

An Excerpt from Nicole Larose's 2006 dissertation at the University of Florida:  
GANGSTERS, ZOMBIES, AND OTHER REBELS: ALTERNATIVE COMMUNITIES  
IN LATE TWENTIETH-CENTURY BRITISH NOVELS AND FILMS  
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CHAPTER 2  
APOCALYPTIC COMMUNITIES: THE DISASTER AND REEALATION OF CLASS  
AND SPACE

The apocalyptic types—empire, decadence and renovation, progress and catastrophe—are fed by history and underlie our ways of making sense of the world from where we stand, in the midst.

Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending*

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

Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History"

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

As Bill Masen, the protagonist of John Wyndham's *The Day of the Triffids* (1951) attempts to come to terms with the disaster that has left most of society blind and thus easy prey for the triffids, mobile and poisonous plants, he describes his surroundings and the feelings that they evoke: "To the left, through miles of suburban streets, lay the open country; to the right, the West End of London, with the City beyond. I was feeling somewhat restored, but curiously detached now, and rudderless" (38). Masen's ability to see grants him an already privileged perspective that permits him to survey his world and to decide how the spaces of the "open country" and "the City" will affect his psyche. His reaction to the spaces epitomizes a trend throughout postwar British apocalyptic

narratives to view the country and nature as redemptive, especially in the face of overwhelming and incomprehensible disaster. The influence of spatiality on the causes of and responses to disasters reveals the political critique of apocalyptic narratives. In this case, Masen yokes his left with the country and his right with the City, responding to the first with feelings of restoration and the latter with feelings of detachment. The political connotations of left and right emphasize that the redemptive country is not a conservative space of nostalgia, but instead a progressive space; whereas, the City, the literal space of business within London, represents the repressive ideological realities of monopoly capital. The novel critiques the oppressive reality of capitalism with the very premise of the disaster—the insinuation that the greed for profits gained from the production of triffid oil has propagated this disaster, or on a more aphoristic level that greed will always lead to some sort of disaster.

While coming to terms with the inevitability of disaster, Masen shows a realist understanding of the spaces of redemption by mediating the country with the borders of the suburbs. The suburbs of London emerge for several reasons related to class status. For the lower classes, the suburbs represent a forced expulsion from the city as the gentrification of previously working-class areas makes housing unaffordable or unavailable. The council estates on the borders of the city, such as Keith's home in *London Fields*, are offered to these displaced Londoners and become emblematic of the forced expulsion of the poor. For the middle class, the suburbs present an easier opportunity to become homeowners, as they cannot meet the standard of living required of life in the city. Conversely, for the upper classes the suburbs present the opportunity to enter into the city for work or leisure without the alienating realities of living in the

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

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

developing Cold War paranoia. The War and the Blitz made the insecurity of London and the British Empire obvious, thus leaving the English subject fearful of fascist and communist occupation. Wyndham and Orwell recognized the lingering fear over a threat to British sovereignty and thus imagined situations where their characters deal with and to varying degrees find protection from oppression, particularly in a collective understanding of the redemptive principles of the natural and the country, epitomized by the imaging of alternative communities that come into being within this protected space. The focus on the natural permits me to elaborate Patrick Parrinder's argument that "the rural sanctuary, a fortified island or valley serving as a last redoubt of 'Britishness', is common to almost all the British disaster novels written in the post-war period of imperial withdrawal" (212). Parrinder focuses on the important theme of the rural sanctuary, but he inevitably concludes that the futures imagined within these sanctuaries are "deluded endgames" (233). I will carefully examine this repeated theme of the rural sanctuary, but I will argue that these spaces permit a utopian imaging of identity and a reassessment of the meaning of collectivity. Overall, the alternative communities imagined by Wyndham and Orwell within the spaces of the country reveal the postwar tradition of using the apocalyptic moment to reveal the limits of oppressive politics and the potential of a progressive reorganization of community. A close reading of the connections between the ideals of the country and the natural and the imagination of alternative communities in *The Day of the Triffids* and Orwell's *1984* (1949) establishes a particular apocalyptic tradition to which authors of the late twentieth century respond. Thus, examining Wyndham's and Orwell's novels will help us to better understand J.G. Ballard's discomfort with the stagnated politics of the late 1970s, Martin Amis's critique

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

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

primacy of the collective desires for genuine experiences and relational love, much like Shelley.

Wells's view of the apotheosis of scientific rationality and thus his reconfiguration of the natural as the scientific is not as clearly optimistic and redemptive as Shelley, but his scientific romances are the standard barer of the British disaster narrative, particularly through their impetus to see disaster as the opportunity to envision the world through new perspectives. Wells's critical apocalypses influence Wyndham, Orwell, and continue to linger in the minds of all other apocalyptic writers. The specific historical event to which *The War of the Worlds* (1898) most directly responds is the possibility for European war after the unification of Germany. As evidence that Wells's novels are not ahistorical or fantastic, his stylistic choice of realism and scientific authenticity become the standard for critical apocalypses. His alien invaders are not frightening because of their appearance or size, in fact they are physically limited by Earth's atmosphere, but instead they are terrifying because of their intelligence and ability, including their attack on the whole of England, making both London and the countryside spaces of siege and danger and suggesting that England and thus the ideal of Englishness is in danger. Wells's use of shifting narrative view points in *Worlds* not only emphasizes the everyman nature of his narrative but also places observers who have a variety of backgrounds and influences in different perspectives to emphasize the potential commonality that a totality like disaster could achieve. Through these varied narrative voices, Wells establishes the use of apocalypse as a way to look inward and examine the workings of the society as a collective, the people as individuals, and the relationships that define humanity when under attack and thus rapidly changing.

Attempting to understand the critical impact of apocalypse, in *The Sense of an Ending* Frank Kermode examines how narrative, which is driven by a need for an ending, allows us to imagine and understand apocalyptic desires from our place in the middle, or in the historically determined categories of our existence. In other words, Kermode provides a narrative theory of apocalypse that attempts to understand the communal experiences of narrative. For Kermode, the radicalism of apocalypse makes it flexible and adaptable to the crisis filled art and time of modernity. Kermode notes that in literary plotting, the End has lost much of its momentum and significance because of our desire to “think in terms of crisis rather than temporal ends” (30). He goes on to note that despite this desire, “we can perceive duration only when it is organized,” which for literature means plot (45). As narrative is apocalyptic in its need for an end and we can only understand temporality through narratives, on some level all narratives are narratives of apocalypse; this statement can be rephrased, all narratives are revelatory or all narratives break apart to reveal meaning, or it can be violently rephrased that all narrative is a state of crisis and destruction, particularly of the reigning order. Kermode’s theory of apocalypse responds to the meaning of the word, “revelation or disclosure,” which necessitates an examination of apocalypse outside of the historically religious definition of the Christian tradition. The ideal of revelation applies directly to narrative, which itself is the act of revealing through words, plot, and character. When looking at narratives that are self-reflexively apocalyptic, the act of disclosure becomes multi-layered. Of all the layers of revelation and disclosure in apocalyptic narratives, I am interested in the connection between the urban disaster or threat and the potential for rural renewal, particularly how the hostile or nurturing spaces can image new formations for

community. These alternative apocalyptic communities are my way of following Kermode's lessons on the End in modernism and postmodernism. Kermode realizes that there must be "rediscoveries, fruitful revaluation" and "a new use for the past" (121), understanding that it is not apocalypse that takes place but that apocalyptic narrative does; apocalypse is thus a kind of angel of history gestalt experience written in order to produce catharsis from its audience.

