fog as a figure for the darker annals of English history: "It is our own dragon, breathing anti-fire. . . . He is deathly, but we are old enough to have seen strange shapes, and to keep our eyes open even in the worst moments" (144). Blunden likely has in mind the First World War, in which he had fought and to which he often alludes in his account. Blunden's fog implies that in times of crisis England may be obscured, but that a collective (and recollective) spectatorship—keeping "our eyes open"—can overpower

the fog and retain sight of, and thereby safeguard, an enduring national identity or Englishness. Blunden's distinction between modes of seeing points to spectatorship as a nativist enterprise: the foreign *tourist* fails to discern any "demonstrably appropriatable tokens of authenticity," to borrow Buzard's phrase, during his travels, while English *travelers* know from experience that behind the fog lies something worth preserving. The fog's threat of "death," Blunden intimates, will destroy the idea of England only "when impressions cease" (144). Blunden's impressionistic travelogue is, then, a necessary instrument for the nation's survival, one of many recorded interwar journeys produced after the traumatic events of the First World War.

Likewise, for Priestley, the fog may obscure an actual England but stimulate recollected or imagined ones. After having circumnavigating the country in *English Journey*, Priestley claims to have seen England not as a single, homogeneous nation but as a "fascinatingly mingled," if perplexing, amalgamation of traditional, industrial, and modern Englands (303). This observation, however, comes as Priestley is "roaring down the Great North Road" in a car. Suddenly, "the surrounding country disappeared. Then the top of the road in front vanished. We had stopped rushing and roaring now" (296). The fog robs Priestley of his spectatorial bearings and fluid mobility, but, unlike Blunden's foreign tourist, Priestley "lit a pipe and huddled down, dismissed this England that was only blinding vapour for the England I had already seen on my journey" (297). Thus, Priestley introspectively summons past experience (his journey) to recreate an England (or Englands) to compensate for a loss of sight. The automobile interior thus becomes a heterotopia of compensation, a site for the free play of the imagination, by which Priestley can weave together the innumerable "real" sites of his journey despite the threat of fogginess. Blunden's tourist, of course, is incapable of such recollection, but Priestley's traveler possesses the cultural and historical tools to remake England in its own image. The automobile,

importantly, offers him the private space in which to accomplish this task. In *Mobilities*, John Urry that automobility instilled "instantaneous time" in modern subjectivities. The twenty-four-hour availability of the car meant that people could reschedule their daily activities independently of the clock time imposed by public transportation. This shift produced "an individualistic timetabling of many instants or fragments of time" and the assembly of "complex, fragile and contingent patterns of social life" into "self-created narratives of the reflexive self" (121, 122). Like Priestley, interwar travel writers appropriate automobility to assemble, selectively and individualistically, the fragments and patterns of history, geography, culture, and sociality into a coherent narrative of England and Englishness. Hence the privileging of the motor coach and car over the railway in travelogues and novels. This automobilization of an informed traveler, in contradistinction to the uninformed tourist traveling en masse, is a significant thread linking together the travel-themed literature of the interwar period.

The distinction between tourist and traveler dovetails with the assumed opposition of "real" and "imaginary" in interwar travel writing. Priestley's automobilized spectatorship demonstrates that a strong desire to see England—to precisely report on the state of the nation after the war—drives unquestioned shifts from an outwardly directed gaze to an inwardly focused one. This tendency to alternate between real and imaginary frames of reference contributes to a mixing of journalistic and impressionistic writing that, as I show below, unsettles the interwar travelogue and travel novel. The inclination in the literature to exert authoritative perspectives on England suggests that people perceived that the nation was in danger of losing sight of itself, of being alienated from its self-referential "tokens of authenticity"—a danger, as we have seen, expressed in the metaphor of the fog. Answering the call to re*vise* the nation, travel writers and novelists sought to construct and celebrate a distinctive image of England. Yet,

as Peter Lowe writes of 1930s travelogues, "any celebration of England was bound to be fraught with contradictions and anxieties, for the country was by no means assured as to what it was and where it was going" (2). Faced with the urgent task of piercing the obscuring "mists and fogs," writers often lose sight of the shifting perspectives that disrupt, intentionally or unintentionally, the authoritative position of their spectator-narrators. Anxieties about the interwar conditions of England prompted writers to both confront the realities and escape from them into alternative heterotopian spaces infused with personal, cultural, or historical imaginations.

A seminal travel account of the 1920s, H. V. Morton's *In Search of England* illustrates the retreat into the imaginary. A columnist covering London society and politics, Morton set out in 1926 in a Morris car to rediscover a provincial England he felt he had neglected in his focus on the metropolis. Published serially in the *Daily Express* and then as a book in 1927, *In Search of England* traces Morton's spontaneous trip around the country. In his introduction, Morton captures the spirit of automobility, stating that his account "was written without deliberation by the roadside, on farmyard walls, in cathedrals, in little churchyards, on the washstands of country inns, and in many another inconvenient place" (ix). As these lines suggest, Morton primarily travels to sites that signal England's pastoral, historical, and cultural heritage. He visits farms, cathedrals, rural churches and inns, and other sites which may seem "inconvenient" to the city-dweller but are conveniently appropriable as "authentic" signifiers of Englishness. Naturally, Morton's leisurely itinerary includes such conventional tourist spots as Winchester, Stonehenge, Tintagel, Bath, Hadrian's Wall, and Stratford-upon-Avon. He writes poetically of their natural beauties and mythologies while reporting earnest conversations with locals and fellow tourists. An instant bestseller, *In Search of England* provided Morton and others with a template for later explorations.[7] It is a travelogue that enthusiastically taps into historically settled and culturally

shared notions of "authentic" and marketable Englishness, (re)collecting and assembling these markers into an enduring English narrative that has passed relatively unaltered through the fogs and mists of recent history. All Morton (and middle-class readers whom he encourages to follow in his tire tracks) has to do is exit the city to locate these English signifiers patiently waiting in the countryside. The ready-at-handness of the automobile is effortlessly matched by the instantaneous consumability of these "authentic" signs of Englishness.

Priestley's *English Journey*, published in 1934, adopts a different approach in its search for England. A veteran of the First World War, Priestley achieved fame with such novels as the comic but socially resonant *The Good Companions* (1929). In 1933, leftist publisher Victor Gollancz commissioned Priestley to survey interwar England with a sharp eye on working-class conditions in England's economically depressed industrial north, a region familiar to Priestley from birth.[8] Unlike Morton, who selectively focuses on culturally commodified sites, Priestley develops what might be called a bifocal spectatorship, allowing him to shift between hyperopic gazes (backward) into England's rich history and tradition, and myopic inspections (downward) of current conditions. As Priestley explores the villages and rural landscapes of southern England, he finds, like Morton, much to eulogize, but he is a more cautious and critical spectator when he journeys through the Midlands and North Country. Consequently, the narrative of *English Journey* mixes, deliberately perhaps, impressionistic prose and matter-of-fact reportage. If Priestley lyrically paints from afar the Wiltshire Downs with "the spire of Salisbury Cathedral like a pointed finger, faintly luminous" on the horizon, he also unsentimentally, if almost voyeuristically, depicts up close the Staffordshire Potteries as a place where "small towns straggle and sprawl in their shabby undress" (24, 162). This second perspective was no doubt conditioned by the seven years that separate Morton's travelogue and Priestley's account, during

which the 1926 General Strike and 1929 Wall Street crash reoriented social attitudes toward poverty and unemployment. The 1930s witnessed not only Priestley's book but also Orwell's *Down and Out in Paris and London* (1933) and *The Road to Wigan Pier* (1937), as well as Morton's pamphlet "What I Saw in the Slums" (1933). Literature in general became more socially aware, but at the same time a doubleness of vision and purpose—competing desires to see an England of rich cultural and historical heritage and to report an England of grim social realities—became more pronounced in travelogues and travel-themed fiction.

Moreover, this doubleness is often expressed in relation to the new forms of automobility that enabled the journeys to reassess England and Englishness. In his introduction to *In Search of England*, Morton asserts that a mass spectatorship[9] of England is underway as the "remarkable system of motor-coach services which now penetrate every part of the country has thrown open to ordinary people regions which even after the coming of the railway were remote and inaccessible" (ix). Therefore, Morton claims, "More people than in any previous generation are seeing the real country for the first time" (x). Morton thus positions away from the city a "real country" that might be seen for the "first time," assuming an "authentic" English experience that has been forgotten but is ripe for rediscovery, and that in diametrically opposed to the artificiality of urban and suburban existence. Morton's "ordinary people" are, obviously, the expanding middle classes who have greater leisure time and access to the convenience of transportation, especially the bus and automobile. In *The Car in British Society*, Sean O'Connell, like other critics, notes that the Ruskinian idea that rail transport coerces passengers into becoming "living parcel[s]" whereas the car embodies "liberation" in that, instead of passively inhabiting railway space as cargo, travelers actively participate in the "commodification . . . of selected spaces of 'English' heritage and landscape"[10] (79). Yet, as Daniel J. Boorstin and others have alleged, the

recasting of touristic sites as "pseudo-events, by which the image, the well-contrived imitation, outshines the original," has led to a more passive consumption of spaces identified as cultural or historical icons (107). Thus, as the search for England aligns with more modern and rapid modes of transport, participation in that search becomes an ambiguous activity, involving active and passive levels of engagement. Yet a distinct irony surfaces in that travelers searching for a supposedly "real," because anti-modern, England are dependent on industrialization in the form of mass-produced vehicles that expedite access to an idealized "rural England."

The commodification and consumption of England as a tourist destination suggests that the accessibility and convenience of transportation facilitated the spread of a middle-class spectatorship across the nation. When Priestley begins his journey, he is "astonished" at the "speed and comfort" of his bus, declaring that "there seems to be a motor coach going anywhere in this island" (9). Indeed, Jack Simmons and Gordon Biddle provide historical backing for Priestley claim: "By 1919 the industry was poised for expansion, which proved so rapid that 10 years later there were motor-bus services everywhere, while express coach services by 1931 linked all the main towns of England and Wales" (61). The comprehensiveness of motorized transportation meant that the newly mobile middle classes suddenly had access to seemingly the whole island. Yet having such unprecedented means and access also permitted travelers to be selective in what they saw and how they saw it. As we have seen, what middle-class travel writers such as Morton seek is a culturally significant, aesthetically appealing rural England of marketable natural and historic landmarks, quaint towns and villages, excised of any signs of industrialism or impoverishment. Analyzing the title of Morton's travelogue, Lowe isolates the word *search*, which he argues transforms the English journey into a quest: "England is not something through which one travels aimlessly, but something that one *seeks*—thus creating the

idea of there being an 'England' within the geographical space of England, a 'real country' that exists to be found by the traveller willing to explore a little deeper" (68). Additionally, Alun Howkins has shown that by the twentieth century the prevailing "vision" of the countryside was determinedly selective: "The landscape of Englishness, in stark contrast to the [rugged] landscape of Romanticism, was a southern landscape – the world of village England" (26). The "rural England" routinely conjured by writers, artists, and commentators was a well-tended, stable, socially stratified site. Whatever did not fit this vision, such as "the spectre of class struggle and industrial unrest," was omitted (Howkins 26). Thus, in *In Search of England*, Morton purposefully avoids industrialized regions in favor of a culturally convenient England—a land of legendary deeds and figures, pleasant agricultural landscapes, and villages populated by squires and parsons. When Morton explicitly (and Priestley implicitly) invites his middle-class readers to follow in his wake, he also provides them with a prearranged way of seeing the countryside—a spectatorship conducive to finding an already anticipated picture of England.

While Morton's approach satisfies an appetite for a particular vision of the countryside, it represents an act of *mis*observation. Adapting Lacan's concept of the scopic drive, Robert Burden proposes that for any culture a (represented or symbolic) landscape is "a way of seeing – a scopic regime" generated by a gaze "motivated by desire" in the "encounter between the imaginary and the real." Therefore, the represented landscape takes form as "a mapping of space as *méconnaisance* (misrecognition)" (21). The opening pages of *In Search of England* reveal how desire fuels the quest to see England. Morton explains that he decided to write his account while suffering an illness in the "cold, unhappy mountains of Palestine" (20). Feeling close to death and alienated from his foreign environs, Morton physically orients himself toward England and imaginatively gazes on it by summoning memories of the land. He surmises that "this vision

of mine is a common one to exiles all over the world: we think of home, we long for home, but we see something greater—*we see England*" (20). Morton's tactic here, replicated throughout his travelogue, is to superimpose "something greater" over a geographically locatable England. Thus an idealized picture replaces an actual site as a heterotopian reflection of reality. Morton attempts here to forge an identity as a "traveler" by displaying, in Buzard's words, a "set of inner personal qualities that amounts to a superior emotional-aesthetic sensitivity" to the England in his scopic field, even if that field is imaginatively projected (6). Yet Morton's motive for writing the travelogue is vividly articulated as an intense desire—produced in a time of crisis: his illness—to see a particular England, and his resolution to "go home in search of England" bespeaks an intention to find there the England previewed in Palestine (21). Morton's admission unintentionally sets up his account as an extended misrecognition, in which his encounters with a "real" England are always filtered through the "imaginary" landscapes he first forms abroad.

It is worth dwelling for a moment on the fact that Morton turns his gaze toward England instead of Palestine, which he finds "inhospitable"[11] (19). In his attempt to distinguish himself as a sensitive and expert "traveler," Morton inadvertently exposes his role as a "tourist." In *The Tourist Gaze*, John Urry remarks, "When we 'go away' we look at the environment with interest and curiosity. It speaks to us in ways we appreciate, or at least we anticipate that it will do so" (1). Morton, instead of curiously observing his immediate surroundings, turns to look intently at England, thereby turning on his homeland the "tourist gaze" that one customarily directs toward places away from home. In this way, England (or an idealization of England) is rendered foreign to the modern subject who, like Morton, perceives himself to be estranged from it. As I show in chapter 1, this is precisely what constitutes a play-ground—isolation from everyday routine— inviting one to creatively fill that foreign space with its own temporality and significance. The

anticipation that a touristic site will be different and intriguing, Urry explains, depends on the circumstances of spectatorship, so that "the gaze in any historical period is constructed in relationship to its opposite, to non-tourist forms of social experience and consciousness" (1-2). A devastating world war, global depression, the General Strike, the rise of fascism, and other social and political "illnesses" in the 1920s and 1930s contributed to a Britain that increasingly focused its gaze inward. In order to see a whole, uncontaminated England, Morton and others imply, one must not only separate from the non-touristic sites and concerns, but also become home*sick*, allowing a deep-seated, nativist desire to overwhelm one's mind. As Morton continues *In Search of England*, his gaze attempt to realize the fantasies of old England, alluding to the Romans, Camelot, Alfred the Great, and other marketable "tokens of authenticity." Writing about interwar guidebooks, Stephan Kohl argues that "through the fusion of historicity and timeless presence, Rural England is seen as a central element of a store of memories . . . which, taken together, define English identity" (198). Travelogues such as *In Search of England* demonstrate the tourist gaze at work, reproducing the countryside as a timeless heterotopia that collects, like Foucault's museum, the valuable artifacts of cultural of historical memory.

The desire to reclaim a culturally and historically luxuriant England conceals a general disposition toward the countryside that grows along with the industrialization of Britain but intensifies in the interwar period. Kohl shows that early twentieth-century critics deduced "that the countryside suffered from alarmingly severe continuous depopulation" due to urbanization, which would eventually "empty the countryside of people." This perception heightened a "sense of loss" that "pervaded discussions of the countryside" (187). In turn, this sense of loss and desire for rejuvenation crystallized in the preservationist movement of the late 1920s and 1930s. A year after Morton's travelogue, English architect Clough Williams-Ellis published his polemic

England and the Octopus (1928). Utilizing sharp, incendiary rhetoric, Williams-Ellis writes that England "has been changing with an acceleration that is catastrophic, thoroughly frightening the thoughtful among us, and making them sadly wonder whether anything recognisable of our lovely England will be left for our children's children" (15). In his view, England has "fallen from grace" through the mismanagement of its rural spaces, now ravaged by "self-inflicted wounds and sores" (13, 14). Williams-Ellis laments that "no official guardian of our country's beauty" exists, a remark that catalyzed action by The Council for the Preservation of Rural England (13). Preservationists, as David Matless explains in *Landscape and Englishness*, tended to exploit "binary contrasts of good and evil, order and chaos, beauty and horror, which are routinely deployed so as to make preservation appear a matter of national fundamentals" (26). Institutionalizing a framework for viewing the country and a discourse for articulating rural Englishness in terms of national responsibility, preservationism deeply influenced interwar travel writing and literature. Morton's selective celebration of England's rural charm and monuments as foundational to a healthy nation replicates the preservationist project to rectify the "wounds" of the countryside by restoring its life-sustaining beauty and function as a national trust. Morton's spectatorship culls the unseemly and magnifies the symbolic and mythical to circulate an imagined England as reality. Conversely, Williams-Ellis gazes at the horrifying reality of a despoiled country, spotlighting the unscrupulous exploitation that has ruined the England of his imagination. Taken together, Morton's and Williams-Ellis's accounts are two sides of the same preservationist coin, both assuming certain rural "tokens of authenticity" that form the basis of their contrastive approaches. The doubleness of preservationist perspectives features prominently in interwar travel-themed literature and is underpinned by the desire to recuperate, secure, and circulate a culturally valued image of England.

Furthermore, this double-vision is marked by temporal dissonance in that it stresses the urgency of *a* rural England now under threat even as it reinforces the timelessness and apartness of *the* English countryside. Williams-Ellis frames rural despoliation as an immediate crisis that may soon dissolve distinctions between urban or suburban and rural England, whereas Morton's account represents the country as a place of timeless historicity apart from sites of modernization. Preservationist double-sightedness can thus direct readers-spectators to turn either a retrospective tourist gaze or a contemporary critical perspective to the landscape. According to Urry, touristic sites instantiate what has been called "staged authenticity," whereby the cultures on display "are invented, remade and the elements reorganized" (9). Tourists take the performance of a culture to be an "authentic" representation, or, as Jonathan Culler puts it in "The Semiotics of Tourism," the "tourist is interested in everything as a sign of itself, an instance of typical cultural practice" (155). On the one hand, a tourist attraction is historically defined, evoking a past even as it is presented according to the context that calls forth its display or performance. On the other, it claims to be timeless, released from any temporality and continually reproducible as a sign of itself. An English village, for example, stands as a touristic site marking "authentic" English-village-ness. In Urry's words, "When a small village in England is seen [by tourists], what they gaze upon is the 'real olde England'" (3). Such "authentic" markers are necessary to both the retrospective gaze, which seeks to reconstitute them as a presence, and the critical perspective, which draws attention to them as an absence.

Elizabeth Outka articulates a similar concept in the "commodified authentic," a phenomenon of the late-nineteenth and twentieth centuries when commodities were first marketed as both modern and nostalgic. Novel products like home furnishings and model estates like Cadbury's Bournville, Outka argues, "promised to deliver a vision of stability and

permanence at the same time that they promised equally to be endlessly exchangeable" (7). A "vision of stability and permanence" was undoubtedly attractive to an English populace dealing with the legacy of war and the disorder of interwar social and political crises. The "commodified authentic" could be seen as an attempt to stabilize modernization by infusing it with the (counterfeited) aura of history. Hence the "commodified authentic" is "staged authenticity" transferred to the marketplace. Writing about global tourism, Culler argues that "[o]ur primary way of making sense of the world is as a network of touristic destination and possibilities." If so, tourism can be seen as "an attempt to overcome fragmentation by articulating the world as a series of societies, each with its characteristic monuments, distinctive customs or cultural practices, and native scenery, all of which are treated as signs of themselves" (166). If we apply this globalized notion to an England composed of varied regions, monuments, and customs, interwar travelogues like Morton's adopt "staged authenticity"—or, if we approach them as marketed books, the "commodified authentic"—as a way to stitch together a coherent and defragmented vision of England.

Even Priestley, who strives toward a more critical perspective than Morton, cannot fully decouple his writing from the tourist gaze and an underlying desire to invest the English countryside with cultural signification and continuity. Early in *English Journey*, as he views the New Forest from his motor-coach, Priestley indulges in a particular spectatorship. His "*pleasure in looking at a countryside comes from its more vague associations*" (24, italics added), indicating a view of rural England that constitutes a form of scopophilia, a voyeuristic perspective on a countryside perceived to lack explicit meaning and therefore to be fillable by the (male) spectator. As Kohl has shown, by the twentieth century the signifier "Rural England" in art and literature had shed many of its conventional associations: for example, its relation to

divine order.[12] Kohl states that a "general notion of an empty rural space implied, theoretically at least, that one could now write about the countryside as an unknown territory" (188). Although Priestley resists "[c]lamping the past on to the present, turning history and art into exact topography," he delights in "the absence of these associations . . . from history and art," a superimposed lack that "makes a new country in which nothing has happened . . . appear so empty and melancholy" (24). Priestley's decisive emptying and implicit feminizing of the countryside affords him "a deep *pleasure*" so that he "could cry out at the lovely thickness of life, as different now from ordinary existence as plum pudding from porridge" (24, italics added). The intense satisfaction derived from viewing a nonsignifying landscape and injecting it with meaning becomes especially magnified in travel-themed literature during the interwar period. As Priestley's account implies, this spectatorial, predominantly male project depends on regarding the countryside in terms of difference, as a heterotopian "other" space, a hallowed play-ground isolated from "ordinary existence" elsewhere. As his bus proceeds through rural Hampshire, Preistley invokes "old landscape artists" such as William Hazlitt to orient his view of the scenery (24). In such impressionistic moments, Priestley eschews the precise historicity of guidebooks, opting instead for a loose set of signifiers assembled from cultural memory and the imagination. Under the guise of a "traveler," Priestley allows his touristic self to come to the fore, writing the landscape with a desiring gaze and hence contributing to a "commodified authentic"—a marketable landscape rooted in cultural tradition and yet freely signifiable (or reproducible) given the range of imaginative "tokens of authenticity" supplied by that tradition.

Nevertheless, at times Priestley distances his account from a culturally commodified or imagined rural England. A supporter of preservation, Priestley's spectatorship moves across the divide of the preservationist double-vision.[13] Traveling in the Cotswolds, Priestley meets an ex-

soldier who supports the "re-establishment" of a "bold peasantry" as a "cure for our ills" (41). In order to deflate his companion's idealism, Priestley responds that a "peasant on paper, a romantic literary man's peasant . . . was all very well, but always seemed a very different sort of creature from the actual ignorant, stupid, mean peasant of reality" (41). Adopting an undisguised middle-class perspective, Priestley nonetheless criticizes the romanticization of the country at the expense of "reality." This exchange is a strategic move by Priestley to boost his credibility as a more qualified spectator, a "traveler" who can differentiate the ideal and the real. As it moves to England's industrial north, Priestley's account shifts to frank representations of factories and working-class towns. Ben Knights suggests that "Priestley has much more in common than Morton with the social investigators and condition of England novelists of the 1840s and 1850s. His cumulative judgment moves towards shocking readers into a social and political rather than merely an aesthetic response" (176). However, *English Journey*, as a mobile text, couples social inquiry with aesthetic appreciation to fluctuate between two modes of spectatorship: one celebratory, idealizing, and commodifying; the other critical, unsentimental, and investigatory.