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



explains the dangers of simply celebrating the science fiction film's depiction of disaster as spectacle and entertainment. She explains, "the imagery of disaster in science fiction is above all the emblem of an *inadequate response*. I don't make to bear down on the films for this. They themselves are only a sampling, stripped of sophistication, of the inadequacy of most people's response to the unassimilable terrors that infect the consciousness" (130). Sontag establishes that the desire to imagine the disaster is to escape from the very real terrors and violence of the world. The disaster (violent battle, nuclear annihilation, or pandemic) is easier to deal with than the real terrors of global capitalism that cause not only these examples of disaster but the continual class conflict waged throughout the world. Each of the texts in the apocalyptic tradition under examination here attempts to use these imagined disasters as the catalyst to reveal how the dangerous forces of global capitalism rule society. Then, like Kermode explains, from the midst of the disaster, these texts attempt to make sense of or reveal the potential for our world, even when threatened by "unremitting banality and inconceivable terror" (Sontag 130). Wyndham's and Orwell's narratives reveal the process of accepting terror as the norm and thus finding ways to adapt and reconfigure the self and the community, particularly through the spaces of redemption, such as the home that Bill and Josella cultivate in *Triffids* and the clandestine natural love den that Julia and Winston visit in *1984*.

*The Day of the Triffids* presents repeated critiques of the effects of industrial capitalism and the imperial nation state on the status of the individual as a self-contained and self-sufficient ontological being, ultimately presenting the cottage home and the collective island society as models of socialist productivity. Wyndham's novel, like the

contemporary adaptation *28 Days Later*, challenges the zombie genre by linking the monstrous to anti-social, non-egalitarian behavior. While the triffids are the immediate enemy, the zombie-like humans who retain their consciousness but lack even the ability to provide for themselves or participate in the work required for the preservation of society present an equally dangerous situation. The sighted though do not necessarily flourish, as exemplified by the failed Christian community and the violent military communities, but can flourish by adapting a socialist agenda based on communal acceptance and respect, or by not becoming the monstrous, anti-social force fighting against collective salvation. Even the main characters must understand the necessity of collectivity. Masen develops from a selfishly individualistic scientist before the disaster to a thoughtful and able caretaker of the land and the people who depend on him. Masen explains his own transformation as the journalistic, first person narrator of *Triffids*, which is essentially his path towards a non-traditional family and their decision to move to the community on the Isle of Wight. As he ends with an epilogue that starts, “*And there my personal story joins up with the rest. You will find it in Elspeth Cary’s excellent history of the colony*” (228), he emphasizes that the path they have followed is the logical progression to a collective and redemptive organization for a successful community, and as Masen has discovered the workings of the natural world alongside the reader, he asks the reader to come to the same logical conclusion about the best path for the protection of humanity. He unselfishly ends his individual narrative once it has accomplished the collective agenda. As his metamorphosis begins shortly after the disaster, Masen critiques how segregated and useless individuals have become as a result of industrial capitalism. He says, “I knew practically nothing, for instance, of such ordinary things as

how my food reached me, where the fresh water came from, how the clothes I wore were woven and made, how the drainage of cities kept them healthy. Our lives had become a complexity of specialists” (12). Masen, unlike the parasitic neo-feudal fascist Torrence, understands the reality that all humans have been left like the blind in terms of useful labor, and he does not wish to manipulate the non-sighted based on fear.

In Wyndham’s apocalypse, the privilege of vision is not based on sight but the need to have foresight of the outcomes of our reliance on technology and our cultivation of the unnatural. Masen explains, “I don’t think it had ever before occurred to me that man’s supremacy is not primarily due to his brain, as most of the books would have one think. It is due to the brain’s capacity to make use of the information conveyed to it by a narrow band of visible light rays” (93). Wyndham realizes the fragility of the visible and correlates this tenable protection to the ever-present danger for corruption or destruction that surrounds Postwar society. By arguing for the supremacy of human visibility based on its connection to ontological identity, Wyndham asks for a more complete and careful understanding of the way English society works, the way Englishness influences the subjects identity within the society, and the historical and political construction of England and Englishness.<sup>1</sup>

The spaces of the farm and the colony represent a revitalization of authentic collectivity and relationships instead of the isolation and specialization of individual identity characteristic of pre-disaster England. Wyndham’s critique cannot neatly be

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

summarized as John Clute does that Wyndham gave an “eloquently middle-class English response to the theme of Disaster” (667). To do so would be to look at the superficially English icons, the pubs and the condemnation of those who hope that the Americans will come and save the survivors, as Wyndham’s main critique. Instead, Edmund Morris argues that Wyndham uses social commentary to look at the aftermath of disaster. Morris’s critique indicates that the novel requires an examination of the spaces that foster collective ideals. He says, “And when disaster happens, the worst is not what it does to such physical infrastructures as cities and transport systems, but to the precious intangibles that a democratic government is supposed to protect: the loyalty of lovers, the upbringing of children, the rule of law, the all-importance of free speech and privacy and good manners” (xiii). These democratic rights are overtly discussed in *Triffids*, thus making them obvious also in the adaptation, *28 Days Later*. On the most obvious level, the variety of communities in *Triffids*, Christian, military, subsistent, or socialist, thrive or fail contingent upon the degree to which they protect democratic rights. The protection of these rights correlates to a vision of history based on Benjamin’s angel of history, which stands amidst the turmoil of the past to piece together an authentic yet non-monumental version of history that protects human rights. This vision of history also appears in *London Fields* through the collective protection of childhood innocence. In *Triffids*, Masen’s and Josella’s union epitomizes this role of history. Masen explains their first intimate connection: “And we danced, on the brink of an unknown future, to an echo from a vanished past” (105). The echo means that the past is still haunting them, but that their union, an embodiment of the protection of love and collective agency, can

bring them into the future. This future eventually leads them to the socialist community on the Isle of Wight, the ultimate triumph of natural collectivity.

Orwell configures the natural as both a literal and imagined space of respite for the protagonist Winston Smith. As Winston begins to write in his journal and to choose other behavior that betrays the Party, he longingly recalls his family and a natural landscape that explains his feelings for his family, or more precisely as he explains, “a time when there were still privacy, love, and friendship, and when the members of a family stood by one another without needing to know the reason” (28). For Winston, authentic emotion is derived from the family, but under the Party these emotions would only lead to unbearable suffering, which for Winston is symbolized by the “large eyes of his mother and sister, looking up at him through the green water, hundreds of fathoms down and still sinking” (29). The acute stare of the only people who have truly loved Winston haunts his memory because of the suffering derived from their constant process of drowning, a feeling that Winston likewise equates with living under Party control. Because Winston has begun a process of rebellion, he now has a memory of a natural space where his family once experienced “privacy, love, and friendship.” He explains his dream: “Suddenly he was standing on short springy turf, on a summer evening when the slanting rays of the sun gilded the ground. The landscape that he was looking at recurred so often in his dreams that he was never fully certain whether or not he had seen it in the real world. In his waking thoughts he called it the Golden Country” (29). This reappearing image in Winston’s dreams is his oneiric house.<sup>2</sup> When it manifests in his

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<sup>2</sup> The oneiric house is Gaston Bachelard’s label of the atavistic dream world, or as he explains, “a house that comes forth from the earth, that lives rooted in its black earth” (111).

thoughts, moving from unconscious dream to conscious reflections, his name for it “Golden Country” reveals the value that Winston grants to the power of this memory. His initial description of the turf and the summer light does not have any specificity but represents absolute pleasure through its soothing connotations. As he continues relating this dream turned memory, he becomes more precise with his description:

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

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

The redemptive power of the natural indicated by the water and the correlation between the natural and the feminine becomes synonymous with rebellion as Winston’s experiences continue. This initial natural memory concludes with a dark haired girl approaching him and tearing off her clothes (29). Winston does not respond with arousal,

instead his desire is channeled toward rebellion. He explains his interpretation of her action: "With its grace and carelessness it seemed to annihilate a whole culture, a whole system of thought, as though Big Brother and the Party and the Thought Police could all be swept into nothingness by a single splendid movement of the arm" (29). The culture of violence and oppression characterized by the Party becomes replaced in Winston's memory by authentic emotional and natural responses. When Winston and Julia first consummate their relationship, it must occur within the space of Winston's oneiric home. Julia arranges the meeting, but Winston recognizes the similarity to his memory. He describes the exact footpath, molehill, trees and stream, using the same language (102-3). The pure emotional bliss that Winston recognizes in this natural space derives from the layers of authentic relationships, from his mother to sister and now to Julia, that the space provides him. For Winston, again like Benjamin's angel, history is defined by the ability to withstand catastrophe, which in this case means to maintain loving relationships by understanding their past and then using this understanding to withstand the terror of the present and thus emphasize the necessity of authentic community for the future. But he explains that under the Party, "History has stopped. Nothing exists except an endless present in which the Party is always right" (128). The oneiric space contradicts the historical understanding allowed by the Party. Because his conception of history has expanded beyond the party definition, Winston starts proclaiming of himself and Julia or anyone living under Party rules, "We are the dead" (113, 145). Even though Winston and Julia cannot maintain the authentic relationship protected by their natural environment, they prove, much like Sam and Nicola in *London Fields*, a momentary

community can reveal the oppressive politics of the mainstream and image alternative social formations that suggest ways to resist oppressive realities.

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



### **J.G. Ballard's Buildings and Neighborhoods**

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

In Ballard's oeuvre the two important themes of history and of identity are often reduced to theoretical phrases like hyperreality because of Jean Baudrillard. Perhaps as synonymous to Ballard as disaster, Jean Baudrillard brought Ballard into the postmodernism debate in 1976. In Baudrillard's definition of the three stages of simulacra, natural, productive, and simulation, he concludes that Ballard belongs to the last order because novels like *Crash* epitomize hyperreality and hyper-functionality.

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

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

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<sup>3</sup> I am talking specifically of the responses to Baudrillard published in *Science-Fiction Studies* 18.3 (1991).

inner space instead of outer space (“Inner” 197), Ruddick attempts to understand Ballard’s conception of inner space, based on psychoanalytical theory, as the unconscious. Ruddick’s criticism turns to Ballard for guidance, a method I also celebrate, but instead of Ruddick’s psychoanalytic method, I want to understand inner space as spatiality and narrative space. Since Ballard connects inner space to Earth, the biological, and “temporal perspectives of the personality” (“Inner” 198), understanding inner space requires looking at the relationship between technological spaces and natural spaces, which thus critiques the effects and influences of the environment on people.

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

culminating in the 1970s when the simultaneous rise of inflation and unemployment led to a period popularly known as ‘stagflation,’ a situation that fostered the monetarist and consensus policies of Thatcher.

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

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<sup>4</sup>Koolhaas’s attempt to imagine new social formations necessitates that the “true Skyscraper,” as he calls it, may not exist, but obviously the real spaces of these buildings are always ripe for the potential of

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

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

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delirious revolution. While developing the delirious logic of high-rise space, Koolhaas theorizes “the Skyscraper’s conquest by other forms of culture” (87) by explaining the feuding simultaneity between the inside and outside of the Skyscraper. He explains, “Through volume alone, life inside the Skyscraper is involved in a hostile relationship with life outside: the lobby competes with the street, presenting a linear display of the building’s pretensions and seductions, marked by those frequent points of ascent—the elevators—that will transport the visitor even further into the building’s subjectivity” (88). Koolhaas’s charged language, including words such as *hostile*, *competes*, and *seductions*, indicates that his conception of the feud is not only of interest to architectural design and designers, but instead highlights for “other forms of culture” how the Skyscraper profoundly influence our understanding of the world.

time. As the journey to understand this inner time progresses through the battle over the occupation of desirable spaces within the building, fewer and fewer people select to leave the building because they base their understanding on the closure and chaos of the building, replicating the stagnation characteristic of the novel's moment. The erasure of historic specificity in favor of a new conception of inner time indicates the need to revise the monumental ideal of historical agency, but as my reading will show, the call to rethink time does not mean that the characters will understand this need in productive ways.