This fluctuation between perspectives becomes problematic in the travelogue. At the start of his journey, Priestley attempts to differentiate his qualified spectatorship from that of other travelers. On the bus from London, Priestley sits next to a man who recounts a failed business for American tourists visiting Canterbury: a tearoom called "Chaucer Pilgrims—you know, Chaucer. Old style—Tudor, you know—black beams and everything" (12). The man's café exemplifies the "commodified authentic"—a move to stabilize a modern commodity by cloaking it in history and culture—as well as "staged authenticity"—the reproduction of a Tudor style as a sign of itself. The man, with his factory-produced "loathsome little pipe" (13), embodies Priestley's criticisms of the expanding middle class: their low aspirations, artificiality, and willingness to

pander to American tastes and lifestyles. Priestley purposefully spotlights his fellow passenger in order to legitimize and elevate his authoritative spectatorship. After their conversation, the two men silently view the passing rural scenery outside the bus window. For Priestley, "the pleasant empty countryside of Hampshire . . . has a timeless quality. The Saxons, wandering over their Wessex, must have seen much of what we saw that morning" (14). Again, key features of the landscape are its emptiness and timelessness, allowing Priestley to fill it with any signifier of Englishness. The man views the same scene, but Priestley cannot fathom "what my companion was thinking about; perhaps the trickiness of the shoe trade" (14). Priestley implies that the man, preoccupied with employment, fails to see a landscape because it is shrouded in the fog, so to speak, of financial uncertainty. In contrast, the range of vision in Priestley's leisurely and secure spectatorship extends far beyond that of the insolvent middle-class Briton. If, as Knights contends, travelogues such as *English Journey* were "an important element in a post-1918 re-affirmation of the identity of 'Britain' (and more specifically 'England')," then Priestley's tête-à-tête with his fellow traveler serves to underline his expertise in identifying an "authentic" England, which can only "be read by the informed traveller" (168). However, Priestley's effort is undercut by his allusion to Saxons to legitimate his authority as a spectator of rural England, having just disparaged the man's exploitation of Chaucer and Tudor style to validate his business.

One way Priestley attempts to maintain this authoritative perspective is by occupying elevated positions from which to survey rural or industrial regions, a practice rooted in preservationism. As Matless indicates, the preservationist response to rural mismanagement and disorder necessitated a "plan view": "Maps and aerial photographs are routinely deployed as a familiar expert currency, signifying a position of advanced technology and expert authority." The circulation and display of such images helped to "establish the preservationist as an enlightened

overseer; passionate yet detached, expert and mobile, distinct from the supposedly closed-in, narrow, near-sighted developer on the ground" (38). In a similar manner, Priestley seeks high emplacements to solidify his role as an enlightened overseer, as, for example, when he climbs a hill to overlook the coal-producing Black Country. From this height, he surveys "an immense hollow of smoke and blurred buildings and factory chimneys" which "unrolled . . . like a smouldering carpet" (86). The panoramic prospect allows Priestley to organize a comprehensive assessment of the industrial region and even to offer a superior aesthetic discernment, which, of course, is predicated on his detachment and mobility. He claims to see "sombre beauty" in the hazy scene, although he admits "it was a beauty you could appreciate chiefly because you were not condemned to live there" (87). Here Priestley cultivates an elite, critical perspective in which he occupies the place of the "passionate yet detached, expert and mobile" spectator in contrast to the "closed-in, narrow, near-sighted" inhabitants of the lesser towns below. His distance permits him both to critically assess the dreariness of the scene and to translate its signs of industrial labor into an aestheticized landscape, if not a William Hazlitt, then an Edwin Butler Bayliss.[14] Priestley thus renders the scene as a kind of "staged authenticity" whereby he elevates the factory towns to the realm of timeless art. Transportation, central to the search for England, grants Priestley the distance and freedom to cultivate a master gaze on both rural and industrialized landscapes.

An excursion to Birmingham further clarifies Priestley's authority and mobility vis-à-vis a relatively immobilized working class. After boarding a tram in the city, Priestley has "one of the most depressing little journeys" of his itinerary. He attributes his downcast mood and the bleak scene to "our urban and industrial civilization," which "was so many miles of ugliness, squalor, and the wrong kind of vulgarity, the decayed anæmic kind" (69). From his detached,

mobile place on the tram, Priestley advances a form of spectatorship typical to interwar social commentary. Drawing from Max Nordau, Knights finds in travel writing a "degeneration thesis" according to which urban spaces connote physical and moral vitiation while the "rural embodies and engenders racial strength" (172). To communicate distaste for working-class Birmingham, Priestley mines the riches of words and images from English industrial literature such that by Charles Dickens. When he exits the tram at the top of a hill in a decayed section of Birmingham, Priestley sees "below and afar the vast smoky hollow of the city, with innumerable tall chimneys thrusting out of the murk" (70). Drawing from an inherited stock of signifiers of industrial England, Priestley merges a preservationist gaze with a literary prospect. Not locally specific, his descriptions are applicable to any built-up, industrial area in Britain. If Priestley's spectatorship in the countryside summons a set of culturally produced signifiers of "rural England," then his perspective in the North likewise relies on established markers of "industrial England." Despite gesturing toward a more documentarist form of writing than that in travelogues such as Morton's, Priestley's account blurs distinctions between journalistic and impressionistic styles in such a way that "authentic" and "imaginary" constructions are inseparable.

This unsettled aspect of *English Journey* connects to the theme of mobility. On the hilltop in Birmingham, Priestley's unease continues until he sees the next tram, which he signals "like a man on a raft seeing a sail" (70). Desperate to escape this urban wasteland, Priestley does not scrutinize it long enough to develop any more than a cursory assessment. He can decry the contamination and squalor of industrial England because he has the privilege to do so from a consistently mobile and detached perspective. At the start of his journey, Priestley's praise of motor-coach transport exposes the luxury of his spectatorship. In a cushioned seat on the bus, Priestley muses, "Perhaps it is significant that you get the same sort of over-done comfort, the

same sinking away into a deep sea of plush, in the vast new picture theatres" (9). He does not develop this significance, but his analogy suggestively joins transportation with the tourist and cinematic gazes. In "Visual Pleasure and the Narrative of Cinema," Laura Mulvey discusses Freud's conception of scopophilia, which arises in "circumstances in which looking itself is a source of pleasure." For the psychoanalyst, that pleasure is erotic in nature and involves gazing at a person as "an objectified other" (835). We have already seen how Priestley's "pleasure" informs his gaze on the English countryside while riding the bus (24). The fantasy he imaginatively embeds in the emptied landscape has a counterpart in the cinema, which, Mulvey argues, promotes scopophilia by situating spectators in an enclosed, darkened space and instilling a "sense of separation" that allows them to "play[] on their voyeuristic phantasy" as images are projected onto a blank screen (836). Both cinematic and rural sites function as heterotopias of illusion, exposing the illusions of spectatorship itself, and of compensation, concentrating desires for authority and control in a disjointed and insecure world.

Of course, Mulvey is concerned with images of the fragmented female body displayed onscreen and objectified by the male viewer, but a similar, if perhaps less eroticized, process is manifest in interwar travel-themed literature. Priestley's cinematic analogy reformulates the search for England as an entertainment whereby a mobile and desiring spectator views England and Englishness from a place of detached convenience. Through varying modes of spectatorship—preservationist or touristic, critical or poetic—the spectator attempts to establish his authority in order to fix and control an image of England. However, the luxury of the authoritative spectatorial position disintegrates at certain moments in Priestley's account, as illustrated in another bus ride in the industrial north. Priestley notes that his Nottingham-bound bus "was not one of those superb coaches that I have already handsomely praised in this book. It

was a most uncomfortable vehicle. It shook and rattled . . . we seemed to be swaying on the edge of catastrophe" (102). These two contrastive modes of traveling in England—one smooth and luxurious, the other precarious and uncomfortable—correlate with the shifting perspectives in the narrative, from an imaginative and cinematic prospect in the south to an unadorned but agitated mode of observation in the north. The comfort of a luxurious spectatorship clashes with the anxiety of encountering the catastrophic England that threatens to unseat the informed traveler from his authoritative position.

We circle back, then, to the end of Priestley's account and the fog that envelops his car as he returns to London. The fog, I have suggested, makes indistinct the boundary between the (exterior) real and the (interior) imaginary. Confronted with a vanished landscape that confounds his spectatorship, Priestley withdraws into the comfortable space of mental recreation. In the heterotopian automobile, Priestley plays with the tradition of seeing multiple Englands, highlighting three in particular.[15] The first is "Old England" with its "cathedrals and minsters and manor houses and inns . . . Parson and Squire . . . quaint highways and byways" (297). Priestley next recalls "nineteenth-century . . . industrial England of coal, iron, cotton, wool, railways; of thousands of rows of little houses all alike, sham Gothic churches, square-faced chapels, Town Halls, Mechanics' Institutes, mills, foundries" (298). Lastly, there is "the England of arterial and by-pass roads, of filling stations and factories that look like exhibition buildings, of giant cinemas and dance-halls and cafés, bungalows with tiny garages" (300). These markers of England and Englishness are not necessarily the sites and objects that Priestley has discovered, but are carefully organized ways of seeing—"tokens of authenticity" paraded before an audience as if on a stage or movie screen. The three Englands conspicuously and comfortably allude to the medieval, Victorian, and modern eras. In this final "staged authenticity," Priestley endeavors to

wrest control of a "fascinatingly mingled" England comprised of the listed "scraps, orts, and fragments"[16] of Englishness (303). Nonetheless, the mingling of fragments creates an unsettled and kaleidoscopic travel narrative that shifts between touristic and critical gazes, imaginary and real landscapes, and impressionistic and journalistic writing, all of which are driven by the desire to stabilize and control a picture of interwar England.

The Poetic Gaze: Team Spirit and National Character in *England, Their England*

The mobile perspectives of interwar travel writing, as well as their underlying desires and accommodating "tokens of authenticity," are creatively reproduced and interrogated in travel-themed fiction, in which a central character is mobilized to survey the state of England between the two world wars. Like the travelogue, travel-themed fiction seeks answers to urgent social questions: How has England changed after the alarming events of war and, later, labor unrest and economic depression? How can one define Englishness or an English national character or identity? How can one assemble a coherent England from its diverse social, cultural, and political components? One example of travel-themed fiction is A. G. Macdonell's *England, Their England* (1933). Marlene A. Briggs has suggested that the novel's publication came at a time when Britain had developed a heightened "self-consciousness about national identity," insecurity produced by the First World War (156).

Critically neglected since his sudden death in 1941, Macdonell was a prolific interwar author. Born in India and raised in Scotland and England, he served as a lieutenant during the First World War in France, where he was injured and suffered shell shock. After a postwar convalescence, he worked for the League of Nations Union and as drama critic for the *London Mercury*. In addition, Macdonell published crime fiction under pseudonyms in the late 1920s, but his literary reputation was cemented with *England, Their England*, which Briggs calls "a comic

novel enriched by understatement, nonsense, hyperbole, and slapstick" (155). This light satire follows Donald Cameron, a naïve Scottish ex-soldier and journalist who, like Macdonell, has experienced shell shock, as he travels around England attempting to define Englishness. Donald observes sporting events, attends London parties, moves in literary circles, and visits provincial towns to find material for a commissioned book on the English character. However, Donald is mostly bewildered, unable to put together any definitive conception of Englishness. In despair, he boards a train to Winchester, where he has an epiphany of sorts—a vision of an armed "nation of poets" poised to defend England and Englishness (14).

Commentary on the novel, though scant, has primarily focused on its insight into Englishness. In a 1933 column titled "The English Character" in *The Times*, the writer claims Macdonell is "able to see deep into the English nature" and "can pounce with equal gaiety and wisdom on what seem to his Scottish eye to be oddities, contradictions, and puzzles, but to the ordinary English eye would seem perfectly simple, obvious, and proper" (15). The columnist praises Macdonell's unique spectatorship. His insinuation is that Macdonell can penetrate a fog of "oddities, contradictions, and puzzles," which to an uncritical "English eye" would appear commonplace and insignificant, and produce a more "authentic" definition of Englishness. The main contributor to Macdonell's perceptiveness, the writer suggests, is difference—his "Scottish eye." In contrast to Blunden's foreign tourist, who cannot derive significance from a befogged England, Macdonell's outsider status is taken as a key to his ability. In *England, Their England*, Macdonell's counterpart is Donald, whose simple, confused, and naïve spectatorship is the means by which Macdonell displays his superior insight. Thus, Macdonell the Scottish *traveler* of sorts, knowingly informing readers of genuine "English nature," stands just behind Donald the Scottish *tourist*, who unquestioningly adopts any frame of reference as a way of seeing England.

It is important first to distinguish between "character" and "identity," two concepts that are often used interchangeably but have been historically differentiated. Patrick Parrinder sees a dual "semantic shift" in conceptions of landscape/environment and character/identity English discourse between the eighteenth and twentieth centuries (89). More specifically, a transition from regarding England as a "landscape" to understanding it as an "environment" correlated with a shift in approaching Englishness as an expression of national "character" to appropriating it as national "identity." According to Parrinder, landscape and character "are comprehensive or holistic concepts, assembling a number of different elements into a 'composition' or composite whole which must be observed from outside. We have to detach ourselves from landscapes and characters in order to appreciate them" (90). Consequent to the distancing of the subject from the object within the scopic field, emphasis can be placed on a comprehensive spectatorship, on landscape or character as something in need of preservation or protection, especially if under threat from modernizing forces. This is precisely the approach in travelogues such as *English Journey*, in which Priestley cultivates a detached, mobile perspective—an outsider's view disguised as an insider's. On the other hand, Parrinder continues, environment and identity "are inherently plastic and plural," shaped through the intervention of a subject who is "constantly changing them rather than seeking to preserve them as fixed frames of reference outside us" (90). Views of environments or identities can also claim to be totalizing, assembling and ordering (or reordering) all components within a given purview; however, modification trumps conservation, and interaction or performance replaces observation. In this way, national character suggests a state of *being* that is fixed, inherited, and observable, while national identity implies an act of *becoming* that is participatory and subjective.[17]

In this section, I examine how *England, Their England* organizes an outsider's view of

Englishness—as national character—to represent and satirize the modes of spectatorship and "tokens of authenticity" that are central to the interwar travelogue. Macdonell's novel is thematically and structurally modeled on travel writing of the period, tracing the journey of a guide (Donald) that searches for a national character that might stabilize an "authentic" picture of England. Yet *England, Their England*, unlike *English Journey*, exposes, albeit comically, the instability of the interwar spectator. On the one hand, I show how Macdonell frustrates the idealizing gaze of touristic travel writing through Donald's naïve spectatorship, which has at its center the desire to see a particular, inherited image of England. Yet, if the novel repeatedly underscores a problematic tourist gaze, it also betrays sudden shifts from satire to sincerity, even endorsing the tourist gaze it also undermines. Hence the novel is marked by spectatorial tension. As Briggs notices, "satire competes with social concord" in Macdonell's novel, "reflecting antagonistic attitudes toward the interwar preoccupation with Englishness" (157). I argue that rather than stabilizing a single perspective, *England, Their England* is unsettled in its orientation toward English character. Donald's troubled spectatorship stretches across assumed boundaries between insider/outsider viewpoints, real/imagined rural settings, and "authentic"/counterfeited markers of national character. At the end of the novel, Macdonell tries to resolve these conflicts by valorizing a poetic gaze on an ideal English character, upheld by an inherited literary tradition.

The title *England, Their England* first directs the reader's attention to English and non-English perspectives. It alludes, on one hand, to William Ernest Henley's "*Pro Rege Nostro*," an imperialist poem composed in 1892 but published during the Boer War in the 1900 collection *For England's Sake*.[18] The poem glorifies British imperial strength and the sacrificial zeal of its supporters—"Take and break us: we are yours" (l. 21)—as it repeats the phrase "England, my England." Henley's words were borrowed by writers and commentators throughout the twentieth

century, notably by D. H. Lawrence in the short story "England, My England," written during the First World War but revised and published in 1922. Lawrence's story commences at the rural cottage of Egbert, a man who "loved the past, the old music and dances and customs of old England" (11), but whose negligence and idleness precipitate his decline and finally death at the front in France. By the 1930s, Henley's phrase had come to reflect deeply conflicted notions of Englishness. Taken patriotically, it expressed confidence in Britain's imperial identity and destiny; taken paradoxically or sarcastically, it conveyed disillusionment with the nation's part in the war and handling of domestic and international affairs.[19] Changing the pronoun in his title, Macdonell shifts the perspective to that of an outsider but retains the criticisms and shades of meaning the phrase accrued in the years after its initial publication.

Moreover, in *England, Their England* an ambiguous orientation of nationalities contributes to insider/outsider complications and unsettles the notion of "character." Donald's employment as a Scottish journalist in England mirrors Macdonell's, and, according to Briggs, "captures the precarious social location of the Scot who treads the unstable territory between cultures" (156). Certainly, Macdonell uses Donald's Scottishness to frame him as a naïve spectator. In a way, his lack of familiar ground on which to base an idea of Englishness contests the idea of the authoritative guide in travel writing. The novel's blending of nationalities also has historical import in that defining Englishness, as opposed to Scottishness or Irishness, was an ongoing project in the twentieth century. Robert Burden has noted "a continuing confusion between Britishness – a concept of national unity based on the union of the different cultural and ethnic groups (the passport holders) – and Englishness, as distinct from Scottishness, Welshness" (15). This tangle of terms has roots in early British imperial rhetoric. To help forge a unifying empire, Burden relates, Britishness "was invented to extinguish the difference between the

English, the Scots, and the Welsh" (16). However, this construction of Britishness, Christine Berberich notes, "had repercussions on England's own status: where, in the union of 'Britain,' did *Englishness* have its place?" (211). As industrialism and globalization dissolved borders in the late-nineteenth and twentieth centuries, efforts were made to reassert a unique "Englishness" by Anglicizing landscapes. As Berberich relates, a "way to reassert 'Englishness' was by reconsidering old traditions and values, and rural traditions and rituals in particular had always had a high status" (211). *England, Their England* ambiguously responds to this preoccupation with nationalities by spotlighting Donald's Scottishness but then submerging it under the broader project of defining Englishness in rural spaces. If Macdonell offers an outsider perspective, by the end of the novel it dissolves in a celebration of a unique English character.

Macdonell also subverts the idea of a separate national character when Donald travels to observe the English playing the Scottish sport of golf. The narrator states that England "is now the real custodian of the ancient traditions of the game," so Donald can "see how they treated another nation's national game which . . . they had mastered perfectly and had, as it were, adopted and nationalized" (92). This episode, retaining the novel's satirical tone, highlights the absorption of a Scottish national marker by an imperial England, which subsumes individualities into a collective Britishness. However, Macdonell reveals Scottish character to be nothing more than a performance for the benefit of an English audience. At the course, Donald's encounters an acquaintance from Scotland, now employed as a golf professional. Although he can speak "the pure English of Inverness," the Scot talks to his customers in a put-on "fine Buchan accent," secretly telling Donald that it "makes the profits something extraordinary" because the English "like a Scot to be real Scottish. They think it makes a man what they call 'a character'" (96). Macdonell thus turns the concept of national character on its head. While the English wish to

preserve a "real" Scottishness in the golf course, the performance of a touristic "character" for profit exposes an assumption of a uniquely identifiable Scottishness. In actuality, the transactions between nations are no more than "staged authenticity."

Macdonell's begins the novel, though, during the First World War, which assembled the nations of the British Empire in a coalition against Germany. In the trenches, Donald and Evan Davies, a Welsh lieutenant, discuss the "general characteristics" of the English, who "are extraordinarily difficult to understand" (12). This conversation sets the problem of defining a national character in the context of the global war, which placed soldiers of various nationalities in close proximity in the trenches. Donald and Davies agree to write a book about the English after the war, but an attack ends their conversation and wounds Donald. After recovering from shell shock in Scotland, Donald travels to London to become a journalist, but his encounters with the English show that, as with Blunden's foreign tourist, it is not easy to see England. Macdonell emphasizes Donald's unstable sight, an aftereffect of his war trauma, as he tries to negotiate London. Waiting in the office of a potential employer, Donald's "eyes were all blurred" after the "sudden jarring of the electric bell . . . came like the whistles of the platoon commander at zero hour" (26). Later, he is "completely befogged" as he studies a journal in a publishing office (32). That same evening, he "went to bed and dreamt that he was lost in a maze of trenches in a thick fog on a cold winter's day" (33). While humorously accentuating Donald's naïveté and outsider status, Macdonell also suggests that the trauma of war has altered spectatorship. Eventually, Donald is reunited with Davies, now an editor, and hired to write a travel book: "England as seen through the eyes of a Scotsman" (38). However, Donald's ability to see has already been called into question, undermining, perhaps humorously the authoritative position of the travel guide.

Donald's relative inexperience means that he can easily be led to see England in certain

ways. Before Donald starts his journey, Davies offers him a working definition of Englishness that configures his spectatorship. An English national character, according to Davies, can be defined by "the team spirit in cricket," the sport that represents "the highest embodiment on earth of the Team" (38). In *Sport, Leisure, and Culture in Twentieth-Century Britain*, Jeffrey Hill writes that cricket is "a sport that articulated in many ways and through many forms ideas of England and Englishness. It was made to signify tradition, the social order, the superiority of rural life and the unity of the Empire" (54). As a sport, then, cricket can be taken as a signifier of an English character that unites an imagined community in the form of "the Team." However, Anthony Bateman relates that in the aftermath of such crises as the First World War, the 1919 Amritsar Massacre, the 1926 General Strike, "cricket took on an even greater burden of significance as the national and imperial cultures it symbolised were perceived to be increasingly threatened" (55). To compensate for a sense of loss, the sport became infused with prewar nostalgia, and, as Bateman writes, "[o]ne of the defining paradoxes of English cricket literature is that it constantly evokes a lost past as means of reproducing an 'authentic' rural Englishness in the present and for the future" (61). One of a number of efforts to secure an interwar identity for England, a body of travel literature that centered on cricket was produced, a representative text being J. M. Kilburn's impressionistic *In Search of Cricket* (1937). In Macdonell's novel, English character is repeatedly embedded in rural spaces and investigated as variations on the idea of "the Team"—a triumph of tradition and order in a harmonious collective of individualities.

England, Their England owes much to cricket literature, but it subverts its unifying and nostalgic function. Through Macdonell's satirical tone and Donald's confused spectatorship, the epitomization of cricket as social order, national unity, and rural life devolves into "staged authenticity." Donald's excursion to the countryside involves viewing a cricket match between a

team of intellectuals from London and a group of local villagers. Early in the game, Donald claims to observe "the Team Spirit at work . . . the individual loyally suppressing his instincts to play a different type of game" (78). But as the game descends into a slapstick comedy of individual players struggling for the same ball, Donald's confidence and comprehension fail. As Briggs remarks, Macdonell's cricket game illustrates the "disparity between individual aims and collective goals" (154). This disparity is not resolved by the end of the match, and Donald regrets that "he had not learnt very much about the English from his experience of their national game" (90). Later, when he reports his progress to Davies, he dejectedly admits that he cannot discern any unified "English character" because the people are "all so different" (101). Although satirically written, the cricket match illustrates the complications in attempting to project a unifying vision of England onto a particular setting and circumstances. Donald's unsettled spectatorship mirrors (comically) that of Priestley as he attempts to piece together the individual characteristics of a multivalent nation.