Ballard proposes that the reinvention of a new sense of time within the building can free the inhabitants from the oppression of historical time, including the stagnation of their current moment, but he recognizes that this reinvention does not automatically occur simply by closing the space from the real space. Ballard relates the ability to imagine a new conception of time, using language similar to Koolhaas, by explaining the feud between high-rise and city. The narrator relates the assessment of Dr. Robert Laing, one of the three male protagonists, that in the building "the dimensions of his life were space, light and the pleasures of a subtle kind of anonymity . . . In effect, the apartment block was a small vertical city, its two thousand inhabitants boxed up into the sky. The tenants corporately owned the building, which they administered themselves through a resident manager and his staff" (9). The sense of anonymity that Laing adores represents an acceptance of the isolation forced by the verticality of the habitation. The phrase "boxed up into the sky" indicates an ungrounded, ubiquitous spatial dynamic to life within this structure and the imagination of a city within the real city of London, inevitably challenging the allegiance of the inhabitants. With the closing off of the structure from

the outside world, the seemingly homogeneous group of apartment owners (grouped by the act of bourgeois ownership) fractures into a hierarchical spatial striation. The text follows a protagonist from each level: Richard Wilder the documentary film maker and father from the lowest levels, Laing the quintessential professional from the middle level, and Royal the building designer and upper-class poster boy from the penthouse. The three social classes eventually fracture into small collective clans, overtaking the electrical system, garbage disposal, and most importantly the elevators and other passageways through the building. This class confrontation ultimately leads to apocalypse as “[t]he old social sub-divisions, based on power, capital, and self-interest” (62) become apparent to the oppressed people of the lower levels. The overthrow of class structure leaves the three male protagonists each attempting to secure or protect authority, particularly through the very logic of power that created the old social structures. The shift in narrative perspectives between Laing, Wilder, and Royal permits the reader to see different paths to the same closed and isolated conclusion, thus revealing the futility of the old logic.

The feud develops emotionally and technologically, but both emphasize the need to imagine new social organizations. The occasion for the start of the conflict between the lower-level parents and the upper-level dog owners, the drowning of one of the stately dogs by Wilder, emphasizes the continual evaluation of the value of life within the high-rise. On an emotional level, Wilder represents the absolute destruction of emotion because of his ability to both kill the animal and abandon his family. Wilder’s transformation from an intelligent, hardworking cultural critic and artist into an intensely individualistic and hedonistic brute requires readers to identify that the building actually

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

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



information, and the war paint on Wilder's naked chest, revealing his primitive inner psyche, represent the decline and destruction of the old power logic because of the breakdown of the technological<sup>5</sup>.

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

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

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

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

As each of the male protagonists retreats to a phallogocentric understanding, Laing becoming obsessive of having weak women to protect and Wilder presenting himself not

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

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

narrative. 'New Jerusalem' celebrates the grandeur of English history and, through its Blakeian connotation, prophesizes a return to this historical ideal. The idea of 'new Jerusalem' directly conflicts with the alienated and isolated "new kind of twentieth-century life" (42) accepted by the passive residents of the building. This passive life celebrates the stagnation that conceives of a present without a past or a future and does not threaten the repetition of middle-class life, the monotony of leaving the building every day for a career that comes to define the individual. In conflict with the monotonous present of the status quo, Ballard does suggest a future formation of community beyond the reach of the technological alienation of the building's spaces.

In opposition to the developing misogynist logic of the male protagonist, Ballard envisions a female collective that emphasizes protection and development based on the redemptive power of the natural. The typical critical reading of this ending follows the same logic ridiculed within the novel through the pathetic end of each male protagonist. Epitomizing this faulty reading, Robert Caserio argues, "This denouement could suggest a misogynistic fantasy of women's role in any new social order—but like all other sociohistorical considerations in the novel, this one is ambiguously endorsed and ridiculed" (304). Caserio's reading takes at face value the manipulative, patriarchal narratives provided by Wilder and Royal. Since each of these protagonists descends deeper and deeper into mental and physical despair, Wilder even views killing Royal as a "game" (196), their misogynistic fantasy should not be accepted as the only view. Caserio's reading enacts a similar violence to the text as Royal's sexual games against his wife and Wilder's rape, both epitomizing the misogynistic fantasy that Caserio wrongly

situates within the female collective<sup>6</sup>. The truly productive element of the female, caregiver collective is that it combines women of each social division through maternal acts and collective care. As the most ambiguous factor of this collective is an explanation of how they came together, it is easy to dismiss them as fantasy, but such a reading does not acknowledge the narrative perspective of the novel. As the building has been manipulating the male protagonists, the readers only see the women's journey through the eyes of the men. Instead, we must read the women through their own logic based on the little evidence that the men do relate.

The masculine desire to rise through the high-rise represents the intensely hierarchical class structure created by the power logic of capitalism, but the feminine idea of mobility, marked as pathological by the men, is based on a logic of nomadism and circuitous social structure. My understanding of Ballard's feminist imagining of community develops from Meaghan Morris's "cramped space," which is an overtly feminist understanding of Deleuze and Guattari's notion of minor literature. She explains "cramped space" as "highly deterritorialized" and "political" (XVIII) and may be more useful for feminist analysis than minor because "the poverty of resources in the 'cramped space' of the minor means that each individual intrigue connects immediately to politics, and that the individual matters intensely ( . . . ) So everything has collective value; there is no room for a 'master' enunciation to develop that is separate from the collective" (XVIII). Morris's notion of individuality highlights an important connection to the collective because the individual is only fully realized once he or she announces the

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

collective enunciation and thus leaves behind the selfishly isolated master narrative of power. In Ballard's novel the master enunciation is the patriarchal battle for space, which the women extinguish through their journey towards new beginnings within the pastoral landscape of the sculpture garden.

We have already established that the masculine journey through the building is based on violence and power, but the feminine journey is based on protection and knowledge. The masculine perspective of the three main protagonists makes this conclusion difficult to recognize, but the language of the narrator, representing the omniscience of the building, indicates the reading I am suggesting. Early in the feud over the elevators, Laing encounters a young woman, a masseuse, who has mastered the mobility of the elevators. The narrator's explanation of this encounter highlights the difference between Laing's perspective and the female perspective. The narrator explains, "Laing immediately recognized her as one of the 'vagrants,' of whom there were many in the high-rise, bored apartment-bound housewives and stay-at-home adult daughters who spent a large part of their time riding the elevators and wandering the long corridors of the vast building, migrating endlessly in search of change or excitement" (38). Laing's knowledge is based on the old power logic, and thus he understands the women based on their worth within that power. They do not embody the work and ingenuity that indicates success under his logic. To him they are marked by idleness and boredom, worthless to the economy of power because they are housewives relegated to the domestic realm. He later comments that another woman, Eleanor Powell, also rides "the elevators up and down in a fuddled attempt to find her way out of the building" (47). In his conception, the elevators are utilitarian, so he views the woman's rides as illogical

because he does not understand the philosophical journey that the elevators provide for the women. Believing in a similar logic, Wilder dislikes Helen's "lack of spirit" and characteristic "passivity" (56). For Wilder, Helen's lack of ambition is justification to leave her and their sons when he endeavors to rise in the building. The narrator uses language to establish that the masculine perspective is not the only one in the building. The quotation marks around 'vagrant' indicate the narrator's effort to attach this diminutive label to Laing, thus distancing the narrative from Laing's conclusions. The phrase 'migrating endlessly' has a less clear attribution. In Laing's view the phrase embodies the futility and failure of the women within the old power logic, but in terms of the narrator's attempt to imagine new social formation based on mobility, the phrase summarizes a new logic.

The nomadic movement of women like the masseuse and Eleanor Powell refutes the stagnated masculine perspective of the three protagonists because, although it can be viewed as endless, it is really only endless temporally. The constant movement through the elevators and the building is the women working to establish a collective for the future. Thus, it is endless in the sense that its accomplishments are not immediately achieved like the narrow agenda of Wilder's rise to the top of the building. The female agenda is pushed into the background by the narrative focus on the men. For example, during Wilder's first journey away from his family and the lower levels, he encounters the young masseuse in the elevator. To him she appears "pallid and undernourished" (76), a statement of the worth that he sees in her similar to Laing's assessment of her vagrancy. The narrator's analogical statement of her reaction to him refers to both the masculine and feminine logics. According to the narrator, "she watched Wilder with

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

In opposition to the violence that characterizes the masculine experience within the high-rise, the narrator offers the more philosophical understanding and journey of the women. The narrator explains Mrs. Steele’s concept of the building:



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

Mrs. Steele presents the anthropomorphic perspective of the building. Unlike Wilder and Royal who view the building as a mass of concrete weighing down upon them, characteristic of their self-centered attitudes, Mrs. Steele comprehends the omniscient perspective of the building, proving that the women's ability to move throughout the building without opposition is due to their philosophical connection to it. The biological analogies that she explains concerning the elevators, the residents, and the lights indicate that a theoretical understanding of the spaces' delirious potential<sup>7</sup> aids in the establishment of the feminine collective. As Mrs. Steele's view is related to the reader through Laing's presence in their apartment, the obvious explanation of the biological language is simply to attribute it to Laing since he is a medical doctor. That reading does not hold up because of the non-clinical biological language, especially pistons, and also because immediately after this passage, Laing reveals his misunderstanding of Eleanor Powell's elevator journeys. Further emphasizing that the philosophical understanding of the building belongs to the women, Helen explains to Wilder, "I think they only exist inside my head" (53), referring to the swimming pool and the most coveted part of the building, the roof garden, also called the sculpture garden. The garden becomes the redemptive home of the female collective. As the narrative does not provide readers access to Helen's reason for her journey into this space, we are left to assume that her

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

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

Even as the female collective grows and gains agency, the men still do not comprehend its importance. Royal believes that Mrs. Wilder lives in the penthouse apartments because she is “a valuable hostage” (158) against Wilder and that she can earn her keep by working as a house servant. He once again reveals that women are only understood on economic terms. Royal explains that she “had regained her strength and self-confidence” (158), which in his terms means a more valuable servant. He does not realize that this strength and self-confidence, like the excitement she feels after she joins forces with two young women from the 7<sup>th</sup> floor to reopen the classes for the children (137), derives from the collective agency of the women. The women are able to communicate in a new language, which the men do not understand. Royal notices the change in communication because Helen “spoke in a flat voice unlike the animated tone she used with Anne and the other women” (159). Dr. Pangbourne, Royal’s upper-class rival, believes that he controls the women by giving them a primitive language based on birth-cries. What he does not realize is that the women, already gaining collective agency through communication, use their biological connection to the building to transform this naturally feminine language into their own, rebelling against his patriarchal control. The women who do not become a part of the garden collective are left like Eleanor Powell, “wandering about the corridors in a vacant way as if she had lost the key to her mind” (114). Or else the women remain submissive to the patriarchal power like the young woman, “content to have Wilder’s strong arm around her shoulders” (188). These

women are blocked from their natural place with the others and thus remain oppressed under the old logic.

The ending reveals the masculine and feminine responses to the oppression caused by the violent power of the old logic. Wilder's killing of Royal is the stereotypical masculine response to the violent high-rise space because Royal embodies the elitism and social isolation that make the building possible. The female collective of caregivers similarly responds to the violent subjectivity of women under the old logic. The women's final location in the sculpture garden is essential for their agency. The garden had previously served as Royal's sanctuary, blocking all others from it because nobody equaled his social position. The narrator explains, "[t]he doors, chained for so long to exclude them, were now wide open" (197). Royal represents the chains that have previously contained the lower classes. Now that they have access, the space becomes idyllic, "freshly painted" and "vibrant with light" (197). This garden serves to nurture the innocence of the children, the embodiment of a future that escapes the stagnated twentieth-century life epitomized by the masculine experience in the building. The women can never fully realize the historical revisionist aim of their garden collective because they are too influenced by the old logic. They still wear evening gowns and aprons, patriarchal symbols. The narrator explains the importance of their dress: "They seemed to belong to another century and another landscape, except for their sunglasses, whose dark shades stood out against the blood-notched concrete of the roof-terrace" (198). While they may seem to represent a return to nineteenth century values of work and gender, their anachronistic sunglasses indicate a coolness that permits them to withstand the chaos of their moment. They are figures like Benjamin's angel of history, protecting

the natural innocence of youth, nurturing youth's redemptive possibility, and aiding the growth of a future egalitarian society. Their primitiveness is a means to protect the children and thus the potential for a future. They control a fire and carry knives, showing that they absolutely refuse the passivity expected of them under the old logic. They will no longer serve the men, but they will nurture them, if like Wilder, they will become one of their children. Wilder always had a strain in his personality that desired to be looked after like a child by women, including his wife. When Wilder first approaches the women, the narrator says, "The circle of women drew closer" (198). The circular formation of the women highlights the collective and egalitarian formation of the women since none occupies a position of authority in this formation. The circuitousness of their society and their journey through the building reemphasizes the important understanding of the anthropomorphic building that they have been providing to readers. When Wilder calls them his "new mothers," he shows his willingness to become one of their innocent children. As a child, he can no longer use the women as sexual objects, but instead must submit to their logic. Wilder's inclusion into the group emphasizes that this social formation presents a feminist logic that directly opposes the master narrative. Ballard does not indicate if the feminist logic will succeed or fail; he simply offers their ideals as a redemptive way to understand history and inner space. The novel's conclusion resorts back to the 'master' narrative of Laing, thus explaining that until this late twentieth-century space can come to terms with collectivity, the disaster will replicate and spread elsewhere.