Furthermore, like Priestley, Donald transports to rural England an assortment of premade ideas and images that determine how it will be arranged and presented to him. The cricket match is played in a "Kentish village" (modeled on Rodmell in East Sussex) in the heart of England's south (73). Arriving by charabanc, Donald is "enchanted at his first sight of rural England. And rural England is the real England, unspoilt by factories and financiers and tourists and hustle" (73). Macdonell echoes the typical conflation of rurality and reality in preservationist discourse and travel literature, a reality whose endurance requires the separation of rural and industrial sites and markers. For Donald, like Priestley and other preservationists, a "real England" must be free of touristic contamination. Yet, like Morton and Priestley, Donald succumbs to the tourist gaze, expressing his pleasure in looking at the countryside by evoking a set of rural signifiers as

cultural currency: "An ancient man leaned upon a scythe . . . A magpie flapped lazily across the meadows. The parson shook hands with the squire. Doves cooed. The haze flickered. The world stood still" (75). As Kohl shows, "rural England" has been typically seen as "an aesthetically arranged combination of byroads, brooks, hedges, fields, small forests, thatched cottages and a few other ingredients. It is not the countryside, or nature, but a representation of the country, constructed from traditional material along conventional lines of combination" (186-187). Clearly, *England, Their England* continues this tradition of rural representation, but what remains ambiguous is how it positions itself in relation to it. The novel maintains a satirical tone for most of Donald's travels around England, but at certain moments, such as this extended gaze at the rural landscape, it shifts to an earnest, celebratory register. If Macdonell generally, and gently, undercuts Donald's naïve perspective, the narrative notably slips together with Donald into a touristic spectatorship as he "gazed eagerly" at the countryside, whose "sight was worth an eager gaze or two" (74). The eagerness of both the novel and Donald is comparable to Priestley's pleasure in his search for England. Even as *England, Their England* activates and satirizes elements of the interwar travelogue, it cannot help but surrender to the same underlying desire to see a particular vision of "rural England." As a result, Macdonell's novel is both self-conscious as a satirical fiction drawn from travel writing and susceptible to the very forms of spectatorship its calls forth and questions. Donald's unsettled perspective is tacitly mirrored by discontinuities in the way the novel orients itself toward its protagonist and Englishness.

A discontinuity becomes immediately apparent when the narrative shifts attention from "rural England" as "staged authenticity" underpinned by desire to the countryside as a form of the "commodified authentic." While Donald dwells on his vision of a conventionally arranged countryside, the narrator alludes to theatrical reproductions of rural Englishness in London: "The

entire scene was perfect to the last detail. It was as if Mr. Cochran had, with his spectacular genius, brought Ye Olde Englyshe Village straight down by special train from the London Pavilion, complete with synthetic cobwebs . . . hand-made socks for ye gaffers . . . and aluminum Eezi-Milk stools for the dairymaids" (74). The reference is to showman Charles B. Cochran, who produced a series of elaborately ornamented and highly successful revues and musicals during the interwar period in London. Momentarily, the narrative's satirical orientation toward Donald's perspective and the objects arranged within his scopic field returns, so that once again questions are raised concerning a mobile spectatorship and the circulation of rural signifiers of Englishness. Reversing the typical flow of a reproduced object from the place of its origin to a distant site of consumption, the narrator imagines a "perfect" rural England not as originating in the countryside but being imported from the metropolis. One implication is that because rural signifiers of Old England are manufactured and mobile, they have, in a Benjaminian sense, lost all capacity for expression of an "aura." Thoroughly modernized, rural "tokens of authenticity" are no more than signs unto themselves, infinitely removable and replaceable, erased of any local significance or value. In this brief passage, Macdonell deflates the opposition between a "real" countryside and "inauthentic" urban spaces. The continuous circulation of a rural "commodified authentic," the novel suggests, has created conditions in which neither representations of the country nor the country itself can be considered "real."

Nevertheless, this construction of an overtly critical perspective fails to hold together as the novel progresses. During a second sojourn in the countryside, Donald and the narrator are once again allied in admiration of traditional, rural, gentlemanly virtues of ethical conduct, responsible management, and the maintenance of a benevolent social order. Staying at a rural Buckinghamshire cottage owned by the paternal landowner Mr. Fielding, Donald keeps a sincere

and reverential attitude toward this country estate. The Fieldings' cottage is in the Anglo-Saxon town of Aylesbury, which, Mr. Fielding states, is an "old country. Incredibly old." It is a place where "there aren't many changes" and "[f]amilies go on and on and on. . . . And have stuck to the soil for centuries" (157). Macdonell's novel has again dropped the satirical tone and openly endorses this realized vision of the countryside. This vision in the twentieth century, Howkins explains, was of England as "a farmed land, a land of churches and greens, of peopled land" (26). The signifiers Macdonell appropriates are typical of celebratory literature on the countryside. The Fieldings' cottage estate lies beside a "cluster of ancient barns" and is emplaced in a village marked by the sounds of a "clock on a square, flinty, Saxon church-tower" and "the clinkety-clink of hammer upon anvil" (155, 156). These images are taken as "tokens of authenticity" in the novel, as no satirical or critical narrative voice serves to diminish them. Instead, Donald's desire to see the Fieldings as exemplars of a "real" English character is matched by the novel's apparent yearning to accept its own representation of Aylesbury as an "authentic" England.

Not only does Macdonell emphasize these picturesque signifiers of Englishness, but he also highlights the people who stand as harmoniously integrated beneficiaries of the Fieldings' paternalistic estate. As Howkins relates, the twentieth-century movement to rediscover rural life was framed as a return to "a particular social order – that of the paternalist squire, the ruddy-faced tenant farmer and the loyal worker bound together in a pre-class unity of devotion to the soil" (26). Evoking historical nostalgia permitted commentators to sidestep "social Darwinist fears of racial decay" and "the spectre of class struggle and industrial unrest" (Howkins 26). Leading interwar social issues such as physical fitness, which was cause for concern during the Boer War and after the First World War, and labor disputes, especially the 1926 General Strike, are not permitted to enter Aylesbury. The farmers who work Mr. Fielding's land are "those who

live on the earth and for the earth"—"the most natural" of human beings (159). When one tenant cannot pay rent because illness has forced her out of work, Mr. Fielding remarks, "we'll just have to go without it, that's all" (165). The landowner agrees to take on more workers even though he "employ[s] far more hands already than we ought to" (166). The Fieldings' country estate, more than cricket, epitomizes English character as "Team Spirit," in the form of the sensible management of a social collective in which each individual happily occupies his or her "natural" place in the order. As Briggs observes, Macdonell "devises a celebration of English values by stressing consensus and harmony" (156). The Fieldings oversee this amicable order as benevolent caretakers and not exploitative capitalists. The novel's approving portrait of tenancy nostalgically reaches into the past to borrow traditional English ideologies of ethical paternalism and improvement.[20] It asks readers to adopt Donald's mode of spectatorship, to turn a tourist gaze on Aylesbury and take its "staged authenticity" as the paradigm of Englishness.

To reach this idyllic space, all signifiers of an industrial England must be expunged from the narrative, submerged into the rural landscape, or recuperated as inoffensive instruments benignly operated by the Fieldings. This process is neatly illustrated in forms of transportation. Traveling by train, Donald rides on the Great Central Main Line linking London to the industrial city of Manchester. A principal symbol of industrialization, the train, as it travels toward the Anglo-Saxon town of Aylesbury in Buckinghamshire, becomes lyrically integrated into a quaintly pastoral setting. As the train "runs through lovely, magical rural England," it "goes to way-side halts where the only passengers are milk-churns. It visits lonely platforms where the only tickets are bought by geese and ducks. It stops in the middle of buttercup meadows to pick up eggs and flowers. . . . It is a dreamer among railways, a poet, kindly and absurd and lovely" (154-155). Even Mr. Fielding's "ancient Ford" (he dislikes "new cars") is employed for village

"marketing" and attracts a "jumble of terrier dogs" when he arrives home (155, 156). Evidently guided by Donald's earlier dialogue with a foreman who sees "poetry in machines" (151), the narrative focalizes a poetic gaze on rural England, nostalgically embedding the train in the landscape to lyrically merge disparate Englands. This imaginative spectatorship, to which I return below, gestures toward the novel's resolution of its shifting perspectives and anxious interplay between a collective England and its individual components.

Likewise, the markers of individual nationalities must be submerged into this vision of a collective England. In the Fielding estate, Donald repudiates his Scottishness in favor of a superior English character. As Donald becomes enamored with the Fieldings, whom he regards as "settled and cosy" (167), his appreciation is enhanced by underscoring national differences. Unlike "the Scots, and the French, and lots of other races," which Donald insists have "far too much permanent bad temper," the English are "such a friendly race" (168). If they have done "beastly things in the past," Donald dismisses them as momentary "fit[s] of bad temper" (168). As a microcosm of an idealized England, the Fielding estate is a "different sort of land" to Donald, characterized by arable soil, variegated plant life, and tenants who quote Shakespeare (167). In perspective, Donald sees his own nation as "rather disjointed" (167). Such racial characterization prompts Donald to valorize an ideal Englishness while repudiating his own inferior Scottishness. This Anglocentric turn in the novel is not accompanied by satirical narration or comic undermining, and thus Donald's assessment appears to be endorsed by Macdonell. At the Fielding's estate, Donald gains an insider view of English character that distances him from his humorously uninformed spectatorship in the first stages of his journey. However, back in London Donald again experiences mental fogginess: his work becomes "utterly unfamiliar to him" and his mind "a little jaded" (197, 198). Needing to escape a

metropolitan perspective, he boards a train for "the ancient City of Winchester, city of Alfred, once capital of England, perhaps even the Camelot of Arthur" (198). Thus Donald's search for an English character finally carries him to one of England's oldest towns, which embodies a long-standing Anglo-Saxon heritage. The entirety of Donald's journey and Macdonell's narrative enfolds into this wholly English setting, steering *England, Their England* into the territory of *In Search of England*, in which Morton endeavors to "shake up the dust of kings and abbots" and "bring the knights and the cavaliers back to the roads" (22). Once Donald arrives in Winchester, the novel fully commits to a poetic spectatorship celebrating a resolutely English character.

In the novel's final scene, Donald climbs to the top of St. Catherine's Hill, which offers a panoramic view of the countryside, cricket fields, and Winchester Cathedral. He thus occupies the position of a detached observer gazing down on a landscape that is transformed into a representation of English character to be safeguarded. As Donald lies daydreaming on the hilltop, he sees "a thick white mist . . . rolling swiftly up the valley from the direction of the sea, and . . . wreathing itself round the ancient town" (203). It is a fog that initially conceals the landscape and mutes the cathedral bells, recalling Donald's initial difficulty in seeing England from an outsider's perspective. However, in the course of his travels he gains knowledge, and the fog opens a new path as it "gradually flattened itself, and narrowed itself, and spun itself out into the shape of a snow-white road" stretching across England (204). On this fog-road an "absurd host of kindly, laughter-loving, warrior-poets" marches into view, apparently to secure the English landscape against invaders, just as Alfred defended Winchester against the Vikings. In addition to makeshift weapons, these warrior-poets hold "books and scrolls and parchments and pieces of paper," apparatus of culture and erudition, tools to eulogize and immortalize an English national character (206). Finally, the fog and its army of poets dissolve, the underlying landscape returns,

and Donald rather matter-of-factly goes "off to find some tea" (207).

Donald's dream-like, poetic vision of England presents a totalizing spectatorship that assigns the work of defining and preserving an English national character to literature. Instead of continuing his journey to find a "real" Englishness, he goes to "find some tea"—that most English of customs—suggesting that he need look no further because a "nation of poets" has already accomplished the task (14). However, in overlaying the "real" landscape of Winchester with a representative panorama of literary figures, the novel closes with a "staged authenticity" that unites the touristic and the literary. The reader, like the daydreaming Donald, should turn to literature in the search for English character. The armed poets are those who can penetrate the mists and fogs obscuring the nation in times of crisis. *England, Their England* merges the poet's eye with the tourist gaze, yet Donald's vision is also a revision of the Fieldings' country estate. The desire that focuses his gaze is for a fantasy of a collective England in which individually disordered parts are united and stabilized by a benevolent protector such as Mr. Fielding. An English literary tradition, Macdonell's novel argues, functions as just such a protector, offering a print-culture that can hold together the imagined community. Whether or not Macdonell offers readers insight into English character is debatable, but his novel points them in a direction. The oneiric, engrossing spectacle at the end, however, cannot fully compensate for the many anxious moments of unsettled spectatorship that have led Donald to this place.[21]

The Retrospective Gaze: Fishing for England in *Coming Up for Air*

Like Macdonell and Blunden, George Orwell contemplates outsider perspectives on Englishness. In *The English People* (1947), a piece commissioned during the Second World War for the *Britain in Pictures* series, Orwell asks his readers to imagine "the position of a foreign observer," whose "fresh eyes . . . would see a great deal that a native observer misses" (8). Such

an observer, Orwell claims, "would find the salient characteristics of the English common people to be artistic insensibility, gentleness, respect for legality, suspicion of foreigners, sentimentality about animals, hypocrisy, exaggerated class distinctions, and an obsession with sport" (8). But Orwell posits that even if this foreign observer, unlike Blunden's tourist or Donald for most of Macdonell's novel, felt "that he could construct a reliable picture of the English character," he would nevertheless have lingering doubts about whether there is "such a thing as 'the English character,'" whether "one talk about nations as though they were individuals," and whether "any genuine continuity" exists "between the England of to-day and the England of the past"[22] (11). As we have seen, these are the same questions that authors of interwar travel-themed literature endeavor to answer by mobilizing a guiding figure on a search for England. For Orwell, though, such questions arise from a place of deeply personal as well as political investment.

Orwell's struggle to define Englishness had roots in his childhood and matured over the course of his young adulthood during the interwar period. As Jonathan Rose states, Orwell "had his feet planted firmly in two different and antagonistic worlds": his father's "Tory England," which was grounded in empire, Anglicanism, and a public-school education; and his mother's "Bohemian England," which prized the arts, pacifism, and socialist thought (28, 29). At St. Cyprian's School—a "typical nursery of Tory England" (Rose 32)—and later Eton, Orwell's education was steeped in the principles of Britain's elite class. By the interwar period, Orwell's writing sat squarely in the middle of what Ben Clarke calls "a broader 'struggle over definitions' in which England becomes a contested, political site," as Englishness was variously appropriated by fascists on one side and leftists on the other (128). In *Scarecrows of Chivalry*, Praseeda Gopinath explains how Eric Blair's alias George Orwell (the first name alluding to the patron saint of England, and the last to a beloved river in Suffolk) corresponded to his idea of "a

quintessentially English everyman persona": an English character, we might say, that was "reasonably" patriotic, held considerable affection for the English countryside, and promoted "egalitarianism . . . while still believing in the long-standing traditions of a national culture" (1). Yet his particular brand of Englishness was conflicted by "the crisis and contradictions of the declassed and subsequently new middle-class Englishman" (3). According to Gopinath, one manifestation of Orwell's contradictory Englishness can be seen in his attempts to apply "upper-middle-class public school values of gentlemanliness" to "the ordinary, decent Englishman" of humbler class origins[23] (3). These entangled ideas of English character, as I show below, form the basis for Orwell's 1939 travel-themed novel, *Coming Up for Air*.

During the interwar years, Orwell's Englishness was profoundly shaped by travels in England and abroad. Stationed in Burma as an officer in the Indian Imperial Police, Orwell witnessed firsthand the corruption and racism of British colonial rule. His observations found expression in the short story "A Hanging" (1931) and his first novel *Burmese Days* (1934). In *George Orwell*, Raymond Williams writes, "The eyes of the observer, of the man coming back to England, are eyes full of this experience of imperialism" (13). After his return in 1927, Orwell turns these eyes on working-class and transient lifestyles, detailed in his memoir and travelogue *Down and Out in Paris and London* (1933). Yet perhaps the events that most influenced Orwell's writing were his 1936 journey to the North Country to report on working-class conditions and his 1937 stint in Catalonia fighting for the Republic in the Spanish Civil War. The first of these expisodes opened Orwell's eyes to the gap between the lives of the laboring classes and typical socialist perspectives on them. The resultant book, *The Road to Wigan Pier* (1937), documents industrial England during a time of depression and then pointedly criticizes middle-class British socialism. John Rossi and John Rodden regard Orwell's journey as "the turning

point of his life," stating that *The Road to Wigan Pier* "made his reputation as a sharp critic of capitalism" (3). At the same time, Rossi and Rodden continue, the book "launched him on the road to his own eccentric brand of socialism" in which he integrated "egalitarianism, idealization of working class culture, and an intense dislike of Marxist bickering" (3, 4). This antipathy intensified during his time in Spain, where he was exposed to the distortions of truth and brutal repression of Communist-run socialist groups. Shot in the throat by a sniper, Orwell returned to England and published his experience as *Homage to Catalonia* (1938). It was especially his service in Spain that "embittered Orwell and made him pessimistic about the future" (Rossi and Rodden 6). While holding true to his socialist ideas, Orwell felt that a coercive and corrupted communism would quash genuine socialism and allow for fascist control. The spread of fascism, Orwell believed, was inevitable not only in Spain but across the whole of Europe, which was already moving precipitously toward a second world war.

The questions that Orwell raises in *The English People*, then, were part of ongoing social and political conversations in multiple discourses during the interwar period. Morton, Priestley, and Macdonell attempt to discover continuities of Englishness in their travel writing and fiction. Orwell undertakes a similar search for England in *Coming Up for Air*, which, I argue, replicates and complicates perspectives on England and Englishness common to interwar travel-themed literature. As a mobile text, *Coming Up for Air* discloses three shifting gazes on interwar Britain: a retrospective gaze that fondly looks back to a prewar England of childlike innocence; a preservationist gaze that critically views a rapidly modernizing England from a detached, authoritative position; and, just as insistent, a prophetic gaze that cynically peers into the future to the inevitable severing of any last "connecting thread that runs through English life" (Orwell, *The English People*, 12). These three modes of spectatorship interweave through the narrative

until they achieve a kind of confused jumble when George Bowling, Orwell's protagonist, reaches the destination of his English journey: Lower Binfield, the small rural town of his childhood. *Coming Up for Air*, I believe, is the most unsettled of interwar literature on the search for England, pushing the formal features and perspectives of the genre to their extremes before exploding them in a fit of futility and anguish. What is most infuriating for George Bowling, I argue, is his being forced to modify his view of "rural England" as an environment, in which he can (subjectively) inhabit, act, and therefore identify himself as English, to a "rural England" as a landscape, from which he remains a detached, passive observer, able only to report on the decay of an English national character. *Coming Up for Air*, then, is an appropriate endpoint for interwar travel writing, as it concludes a tumultuous decade by emphatically suggesting that the search for England is a vain and fruitless undertaking.

Orwell's four novels of the 1930s—*Burmese Days*, *A Clergyman's Daughter* (1935), *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* (1936), and *Coming Up for Air*—have not garnered the same praise as have *The Road to Wigan Pier* and his later efforts *Animal Farm* (1945) and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949). The early novels have been traditionally seen as, to use Michael Levenson's phrase, "four failed novels about failure" (59). Williams suggests that "most of Orwell's important writing is about someone who tries to get away [from an oppressive normality] but fails" (36). Orwell attempted throughout his career to evade the ideological and literary limitations of his "lower-upper-middle class" upbringing.[24] Expressing admiration for Henry Miller's *Tropic of Cancer* in a review, Orwell writes that "English fiction on its higher levels is for the most part written by literary gents about literary gents for literary gents; on its lower levels it is generally the most putrid 'escape' stuff." Orwell aspires to a style of writing that, like Miller's, "cast[s] a kind of bridge across the frightful gulf which exists, in fiction, between the intellectual and the

man-in-the-street."[25] Such a bridge might be achieved, evidently, through a mix of fictional and documentarist styles. Marsha Bryant shows that the 1930s, which witnessed the beginnings of government-sponsored film units and Mass Observation, "established documentary discourse as our century's principal means of representing social reality" (7). This turn to documentary influenced the literary styles of Priestley, Orwell, and W. H. Auden. For Williams, Orwell's "unity . . . of 'documentary' and 'imaginative' writing" is a vital characteristic of his writing, even if, Williams claims, there are "many problems of method" (40). Williams believes that Orwell's "artistic failure" in his 1930s fiction stems from his tendency to fuse observation and imagination, a result of the "social achievement" of his nonfiction (46). However, if we place *Coming Up for Air* alongside other examples of interwar travel-theme literature, Orwell's interfusion of documentarist and fictional elements makes sense. The blending of styles in *Coming Up for,* common to travel-themed mobile texts such as *English Journey* and *England, Their England*, characterizes the contradictive approaches to Englishness in interwar Britain.

Coming Up for Air begins with touristic exposition, as narrator George Bowling guides readers through his life and the conditions in West Bletchley, a suburb marked by artificiality, uniformity, and bloat. George is Orwell's "intermediary," as Williams calls him, a figure who "is not Orwell, though it has Orwell's experiences" (46). Williams suggests that the "intermediary" is characterized by "acceptance" or "passivity," opting for observation rather than intervention in events as they occur (45). In this way, Orwell presents George initially as a detached spectator of an English suburban landscape, which has a definable character but which George believes he cannot change or even properly inhabit. Consequently, *Coming Up for Air* resembles travel writing of the 1930s, most notably *English Journey*. George, like Priestley, denounces the Americanization of England, which has produced a consumerist society "where everything's

made out of something else," where oversized, artificial products are listed on restaurant menus and stored on supermarket shelves (491). This society has shaped the middle-aged George, as he is "inclined to be a little bit on the fat side," has "new false teeth," and lives in a suburban villa with "the same back garden, same privets and same grass" as every other house (475). Yet even though George has become so integrated into this Americanized England that it defines his being, he maintains critical distance in his observations.[26] George thus replicates the duality of Priestley's narrator, whose simultaneous insider expertise and outsider perspective claims both intimacy and separation to critically observe and record.[27] George is not as much interested in articulating an English identity as lived in the suburbs as he is in presenting a general character of the region as insipid and emasculating.

Opposed to this critically distanced perspective on the suburbs is George's subjective, nostalgic view of rural England. In a nod to Proust, Orwell activates George's memories his idyllic childhood in Lower Binfield by having him glance at a name in a newspaper headline.[28] Through memory, George imbues the past with a kind of spirituality that heightens a sense of loss and alienation in the suburbs. He recalls, for example, the "sweet corpsy smell, the rustle of Sunday dresses, the wheeze of the organ and the roaring voices, the spot of light from the hole in the window creeping slowly up the nave" (496). This is still, however, a detached view, both temporally and spatially distant, so that George can isolate and preserve his vision as landscape. Moreover, like interwar travel writers and preservationists, George juxtaposes an idealized past with a disordered present, confusing "real" and "imaginary" Englands. Insisting that he was "breathing real air" in Lower Binfield, George feels that in comparison modern England, with "all those bloody fools hustling to and fro, and the posters and the petrol-stink and the roar of engines," is "less real" (496). At this point in the novel, George occupies a similar place as

Morton at the start of *In Search of England*. Both narrators position themselves in foreign, inhospitable settings that they associate with illness or dis-ease and the desire for rejuvenation. They then proceed to gaze retrospectively at nostalgic landscapes evoked as antidotes to current afflictions or predicaments. As I have shown, this is a common embarkation point from which the search for England is launched in interwar travel-themed literature: *In Search of England* in Palestine; *England, Their England* on the Passchendaele slopes of France during the war, and *English Journey* and *Coming Up for Air* in the Americanized suburbs of London.

However, there is a key difference in Orwell's novel. While it begins with an embittered George voicing his frustrations about the suburbs, the middle section explores the roots of that bitterness and traces George's path to his current place of discontentment. Hence *Coming Up for Air* is a kind of etiological novel, probing the origins of interwar discontentment and social malaise by reviewing the evolution of George's character from rural innocence to suburban experience. While Orwell clearly marks the ways in which a retrospective gaze is also a tourist gaze, fueled by the desire for recovery of a lost past, he delves deeper than the travelogues or *England, Their England* to identify threads of connection between the past and present and to attempt to answer the questions he again poses nearly a decade later in *The English People*. As a result, Orwell's novel shifts from espousing detachment to investigating involvement, from regarding England as a landscape to understanding it as an environment, or, put differently, from focusing on the character of contemporary England to expressing an identity for the modern English suburban man. This perspectival shift reorganizes England into two distinct and contrastive environments: the suburban England in which George, largely through his life choices, has come to inhabit but resent; and the rural England to which George might return and actively recommence an abandoned mode of living as a corrective to his present existence.