The narrator ends by telling how the revolution has spread to an adjacent high-rise; through Laing's evaluation, the narrator reveals, "Laing watched them contentedly,

ready to welcome them to their new world order” (204). The conception of this “new world order” supports Wagar’s argument that “in Ballard’s transvaluation of the traditional Western wisdom, even dystopias are utopian” (54). The ideas apocalypse and dystopia connect to Frederic Jameson’s discussions of these very concepts and also his reading of Ballard’s understanding of the historical and the present. He argues that apocalypse “and its weaker embodiments in the various dystopias . . . are seemingly historical visions—if not of the very end of history—that have in fact more modest expository functions as ways of articulating a social structure in full evolution” (“The Use of Apocalypse” 38). As Ballard’s careful explication of the spaces of the metropolis continues throughout his fiction, obviously he views these spaces and their effects as a changing structure and attempts to understand the evolution through a variety of revolutions.

By looking briefly at *Millennium People* (2003), we will see how Ballard addresses the cultural ideals of the moment in order to explore how a conception of history influence the understanding and existence of space. The conception of millennium has two poles for the novel. On one side it represents the apocalyptic and the revelatory as they pertain to Ballard’s project, but it also refers to the nostalgic Millennium Project conceived by the Blair government, particularly because the most visible icon of the Project, the Millennium Wheel, also known as the London Eye, a carnival ride that supposedly provides the guest with a transcendent perspective of the metropolis, plays a pivotal role in the narrative. The centrality of this space indicates that while the middle class revolution in Chelsea Marine, a gated-community<sup>8</sup>, is on the

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<sup>8</sup> The gated community is the embodiment of the New Urbanist movement, which Andrew Ross defines as “mixed-housing, mixed-use, walkable town with small lots, interconnected streets, and an identifiable

surface a revolt against the pacification of the middle class by the responsibility to property taxes, school fees, maintenance charges, parking fines, and the institutions of culture that instill social responsibility and make for docile citizens, the actual revolution that Ballard calls for is a more complete, less carnivalesque, notion of the historical present.

The historical passivity of the Millennium Project assumes that the Millennium Wheel provides the transcendence needed in a meaningless world. The narrator, a psychologist named David Markham provides the running commentary on the status of ideas in the twenty-first century. He joins with a group of revolutionaries, Kay Churchill who leads the dissatisfied homeowners in their plight against the management company, tourism, and the film industry and Richard Gould who carries out so-called “meaningless violence” by bombing Heathrow and the Tate Modern and killing a television star; for Gould only the meaningless could provide meaning in a meaningless world; Gould is the spokesperson for Baudrillard. Markham is the foil to Gould’s philosophy, looking for meaning through relationships with the other. Before Markham can realize his role as foil, he has to go through a philosophical journey with Gould. After hearing the news of the Tate bombing, David comments, “The city was a vast and stationary carousel, forever boarded by millions of would-be passengers who took their seats, waited and then dismounted. I thought of the bomb cutting through another temple of enlightenment,

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center and edge” (73). Ross’s analysis develops from his experiences living in the infamous planned community at Disney World, Celebration. While the cultural and historical specificity of Celebration does not relate to Chelsea Marina, the historical background for the development of such New Urbanist communities does. Ross explains that these communities emerge out of the blurring of lines between private and public. He explains that in the aftermath of the Cold War, “[m]ore and more of what has been public sector was being turned over to private and corporate interests” (311). As the threat of communism and nuclear annihilation dissipated with the end of the Cold War, the economic forces found a way to control the middle classes through privatization of urban space.

silencing the endless murmur of cafeteria conversations. Despite myself, I felt a surge of excitement and complicity” (159). David notices that the tourism and perspective promised by a spin on the Millennium Wheel is the commonplace position of the inhabitant of the postmodern city, a passive, undeveloped acceptance of a cultural understanding based on nostalgia and chatter. The attack on the National Film Theater leaves the Millennium Wheel carrousel covered with black soot, blocking this false transcendence and asking the revolutionaries to understand their positions without the aid or control of cultural and governmental influences. In addition, the attack on the Tate was meant for the Millennium Bridge, hoping to return the wobble that caused its repeated closure after its first opening and became a symbol of the failure of the Project. David’s admission of the uncertainty of perspective parallels Joseph Conrad’s anonymous frame narrator in *Heart of Darkness*. Reviewer John Gray notices the relationship between Ballard and Conrad, saying, “this mesmerising novel about a world on the brink of despair could be read as a Conradian fable of loss and dereliction set on the banks of the Thames” (Gray). Gray dismisses this relationship because he wrongly says that Ballard’s world “lacks the social structures that Conrad’s characters took for granted” (Gray). Gray gets at the root of Conrad and Ballard’s projects, which is an attempt to explain the inner workings of individuals and communities under the tumultuous conditions of modernity and postmodernity, respectively.

Overall, Ballard attempts to counteract the stagnated and nostalgic historical agenda of the moment of each text. For Ballard the crisis is not the middle class revolution of *High-Rise* and *Millennium People*, which at most may temporarily shut down the economy, but instead a society where the hyperreal provides the only

understanding of the individuals' relationship to the community. Reconsidering the Ballard-Baudrillard connection, Bradley Butterfield explains that both agree with Donna Haraway that to be human is to be part machine, but these technologies are controlled by multinational capitalism (74). He concludes, "In a world dominated by immeasurable simulacra despite the continued existence of the body, Ballard's and Baudrillard's aestheticism claims social relevance by demonstrating in guerrilla fashion interventions whereby one fiction is played against another as a means of challenging the darkest secrets and silent hopes of the social imaginary" (74). In *Millennium People* the fictions that play out against each other are Gould's dangers obsession with "meaningless acts" and Markham's questioning need for answers. Markham literally needs to know who was responsible for the death of his ex-wife, but through his immersion into Gould's world and the revolution within Chelsea Marina, Markham realizes that he needed to understand how the historical and political influence the technology of the body. Markham transitions from thinking of women as sexual objects and relating to men through their mutual sexual experiences with women to having compassion and connection with others. Like Markham, Wilder undergoes a similar transformation about the idea of power. Through both of these men, Ballard offers a new social imaginary based on collectivity, authenticity, and redemption.