As narrator and guide, George's task is to re-establish continuity between these two environments: the England of his past and the England now. However, the novel complicates George's efforts to nostalgically reconstruct his past. While the first part features George's intimate but distant critique of suburbia, the lengthy middle section centers on George's highly personalized account of Lower Binfield circa 1900. A setting contained entirely within George's memory, Lower Binfield overwhelms the present, even if it becomes the touchstone for George's evaluation of contemporary England. As the bulk of George's narration involves retrospection, Orwell frequently underscores its fictionality.[29] George often slips into dubious recollections and must admit the limitations of his storytelling but reassert its genuineness. For instance, George claims that before the war "it was summer all the year round" in Lower Binfield, adding that he is "quite aware that that's a delusion. I'm merely trying to tell you how things come back to me" (503). Even though George understands the unreliability of memory, it is his primary mode of reviewing prewar England. We have seen that recollection is crucial to the search for England in interwar travelogues such as Priestley's, although this aspect is quietly taken to be unproblematic. In contrast, *Coming Up for Air* exposes how the search for England always depends on the shaky foundation of selective memory. George confesses that "when you look back over a long period of time, certain things seem to swell up till they overshadow everything else" (526). If, as George complains, modern, suburban England is characterized by artificiality and inflation, so too is the retrospective gaze on prewar, rural England. Through George's recollections of Lower Binfield, Orwell criticizes interwar travel writing that is driven by the desire to expand an image of England to unrealistic and asymmetrical proportions.

Perhaps this criticism helps to explain Orwell's decision to focalize rural England as an environment on fishing, which George underscores as "the real thing" epitomizing "the whole of

my boyhood" (528). This leisure activity is implicitly placed in opposition to George's unfulfilling "insurance business" in West Bletchley. George sees fishing as "typical" of "the civilisation which I grew up in and which is now, I suppose, just about at its last kick" (532). In a suburban English environment, work is associated with a materialist and consumerist society, the need to be mobile through transportation, and complicity with aggressive politics. On the other hand, fishing in a rural environment is anti-modern: it is driven by pleasure rather than profit, enjoyed at a leisurely pace and from a fixed position, and freed from any political interference. As George puts it, "fishing is peace"[30] (612). In this sense, fishing in *Coming Up for Air* embodies all the characteristics that interwar travel writers seek in a rural England that can be stabilized and consumed at the traveler's leisure. George's treasured fishing pool, then, is a heterotopia that inverts the hectic routine of everyday life. Consequently, there is a strong desire in George to isolate and protect the "good-sized pool" while retaining its accessibility, its being only "a dozen miles from Reading and not fifty from London" and yet a place of "solitude" (534). This simultaneous distancing of the pool and bringing it into proximity suggest that for George rural England is a landscape with the potential to be an environment. If he can return to Lower Binfield and realize his fantasy of fishing once more in the pool, he will reactivate an English identity that has been radically—but not, he believes, irrevocably—transformed by the debilitating environment of suburban West Bletchley.

As in Priestley's depictions of rural England, George's recollection of Lower Binfield depends on a vision of the landscape that empties it of any signs of human presence. Whereas Priestley imaginatively fills the countryside with signifiers English culture and history, George can speak of the landscape in a proprietary manner: "it was as though the pool belonged to you" (535). Importantly, the pool is located in a wood within the estate grounds of Binfield House,

which overlooks Lower Binfield and stands as an emblem of inherited rural ownership and, as in Macdonell's novel, patrician order. However, the house is decayed and empty, as the owner "lived in London on the rent of his farms and let the house and grounds go to the devil" (534). Orwell's novel seems to implicitly criticize the decline of the aristocracy or gentry, who are perhaps traditionally associated with codes of gentlemanly conduct that Orwell valued, but who have abandoned the countryside to be abused by the newly mobilized middle classes that George discovers later in the novel. More importantly, though, the absence of any prohibiting authority or human interference in the countryside allows George to continue to imagine its unspoiled availability through his retrospective gaze.

Moreover, as in Priestley's account, George's possessive gaze is gendered male while the vacated rural landscape is feminized. In George's recollection of the pool, it becomes an anti-modern site not only by associating it with the leisure activity of fishing but also by representing it as a removed space for asserting a masculinity that directly contrasts the emasculating suburbs. George recalls a 1913 visit to the pool with Elsie, a girl he describes as "deeply feminine, very gentle, very submissive" (556). His ambition to catch the fish is equated with his desire to have sex with Elsie, and his recounting of both actions employs the language of entitlement: "The carp were stored away in my mind, nobody knew about them except me, I was going to catch them some time. Practically they were *my* carp. . . . And I wanted Elsie very badly. . . . She was mine and I could have her, this minute if I wanted to" (557). The pool thus becomes a gendered space, receptive to the male gaze and desire, placed in the same relationship to George as the South is to Priestley in *English Journey*. Matless suggests that in geographical discourse there tends to be a "gendering of vision": "a classically masculine way of seeing landscape, feminizing an object of study as an object of distanced desire, and priding itself on a masculine self-control and reason"

(79). In *Coming Up for Air*, such a gendering of vision fills the pool and its vacant surroundings with the promise of male fulfillment that can transform them from a distant landscape into a potent environment in which George, by returning and catching the fish, can regain a lost masculinity and realize the fantasy of rural proprietorship.

If fishing metaphorically captures an interwar desire, coded male, for rejuvenation in an isolated, anti-modern, heterotopian space, the pool also exemplifies how that desire grows to outsized dimensions through recollection. George retrospectively sees the pool as being "very clear . . . immensely deep," and full of "enormous fish" (535). He assumes that the pool "had just been forgotten"—in the same way social commentators believed that a real "rural England" had forgotten by an urbanized population—so that the fish have "grow[n] to monstrous sizes" (536). George's memory of the pool thus parallels the imaginative reconstructions—by Morton and Macdonell, for example—of an Anglo-Saxon England of myth and legends that were believed to persist in the countryside despite such destabilizing historical events as the First World War and the Great Depression. Morton's quest to resurrect English kings and queens, squires and parsons, correlates with George's desire to return to the secret pool and finally catch the enormous fish that have eluded him since his childhood. The fish, which George keeps "stored away in my mind," grow in proportion as the novel progresses and as time passes (537). Written at the end of a tumultuous 1930s of unemployment, labor unrest, fascist aggression, and other political and social instabilities, *Coming Up for Air* expresses a dire and enlarged public desire to recuperate an increasingly distant ideal of rural Englishness.

George's quest, like the search for England, depends on mobility for fulfillment. Modern transportation affords George an opportunity to leave the suburb—in which "rural England" can only be seen through his distorting, retrospective gaze—and thereby actualize a remembered

landscape as an interactive environment. Nevertheless, his journey, like Morton's and Priestley's, is no more than an attempt to locate a "rural England" that matches his prefabricated vision. As a traveling insurance agent, George owns an automobile, which provides him with the leisure and luxury to access his vision of the countryside. According to O'Connell, "Car ownership allowed many to indulge their fantasies about rural life," which were "suffused" with "the ideology of 'Englishness'" (150, 151). In one scene in Orwell's novel, George briefly stops on the road to contemplate a rural landscape with "grass under the hedge . . . full of primroses," a field of "winter wheat," and "utter stillness everywhere. . . . A lark singing somewhere, otherwise not a sound, not even an aeroplane" (606). George sees this natural landscape as a foretaste of the beauty and remoteness he will be able to recover in Lower Binfield. The commodification and consumption of this rural scene, however, is enabled by George's having access to technological mobility. Transportation thus allows him to appreciate the countryside as a "repository of essential national values" (O'Connell 152).

The automobile also transports George's back to Lower Binfield, but instead of realizing his vision of rural England he is made to confront its idealization. The novel's most ironic moment happens when George discovers that "rural England" is just as artificially bloated as the suburbs. Stopping on a hilltop above Lower Binfield, George finds the area covered with "fake-picturesque houses," the town having been "swallowed" by "an enormous river of brand-new houses which flowed along the valley in both directions and half-way up the hills on either side" (619, 620). From his vantage point, George also observes "two enormous factories of glass and concrete" that mass manufacture weapons, a view punctuated by "a fleet of black bombing planes" flying over the landscape (621). Essentially, George discovers that his "rural England" has been superseded by suburban expansionism, and his protracted effort to distinguish Lower

Binfield from West Bletchley has proved to be uniformed. Essentially a tourist revising a past, idealized England for the greater part of the novel, George is finally coerced, on the hilltop, into the critical gaze that characterizes a preservationist outlook. Like Williams-Ellis, George dejectedly looks down on a rural scene overrun by mass housing development and industrialism. At this point in the novel, then, Orwell executes the shift from a retrospective or nostalgic gaze that adheres to the potential for recovery and interaction, to a critical gaze that suggests the search for England exists only in the realm of the imagination. From his height, George becomes, in Matless's words, "an enlightened overseer; passionate yet detached, expert and mobile," as opposed to the "near-sighted" people in the housing developments below[31] (38). If automobility promises access to an idealized "rural England," it can also move travelers into positions in which they must confront the unreality of that vision. Transportation in *Coming Up for Air*, and in other interwar mobile texts, is ambiguously represented as an escape to fulfillment and a confrontation with disillusionment.

But before he fully relinquishes his retrospective gaze and desire for recuperating a rural English environment, George must determine whether he might still instantiate the peace and leisure of his childhood by fishing. Of course, the anti-modern symbolism of this act, too, has been deflated through modernization and commercialism. On his tour of the area around Lower Binfield, George drives to a section of the Thames that he fished as a child. There, he finds a "knot of little red and white bungalows," and, "where the water-meadows used to be – tea-houses, penny-in-the-slot machines, sweet kiosks and chaps selling Wall's Ice-Cream" (639). Lining the banks of the Thames is "a continuous chain of men fishing," and "the river was crammed with boats . . . full of young fools with next to nothing on, all of them screaming and shouting and most of them with a gramophone aboard as well" (640). Orwell's raucous middle-

class excursionists are an invasive crowd that devalues George's ideal countryside. In interwar preservationist discourse, such people were depicted as "anti-citizens" or "Cockneys," terms that Matless explains evoked "a cultural grotesque, signifying a commercial rather than industrial working class whose leisure is centred around consumption and display" (48). Rather than a space for gentlemanly leisure and private appreciation, the countryside has become a site for collective consumption and "staged authenticity." George's retrospection is replaced by a mass tourism that converts "rural England"—and its sacred act of fishing—into a tourist attraction. Likewise, when he returns to his secret pool, he discovers that the trees around it have been "shaved flat" to make way for one "of those sham-Tudor colonies" whose residents believe they have attained the same isolation and peace that George associates with the pool and fishing (649). Another irony arises in the residents' belief that they have achieved the very peace and isolation that George seeks. However, George is horrified that the people have drained the inner pool, which, still half-hidden behind a "clump of trees," has been converted into garbage dump (651). The reality that George uncovers is that there is no magical piece of old England hidden in the heart of the countryside, waiting to be rediscovered and repossessed. His personalized, elitist version of the past is nullified by the presences of the masses, whose encroachment has been facilitated by their increased mobility and leisure time. Disillusioned, George becomes a "ghost" that can only "haunt the old places" and "walk[] through a world that wasn't there" (636, 637). George finds himself in a position of forced detachment, unable to actualize his vision of a rural English landscape as an environment in which he can actively revitalize a vitiated self.

In *Coming Up for Air*, Orwell explodes the myth of "rural England" and the desire for recovery that impel the search for England in interwar travel-themed literature. In a sense, the novel marks the endpoint of two decades of attempted recuperation, the Second World War

starting less than three months after it was published. The utter deflation of George's fantasy leads him to decide he is "finished with this notion of getting back into the past" because the "scenes of your boyhood . . . don't exist. Coming up for air! But there isn't any air. The dustbin that we're in reaches up to the stratosphere" (652). Fittingly, Orwell punctuates George's cynical assessment with a bomb dropped (accidentally) on Lower Binfield by a passing warplane. Its abruptness and shocking reality jolts George out of his fantasy and signals Orwell's total obliteration of the English journey as marketed in interwar travel-themed literature. Todd Kuchta has remarked on one of the 1930s "most curious tropes: the prospect of mass extermination" (176). From mass poisoning to mass bombings, writers such as John Betjeman and Stevie Smith pessimistically envision extreme conclusions to otherwise unsolvable suburban conformity and national crises. These are writers, like George, who are forced into passive engagement with seemingly unchangeable landscapes rather than active intervention in pliable environments. The bombing planes in *Coming Up for Air* keep pace with the narrative, weaving in and out of the picture as George commutes to work and journeys to Lower Binfield. They, too, accompany the traveler on the search for England, and are ready, as a last resort, to eliminate an outworn genre.

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[1] See p. ix.

[2] See p. 297.

[3] See p. 141.

[4] Schweizer borrows the term "travelling culture" from James Clifford's 1997 anthropological study *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*.

[5] Helen Carr notes that the "period from 1880 to 1940 was the heyday of the British Empire, and much travel writing shows the complicity with imperialism - if not its outright support" (71).

[6] In *The Image*, Daniel J. Boorstin claims that modern experience has increasingly centered on "pseudo-events": forms of "synthetic novelty" that can be reproduced and consumed ad nauseam (9). In a chapter on the "Lost Art of Travel," Boorstin interprets "the decline of the traveler and

the rise of the tourist" as a shift in engagement: "The traveler was active; he went strenuously in search of people, of adventure, of experience. The tourist is passive; he expects interesting things to happen to him" (85). In "The Semiotics of Tourism," however, Jonathan Culler contests the traditional opposition between traveler and tourist, two terms which he argues "are not so much two historical categories as terms of an opposition integral to tourism" (157). The traveler-tourist dichotomy arises from the tourist's need to feel superior to others, Culler suggests, and is therefore indicative of "a crucial feature of modern capitalist culture: a cultural consensus that creates hostility rather than community among individuals" (158).

[7] Morton's later travelogues include *In Search of Scotland* (1930), *In Search of Ireland* (1931), and *In Search of Wales* (1932). He also applied his formula to imperial lands with *In the Steps of the Master* (1934), recounting a pilgrimage to holy sites in Syria and Palestine, and *In Search of South Africa* (1948).

[8] Priestley was born and raised in Bradford, a textile manufacturing center in West Yorkshire. He did not, however, have working-class origins. His father was a headmaster, and following his grammar-school education Priestley worked as a clerk in a wool firm. He was further educated at Cambridge after service in the First World War.

[9] The Mass-Observation movement in England does not get underway until later in the 1930s. For more on the movement's relationship to modernist writing, see, for example, James Buzard's "Mass-Observation, Modernism, and Auto-ethnography" in *Modernism/Modernity* 4.3 (1997), 93-122.

[10] Of course, the mobility offered by the mass-produced automobile was still fairly exclusive in the 1930s. O'Connell notes that the "inter-war years saw the arrival of Britain's first era of mass motoring. The number of private cars rose from just over 100,000 in 1918 to slightly over two million in 1939" (19). However, Knights reminds us "that at the end of [the interwar] period there was still only one car to 24 people. Motoring remained . . . very much a middle and upper class amenity" (169). Motor-buses, on the other hand, extended the social range of mobility to the upper levels of the working class.

[11] According to Lowe, Morton's image of "himself near death in a land traditionally viewed as the goal of pilgrimage and that his thoughts should turn in extremis away from the land of the Bible and towards England is a bold reworking of the notion of the promised land that each person carries within" (69). Later in this chapter, I briefly discuss the tendency to spiritualize the quest to rediscover England in interwar travel writing.

[12] See Kohl 188. Kohl discusses *Howards End*, in which Helen Schlegel "lack[s] any sense of place when looking at rural scenes" (188). He also proposes that H. G. Wells's *Tono-Bungay* draws attention to "a fraudulent, commercialised society [that] devalues the virtues of the traditional social harmony and its environment" (192).

[13] Matless notes that Priestley was "a frequent contributor to preservationist argument" (35).

[14] Edwin Butler Bayliss (1874-1950) was a self-taught landscape artist who almost exclusively painted industrial scenes of the Black Country, where he also lived. His paintings were displayed regularly at the Royal Academy of Art during the first three decades of the twentieth century.

[15] In "Englands His Englands," a brief study of Orwell's Englishness, Jonathan Rose points out that "there is, and always has been, more than one England," from Disraeli's "Two Nations" in the nineteenth-century to numerous political, ideological, and socioeconomic Englands in the interwar period (28). Morton also published a travelogue titled *I Saw Two Englands* (1942), in which he attempts to present a more varied comprehensive view of the nation than he does in *In Search of England*.

[16] This phrase is from Woolf, *Between the Acts*, 131.

[17] Parrinder argues that John Stuart Mill and Walter Bagehot theorize the nation in terms of "national identity" and "national character," respectively. Mill's *Representative Government* (1861) conceives of nationhood as "the will to co-operate," whereas Bagehot's *Physics and Politics* (1872) foregrounds "likeness" as a necessity for "acting together" (95).

[18] Henley's poem has also gone by the title "England, My England," especially after the phrase became popular. See, for example, the 1914 volume of poetry *England, My England: A War Anthology*, edited by George Goodchild.

[19] George Bowling, Orwell's narrator in *Coming Up for Air*, explains that he enlisted during the First World War "[p]artly for a lark and partly because of England my England and Britons never never [from "Rule, Britannia!"] and all that stuff" (563). Those patriotic sentiments, however, quickly dissipate, and George becomes embittered by his experience in the war.

[20] In *The Country and the City*, Raymond Williams writes of a "morality of improvement" that begins to develop in the eighteenth century as estates were no longer "regarded as an inheritance" but as "an opportunity for investment" (60-61).

[21] Briggs writes that "the rhapsodic ending resolves the plot but confuses the satirical purposes of the novel" (157).

[22] Orwell's answer in *The English People* seems to be a qualified yes. He explores each of the characteristics that he sets forth at the beginning, dwelling at last on the future of the English. The continuance of the English nation, he argues, depends upon closing the gap between the elite and the masses, and upon transferring more power to the hands of the common people. Rossi and Rodden maintain that Orwell's egalitarianism "separated him from many of his fellow socialists" (4).

[23] In his 1946 essay "Why I Write," Orwell confesses, "I am not able, and I do not want, completely to abandon the world-view that I acquired in childhood" (qtd. in Rossi 88).

[24] See Orwell, *The Road to Wigan Pier* 121 for his use of this term to identify his class status.

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[25] See *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters* 1: 230.

[26] In *Semi-Detached Empire*, Todd Kuchta relates Orwell's depiction of West Bletchley, George's suburban district, to his criticisms of empire in *Burmese Days*. Kuchta argues that Orwell "sees England's interwar suburbs imposing a form of domestic colonization on its own men" so that his "suburban males emerge as English avatars of the colonized: exploited, dispossessed of their homes, and plagued by feelings of powerlessness and enslavement" (172). I read George Bowling's character similarly but approach it from the starting point of interwar travel writing.

[27] Some critics, for example Raymond Williams and Michael Levenson, have proposed that the protagonists in Orwell's 1930s fiction are indebted to James Joyce, whose *Ulysses* (1922) Orwell admired. Taking his cue from Williams, Levenson argues that George "is Orwell's rendering of the average sensual man," cast in the mold of Leopold Bloom and presented as "the ordinary self on which civilisation was founded and on which it could thrive again" (71). This comparison is perhaps made a little too easily. In this chapter, I focus on George as an *observing* narrator and commentator that derives from the mobile guide of interwar travel-themed literature.

[28] George mentions Proust (along with Henry James) as one of the authors he "wouldn't have read . . . even if he had" discovered them (570). His taste is for Wells, Joseph Conrad, Kipling, Galsworthy, and similar writers. But clearly Orwell had Proust in mind as he wrote *Coming Up for Air* and perhaps modeled George's sudden recollection of his childhood when he notices the name "King Zog" in a newspaper on the narrator's experience with the madeleine in *Swann's Way* (1913).

[29] Adding to a confusion of reality and fictionality, Lower Binfield is Orwell's invention, but possibly modeled on Henley-on-Thames, where Orwell spent his childhood.

[30] During the war, George also represents fishing as the possibility of "escaping, for perhaps a whole day, right out of the atmosphere of war" (539). Thus, George also defines fishing as "the opposite of war" (539-540).

[31] Also echoing the preservationist writings of alarmists such as Williams-Ellis, George sees the repopulation of rural England as "a kind of enemy invasion," with hordes of "people flooding in from Lancashire and the London suburbs, planting themselves down in this beastly chaos" (623). He is, of course, bitter about the changes to his hometown, but he mimics the astringent language and scaremongering tactics of stronger preservationist discourse in his depiction of the current population of Lower Binfield as a "conquering army that's sacked the town and covered the ruins with fag-ends and paper bags" (646).

CHAPTER 4

Homes away from Home:

The Crisis of Moving and Dwelling in Graham Greene's Interwar Fiction

> Between the two world wars new shapes on the ground began to
> appear all over England on the edges of towns and cities, in the
> suburbs, along the arterial roads, in the coastal resorts and even in
> the remote villages, which by their number and external similarity
> might seem to suggest to an outside observer that some new race or
> class had suddenly appeared, clamorous for accommodation.
> —John Burnett, *A Social History of Housing 1815-1985*[1]

George Orwell's *Coming Up for Air* takes direct aim at the social issue of housing during the

interwar period. As George Bowling moves around England, the novel indentifies mass housing

development, Garden City planning, uniform semi-detached villas, and slum districts as evidence

of a pandemic homelessness, in the sense that modern Britons reside in houses but lack homes,

just as George feels alienated from his birthplace while living in the West Bletchley suburb. As

George commutes to London on a train, he notices "a bombing plane flying low overhead. For a

minute or two it seemed to be keeping pace with the train" (485). Bomber aircraft signal the

approaching war in the novel, but they also represent a barely disguised desire that the artificial

and shallow Britain embodied in modern housing might be obliterated once and for all. From the

train window, George views the "the little red roofs where the bombs are going to drop," and

then exclaims, "Christ! how can the bombers miss us when they come? We're just one great big

bull's-eye" (487, 489).

In his fiction, Graham Greene has also targeted modern housing and, like Orwell, has

interrogated what he perceives as a fatal separation between residing in a structure and dwelling in a home. Greene treats this housing crisis in his 1954 short story "The Destructors," which follows a Wormsley Common boys gang that meets daily in a car-park that was "the site of the last bomb of the first blitz" (328). Next to the lot is an old house, rumored to have been designed by Christopher Wren, but now half-destroyed by the impact of the bomb. In this "crippled house" resides a former "builder and decorator" whom the gang mockingly calls "Old Misery" (328). Over the course of several days when the owner is away, the boys become "housebreakers"— "like worms . . . in an apple," one says—and proceed to wholly demolish the interior of the house (332). When the owner returns, the house appears untouched from the outside, but the boys have devised a slapstick finale by running a rope from a wooden strut in the house to a truck parked in the lot. When the truck reverses, the house is pulled down, and the story closes with the "convulsed" driver telling the "sobbing" owner, "you got to admit it's funny" (346). Greene's story illustrates a recurring theme in his fiction: the way in which housing structures have been gutted and stripped of traditional, functional homes centered on healthy family and spiritual values. The house in "The Destructors," which stands as a specimen of classical English architecture and as a memorial to higher standards of building and decorating, has been "crippled" by war and is ultimately destroyed by a younger generation that finds no value in anything that such a structure might contain. The absurdity of trying to salvage a worthless house is captured in the driver's uncontrollable laughter at the end.

Although "The Destructors" was written after the Second World War, Graham Greene also employs his earlier fiction to interrogate the viability of the home in postwar settings. In *Brighton Rock* (1938), Greene examines the union of the juvenile gangster Pinkie and Rose against a backdrop of slum housing and mass-manufactured bungalows. Like the boys in "The

Destructors," characters in *Brighton Rock* lack anchored homes and are therefore dislocated, incapable of settlement. It is fitting that the gang in that later short story routinely meet in a car-park, a site of transitory use-value, of impermanence. *Brighton Rock* is likewise set in a place of temporary inhabitance, especially for Britain's middle classes, the coastal resort of Brighton, with its entertainment districts, pleasure piers, and race courses. A crucial feature of Greene's work is characters that have been alienated from home, like Orwell's George Bowling, yet are mobilized in expectation of its recovery. In relation to characters in *England Made Me* (1935), Mary Ann Melfi writes that "going home is a return to authenticity and decency, away from enmeshment in a corrupt modern setting" (219). In Melfi's reading, the maturation of characters becomes endangered away from home, and only by "accurate recall" of their "natural pasts" can they construct a moral basis for activity abroad[2] (219). David R. A. Pearce, writing on *Stamboul Train* (1932), observes that "[a]ll the characters seek some *home*. Some notional haven of rest"[3] (36). Maria Couto also points to the "homeless state" of Greene's characters that "lack tradition and live in homes whose chief characteristic is impermanence and change"[4] (138). In Greene's interwar novels, I propose, his inquiries into homelessness are formulated and reach a high level of concern and urgency.

Greene's interrogation of the home in relation to interwar housing crises classifies him as an important figure of late modernism. Referring primarily to authors such as Wyndham Lewis, Djuna Barnes, and Samuel Beckett, Tyrus Miller explains, "Late modernist writers in no way ignored their social context; in fact, they were deeply troubled by their inability to keep it at a manageable distance. Their literary structures tottered uneasily between vexed acknowledgement and anxious disavowal of social facts" (32). In Greene's work, too, social and political contexts penetrate and disturb characters and settings, even when those contexts are not explicitly stated.

During the interwar period, postwar Britain sought to revitalize an idea of home, which had been deeply disturbed by the war's unprecedented devastation. Writing on the twining of political and religious elements in Greene's novels, Couto points to the context of "radical movements in the world order that began to be felt after the First World War" (3). Greene's skill as a writer, Couto holds, stems from "his ability to see the world changing about him in many different ways" and to produce "a structure of complex human experience" which buttresses his narratives (3). In this chapter, I focus on a specific but multifaceted area of social and cultural negotiation in interwar Britain—the interconnected movements to reify the traditional home and to rectify the housing situation—and show how it permeates Greene's writing. I argue that a crucial but overlooked concern in such novels as *Stamboul Train*, *Brighton Rock*, and *The Power and the Glory* (1940) centers on the viability of the home during a time when instabilities relating to housing, mobility, gender, and morality threaten to dismantle it. I argue that Greene's interwar novels, implicitly contradicting mass housing development, interwar housing policies, and media representations of ideal homes, hints that the modern home is beyond redemption or recovery, already damned by postwar trends too prodigious to be reined in or reversed. Thematically, these novels are mobile texts that set characters in motion in the long and ultimately futile search for home.

Greene's novels rarely announce themselves as social investigations of housing and the home, which perhaps explains the general failure by critics to address this concern. Couto has suggested that Greene "did not quite follow his contemporaries in any of their overt [political] commitments or actions, but confined himself to story-telling with a clarity of mind and intensity of feeling that make his novels parables" of changing times (6). The word *parable* is telling, and while Couto links religious ideas and political contexts, *Brighton Rock* has commonly been seen as allegorizing a spiritual battle between good and evil or salvation and damnation.[5] Bernard

Bergonzi, for instance, has insisted that *Brighton Rock* should be read as "the first of Greene's Catholic novels, which presents a moral fable about damnation" (9). While Bergonzi deftly counters a tendency to identify biographical clues in Greene's fiction, his adherence to New Critical and structuralist analysis denies the novel its potency as a socio-historical artifact of the 1930s. Brian Lindsay Thomson, in *Graham Greene and the Politics of Popular Fiction and Film*, laments the dearth of "scholarly work that attempts to situate Greene's work in a wider matrix of cultural negotiations" (3). This critical lack, Thomson suggests, stems from the persistent belief that Greene's novels are his personal iterations of Catholic dogmata and ideologies. Particularly *Brighton Rock* and *The Power and the Glory*, I suggest, cannot be read merely as religious tracts, given that, in Couto's words, the "discussion of good and evil, right and wrong . . . develops in relation to the problem of survival in this world" (33). In order to firmly situate Greene's fiction within its larger social and historical circumstances, I first detail those circumstances in a brief overview of the housing climate of interwar Britain. I further show how the advertisements and public policies of the interwar period sought to reify traditional conceptions of the home via representations of ideal houses and labor-saving devices. These model homes advocated a return to a prewar domestic ideal that was predicated on heteronormative gender relations. Then, having established these contextual foundations, I turn to Greene's novels and examine the ways in which they engage with and contest the crises of housing and ideologies in the 1930s.

Homes Fit for Heroes: Housing Development and Slum Clearance

In the wake of the First World War, Britain refocused its attention on domestic matters, of which one of the most urgent and contentious involved housing. The Tudor Walters Report, commissioned in 1917 and published in October of the following year, documented a nation in dire need of sanitary and affordable accommodation. Primarily authored by architect Raymond

Unwin, a prominent figure in the Garden City movement, the report advocated a central housing authority that oversaw the design and building of cottage estates. An estimated 500,000 new dwellings were necessary to rectify current deficiencies (Cherry 73-74). To be sure, such assessments of housing conditions were not uncommon, but the magnitude of the shortage, coupled with a war-weary Britain whose soldiers would need housing on their return, lent social and political insistence to the Tudor Walters Report. Policymakers responded by passing the 1919 Housing, Town Planning, &c. Act, which provided subsidies for local authorities to erect low-rent housing on council estates. The aim of the reform policy was as much the reconstitution of a vigorous national identity as it was postwar reconstruction. Publicly, the 1919 act was backed by a "homes fit for heroes" program that aimed to alleviate widespread "concern for 'national efficiency' and the maintenance of an 'imperial race'" by raising the standard of living for returning soldiers.[6] As M. J. Daunton indicates, public officials stressed quantity *and* quality, as "new houses had to be of a design superior to anything supplied in the past, in order to show that aspirations could be met under the existing order" ("Housing," 236). However, insufficient funds and the decline of the postwar boom led to the discontinuance of the plan in 1921, with only 170,000 houses built. Council housing subsidies were reintroduced by parliamentary acts in 1923 and 1924, and held until 1933, although depression, prohibitive rents, and exclusionary criteria for occupancy kept many of the working classes either in the slums or out of the better housing estates.[7]

At the same time, the housing climate of interwar Britain included the growth of another "class . . . clamorous for accommodation" (Burnett 250): middle-income owner-occupants. Prior to the 1920s, Daunton writes, home ownership for many families was "more often talked of than achieved," as renting was the more economical option ("Housing," 242). While private landlords

continued to have an active role in the interwar housing market, there was a dramatic increase in council estates and private residences.[8] According to Matthew Taunton, home ownership peaked in the 1930s, when the costs of construction fell and building societies and banks offered lower rates on loans. By 1938, thirty-two percent of Britain's houses were privately owned, compared to ten percent in 1914[9] (Taunton 52). According to Dennis Hardy, between 1935 and 1939 private builders produced, on average, 265,000 houses a year (172). Thus, housing development in the interwar period ran along two class-inflected parallel tracks. Daunton notes that "local authorities emerged as the suppliers of new rented accommodation to the working class; and owner-occupation developed as the typical middle-class tenure" ("Housing," 218). Both of these tracks led to the suburbs, away from urban districts that were deemed unsanitary or degenerative. Naturally, class prejudice led to the demarcation of suburban spaces and differentiation between residents, with owner-occupancy regarded as superior to council estate inhabitancy (Daunton, "Housing," 241).

It is important to note that interwar construction was accompanied by demolition, for while suburban villas and cottage estates were being built, urban slum clearance projects were being implemented on a wider scale. According to Daunton, "the number of houses closed or demolished in England and Wales increased dramatically from 27,564 up to March 1934 to 245,272 between April 1934 and March 1939" ("Housing," 238). The Greenwood Housing Act of 1930 subsidized slum clearance but, John Burnett explains, "related the subsidy to the numbers of people displaced and rehoused: the intention was to prevent the pre-war practice of demolition by local authorities without replacement" (243-244). As a result, council housing was largely set aside for those dislodged by slum clearance.[10] Also, certain reformers proposed that displaced families settle in urban houses vacated by the suburbanized middle classes, but, as

Burnett relates, the proposal was made under the false assumption "that people were mobile—physically and economically—and in the circumstances of the great depression this was not so" (242). Furthermore, families that did relocate to housing estates were frequently unable to afford the rents, "and one solution was to increase the rents of 'general purpose' housing – a policy which provoked considerable resentment by 'respectable' towards 'unrespectable' tenants" (Daunton, "Introduction," 35). It should be evident, then, that the housing situation in interwar Britain was not only a matter of building greater quantities of better quality homes. Reformers took for granted the physical mobility, let alone the financial means, social reintegration, and predispositions toward housing, of the people they purported to assist. If a "new race or class" was "clamorous for accommodation," it scarcely qualified as a unified people, but was often characterized by competition, controversy, and disillusionment.

While these social and political projects to improve the housing situation were ongoing, there were also concerted efforts to market model houses that might contain ideal homes to the British public. These efforts relied on conventionally gendered ideas of domesticity for their attractiveness and success. Reviewing women's domestic fiction after the First World War, Chiara Briganti and Kathy Mezei state that the "trauma of instability and desire for recuperation, which coexisted with the resistance to a 'return to normalcy,' both enhanced the idea and meaning of home for returning soldiers and the home front and accentuated the crisis of gender relations that had been brewing for decades" (4). Despite a public yearning for prewar settlement and domesticity, women wished to build on advances, such as their entrance into the workforce, occasioned by the war. Yet advertisements targeting women promoted a "return to the home" by circulating images of ideal houses and labor-saving devices (Briganti and Mezei 4). As Elizabeth Outka relates, the Ideal Home Exhibition, held annually in London from 1908, "showcased the

many goods and products available for furnishing and for building the home, contributing to a surge in efforts to present the 'home' as something that might be created through careful shopping" (85). Outka explains how the exhibition promoted the "commodified authentic" as advertising and articles for women "continually emphasized the various ways to construct an 'ideal' home" that was both modernized and traditionalized in its makeup (85). Concurrently, policymakers inaugurated a "homes fit for heroes" program aimed at "building enough good homes for the men who had suffered [in the war] and for their children who would restore the depleted strength of the nation" (Burnett 220). Thus, commercial exhibitions, public programs, and media outlets actively sought to reconstruct and market a domestic space that enshrined modern convenience, wifely ministration, and healthy reproduction. These reifications of the home, however, were contested in what Briganti and Mezei term "domestic modernism." Attuned to "domestic culture and the performance of the everyday," women created fictions that constituted "essentially a discourse of opposition" in their representations of the home (33). Interiors in these novels are disturbed by abuse, deception, and oppression, contradicting publicized reifications of ideal households.

Issuing from this housing climate that I have broadly sketched here, Greene's fiction critiques housing development and gender idealizations, albeit by from predominantly male perspectives on the home. Even as circulated images of homes promise new opportunities of domestic attainment, *Stamboul Train*, *Brighton Rock*, and *The Power and the Glory* expose the illusion in such fantasies and the hollowness that exists at the heart of the modern home. As Rosemary Marangoly George states in *The Politics of Home*, "fictionality is an intrinsic attribute of home" (11). "Home" is a non-geographical entity, an "imagined location," and Greene's novels direct attention to the interpersonal complications that arise when imagined homes are

contradicted by social realities. Greene's male characters are routinely alienated from domestic spaces, while female characters inhabit houses that are rarely "authentic" homes. Often, men themselves create conditions or exacerbate environments in which "ideal" homes cannot thrive, in which conventional domesticity is critically impaired. In his study of Greene's development as a novelist, Robert Hoskins recognizes the "diminished power of women as redeemers" in Greene's fiction (17). Yet this diminishment, together with the expulsion or alienation of Greene's male characters from domestic spaces, must be measured in relation to the social and cultural atmosphere of the interwar period, specifically that concerning housing and the home.

Indeed, the interwar desire for recovery of an "authentic" or "ideal" home requires access to a culturally produced and shared memory of what a "home" once was but is perceived no longer to be. Outka writes that the "new design possibilities" shown at Ideal Home Exhibitions "marked a shift in the very idea of 'home'" (89). Whereas homes formerly had to "have actual ties to a family estate or to be an old country cottage" to secure placement in a verifiable history, the modern home, Outka argues, "instead could become referential, gesturing to previous models but remaining accessible and controllable by a customer who might not posses[s] (or even want) an actual old dwelling" (89). In a Benjaminian sense, the modern idea of the home thus becomes detached from any specific locale or familial continuity to be instead circulated as a marketable good, as the "commodified authentic," thereby diminishing an "aura." Or, as Outka puts it, the appeal of "nostalgic forms of authentic goods" lay in their "noncommercial aura" (4)—their tacit claim to replicate the original as an original. As with interwar travel writing, certain "tokens of authenticity" or signifiers of a "home"—Tudor architecture, gardens, pianos in windows—are identified and circulated as markers of authenticity. For the middle-classes especially, but also for those of the working classes with the means to relocate to council estates, the public display

of houses as signifiers of viable homes suggests a form of touristic experience or "staged authenticity" in that the material components of residences are taken by passers-by as signs of "real" homes. The unstated assumption IN marketing "authentic" homes is that through informed and resourceful *building* (i.e. purchasing the right products) it is possible to create a space for proper *dwelling*.

It may be profitable to elaborate breifly this distinction through Heidegger's 1951 lecture "Building Dwelling Thinking." For Heidegger, the "proper sense" of dwelling has "fall[en] into oblivion" in the modern age (350). In the twentieth century, Heidegger believes, space has come to be defined by "the possibility of measuring things and what they make room for, according to distances, spans, and directions" (357). The essence of dwelling—of inhabiting a site in "relation to locales, and through locales to spaces," thereby permitting things to exist in and of themselves and not as embodiments of their use-value (359)—becomes obscured by the quantitative mode of building. Alienated from dwelling, Heidegger suggests, people are unfulfilled, unattached, and, if we connect the idea to Greene's fiction, homeless.[11] While Heidegger understands dwelling in an ontological and spiritual sense, in a social and economic context the concept of dwelling—as the "authentic" inhabitation of an "ideal" home—has relocated to the marketplace as a qualitative value. Recognizing the profound emptiness at the core of this idea, Greene shows in his fiction how humans have become alienated from the home, wandering in a kind of forced mobility due to the lack of a stabilizing center. As in "The Destructors," Greene shows throughout his fiction that housing in the modern Britain is destined to collapse because there is nothing solid inside to prop it up. If Greene believes that some form of spiritual recovery is needed for proper dwelling in a home, he rarely seems to provide any evidence in his fiction that such a recovery is possible.

Respectable Housing and Deviant Wandering in *The Power and the Glory*

In the first chapter, I showed how *Stamboul Train* evidences Greene's anxious mingling of popular "entertainment" and "serious" social issues in his fiction, even if he later attempts to classify his novels as one or the other. In that novel, Myatt can be seen as a prototype of the homeless or wandering figure in Greene's work. David R. A. Pearce reads Myatt in the context of a transnational but politically divided Europe in the 1930s. As he travels across frontiers in the Orient Express, Pearce suggests, "Myatt is the most obvious symbol of an unsettled Europe" (33). Myatt is repeatedly represented as an itinerant, as when the narrator remarks that the cities and buildings he views through the train window afford him "no permanent settlement" (6). In an article on the Victorian home, Mike Hepworth notes, "Individuals in their own home have a respectable place in society: they can be located and identified as anchored in the normal social world. But the unfortunate individual expelled or threatened with expulsion from the family home stands on the line dividing normality from deviance: the transition is from 'being at home' to 'homelessness'" (21). This important distinction holds into the twentieth-century, particularly in Greene's work, in which homelessness in male characters usually links to some form of sin or deviance, either perpetrated by the characters or visited upon them.[12] In *Stamboul Train*, Myatt's Jewish identity prompts an anti-Semitic Europe to label him as a social deviant and force him into unsettlement, even if he remains commercially prosperous.[13] While respectability and deviance in Greene's novels are usually approached as correlatives of Catholic dichotomies— virtue and sin, redemption and damnation—they must also be understood as socially rooted in interwar dialogues about housing and the home.

Greene's wandering, homeless characters are often victims of domestic bankruptcy and develop "inauthentic" or deviant lifestyles. In *The Power and the Glory*, set in Tabasco, Mexico

under an anticlerical government, Greene uses an expatriate English dentist, Mr. Tench, to open his inquiry into the crisis of home: "Home: it was a phrase one used to mean four walls behind which one slept. There had never been a home" (11). Tench's idea of home has shrunk to a mere structure with only the most basic functionality. Hollowed out of any intrinsic value, the "home" becomes perfunctorily reproducible and mobile: "Home lay like a picture postcard on a pile of other postcards: shuffle the pack and you had Nottingham, a Metroland birthplace, an interlude in Scotland" (11-12). Here, the home is framed as a touristic image, a "staged authenticity" that is supposed to be transportable because it can readily be detached from any specific locality and reconstituted in a different setting. This interchangeability, however, creates a void at the center of the house so that when Tench enters his house in Tabasco, he finds that "[l]oneliness faced him there, vacancy" (18). This emptiness in Greene's novels is usually associated with political, spiritual, or social forms of corrupting deviance that originate inside or outside the home: state-sanctioned oppression; religious abandonment; hypocrisy or sanctimony; dysfunctional or illegitimate family relations; criminal activity. Characters are then forced to search for dwellings that might resolve these issues but repeatedly occupy only insubstantial or temporary structures in which homes cannot thrive.

In *The Power and the Glory*, Greene's literally unhoused wanderer is a "whisky priest" who flees the police and journeys to "his home" in hope of finding refuge (60). Expelled from his post and criminalized by the anticlerical government of Tomás Garrido Canabal, the priest is integral to the novel's focus on moral integrity in coercive environments, but the complexity of his character importantly connects to a broad issue stretching across Greene's work: the prospect of a return to home. Even Greene's most unsettled, deviant, or stigmatized characters desperately grasp at some image of home. As he wanders, the Mexican priest holds on to the possibility of

home as a safe haven from public oppression and punishment. A potential home exists in a hut in a village, but it is highly problematic because it houses a woman with whom he had illicit sexual intercourse and their illegitimate daughter, making the home unlawful according to his religious beliefs and position as a priest. The Tabascan government has offered priests the chance to avoid execution by renouncing their faith and marrying, thereby conforming to a politically sanctioned and secularized idea of home. Although he identifies himself as a sinner and anticipates damnation in the afterlife, the priest chooses not to abandon his beliefs and priestly obligations, at the price of being condemned in this life as well.

Greene strategically links the priest's dilemma of either choosing an officially licensed but spiritually bankrupt home or remaining loyal to his clerically mandated role as a "father" to religious believers to the larger issue of the disunity of housing and "ideal" or "authentic" homes in interwar Britain. Greene forges this link by bringing the Mexican priest into direct or indirect contact with British expatriates. At the start of the novel, Tench meets the priest and invites him to his house, but as he shows the priest his dental tools, his "mouth fell open: the look of vacancy returned . . . He stood there like a man lost in a cavern among the fossils and instruments of an age of which he knows very little" (13). Such moments of abrupt silence during the priest's visit highlight Tench's alienation from his home and workplace, although he still occupies the space, unlike the priest who has been forced from his church and ministerial position. Both men admire one particular object in Tench's house: a stained-glass pane illustrating a Madonna. Tench took the pane when the Tabascan Red Shirts "sacked the church," but he tells the priest that dentist's rooms in England generally have "the Laughing Cavalier" or "a Tudor rose" for stained glass (13). Here, Greene draws a subtle but crucial parallel between the situations in Mexico and England in relation to the home. The priest no doubt appreciates the stained glass for its religious

iconography and as a relic of the church that has survived the totalitarian government's attempt to eliminate symbols of the church. For the priest, the stained-glass image might recall a biblical narrative that validates the authority of the church as well as his office as a clergyman, even if he has committed what he perceives to be an unpardonable sin. For Tench, on the other hand, the stained-glass image is divested of its religious significance and becomes instead an ornament that lends "authenticity" to his dental practice by making it more like "home" in England. Instead of a biblical narrative, the pane links to a tradition in English dentistry.

Regardless of any belief system that exploits the Madonna as an authenticating icon, Greene links the religious and the secular through the image in order to underscore a tendency in England to use iconographic markers as legitimizing "tokens of authenticity" in "ideal" homes. As Tim Brindley points out, housing development in the nineteenth century featured a "revival of past styles, such as Gothic or Classical, the free use of ornament in the Arts and Crafts style and the elaborate decoration of Art Nouveau" (32). Applying the "commodified authentic" to housing, Outka explains how "English domestic architecture" evolved in the nineteenth century "to create individual dwellings that evoked a countrified past" through "nostalgic replication, an evocation of a different time and place that might connect the viewer to the past in the present moment" (68). The appropriation of nostalgic styles represents an attempt to authenticate the modern home by clothing it with visual markers of history, culture, and respectability. By the twentieth century, Outka writes, "the nostalgic image of the individual country house" was being persuasively marketed to a British public fascinated that "the very idea of an authentic country residence was for sale" (68). Thus, nostalgic housing styles became signifiers of genuine rural habitations as well as hygienic or "authentic" dwelling.

This combination of mass consumption, "authentic" building, and healthful dwelling

influenced housing development especially in the form of the bungalow. By the early-twentieth century, Burnett relates, the suburbs were increasingly viewed "as an artificial creation, a mere apology for nature in which urban values and attitudes were still dominant" (211). This view, coupled with the greater range and enhanced speed offered by the railway and the automobile, prompted migration to the countryside and a need for further accommodation.[14] The rural cottage and bungalow increased in demand and came to embody "a set of ideological values—the quest for nature, solitude and isolation in a health-giving environment"[15] (Burnett 211). Rural houses, then, were assumed to contribute to proper modes of dwelling in wholesome structures. As a result, owner-occupants and vacationers could imagine that they permanently (or temporarily) activated an idea of home modeled on leisured lifestyles and isolated from the spaces of the employment necessary to attain that model.[16] In his comprehensive study of the architectural and cultural history of the bungalow, Anthony D. King explains that it "provided the cheapest entry into the property-owning class," allowing middle-income families to "emulate the style of a country-house-owning elite" (160). As was the case with suburban villas, Gothic and Tudor designs were integrated into bungalows and cottages as visual markers of their legitimacy.