### **Martin Amis's Millenarian Fears and Hopes**

Like *Millennium People*, Martin Amis's *London Fields* (1989) deals with shift from the twentieth to the twenty first century. In a 1995 interview with Graham Fuller, Martin Amis explains his interest in setting the novel on the precipice of the coming millennium. He says, "You do feel that history is approaching a climax and that all over the world one is seeing the classical symptoms of millenarian anxiety and fever:



fundamentalism, strange weather, et cetera. I think 1999 will be the year of people behaving strangely” (“The Prose”). The majority of Amis criticism responds to the strange behavior of postmodern narrative, questioning the status of authorial intention, accuracy, and control. While Amis certainly does address these metafictional topics and critics like Brian Finney, who analyzes Amis’s depiction of the sadistic aims and desires of writers and readers, and Peter Stokes, who explains how Amis’s postmodernism relates literary discourses and social discourses to problematize the power of the authorial voice, have successfully explicated how the games that Amis plays challenge narrative conventions, often there is not much attention given to the historical climax that Amis sees causing this strange behavior of writers, characters, and perhaps most importantly society. Instead of reading Amis as a stylist who includes some satirical elements, I wish to reverse the emphasis and read Amis as a satirist who uses style to reinforce his critique of the “strange behavior” of late twentieth century Britain, particularly the Thatcher Government’s destruction of the welfare state.

The obvious climatic historical events surrounding the novel are the end of the Thatcher government and the impending collapse of the Soviet Union, but the historical climax most notably haunting *London Fields* is the potential of a nuclear holocaust. As the themes in *Einstein’s Monsters*, *Time’s Arrow*, and *London Fields* show, Amis views himself and other writers of his generation as part of the nuclear age. Amis embraces his position within the nuclear age<sup>9</sup> and creates a nuclear rhetoric that goes beyond the Cold War terms of superpowers, armaments, disarmaments, and deterrence, a rhetoric he titles “Thinkability” in the introduction to *Einstein’s Monsters*. A nuclear apocalypse provides

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<sup>9</sup> In “Apocalyptic London in the Fiction of Martin Amis,” Magdalena Maczynska labels Amis’s relationship between nuclear crisis and the spaces of the city as Amis’s “insidious apocalypse.”

a potential destruction of narrative. In “No Apocalypse, Not Now,” Derrida explains that literature, which he labels as a stockpile, has always belonged to the nuclear epoche. Because of the possible and absolute destruction of the archive, Derrida argues we are forced to see literature’s “radical precariousness and the radical form of its historicity” (27). To get at this radicality, Derrida calls for “nuclear criticism” which goes to the limit through its self-destruction and bursting apart. In *London Fields*, Amis conducts an experiment in Derrida’s “nuclear criticism” by looking at the radical potential for narrative (the novel) to burst apart the controlling narratives of class and gender. The bursting apart occurs through the creation of a community that embraces the utopian destruction of hegemonic narratives within the lived environment of London. By setting *London Fields* in an imagined future, Amis focuses on the apocalyptic promise of revelation, reaching a higher state of existence and understanding, or in other words the absolute completion of narrative, which could be disaster or salvation, disaster leading to salvation, or salvation revealing the real cause of disaster. He creates a rhetorical space, named confusingly also London Fields, which by existing within the real London shows the inability for individuals to escape the spatial reality of class and state control. The rhetorical gesture supports James Diedrick’s claim that “at the allegorical level the novel is an apocalyptic jeremiad about the world’s decadence and exhaustion at the end of the century” (157). Following through on the complaint, the novel offers London Fields as the space that permits and necessitates the utopian possibility of the destruction of narratives based on hierarchical power. The novel’s title and the space described in the novel folds the pastoral simplicity of a pre-capitalist time onto the collapse of the welfare state and the disappearance of socialist sympathies, hoping to reveal the need for the

creation of a community that can burst apart the controlling class system. Through this community, Amis attempts to recoup the socialist goals destroyed by Thatcher's assault on the welfare state.

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

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

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

“Amis’ way of illustrating that the great forms of the past have been exhausted and need to be redeployed” (7). Dern’s focus on the periodization of form address one of the central questions of the novel—the ability for narrative to create meaning out of chaos and use this materiality to accomplish “nuclear criticism.” Frederick Holmes explains Amis’s dissatisfaction with the construction of culture; he says, “In the *fin de siècle* climate of Amis’s London (which seems as much a satiric comment on present day London as an admonitory prophecy of its future), the only available narrative for constructing the self and interacting socially are either debased and shallow or hopelessly anachronistic. They are the product of mass consumerist culture ( . . . )” (55). As Holmes indicates, Amis critiques how capitalism has effected the social relationships essential for the understanding of identity and collectivity. Since Amis sees the spectacle of consumerist culture altering the social fabric, instead of reading each character as representing a literary form, we should look at how each epitomizes the three stages of capitalism that Frederic Jameson defines through his spatial analysis of culture<sup>11</sup>.

The correlation between the stages of capitalism and the characters in the novel emphasizes London Fields as a critique of hierarchical economics. The grid indicative of market capitalism concentrates power in a central location, which epitomizes Guy who “still had all the money, and all the strength” (464) according to Samson. Guy’s home,

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

Lansdowne Crescent, represents the power of wealth and the history of bourgeois rule. Guy controls the space of the City, the financial district of London, which is represented as “£1000 suits and platinum wrist-watches and sported uranium credit cards” (91). The true testament to Guy’s power and the space of the City is that he never actually has to work; a grid keeps everything in order for him even if he is oblivious to the organization. His wealth propagates the hierarchical structure. As the opposite to Guy, Keith’s failures and closed worldview epitomize the second stage. His Council flat, Windsor House, is his specific tiny corner, and his fixed-camera view is mediated by popular television. His understanding of self derives from an understanding of English nationality as the stereotype of pub culture, darts, and football. Samson explains Keith’s Englishness through Keith’s pride “to represent his country in an England shirt” (67) and Keith’s view of a football match through clichés (97-98). Keith does not conceptualize his limitations and reliance on stereotype and cliché because he does not have the ability to place himself within the narrative of Empire. Raymond Williams coins the term ‘knowable communities’ (165) to label the difficulty of comprehending community during the rise of industrial capitalism and the expanse of the metropolis. Williams sees the circulation of narratives as essential to the creation of a community since the face-to-face is no longer possible. The circulation of narrative occurs explicitly in *London Fields* as each character shares their writing with Samson and thus with the readers, but circulation also implicitly shows how Amis merges the different spaces of capitalism, mostly within the Black Cross, to highlight the limitations placed on individuals by the organization of capitalism. For example, as Guy merges into Keith’s space, through the pub, the darts, and the women, Guy maintains the power granted by his capital, but he encounters

alienation like Keith because he cannot comprehend his position, as epitomized by his inability to understand the historical allusion of Enola Gay and Little Boy; in other words, he does not know the narrative and thus does not have access to the community.