Greene both alludes to and undermines associations of the bungalow with mobility, social validation, and fitness in *The Power and the Glory*. Burnett explains that the bungalow "was described as a 'portable dwelling'" (212). Mobility, though, could couple occupancy to feelings of detachment or dislocation, as when Tench's series of homes is compared to shuffled postcards. As a moveable structure, the bungalow emblematizes the typical conflation—and the resulting confusion—of house and home. Briganti and Mezei have distinguished the house as "a physical, built dwelling for people in a fixed location," whereas the home "may possess the material characteristics of a dwelling" but "implies a space, a feeling, an idea, not necessarily located in a

fixed place" (19-20). Greene questions this problematic distinction in a dysfunctional British family, the Fellows, who live in a bungalow on a banana plantation and represent the slippage of house and home. As he approaches the bungalow settlement, Captain Fellows feels at "home" with only a "very slight cloud [that] marred his happiness" (31). However, if his external view of the bungalow buoys his exuberance, the "slight cloud" swells to a dark haze when he enters the house to find Mrs. Fellows with a "scared thin face," sensing "death coming nearer every year in the strange place: everybody packing up and leaving, while she stayed in a cemetery no one visited, in a big above-ground tomb" (32, 33). Her perception of an environment signaling death instead of healthy living stands in direct opposition to the interwar ideology of rural settlement as life-sustaining and sanitary. Of course, the banana plantation is located in a foreign land, and the bungalow was historically an Indian structure that supported imperial administration. Yet by the twentieth century, the bungalow in England had largely camouflaged its colonial origins and functioned, according to King, as "a purpose-built leisure or holiday house" in rural or coastal regions, assisting in the transformation of those areas into "place[s] for mass leisure" and "resource[s] consumed by people living in towns"[17] (1, 91).

Setting his novel in Mexico, Greene clearly does not implicate the bungalow in a colonial apparatus. Like Tench, who makes a profit fitting patients with gold teeth, Captain Fellows earns a living as a banana picker. Instead, Greene interrogates housing structures and homes in parallel to the housing climate of interwar England. Captain Fellows' enthusiasm outside his bungalow correlates with the dominant ideology of rural spaces being wholesome and invigorating, but his positive outlook is contradicted by Mrs. Fellows' interior pessimism. Greene uses the bungalow to demonstrate how a supposedly convenient and emancipating structure can conceal an unsound, unserviceable home. The Fellows' daughter Coral informs the cook that her mother "would not

be getting up for dinner," while the Captain thinks of his daughter as "the stranger in their house" (33, 34). Moreover, the narrator describes Captain and Mrs. Fellows as "companions cut off from all the world" and compares them to "children in a coach through the huge spaces without any knowledge of their destination" (39). Once mobilized, the idea of home, for the Fellows as well as for Tench, remains elusive as characters continually relocate to find settlement. Greene makes the familiar foreign: dysfunctional and lacking direction, the Fellows family is estranged from a home despite the Captain's attempt at "desperate cheerfulness" (39). Thus, Greene suggests that the British expatriates in the novel are as homeless as the priest, wandering globally in search of fulfilling environments for "ideal" homes.

Accordingly, to underscore the emptiness inside the bungalow, Greene has the wandering priest enter the house after the Fellows have deserted it. There, the priest's sense of isolation and despair is mirrored in the bungalow's failure as an ideal home. Sheltering in the house, the priest feels that "he had passed into a region of abandonment – almost as if he had died . . . and now wandered in a kind of limbo . . . Life didn't exist any more: it wasn't merely a matter of the banana station. Now as the storm broke and he scurried for shelter he knew quite well what he would find – nothing" (147). The priest's arrival forms the nadir of his forced exile, and his expectation that "nothing" exists in the bungalow to offer him refuge from the "storm" of oppression he weathers distantly echoes Mrs. Fellows' pessimism. Indeed, inside the bungalow the priest discovers only ghosted objects scattered about as former markers of a materialistic domesticity: "a cardboard box full of torn paper"; "a small chair which had lost a leg"; "a broken shoe-horn"; "a pile of old medicine bottles" (142). Each object represents a flawed or rejected piece in the Fellows' abortive attempt to establish a home. The priest also finds a *Treasury of English Verse*, which "was almost like a promise, mildewing there under the piles, of better

things to come – life going on in private houses with wireless sets and bookshelves and beds made ready for the night and a cloth laid for food" (146). This conjured vision of an idealized English household, in which material possessions instead of spiritual harmony are highlighted, raises a promise that has gone fulfilled in the bungalow. While interwar Britain yearned for "better things to come" in terms of advancements in the quality and quantity of housing, such improvements did not guarantee fitter and more stable homes.

It is possible to argue that Greene adopts a modernist stance in relation to housing and the home. Town planners in England publicly denigrated the bungalow for its invasiveness in rural spaces, cheap, often prefabricated, material, and inexpert reproduction of older English styles of architecture. In *Town Planning in Britain since 1900*, Gordon E. Cherry discusses "anxiety about the despoliation of the coast and countryside" in interwar Britain, where "objectionable eyesores" such as "house huts, caravans, old railway carriages, bus bodies, temporary bungalows and shacks" were affordable residences for holidaymakers (80). Tony Chapman and Jenny Hockey show that the villa, with its sham Gothic style and gaudily decorated interior, was "popularly accepted as the model of the ideal home" but "offended the aesthetic sensibilities of the intelligentsia" (8). Burnett, too, points to "the overwhelming popularity of individual houses and bungalows" that irritated modernist architects and preservationist town planners in the 1930s.[18] In *The City of To-morrow and Its Planning*, Le Corbusier criticizes the "notorious things we call 'housing schemes'" (206). He disparages suburban villas with meager gardens, which, far from providing a "romantic simple life" and "healthy exercise," are "stupid[ly] ineffective and sometimes dangerous" (202, 203). Proposing blocks of multistoreyed, cellular housing in both urban and suburban settings, Le Corbusier anticipates that "idea of the 'old home' disappears, and with it local architecture" (231). Indeed, many modernist architects "strongly urged" blocks

of flats "on grounds of both private convenience and public conscience" (Burnett 272). While Greene does not offer any promising Western alternatives to the degraded housing he depicts in his fiction, his criticisms of modern housing schemes and the fractured or abandoned homes they contain aligns his work with the views and objections of modernist architects. "The Destructors" offers an explicit and extreme illustration of the inapplicability of older housing structures to modern settings, while *The Power and the Glory* implicitly demonstrates that modern styles of housing also fail as spaces in which homes or modes of "proper" dwelling can prosper.

Fittingly, then, in the Mexican setting of his novel Greene privileges the hut over Western structures. Jennifer Johung has argued for a "historical impulse to return to and to renarrativize the origins of building" in "an attempt to recontextualize vastly different material developments as not so very different after all" (16). Modernist architects such as Le Corbusier exhibit this tendency when they invoke an idealized primitive man as one who builds according to principles of nature. Such an idealization, Johung suggests, allows Le Corbusier and others to envision a modern architecture that is "capable of achieving its ultimate goal of housing the human body in relation to nature" (16-17). In other words, modern architecture might be designed so as to allow a "proper" form of dwelling. In *The City of To-morrow and Its Planning*, Le Corbusier lauds the primordial "savage" who uses "pure geometrical forms" to create "a state of equilibrium which is primitive and inferior no doubt, but which is perfect as far as it goes" (35). While Greene is not interested in the hut as a respectable architectural form per se, he nevertheless uses it to display a different model of home than that within residences of his English characters. When the priest returns to the small village in which he has fathered a child, he at first feels "unwelcome even in his own home" due to the villagers' fear of the police (62). However, he stays in Maria's hut, the site of his "crime" six years earlier, and although the home is unlawful according to his faith, he

becomes aware of the "immense load of responsibility" and "love" that "all parents feel" (66). The familial bond that the priest recognizes with Maria and their illegitimate daughter surpasses that between the Fellows and between Tench and his estranged family in England. In this (from a Western perspective) undeveloped settlement, Greene temporarily allows a natural affection of a father for his daughter to form, even if that connection is not allowed to develop due to the priest's clerical duties and the pursuit of the Tabascan police.

Instead, Greene shifts the possibility of a functional home to another Mexican household in which a mother reads to her children a hagiographical story that mirrors the narrative of the priest's wanderings and eventually execution, reframing it as martyrdom. Among her children is a skeptical boy, Luis, who confronts in the novel a critical choice of allegiance to an atheistic state that promotes public tyranny or to a Catholic mother who privately instructs her family in religious morality. When Luis finally accepts the mother's teachings, Greene gestures toward the possible continuation of a conventionally "ideal" home founded on maternal guidance and family unity in spite of hostile exterior conditions. The positive outlook at the end of *The Power and the Glory* is rare in Greene's interwar fiction, and it is importantly allowed to flourish on foreign soil, while the English characters are left in a state of confusion and uncertainty. It is as if Greene can only distantly imagine the recovery of a viable home, the ideal still far removed from credibility in an English setting. However, Greene's momentary envisioning of a functional domestic space notably draws from interwar reifications of the home and gendered models inherited from the Victorian period. In opposition to the immoral, repressive, and violent exterior world of men that threatens the home, Greene positions an interior domestic space in which a nurturing mother tells stories (of exemplary *men* in hostile public environments) that instill in the male child (the two girls "sat placidly side by side . . . nearly asleep" (218)) a moral compass for right action in the

market and workplace.

Thus, underlying Greene's criticisms of Western housing and homes is an orthodox and highly gendered perspective on domesticity. This is a recurring paradox in Greene's fiction: while he routinely maligns modern housing schemes and undermines the "ideal" homes they are supposed to contain, he also insists on idealized gender relations in the home, even if he remains pessimistic about their realization in British or European settings. In *The Gender of Modernity*, Rita Felski explains that "nostalgic representations of femininity as a redemptive refuge from the constraints of civilization" in Romantic texts and subsequent views of woman as "a sphere of atemporal authenticity seemingly untouched by the alienation and fragmentation of modern life" persisted in many twentieth-century discussions of gender (16). Greene's novels evince a strong desire to frame "authenticity" as a feminine virtue in contradistinction to the counterfeiting and sin of the male public sphere. This propensity, as I show below, informs a reading of *Brighton Rock*, Greene's novel set in interwar England at a time of mass housing development and slum clearance.

Although it is customarily categorized as a "Catholic novel," *The Power and the Glory* demonstrates Greene's inquiry into housing and the status of home between the two world wars. Interwoven into the novel's overt religious subject matter is a subtle but persistent thread dealing with the European crisis of home and the prospect of its revitalization. Critical approaches that fail to acknowledge that thread and situate it within its socio-historical context overlook the full implications of a major novel in which Greene clearly focuses attention on the ways that exterior environments place significant pressures on the idea of home. By having British characters travel long distances in search of viable homes, Greene suggests that the interwar struggle to attain an "ideal" home ultimately proves unfulfilling and deeply problematic. Dreams of homes away

from home—whether in the English countryside or in the Mexican rainforest—are shown to be as empty as the structures characters abandoned when their visions fail. Mobile individuals and families in Greene's novels achieve little, if any, progress toward a meaningful actualization of the home. Accordingly, at the end of *The Power and the Glory*, Tench still has "an appalling sense of loneliness" (217). While *The Power and the Glory* removes an examination of housing and homes to a foreign setting, *Brighton Rock* more intimately confronts the crisis of home by turning its critical lens onto England itself.

A Local Crisis of Home: Mobility, Leisure, and Homemaking in *Brighton Rock*

Thus far, in relation to *The Power and the Glory*, I have focused primarily on mass housing development and reifications of the "ideal home" in the media. That, however, is only half of the picture of the housing situation in interwar Britain. While the middle classes enjoyed greater mobility, higher wages, and increased leisure time after the First World War, that conflict also "stimulated a social conscience about the quality of working-class life which now regarded much pre-war housing as unacceptable"[19] (Burnett 222). This renewed sense of moral obligation on the part of the more well-off classes, Burnett suggests, arose from a general perception that "modern war was only acceptable if it held out the prospect of a better world and a better life for its survivors" (219). On the one hand, as we have seen, this sentiment led to the "homes fit for heroes" program that ostensibly aimed to provide returning soldiers with quality accommodation. The interwar years in Britain were also defined by state-run housing programs and parliamentary acts mandating the destruction of slum areas and the building and maintenance of new residential estates for the poor. There was, then, duplicity in British housing efforts between the wars. While systematically demolishing unsanitary structures in poverty-stricken urban areas, the country was speculatively building cottages, villas, and bungalows to market to the middle classes. Even

though the migration of families to new housing opportunities was largely centrifugal, moving away from city centers t toward suburban and rural districts, by the time of the First World War, as Burnett writes, Britain was still by and large an "urban society" with a multitude of attendant problems, the "most obstinate and most controversial" of which was inner-city housing (140). Amid growing pressure to alleviate the dire situation, the government passed the Housing Act of 1919, which transferred the responsibility of housing reform from philanthropists and private developers to local authorities. Although slum-clearance projects had been pursued in Brighton and other towns since the 1870s, replacement houses often proved too costly for the displaced poor. Once local councils assumed control, housing policies, Burnett maintains, were "limited to slum clearance and the provision of minimal accommodation for those who could not afford the products of the speculative builder" (187). Many of the working families "were unable to move out of slums and tenements where, at least, they had some sort of roof over their heads" (Burnett 242).

There was not universal support among the middle and upper classes for slum clearance and relocation to council-built estates. Assumptions about slum clearance included not only that working-class houses were decrepit, unsanitary, and therefore justifiably torn down, but also that the homes within such houses were socially and morally bankrupt. As Burnett relates, interwar opposition to slum clearance was expressed in "the view, widely held in some circles, that slums (like poverty) were not so much due to an unsatisfactory environment as to individual failings of personality" (242). For example, one Social Darwinist critic "described slum-dwellers as a 'sub-species of *Homo sapiens*,'" while others deemed them "undisciplined, thriftless, shiftless and intemperate" (Burnett 242, 243). Such labeling implies that lower-class homes were essentially flawed because they deviated from accepted social norms and values. Just as Gothic and Tudor

styles and well-tended gardens were assumed to be markers of respectable homes, unclean and run-down exteriors were taken as signs of internal disharmony and vulgarity. The British middle classes tenaciously clung to "the belief that family and home were the central life interests, and that the house, which enshrined these institutions, had an importance far beyond other material objects" (Burnett 251). Social reformers who favored slum clearance believed that relocating the poor to more modern and hygienic accommodations would also improve the quality of domestic life and thereby contribute to a "proper" mode of dwelling. As I show below, these assumptions are exposed and contested in *Brighton Rock*, Greene's novel that most directly interrogates the housing climate in 1930s England.

A one-hour journey from London by express train, Brighton was a popular site for pleasure-seekers during the interwar period. Clifford Musgrave, in his exhaustive history of the coastal town, writes: "With the opening years of the 1930s Brighton embarked upon one of the most prosperous and successful periods of its history, not only as a holiday resort, but as a residential town" (383). However, beneath this layer of amusement and leisure lay a Brighton that was undergoing marked social and environmental transformation. Bungalow towns grew and the Corporation of Brighton purchased and developed land in the outlying districts. As a result, the city officially extended its boundaries in 1928 (Musgrave 390). Simultaneously, intensive slum clearance altered the material and social dynamics of inner-city districts such as Carlton Hill. The promotion of Brighton's shorefront and surrounding leisure sites for middle-class consumption therefore masked a destruction of housing that displaced the poor. While "great monuments to pleasure" were erected along the seaside (Musgrave 383), large swaths of local neighborhoods were razed a few blocks away. In *Brighton Rock*, Greene draws out the ironies and contradictions in this double-sidedness of the resort town. His project in the novel, I argue,

involves contesting and undermining assumed oppositions set up by the housing schemes in and around Brighton: oppositions between the unsanitary slums and healthful housing in suburban or coastal areas, between dysfunctional and ideal homes, and between sin and morality, damnation and salvation. To accomplish this task, Greene's novel becomes mobile by mobilizing his main characters, Pinkie and Rose, who negotiate the urban spaces of Brighton's slums and pleasure districts as well as the suburban spaces of bungalow settlements and villas. Greene sets up Pinkie and Rose and intermediaries in the sense that they continually move between the two supposedly antithetical poles of slum housing and open-air residential sites. I argue that Greene uses their relationship not only to criticize both slum clearance and mass housing development but also to illustrate that modern conditions in interwar Britain are not conducive to the construction of wholesome, viable homes.

Central to Greene's scrutiny of housing and the home is the theme of mobility. An early scene in *Brighton Rock* cues the novel's interwar context through Greene's choice of a setting in which social class and transportation converge. To exert his authority over those who pay him protection money, the teenage gangster Pinkie visits the bookie Bill Brewer's "house near the tram lines on the Lewes road almost under the railway viaduct" (55). While Pinkie stands outside, Greene's narrator notes that "a tram went by with nobody in it, labelled 'Depot Only,'" and a "slow goods train went by across the viaduct, shaking smoke down into the Lewes road" (55, 56). Deceptively mundane, these references to Lewes Road and railway transport point to local events during the 1926 General Strike. Rail transport was crucial to Brighton's nineteenth-century transformation from an exclusive but declining resort for royal and aristocratic patrons to a popular leisure spot for the urban middle classes.[20] In Musgrave words, "The coming of the railway truly marked the beginning of the modern age for Brighton" (265). Opportunities created

by the railway led to an influx of both workers who laid tracks and builders who erected housing to accommodate the growing population (Musgrave 312-313). Settling in Brighton's poorer areas, many workers became actively involved in labor unrest. During the General Strike, the Brighton working class showed "complete unity" with coal miners and industrial employees by "bringing local industries and services to a standstill" (Musgrave 314). To prevent replacement workers from operating the tramways, thousands of protesters assembled outside the depot at Lewes Road. Beneath the massive viaduct, the police, aided by a group of "ex-cavalrymen, yeomanry and artillerymen," violently suppressed the protesters in what later became known as "The Battle of Lewes Road" (Musgrave 381). Locally speaking, the main point of contention in this brief but significant conflict was control of the means of transportation, the mobility on which Brighton's middle-class tourist industry clearly depended. Uninhibited mobility was central to Brighton's prosperity, the battle suggests, yet that prosperity necessitated a co-operative laboring class.

By setting Pinkie and Brewer's altercation in "the vast shadow of the viaduct" (58), Greene establishes a historical framework through which to view Pinkie's continual desire for social authentication and increased mobility. Having used crime as a way to raise his social standing and move away from his place of origin in Brighton's slums, Pinkie tries throughout the novel to wrest control of the privilege of mobility that is primarily reserved for and secured by the middle classes. In the image of the "slow goods train" and the tram returning to the depot, Greene quietly reminds readers of the futility of the General Strike, which stopped industry and transportation around England but failed to effect any change in labor conditions. The towering viaduct, which Musgrave calls one of "the finest achievements of early railway architecture" (264), signifies the inaccessibility and uncontrollability of mobility to those who reside in its shadow. If Bennett's *Accident*, as I argue in the first chapter, expresses middle-class anxiety

about transportational stoppage in the aftermath of the General Strike, Greene's *Brighton Rock* communicates the working-class desire for the power and attainment that expanded mobility offers. Pinkie's efforts to maintain control of his criminal network—to solidify his authority as a gang leader in an underworld run by adults—reveal his insistent desire to move: to rise to the social level of Colleoni, an affluent and influential mafia boss; to drive his Morris car to the countryside; to escape his slum-dwelling past by relocating to Brighton's seaside and suburbs. Yet the persistent paradox in Pinkie's character is his tendency to align himself with a middle-class perspective, which he associates with status and control. His "carving" of Brewer's face to force payment is a violent gesture that mirrors the suppression of the protest in the "Battle of Lewes Road." It signifies his effort to wrest control of his network and thereby mobilize his self up and away from his lowborn, underprivileged beginnings.

Importantly, Greene further interrogates Pinkie's desire to access and control the means of mobility alongside middle-class ambitions to build houses that might stabilize "ideal" homes. Pinkie criminally gains social mobility through money and property that were unattainable in the slums, but he remains antagonistic to middle-class values and lifestyles. His animosity surfaces when he is attacked by Colleoni's mob at the Brighton Racecourse and retreats into a nearby development of suburban villas. Hiding in a garage, Pinkie notices "all the junk the owner had no room for in the tiny house: an old rocking horse, a pram that had been converted into a wheelbarrow, a pile of ancient records . . . a doll with one glass eye and a dress soiled with mould" (108). In a housing structure that commonly embodied the middle-class dream of owner-occupancy and domestic fulfillment, Pinkie instead discovers a scene of abandonment. The material objects—against which Greene frequently opposes a spiritual genuineness, as when the priest visits the empty bungalow in *The Power and the Glory*—function as signifiers of an "ideal"

home that once may have seemed attainable, but now, like the soiled innocence conveyed by the children's toys, has through experience been rendered obsolete. The playthings become even more suggestive as harbingers of Pinkie's future, for, as I show below, he becomes an agent in the destruction of his own home and family.

As in *The Power and the Glory*, which highlights despair and failure in the deserted bungalow, *Brighton Rock* questions the viability of a home in a modern housing environment. Pinkie's displeasure in the villa appears directed at the privilege of middle-class mobility:

> Whoever the owner was, he had come a long way to land up here. The pram-wheelbarrow was covered with labels – the marks of innumerable train journeys – Doncaster, Lichfield, Clacton (that must have been a summer holiday), Ipswich, Northampton – roughly torn off for the next journey they left, in the litter which remained, an unmistakable trail. And this, the small villa under the racecourse, was the best finish he could manage. You couldn't have any doubt that this was the end, the mortgaged home in the bottom; like the untidy tidemark on a beach, the junk was piled up here and would never go farther. (108)

The tone of the passage reflects Pinkie's distaste for the materialistic owner who is unfamiliar with the "pain and fear" that has characterized Pinkie's life (108). Yet the greater contributor to Pinkie's hatred is the mobility and proprietorship that divides the owner's social place from his impoverished origins. Similar to Tench's postcards, the labels on the pram not only signal access to transportation but also betray a restlessness and dissatisfaction with the multiple sites where the family has tried to actualize a viable home. Even though the owner's travels have ironically terminated in the inertia and lifelessness of the suburban villa, they express opportunities to relocate for which Pinkie so desperately yearns. This desire, though, is given materialistic form

in Pinkie's "old Morris" (131), an affordable automobile often used for traveling from towns and cities to the countryside and beaches.[21] The car offers Pinkie a fantasy of middle-class ownership and mobility, allowing him the freedom to move and to boast that he "couldn't get on without a car" (88). In spite of his animosity toward middle-class lifestyles, Pinkie subscribes to its ease of movement and materialistic priorities.

Greene further interrogates Pinkie's paradoxical disdain and embrace of middle-class values through his relationship with Rose. Both characters originate in a slum district but have managed to leave—Pinkie by entering Brighton's criminal underworld, and Rose by finding work at a seaside café. Their separate escape routes run parallel to the path that interwar policies purported to open by compelling working-class families to vacate the slums. However, the road from slum housing to better accommodations in the novel is problematized because it unites legitimate and illegitimate methods. Pinkie, the novel implies, has murdered to gain entrance into the criminal organization that has expanded the range of his influence and of his physical and social mobility. Rose, on the other hand, has found employment and board outside of the slums through honest means. Indeed, the circumstances of their meeting bring together illegitimate and legitimate activities. Having murdered a man under a pier, Pinkie returns to make sure that no one in a café above can identify his gang. There he meets Rose, who, Pinkie believes, knows more than she claims. Pinkie and Rose's marriage, which he views as necessary to prevent her from reporting him as a murderer, punctuates their doubleness and becomes a way for Greene to subvert the assumption that slum clearance provides a unidirectional path to betterment.

The duality of Pinkie and Rose as a couple is explored along the lines of sin and virtue, crime and morality, damnation and salvation, illegitimacy and legitimacy, all of which are tightly entwined in a single thread conveying not only the novel's parabolic thrust but also its secular

interrogation of the home. As Diemert relates, critics have traditionally divided Greene's work into two rather facile categories: "the novels express 'the serious preoccupation with religious and ethical problems' while the 'secular' entertainments subordinate these concerns to 'plot, action, and melodrama'" (8). Yet even in explicitly Catholic novels such as *The End of the Affair* (1951) and, as we have seen, *The Power and the Glory*, Greene's social inquiries are insistent. In *Brighton Rock*, Pinkie despises Rose because she embodies his slum past, yet he admits their compatibility: "What was most evil in him needed her: it couldn't get along without goodness. . . . She was good, he'd discovered that, and he was damned: they were made for each other" (126). Analogously, in Greene's fiction the "serious" needs the "secular"—the power of the religious themes depend upon their being socially embedded, while the social themes are enhanced by being meaningfully bundled with religious significance. However, for Greene each pole in these intertwined dualisms—sin and virtue, illegitimacy and legitimacy, the secular and the spiritual—is not diametrically opposed to the other. Rather, Greene weaves these terms into complex, asymmetrical shapes that do not easily fit into precise social (or literary) categories. In *Brighton Rock*, the complicated union of Pinkie and Rose allows Greene to present the home as neither ideal nor totally annihilated—hope remains until the end, if not as positively as in *The Power and the Glory*—but as a deeply conflictive construction that can have no place in which to thrive. Hence "proper" dwelling in Greene's representation of interwar Britain is unfeasible.

Nevertheless, Rose's goodness stems in part from her innocence and naïve sense of morality, as well as from her resolve to actualize an idea of home, even when she realizes that her union with Pinkie is a "mortal sin" because they are underage and the marriage cannot be acknowledged by the church (167). Nevertheless, after they consummate the marriage, Rose takes pleasure in the "freedom, liberty, strangeness . . . [and] a kind of pride" her identity as a

married woman offers her (191). Pinkie's boarding-house room becomes more than a simple habitation or place for his gang to plot crimes; in Rose's imagination, it transforms into a "home" (196). Yet, of course, the underlayer of illegality never disappears from the marriage and home, a fact that is compounded by Pinkie's and Rose's slum origins. Although Pinkie tries to mentally erase the "drab dynamited plot of ground they both called home," Rose's presence means that "his home was . . . back beside him, making claims" (91, 90). Despite Pinkie's attempt to place the burden of recollection on Rose, their relationship repeatedly underlines the fact that Rose's imagined home cannot be disconnected from the reality of Carlton Hill.

Rose is from Nelson Place and Pinkie from Paradise Piece, both in Carlton Hill, the worst slum district in 1930s Brighton. In Nelson Place, Pinkie recalls, "the houses . . . looked as if they had passed through an intensive bombardment, flapping gutters and glassless windows, an iron bedstead rusting in a front garden, the smashed and wasted ground in front where houses had been pulled down for model flats which had never gone up" (90). Greene's language evokes a war-ravaged landscape, prompting readers to link slum clearance to the devastation of the First World War. By associating the two, Greene faults the logic of postwar urban renewal—the belief, triggered by a sense of moral obligation in the middle classes, that the wholesale demolition of unsanitary houses would inevitably lead to a fitter nation of quality homes. Diemert argues that Greene "illuminates . . . the violence and savagery lurking beneath a seeming peace" in his 1930s fiction, in which "the image of the battlefield . . . stand[s] for social conflict and class war" (117, 118). When asked in a 1949 interview to explain the frequency of violence in his novels, Greene replied, "It's humanity's normal state. Certain epochs create the illusion of being calmer, but they are rare. Man is destined to live in catastrophe."[22] The violence with which Greene details the slums exposes a catastrophic substratum to an interwar housing situation marked by reform

policies and mass development in suburban and rural regions, just as the criminal underworld below the pleasure piers and seaside entertainment districts signals an unsavory, repressed facet of Brighton. If "homes fit for heroes" and other housing schemes promised peacetime comfort and convenience, *Brighton Rock* reminds readers of the persistent contradictions in the interwar marketing and pursuit of ideal homes.

One way the novel contests the moral impulse behind slum clearance is by showing how its catastrophic effects pursue those who supposedly benefit from its implementation. When Pinkie returns to the slum to propose marriage to Rose's parents, he finds that he has reversed course: "Every step was a retreat," for "there he was, on the top of the hill, in the thick of the bombardment . . . Half Paradise Piece had been torn up as if by bomb bursts . . . His home was gone" (140, 141). The erasure of Pinkie's family's condemned house has apparently opened up a vacancy in terms of a home. Pinkie, like other wandering male figures in Greene's fiction, lacks an anchoring home, which limits his maturation and deprives him of compunction, a deficiency that foredooms any attempt to create a new home. The implicit charge that *Brighton Rock* levels against slum clearance, then, is that it blindly conflates houses and homes. Local authorities that mandate slum-clearance projects, the novel suggests, fail to recognize that, on the one hand, demolishing houses may also destroy homes and, on the other, building sanitary or improved housing does not necessarily guarantee healthier, more stable homes.

The illusion of home becomes even more evident in pivotal scenes set in the bungalow town of Peacehaven, whose name echoes the Ruskinian notion of home as a site of peace and safety.[23] According to King, Peacehaven represented a nationalistic dream of fulfillment and legitimation through home ownership. Advertisements in *The Peacehaven Gazette* touted the bungalows as opportunities to "own a little bit of England" (171, 173). Yet Peacehaven's "major

attraction . . . was romance" (King 173). Given that Greene figures the union of Rose and Pinkie

as one of inherent opposites such as virtue and sin or legitimacy and illegitimacy, Peacehaven is

an ironic setting for the development of their relationship. On the bus en route to Peacehaven—

following the customary direction of middle-class migration away from urban centers—Rose

observes that "it's lovely" being "in the country," echoing the view of rural spaces as wholesome

environments receptive to relocation or leisure consumption (88). However, Peacehaven's reality

is hardly lovely: "Little tarred bungalows with tin roofs paraded backwards, gardens scratched in

the chalk, dry flower-beds like Saxon emblems carved on the downs," along with "a vista of To

Let boards running back along the chalky ruts of unfinished roads" (88). If Peacehaven promised

the actualization of fantasies of home ownership and Englishness, then *Brighton Rock* counters

with a scene of barrenness, incompleteness, and impoverished or abandoned residences. Greene

presents Peacehaven as a place where fantasies alone cannot induce prosperity. The scene shows

that efficient, consumable, modern houses structures are, like the villa Pinkie hides in, a dead end.

So, too, is Pinkie and Rose's romance. They stop on their outing between one bungalow with

"broken windows" and another in which "the blinds were down for a death" (88). The house as a

shelter has been compromised, and within it one finds death.

Additionally, Greene exploits Peacehaven to narrow the gap between the promise of mass

housing and the alleged contamination of slum dwellings. Greene wryly inverts the name of the

bungalow town in Pinkie's birthplace, Paradise Piece, suggesting a correspondence between the

two locations.[24] Cherry links Peacehaven in its 1930s heyday to "anxiety about the despoliation

of the coast and countryside," specifically "large-scale coastal development [that] offended

popular taste" (80). Peacehaven's founder, Charles Neville, advertised the town as a "garden city

by the sea," and yet, as Hardy relates, it "def[ied] all the known laws of civic planning" and

came to be regarded as one of a growing number of "rural slums" (11-12). It is in Peacehaven, too, that Pinkie experiences both attraction and repulsion for Rose, who is most associated in the novel with the possibility of an ideal home. Rose's presence links slum-clearance and housing development, for she has escaped the unfit conditions of Carlton Hill and envisions relocating to better housing to maintain a home. The novel, then, places upon her the burden of domesticity. The fate of the home is not wholly in her keeping, as Pinkie takes an active part in destroying it, but she is the primary visualizer of the home in the novel. Thus, Peacehaven can be most closely associated with Rose, into whose character Greene weaves the fantasy of home and attainment that Peacehaven signifies. However, the Peacehaven-Paradise Piece inversion taints the fantasy. If Rose, as a woman, is the potential creator of the home, then Pinkie, as a man, is its destructor. Building and demolishing are thus wedded through Pinkie and Rose's union, and the coupling is reinforced by their travels between Brighton's outlying bungalow towns and its inner-city slums. Peacehaven is as much a wasteland as Carlton Hill, and if Rose embodies the possibility of home, then there appears to be no place in the novel where the home might relocate and thrive.

As my reading suggests, the home in Greene's novel is problematically gendered, as in interwar reifications in the media and housing programs. Burnett shows that the First World War "raised expectations about women's emancipation," but interwar housing legislation, "enshrined in the phrase 'Homes fit for Heroes,'" endeavored to reassign women to the domestic sphere of influence (219). *Brighton Rock* begins with Rose having entered the workplace as a café server, but her employment ends when she marries Pinkie. However, the novel does not wholly endorse this reassignment, for Pinkie and Rose's marriage is a "mortal sin" and the home is manifestly threatened by an unstable and abusive male figure, a common feature in the domestic fiction that Briganti and Mezei highlight. Pinkie approaches marriage as an opportunity to possess and

control Rose, to prevent her from testifying against him. *The Power and the Glory* decisively confines its Mexican women within domestic boundaries—the only exception being a prostitute, and she is detained in a jail—while men are mobile, albeit anxiously or painfully, in public spaces. *Brighton Rock*, on the other hand, suggests that the interwar effort to reinstate women in domestic interiors is problematic because it is linked to criminal behavior as it is re-enacted in Pinkie and Rose's union. Pinkie's domination of Rose depends on his ability to coerce her into a home, and the marriage, which he abhors, is necessary only because he fears what she may do if she remains free to move and make her own choices in the public realm. Whenever his misogynistic disdain for Rose flares up, he caresses a bottle of vitriol in his pocket, a symbol of his corrosive effect on their relationship and the home. While Pinkie stresses the illegitimacy of their union—it is not a "real [marriage] like when the priest says it," he reiterates (118)—he nevertheless views it as an institutionalized means to gain control and, ultimately, totally wreck the home he so vehemently opposes. As *Brighton Rock* illustrates, Greene's fiction ambiguously portrays domesticity and the home. It adopts a decidedly traditionalist perspective on a gendered model of the home, and yet it consistently undermines that ideal by accentuating the ruinous interference of some malignant, reprobate, or callous male figure in the realization of that home.

Importantly, Greene is careful in the novel not simply to allegorize Pinkie and Rose, but he instead grounds her desire for a home and his eagerness to destroy it in the social context of interwar England. In his study of Greene's novels, Stephen K. Land suggests that "the universe of Greene's fiction is fundamentally dualistic, a conflict of distinct forces of good and evil," even if those two concepts "are inextricably bound together in the moral nexus of human action" (192, 195). In an overtly Catholic reading, Michael G. Brennan proposes that Pinkie represents "the irredeemable malevolence of the Devil," whereas Rose embodies "the potency of innocence"

(50). Yet regardless of Greene's theologizing his characters, he also distinctly tethers them to the social environments from which they originate and in which they move and interact. In a 1938 review of *Brighton Rock*, Edwin Muir perceives Pinkie to be "an evil product of an evil environment, a living criticism of society, and on that plane genuine" (qtd. in Diemert 120). Diemert also discerns that "Pinkie's evil arises out of the corruption of his innocence" due to the "crippling effects of his environment" growing up in the slums (120). Writing more generally, Couto adds, "For Greene evil is a summation of social wrong and institutional injustice which deprives people like Pinkie of human sensibilities" (61). While these commentators do not look closely at the specific social and historical conditions in which Greene deposits his characters, they provide valuable alternative readings to conventional theological interpretations.

Pinkie and Rose's compatibility stems not merely from his evil needing her goodness to complement it, but from their common origin in Brighton's slums. Rose accepts her "mortal sin" and damnation in marrying Pinkie because their union represents the sole possibility of realizing a home given the conditions of interwar Brighton. After her marriage, she understands that "she had chosen her side: if they damned him they'd got to damn her, too" (189). Her "side," then, is with Pinkie whose immorality and damnation have been cultivated in the slums and underworld of Brighton. Greene makes this clear in the moments when Pinkie articulates a pained awareness of the squalor, abuse, and brutality lying beneath Brighton's veneer of pleasure. Frequently, this criminal underbelly manifests in male perversion and sexual deviance that are implicitly linked to Pinkie and Rose's efforts to legitimize a home. When Pinkie returns to Carlton Hill to request permission to marry Rose, he glances at a newspaper displaying the "tawny child face of Violet Crow violated and buried under the West Pier in 1936" (141-142). Waiting outside Brighton's municipal building to obtain a marriage license, Pinkie is nauseated by sadomasochist magazines

sold "under the counter" at newsagent's shops, which prompt him to narrate the story of "Annie Collins," an impregnated fifteen-year-old who "put her head on the [railway] line" on which middle-class excursionists travel from London to Brighton (165). These disturbing accounts are evoked in the novel to establish an environment in which male domination and criminality have debased the idea of sexuality and the home. They provide an alternative to the dominant view, especially in Brighton's pleasure districts, of sex as the "fun" of "the game" (165). When he is asked what he believes in, Pinkie replies, "Credo in unum Satanum," thus profaning the Catholic mass in a similar manner as the perversion of secular Brighton (165). Pinkie's utterance, often isolated by critics as evidence of his personification of evil, must be understood in its context in the novel—a response to a world perceived to be profoundly degenerate, hypocritical, and unjust. Greene thus employs Pinkie to provide an alternative perspective on interwar England and a voice that speaks what other characters cannot utter or chose not to see. Through such scenes of contemplative anguish, Greene carefully renders Pinkie a pitiable reflection of his environment.

Because of Pinkie's degenerationist view of Brighton as a brutal and sexually perverse world, he cannot support the founding of a home, instead believing in its utter damnation. His misogyny and distorted view of the home have also been shaped by his upbringing. Ironically, Greene uses Peacehaven rather than Brighton's slums or seedy entertainment districts in which to explore the rootedness of Pinkie's aversion to sexuality and the home in his past. Amid the bungalows meant to signify a wholesome environment for the "ideal" home, Pinkie recalls his "room at home, the frightening weekly exercise of his parents which he watched from his single bed. That was what they expected of you, every polony you met had her eye on the bed" (90). The possible allusion to an Oedipal complex aside, Pinkie's personal experience has inextricably entwined an idea of "home" with sex, which for him becomes a kind of horrifying, mechanically

recurring, and ultimately meaningless routine. Pinkie's living conditions—Michael Anderson notes that "75 per cent of the population of England still lived in a one or two roomed dwelling" in 1911, and "[i]mprovement was small at the time of the 1931 census" (58)—have coerced him into the position of an involuntary voyeur. This experience, coupled with later observations of aberrant sexuality outside the home, has led to Pinkie's perversion, which etymologically suggests a turning away from a "true" religious belief to a "false" one. If we (loosely) apply Heidegger's criticism of modern housing, Pinkie's slum residence does not allow for a proper sense of dwelling. Having been raised in what interwar Britain deemed insanitary conditions, Pinkie's apostasy directly correlates to his misogyny and skewed perspective on the home. The "prick of sexual desire disturbed him like a sickness" because he loathes "what happened to a man in the end: the stuffy room, the wakeful children, the Saturday night movements from the other bed" (92). In a way, Pinkie's seems to have interpellated an interwar mindset that brands slum housing as unhygienic, hazardous, and fit only for demolition. Yet Greene also implies that the contamination of the home—embedded in Pinkie and transported wherever he travels—is not localized in the slums but spreads throughout Brighton and its environs. On the surface, Greene's novel may appear to corroborate an elitist view that the slums and those who reside in them are socially or morally irredeemable, and yet there are no feasible alternatives presented among the middle-class characters or in the suburban villas or bungalows surrounding Brighton. Instead, Pinkie offers Greene a potent figure through which to express a deep pessimism concerning the viability of a home in interwar Britain. Rose alone takes on the burden of optimism in the face of Pinkie's dark purpose to eradicate the home and the last vestige of its goodness and promise.

Moreover, through Pinkie the novel critiques the patriarchal authority that the foundation of an "ideal" home bestows upon the male head. If Pinkie despises marriage as a form of debased

sexual routine and reproduction, he nevertheless craves the social validation and masculine rights that his union with Rose confers on him. Pinkie's conflicted attitude is apparent an "odd" post-coital "sense of triumph: he had graduated in the last human shame" (181). Although repulsed by the idea of sex as pleasure, Pinkie can reconstitute it a form of entitlement, a show of masculine potency: the "beginning of a long polished parquet walk, [where] there were busts of great men and the sound of cheering" (135). Treated as an inferior boy for most of the novel, Pinkie gladly accepts the adult (male) authentication that comes with domestic attainment. Paradoxically, to transfer this newfound domestic ascendancy to the social sphere, Pinkie feels he must expunge his unwholesome, impoverished past, that is, he must figuratively initiate a slum-clearing project of his own that erases all visible signs of his contaminated roots, including Rose. His desire for public recognition parallels middle-class ambitions to validate home ownership by incorporating Gothic and Tudor styles into modern housing designs. Markers of an "authentic" home focus on exteriority, on image-making. Pinkie reasons that if "he climbed" the social ladder while married to Rose he would have "to take Nelson Place with him like a visible scar. . . . Only death could ever set him free" (187). Because he cannot abandon a diseased image of the home—as it is embodied by Rose—he effects the ruination of that home and of himself. In this way, Greene pours into Pinkie the deeply contradictive animus of the middle-class housing scene in interwar England—the strong compulsion to build and publicly authenticate sanitary, idealized homes in suburban or rural settings, as well as the reformist drive to rid the urban centers of polluted and therefore illegitimate housing.

If *Brighton Rock* subtly subverts these middle-class priorities through Pinkie's character, the novel more overtly satirizes and further censures them through the figure of Ida Arnold. As a middle-class, physically mobile pleasure-seeker, she embraces simple moralisms contradicted by

her own hedonism. Whereas Greene deploys Pinkie and Rose's union to deform and complexify such conventional polar opposites as good and evil, he uses Ida to illustrate how those opposites can be uncritically distanced in reformist discourse. Reprimanding Rose for her loyalty to Pinkie, Ida claims, "I know the difference between Right and Wrong. They didn't teach you *that* at school" (199). She assumes, like social reformers and degenerationists, that impoverished or insanitary environments necessarily engender moral deficiency. Ida, conversely, has acquired a Manichaean moral outlook that she applies to any social context to justify her actions. Greene associates her character with Victorianism—she first appears in the novel singing a "Victorian ballad" (15)—yet her sensual indulgence and promiscuity are relatively modern characteristics.[25] This incongruity frames her as a paradoxical figure, one who insouciantly embodies the carnality and pleasures of a Brighton that, from Pinkie's perspective, is irrevocably damned, while also retaining the moral framework of an era that, for many, was rendered obsolete by the First World War. Greene unambiguously portrays Ida as a representative of an interwar British majority, for she "belonged to the great middle law-abiding class, her amusements were their amusements, her superstitions their superstitions" (80).

Misapplying her moral principles to a social context that she fails to fully comprehend, Ida assumes the role of middle-class reformer in the novel. Meeting Rose in Pinkie's apartment, Ida self-importantly announces a motivation for bringing Pinkie to justice and delivering Rose from his grasp: "'I don't want to let the Innocent suffer' – the aphorism came clicking out like a ticket from a slot machine" (199). Ida's reductionist moralizing and reformism is evidently as much a source of pleasure as her carefree life of leisure. Greene depicts her initial encounters with Rose in as a clash between a middle-class perspective, assisted by the capacity and leisure to move freely around Brighton, and a working-class outlook limited to the confines of its

environment. This conflict between the two viewpoints intensifies whenever Ida invades living spaces that Rose inhabits and must defend. In Rose's boarding room above the café, Ida first attempts to "save" her from "wicked" Pinkie, but Rose's "Nelson Place eyes stared back at her without understanding. Driven into her hole the small animal peered out at the bright and breezy world; in the hole were murder, copulation, extreme poverty, fidelity and the love and fear of God" (122, 123). Rose becomes thus identified not only by the slum boundaries but also by its immoralities and deficiencies. Her refusal to abandon Pinkie, her acceptance of the damnation he brings to the home, is a desperate act of loyalty.

The second confrontation occurs in Pinkie's room, which for Rose, now married to Pinkie, is a "home" under threat of invasion (196). From Rose's point of view, Ida's "plump, good-natured, ageing face . . . stared out at her like an idiot's from the ruins of a bombed home" (197). In contrast, from Ida's standpoint, Rose's "bony and determined face" is like "warships cleared for action and bombing fleets [taking] flight between the set eyes and the stubborn mouth" (199). Using war imagery, as when Pinkie returns to the slum, Greene conveys Rose's futile but unflinching defense of the home, even if it is "bombed," is something that Ida in her ignorance cannot comprehend. As Cherry shows, interwar "working class communities regarded state intervention in their lives with suspicion and hostility" (45). On the other hand, by 1930, Burnett relates, the "realization that a decade of housing policies and programmes had had almost no effect on the conditions of the poor was beginning to lead to a demand for an effective anti-slum campaign" (242). Ida's single-minded resolve to excise Pinkie's evil influence becomes her effort to realize a successful anti-slum campaign in spite of Rose's resistance. In Ida's judgment, Pinkie, socially unfit and irredeemable, is a disease that contaminates Rose's "purity" and "innocence." Rose's salvation can only be secured by Pinkie's destruction and her relocation.

Even though Ida is right—Pinkie is a threat to Rose—Rose's obstinacy is not simply blindness to Pinkie's toxic effect on the home. Rather, she seems to realize that there are no better options. If Ida stands as social reformer in the novel, her character also exposes the hypocrisy of interwar housing policies and incapacity to remedy a dire situation.

The suspenseful climax of *Brighton Rock* focuses the theme of damnation and salvation on the possibility of the home. Pinkie and Rose return, in the Morris car, to Peacehaven, where the home is again threatened by eradication at Pinkie's hands. This second trip to Peacehaven again replicates interwar migration from insanitary urban spaces to the more healthful rural and coastal areas. However, the promise of romance and home ownership in advertisements for the bungalow town is invalidated by Pinkie's intention to murder the now-pregnant Rose there to ensure, he believes, a complete erasure of his slum past. Greene inverts the town's idealized reputation as a site for creation and reproduction to render it a place of destruction and death. King illustrates the popularity of bungalow towns with young adults during the interwar period by referencing a ballad in which the speaker recollects his "gay little Peacehaven Nest":

> Its [sic] the place for a kind loving wife
>
> And for children a haven of bliss
>
> And the rich fertile ground
>
> Makes the products abound
>
> Never Eden of Dreams was like this. (173-174)

For Pinkie, of course, the idea of home is not a "haven of bliss" but rather a "hell" (182), and despite Rose's apparent goodness and loyalty she cannot be separated from her slum origins, at least not in Pinkie's mind.

However, it is Pinkie's death that forms the novel's final act of eradication or slum

clearance. Pinkie attempts to coerce Rose into committing suicide so that he can discontinue the marriage and destroy the home, but Ida appears with the police in time to stop him. During the scuffle, an officer smashes Pinkie's bottle of vitriol with his baton, the sulfuric acid spills onto the boy's face, and in his blindness he plummets from a cliff to his death in the sea. Pinkie is a victim of his own corrosive effect on the home, his clearance executed by a law enforcement agency that officializes Ida's reformist program in the novel. Thus, an institutionalized slum clearance outmaneuvers Pinkie's illegitimate attempt to annihilate his origins, allowing Ida to emerge as "a figurehead of Victory" (244). Yet assuming that her reformist work has been a success, she casually neglects any effect on Rose. When asked what Rose thinks about her rescue, Ida replies, "Don't ask me. I've done my best. I took her home. What a girl needs at a time like that is her mother and dad. Anyway, she's got me to thank that she isn't dead" (243). Instead of providing Rose with a better standard of living, Ida ironically returns her to an insanitary Nelson Place residence and an indifferent home.[26] The emphasis, at least in relation to Ida, is on housing reform as a moral "victory"—the triumph of "Right" over "Wrong." Slum-clearance projects, the novel implies, are in reality less about providing the lower classes with quality housing in which to dwell than about ensuring the continued maintenance of middle-class mores.

Greene's novel, however, is concerned with Rose as a figure for the modern home. The final scene finds Rose questioning her loyal because she did not commit suicide alongside Pinkie, and she confesses to a priest to receive damnation. The priest offers Rose hope in the form of her unborn child, whom she might, he suggests, "make a saint – to pray for his father" (247). The novel thus briefly considers the possibility of a deferred salvation that could preserve an idea of home by spiritualizing it. This preservation is contingent on making the child (gendered male by the priest) a "saint" who can then posthumously rehabilitate Pinkie through religious pleading.

Like *The Power and the Glory*, *Brighton Rock* ends with a window of opportunity that depends upon a woman's moral instruction in a conventionally gendered model of the home. Yet, unlike that later novel, *Brighton Rock* closes this window as Rose, with newfound hope and a sense of purpose, starts walking toward Pinkie's room to recover a phonograph record that she convinced Pinkie to record just after their marriage. Not having listened to the recording yet, Rose remains unaware that Pinkie has recorded these words: "God damn you, you little bitch, why can't you go back home for ever and let me be?" (177). The record, which Rose ironically believes to be a gift celebrating their union, inscribes Pinkie as a spectral voice that survives to effect the damnation of the home. In *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, Friedrich A. Kittler writes of the "phonographic realm of the dead," in which "spirits are always present" (72). As a *Scientific American* article remarked about Edison's 1877 invention of the phonograph, "Speech has become, as it were, immortal" (qtd. in Kittler 72). At the end of *Brighton Rock*, Greene offers a haunted home, one whose contamination cannot easily be eradicated by social reform programs or even religious praxis but outlasts the concerted efforts of such institutional correctives. The final line of the novel confirms the power of this haunting: "She walked rapidly in the thin June sunlight towards the worst horror of all" (247). Rose, as the novel's figure of the home, is left in suspense, poised between hope of salvation and inevitable damnation. Greene, like Pinkie, seems to despair of a world in which "ideal" homes and "proper" dwelling exist only as a social imaginary, primed to be exploded by the aggressive return of the real.[27]

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[1] See p. 250.

[2] Melfi argues for a Wordsworthian perspective in *England Made Me*. Drawing from *The Prelude*, Melfi suggests that Greene's protagonist must recollect Nature's lessons in sublimity— "'beauty and . . . fear'"—in order to form a basis for an adult "conscience" and "moral life" (219).

[3] Pearce follows many scholars in attributing Greene's concern with home to his personal experience: if "[h]ome is full of the fears of emptiness," then "Greene recognised the unsatisfactoriness of it all" due to unhappiness in his own domestic life (36). I propose that the dissatisfaction with home in Greene's novels also acquires significance in the context of interwar housing crises.

[4] Couto suggests that "[s]ocial injustice" is a "cause of homelessness in the early novels," though she does not discuss slum clearance or housing development as possible occasions of social injustice (140).

[5] See, for example, Michael G. Brennan's *Graham Greene: Fictions, Faith and Authorship*, 46-55. According to Brennan, *Brighton Rock* "[offers] a moral fable of sin and damnation . . . [and] explores the disturbing theological paradox of the 'virtue of evil,' suggesting that even a creature as callous as Pinkie may not be irrevocably separated from Christian concepts of goodness and the possibility of Divine redemption" (48).

[6] See Daunton, "Housing," 208. Furthermore, Gordon E. Cherry explains that the twentieth-century concern with the fitness of Britain's male population stemmed from reports during the Boer War that over a third of all men examined at recruiting stations were deemed unfit for service. Eugenicists pointed at such statistics as evidence of physical degeneracy among the urban working classes, a view that was also adopted by town planning groups (27). This background was undoubtedly called to mind by the phrase "homes fit for heroes."

[7] According to Daunton, a significant proportion of council-estate residents were from the upper-working class and even the white-collar demographic. Daunton writes, "Councils developed criteria of 'housing need,' but there was still a concern for ability to pay the rent and whether a tenant was 'desirable.' . . . Families would be categorised as respectable or roughs, as desirable or undesirable tenants, and the sifting of the free market was institutionalised so that certain families could be allocated to 'problem' estates" ("Housing," 240).

[8] Daunton contrasts houses built before and after the First World War: "local authorities had supplied only 0.5 per cent of the houses erected between 1891 and 1908 and 5.5 per cent between 1909 and 1915," whereas in the 1920s and 1930s "19.4 per cent of the additional housing stock was provided by private landlords, 31.5 per cent supplied by local authorities and 49.1 per cent owner-occupied" ("Housing," 218).

[9] Taunton also relates that the "two main boom periods" of suburbanization in Britain were "the last three decades of the 19th century and then the 1930s" (49).

[10] See p. 35 of Daunton's "Introduction" in *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain: Volume III 1840-1950*.

[11] Heidegger then proposes that the essence of dwelling lies in its spiritual quality. He argues that building create a site for dwelling as the safeguarding of being. What must be secured is "a *primal* oneness" of "the four—earth and sky, divinities and mortals" (351). As this spiritual turn

in Heidegger's lecture is not immediately relevant to my reading of Greene's fiction, I do not pursue it further here.

[12] The contrast between the home as a form of social validation and homelessness as a form of deviance has perhaps its most extreme expression in the late-modernist work of Samuel Beckett, specifically in *Waiting for Godot* and in the trilogy of *Molloy*, *Malone Dies*, and *The Unnamable*, all of which were published in French in the early 1950s. For more on Beckett's relationship to late modernism, see Tyrus Miller's *Late Modernism: Politics, Fiction, and the Arts Between the World Wars*.

[13] Critics have dealt variously with anti-Semitism in *Stamboul Train*. Bergonzi half-dismisses the issue by stating there is "no doubt that Greene was mildly anti-Semitic, if in an unthinking way, since it was the default position of large areas of English cultural and intellectual life before the advent of Hitler and the Second World War" (26). Pearce, on the other hand, insists that "Myatt is a key to the book and to Greene's thinking. Socially over-sensitive reviewers have pointed to Myatt as an example of Greene's anti-Semitism" when, Pearce claims, "Greene wishes to make us aware of his strengths" (34). Thomson acknowledges the "troubling influence of Shylock" in the novel but believes "the use the narrative makes of Myatt hinges on both the reader's awareness of the stereotype of the Jew and his willingness not to judge Myatt on the basis of his ethnic background" (51). Regardless, it is impossible to ignore the very evident strands of anti-Semitic stereotyping running through Green's work, even when he personalizes the characters or draws attention to the debilitating effects of racist perspectives.

[14] Though the automobile facilitated middle-class migration to suburban and rural regions, it was still a relatively expensive form of transportation in the interwar period. Burnett details the state of transportation at this time: "For the middle and upper classes, the motor-car became increasingly important between the wars as the vehicle for the journey to work or, in remoter districts, the journey to the local railway station. Car-ownership, which had totalled only 32,000 in 1907 and 109,000 in 1919, increased dramatically to 2,000,000 in 1939" (257). Even so, Burnett continues, "a motor-car at a minimum cost of £100 remained something of a luxury for most white-collar workers in the period" (258). While electric trams and trolley-buses were available to those close enough to city centers, it was the "flexibility of the motor-bus, which could reach into hinterlands and beyond the built-up areas independently of rails or overhead wires, [that] eventually gave it the victory over other forms of urban transport" (258).

[15] Similarly, Anthony D. King explains the spread of the bungalow to the countryside, which was transformed to "a place for mass leisure, a resource consumed by people living in towns" and which "began to be invested with an aesthetic and ideological identity of its own" as a "recreational resource" (91, 124-125).

[16] King borrows human geographer Brian Berry's term "counter-urbanisation" to describe the flight from urban centers that was a part of the bungalow phenomenon (124). Also, King relates that in the decades leading up to the First World War the bungalow "came to be invested with symbolic meanings: as it was, by definition, physically separate and away from the town, it symbolised not just the 'flight from the city' but also, at a time when many social conventions were in flux, an ideal of Bohemianism and the 'simplification of life'" (91). In addition to "its

'apartness' and consequent social isolation," the bungalow's appeal to Bohemian counterculture stemmed from its image as an "unconventional" residence (100-101).

[17] Like Burnett and other social historians, King stresses that this major conversion of "rural England" into an available site for leisure consumption "invested" the countryside with a unique "aesthetic and ideological identity" as a "recreational resource" (123-124).

[18] Certainly these criticisms reveal an educated elite mapping out boundaries to differentiate themselves from popular taste. However, these outcries did little to stop "bungaloid growth" in the interwar period (King 158). As King writes, the "mid 1930s saw greater expansion than ever. Each year, over 360,000 houses were built," a staggering number for that time (187).

[19] Modern housing problems were, of course, an issue that dated to at least the first half of the nineteenth century. Burnett notes that the housing crisis "was a creation of the nineteenth century—both because new demographic trends multiplied and exacerbated the inherited problems, and because new social trends gradually raised housing expectations and produced a climate of opinion in which, for diverse reasons, housing evils came to be regarded as unacceptable" (5). By the interwar period, Burnett suggests, the crisis had reached an apex.

[20] Musgrave writes: "It was the excursion train and the day-tripper that brought about the downfall of Brighton as an exclusive resort of wealthy and fashionable society, and its rebirth as the truly democratic pleasure resort of modern times" (271).

[21] See King 157.

[22] *Conversations with Graham Greene*, 22.

[23] In "Of Queen's Gardens" (1865), Ruskin's asserts that the "true nature of home" lies in its function as "the place of Peace; the shelter" from "the anxieties of the outer life." This essay is the same in which he genders domestic space by assigning its maintenance and moral upkeep to women. As Chapman and Hockey state, "The notion that home, in an ideal sense, is a place of safety is shown to be highly gendered. It binds women of all ages into the home and fosters their dependence upon male relatives" (11). This Ruskinian model of the home was clearly part of the Victorian inheritance that middle-class homeowners in interwar Britain used to authenticate their domestic spaces.

[24] While Nelson Place was an actual subdivision of the Carlton Hill slum district, Paradise Piece seems to be Greene's invention. Quite probably, then, Greene fabricated the name as an ironic inversion of Peacehaven.

[25] Greene also connects Ida to the New Woman, as she has "a Netta Syrett from a second-hand stall" on a shelf in her room (42).

[26] Earlier in the novel, when Pinkie returns to Carlton Hill to propose marriage to Rose's parents, they respond to his offer of money by "bluff[ing] each other" until Rose's "life was confused in the financial game" (143).

[27] Kittler connects the typewriting, cinematography, and phonography to Lacan's conceptions of, respectively, the symbolic, the imaginary, and the real. Film correlates with the imaginary in that its "optical illusions"—particularly the "illusionary continuity of movements" of the "cut-up body" on screen—parallel the "mirror image of a body" in Lacan's psychoanalysis (15). On the other hand, the phonograph corresponds with the real because it "can record all the noise produced by the larynx prior to any semiotic order and linguistic meaning" (16). I am adapting Kittler's differentiation loosely to suggest that the "ideal" home as imagined in interwar media and other outlets is a form of the imaginary in its conception of the home as a perfectible entity that unifies exterior housing and interior domestic spaces. The real, on the other hand, is that which remains unacknowledged, unwritten, or unseen—the ghost of disorder and contamination that haunts the unconscious substratum of the interwar idea of home.

CONCLUSION

H. G. Wells and Heterotopian Utopias

In this study, I have argued that interwar British literature reveals the nation's intense scrutiny of and profound dissatisfaction with its reflection in the mirror. Whether in the form of anxieties aroused by the First World War and the General Strike in *Accident*, the fragilities of an insular, imagined community in *The Waves*, unsettled perceptions of Englishness in travelogues and fiction, or questionings of housing reform and homes in *Brighton Rock*, the literary responses to interwar conditions are socially engaged, politically motivated, and thematically rich. As access to novel forms of transport and expanded networks for mobility increased, the horizons of literary investigation widened. Yet one significant genre that I have not covered in the preceding chapters is science fiction, which also flourished in interwar Britain. For one, H. G. Wells continued to have a towering presence between the wars not only because of his string of popular "scientific romances" beginning with *The Time Machine* in 1895, but also because of his vast corpus of sociological, socialist, scientific, and futurological writings. Influenced by Wells, a new generation of science-fiction authors became productive in the 1920s and 1930s. Heir-apparent to Wells, Olaf Stapledon produced ambitious works such as *Last and First Men* (1930), a future history of humanity spanning billions of years, and *Odd John* (1935), a utopian fantasy. Also, E. V. Odle's only novel, *The Clockwork Man* (1923), is generally regarded as the first cyborg fiction, and *Brave New World* (1932), Aldous Huxley's dystopian response to the Wellsian utopia, has since achieved canonical status. Other authors explored science fiction

through philosophical or theological lenses. Scottish writer David Lindsay applied Gnosticism to interplanetary travel in *A Voyage to Arcturus* (1920), while C. S. Lewis allegorized science fiction in *Out of the Silent Planet* (1938). During the interwar years in Britain, the science-fiction genre was a truly mobile, multidisciplinary avenue of literary inquiry.

Many of these works convey characters and readers to utopias or dystopias rather than heterotopias. Yet distinctions between utopias and heterotopias can be fairly ambiguous. Utopias, Foucault writes, "are sites with no real place" and with "a general relation of direct or inverted analogy with the real space of Society," which is presented "in perfect form, or else . . . turned upside down" (24). Thus, utopias have a fundamental unreality, whereas heterotopias have location as real sites. Yet the mirror, Foucault suggests, is a double site: it is a utopia because it is a "placeless place," but it is also a heterotopia because it "does exist in reality" (24). Utopian fiction, I suspect, functions in a similar manner, merging the characteristics of real and imagined worlds. The science fiction of H. G. Wells is especially intriguing because it situates utopias (and dystopias) into close proximity to the real social spaces of England. This is not especially new with Wells, however. In William Morris's *News from Nowhere* (1890), William Guest falls asleep and wakes up in a future agrarian-socialist England that is peculiar yet familiar enough to readers.[1] Wells, however, is more conspicuously interested in exploring relationships between distance and proximity in his utopias. In *A Modern Utopia* (1905), the narrator (the Owner of the Voice) first argues that a utopia must be remote from earth: on a planet "beyond Sirius, far in the deeps of space, beyond the flight of a cannonball flying for a billion years, beyond the range of unaided vision" (15). But Wells plays a trick on us, for after the Voice stresses the distance from present-day humanity, he asks us to imagine two people walking in the Alps and transported in a "twinkling of an eye" to "that other world" so that we "should scarcely know the difference" (16,

17). Travel to that "placeless place" is accomplished instantaneously, and Wells's Utopia, like Foucault's mirror, is just the inverse of his world, the terrain and scenery unchanged but the people and structures of society made perfect. A utopian world, Wells appears to suggest, is not as distant as many assume.

Such utopian fictions transport characters (and readers) to ideal worlds without the aid of technology, but as the science-fiction genre mature, and as transport technologies and systems advance, machines become indispensible for traveling from places of familiarity to ones of strangeness. Submarines, balloons, cars, airplanes, rockets, spacecraft, and tubes are variously employed to facilitate movement between the real and the imaginary. In *Men Like Gods* (1923), for instance, Wells incorporates automobility to carry his protagonist, Mr. Barnstaple, to a utopia that has much in common with the ideologies of rural Englishness featured in interwar travelogues and critiqued in Orwell's *Coming Up for Air* (1939). A journalist who desperately seeks escape from work, family life, and the "chronic disorder" of interwar Britain (Wells specifically references the Irish Troubles and the "futility" of the League of Nations), Barnstaple turns to his car, which offers him "an agreeable sense of mastery" and "such a sense of freedom as he had ever felt since his first holidays from his first school" (10, 13). Wells thus intimates that having not only access to transportation but also the leisure time to separate from everyday settings and obligations is a prerequisite to reaching utopia. As Sean O'Connell writes, the 1920s have often been regarded as a "golden age" for motoring, given the "great comfort and reliability of inter-war cars" and the "improving facilities for touring motorists" (84). During this period, middle-class "car ownership conferred the opportunity to leave the 'smoky cities' and their working-class inhabitants behind" (84). Barnstaple takes a similar road, traveling in no particular direction and thinking that "[a]ny way led to Elsewhere" (13). Through a sudden and mysterious

temporal disturbance, Barnstaple's route leads him to not elsewhere but nowhere: Utopia. Thus, automobility in *Men Like Gods* brings together two worlds, as Barnstaple's car penetrates, in a sense, the surface of the mirror, to reach the "placeless place" beyond. Like George Bowling in George Orwell's *Coming Up for Air*, Barnstaple is driven by discontentment to flee the disorder of contemporary society. Whereas Orwell's novel explodes the concept of a mirror (the fishing pool) in the countryside that can transport one back to a utopian ideal, Wells's fiction stubbornly holds to the possibility of a redeeming alternative to the interwar condition of England.

Wells's Utopia, then, is an Arcadia tended by an elite class of beings. As such, it represents a healing of the exploited rural England depicted in polemical or anti-suburban texts such as Clough Williams-Ellis's *The England and the Octopus* and *Coming Up for Air*. In the other side of Wells's mirror, the arterial development that Williams-Ellis decries is expunged. Priestley's Americanized factories making "[p]otato crisps, scent, tooth pastes, bathing costumes, [and] fire extinguishers" are absent (10). Graham Greene's decaying bungalow towns and Orwell's "Cockney" tourists are unthinkable. In their place, Barnstaple witnesses a pastoral countryside that agreeably blends technology and nature. As Barnstaple travels with the Utopians in their aeroplanes, he is able to conduct "a fairly close inspection of the landscape" (38). Wells combines English and Roman pastoral signifiers as Barnstaple observes "garden pasture with grazing creamy cattle and patches of brilliantly coloured vegetation" and "vineyards on sunny slopes" (39). Later in the novel, Barnstaple sets off to tour Utopia on his own. Standing on the top of a dam of "Titanic engineering," Barnstaple views the "Utopian plain below, sunlit and fertile," and "very clean and dreadful," much "like a garden, with every natural tendency to beauty seized upon and developed and every innate ugliness corrected and overcome" (167, 170). There is a sense of Romantic sublimity as Barnstaple is overwhelmed by the combination of

natural splendor and responsible engineering. This scene forms one of many representations of characters looking down from heights in Wells's utopian fiction, a tendency that replicates, like Priestley's travelogue and Orwell's novel, the "plan view" of the preservationist (Matless 38). By establishing these authoritative perspectives in his novels, Wells maneuvers the reader into a tourist gaze on the utopian landscape and a simultaneous critical gaze on the reader's own environment. This is made especially clear in *Men Like Gods*, as Barnstaple, from atop the dam, imagines how the same landscape would appear on earth. He is certain that "a driven labour, the spite and hates of overcrowding, the eternal uncertainty of destitution, would dominate the scene" (169). This double-spectatorship is crucial to the appeal of Wells's utopian fiction, as it assists in reconciling the remoteness of utopia and the proximity of heterotopia.

Wells further closes this gap by allowing another vehicle to enter Utopia—a limousine carrying a multinational assortment of wealthy, belligerent, provincial, and reactionary passengers who attempt to stir up discord and later overthrow the Utopians. This move essentially allows the entrenched social and political strife of the interwar years—an era labeled the "Age of Confusion" in Utopian history (57)—to enter and unsettle Utopia. The car, as Sean O'Connell relates, was an ambivalent technology in terms of proving access to idealized rural spaces, as it "was also increasingly identified as a major factor in the despoliation of the countryside" (150). The efforts by the limousine motorists to despoil Utopia escalate to an armed conflict against the Utopians, and Wells alludes to the First World War to give the battle topicality. Dividing into representatives of Great Britain, France, and the United States, the Earthlings design a banner "unlike any existing national flag to avoid wounding the patriotic susceptibilities of any of the party"—it is a flag to "represent the Earthling League of Nations" (207). Like Leonard Woolf, Wells was an early proponent of the League of Nations, publishing

several related books and working in a Research Committee with Woolf. However, Wells soon became disillusioned by the limited, old-world perspective of the organization. In a way, then, Wells's Utopia also operates as a heterotopia by reproducing and contesting sites of international conflict and politics. Barnstaple, as a figure mediating between the two worlds, tightens correspondences between the real and the imaginary. Naming the men involved in the war against the Utopians, Barnstaple laments that "Earth was Utopia now, a garden and a glory, the Earthly Paradise, except that it was trampled to dust and ruin by its Catskills, Hunkers, Barralongas, Ridleys, Duponts and their kind" (230). Wells thus suggests that utopia is latent in reality—it is not a simply a "nowhere" but an "elsewhere" that remains just out of reach due to the limitations of dominant social and political perspectives of the current paradigm.

The Utopia of *Men Like Gods* has evolved from a similarly contentious past, and Wells, famously, defines a utopia as a place that is constantly developing. The Owner of the Voice in *A Modern Utopia* starts by arguing that a modern utopia in the post-Darwin age "must be not static but kinetic, must shape not as a permanent state but as a hopeful stage leading to a long ascent of stages" (11). As Patrick Parrinder puts it, Wells rejects classical "utopias of perfection" for modern "utopias of progress" (*Utopian*, 3). Hence, rather than being landscapes that are unalterable and available for detached observation, Wells's utopias are environments that are shaped by their inhabitants. As Barnstaple learns from his conversations with Utopians, their world "is not content" in that "research never rests, and curiosity and the desire for more power and still more power consumes all our world" (257). In his utopian fiction, Wells tends to project a meliorist view of human progress onto his mirrored worlds, while in his nonfiction he can be alternately optimistic and pessimistic about humanity's chances. In *The Discovery of the Future* (1902), for instance, Wells proposes that the twentieth-century world is "in a phase of rapid and

unprecedented development" and that humans, if they open their eyes to it, are "entering upon a progress that will go on, with an ever-widening and ever more confident stride, forever" (57-58, 59). By the end of the 1930s, however, Wells is far less assured. In *The Fate of Homo Sapiens* (1939), published a month before Hitler's invasion of Poland, Wells contends that "all the main religions, patriotic, moral and customary systems in which human beings are sheltering today, appear to be in a state of jostling and mutually destructive movement"[2] (230). He concludes that only "the most hopeful mind" can suggest that the "salvaging of the species is still just possible" (231). Perhaps Wells's persistent doubts about the future of humanity contribute to his belief that a utopia must not be settled but endlessly improved and advanced toward an elusive perfection.

Criticizing those authors who persist in conceiving of utopias as static states, Wells confesses that he "fluctuate[s] . . . between at the best a cautious and qualified optimism and my persuasion of swiftly advancing, irretrievable disaster" (*The Fate*, 232). His resistance to stasis applies not only to his utopias but also to his fiction. In "A Note to the Reader" published in the 1905 edition of *A Modern Utopia*, Wells explains the "peculiar method" he devised for writing the novel, a method he continues to hone for the rest of his career as a writer: "I am aiming throughout at a sort of shot-silk texture between philosophical discussion on the one hand and imaginative narrative on the other" (xxxii, xxxiii). Like Barnstaple's automobile that punctures the divide between the real and imaginary, Wells's novels transport readers between different styles of writing—fiction and social commentary—especially as his work becomes increasingly didactic in the twentieth century. Like his protagonists who wander through fluid utopias to accumulate knowledge and mediate between England and Elsewhere, Wells's novels repeatedly engage in a search for new environments for his readers to inhabit. If the mobile texts that I have interrogated in this study routinely offer pessimistic responses to the interwar condition of

England, Wells's mobile utopias allow readers to travel to mirrored worlds that may seem distant

but that, he cautiously suggests, are closer than they appear.

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[1] Morris borrows this conceit from American writer Edward Bellamy, whose *Looking Backward: 2000-1887* (1888) follows a protagonist who, like Rip Van Winkle, falls into a deep sleep lasting over one hundred years. Wells also uses this plot device in *When the Sleeper Wakes* (1899).

[2] This book was published as *The Fate of Man* in the United States. I use that edition but retain the original title.

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