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

The space of London that Samson and Nicola occupy is not a place on the actual map; their space is London Fields, which represents the totality of the imagining of London and of the narratives of our historical moment. London Fields is living narrative,

“communal fantasy and sorrow” (391), technological discovery and catastrophe, pastoral innocence, and utopia simultaneously. The utopian achievements of the space, London Fields, epitomizes Jameson’s description of utopia as it emerges from Ursula Le Guinn’s writing<sup>12</sup>. Jameson’s description overcomes the naivety of a utopia free from disaster, but instead looks at the potential for interpersonal relationships when freed from the economic, political, and social. Gavin Keulks explains a similar relationship with Amis’s use of feminist rhetoric. He says, “In later works such as *Einstein’s Monsters* and *London Fields*, for instance, feminist rhetoric is couched in the language of nuclear war, which threatens to obliterate authentic emotive relationships” (182). Samson creates London Fields as the space that permits these interpersonal relationships to thrive. Samson’s naming of London Fields takes into account the violence and destruction of history; London Fields was the place where Samson’s father worked on “High Explosives Research” (182) and the place where Samson was exposed to the radiation that now slowly kills him. As we are all actually slowly dying, the novel questions why we obsess over the sins of the past. Samson responds to the question of inheritance, freeing London Fields from this historical origin by transforming it into a utopian space. He explains, “If I shut my eyes or even if I keep them open I can see the parkland and the sloped bank of the railway line. The foliage is tropical and innocuous, the sky is crystalline and innocuous. In fact the entire vista has a kiddie-book feel. (. . .) It is all outside history” (323). London Fields is a pastoral playground that protects and preserves childhood innocence; Nicola and Sam witness the children playing with boats in London fields (95),

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

and Sam remembers playing with his now dead brother, David. *London Fields* has the redemptive power to absorb disaster, the Crisis or Sam's radiation poisoning, and return to a state of innocence.

*London Fields* presents love, Amis' figure of the interpersonal relationship, as the only way to survive the end of the twentieth century. With innocence and love preserved, the predators who thrive off of the corrupted narratives of capitalist accumulation and sexual perversity no longer have the materials to succeed. Amis figures love as the narrative that can overcome class conflict, destroying the uneven development of capital accumulation, and providing the possibility of a truly working welfare state, namely through Kim Talent, Keith's innocent baby daughter. For this welfare state to work, all must take responsibility for the preservation of innocence by realizing the self through the community, not through the libidinal desires of consumerism and individual preservation and accomplishment. Interestingly, Amis suggests a similar hope in *The Information* through Marco, the only innocent character who thus resists the corrupted popular assumptions about information. Amis's continual return to these narratives of progress through the innocent reinforces my argument that his work needs to be read as social satire.

In *London Fields*, the preservation of innocence needs to be the work of community, which can confront hegemony and permit love, or actual concern for the other, to create change. The community arises pragmatically from the Black Cross, the place where all four characters, representing the four points of the cross, meet, mingle, and collaborate. The Black Cross makes explicit the connection between the novel and the biblical Apocalypse through the reference to Christian iconography, but it also



merges the scientific black hole with the Apocalypse. As Hope is Guy's wife and Faith is the First Lady, we need to look outside of religion for salvation from the historical determinism that prevents progress; we need to look to community. The Black Cross, as the space of community within both London and London Fields, represents the need to overthrow the class system in order to protect and fulfill the individual, a goal directly opposed to Thatcher's ideology of individual responsibility. Amis's critique alludes to Karl Marx's idea of community as he presents it in *The German Ideology*. In the community of the Black Cross, all characters become "anachronistic kinds of character[s]" (134), like Samson labels Keith. In other words, they escape the spatial realities of the divisions of labor that limit them, suggesting alternative narratives and alternative communities that burst apart the dominant narrative of alienation. For example, Guy experiences a version of love and desire outside of the narrative of marriage that demanded he marry to enhance his power and wealth. Keith experiences a version of love through the respect and support given to him by the others, but especially Nicola who provides him with knowledge that permits him entrance to the knowable. The problem though for all of these characters is that they cannot escape determinism. Samson and Nicola are already "the dead" throughout the novel. Their deaths at the literal end of the novel emphasizes the teleological requirements of hierarchical narratives; as Samson represents the global and Nicola the century, both of which will come to an end, neither is outside history nor outside of the determinisms that block utopia.

Understanding Samson and Nicola as "the dead" helps explain the responsibility of the community. We have already seen the importance of love, and Samson explains

that “[t]he act of love takes place in a community of death” (282). Samson makes clear that we must understand death to fully understand this community of love. On one level death means Jameson’s sense of the end as it dominates the postmodern. Samson explains that Nicola sees this sense of the end dominating her time, remember that she represents the century, and thus she finds community in the narratives of the end.

Samson says:

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

Amis satirizes the postmodern obsession with this sense of the end; the absence of Roland Barthes’ “Death of the Author” from the list proves that Amis’s continual assertion of the authorial presence, through himself as character, as ghost, or as puppetmaster<sup>13</sup> is a critique of the obsessive adherence to these narratives. Instead of accepting the sense of the end, Amis looks at how it creates community. Nicola finds comfort in existing simultaneously with these metaarratives. Whenever Samson identifies the dead, he does so as a collective grouping of himself and Nicola—“We’re the dead” (260, 391). In one passage he repeats the phrase three times (391). These reiterations establish that with each utterance, it takes on new meanings. Samson’s and Nicola’s literal manifestation as the dead counteracts the uncritical acceptance of the

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<sup>13</sup> In *Money*, Martin Amis the character meets and influences the everyman protagonist John Self. In *The Information*, a narrative voice labeled as M.A. and having biographical features that identify Martin Amis, appears intermittently. Also, Amis can be rearranged as I Sam, the narrator of *London Fields*.

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

As we have already established that the characters reveal the historical and spatial development of capitalism, it makes sense to look at the association of the dead in Marx. In *Capital*, Marx explains, “Capital is dead labour, that, vampire-like, only lives by sucking living labour, and lives the more, the more labour it sucks. The time during which the labourer works, is the time during which the capitalist consumes the labour power he has purchased of him” (362-3). Samson repeatedly refers to himself as a vampire; he says, “I’m like a vampire. I can’t enter unless I’m asked in over the threshold. Once there, though, I stick around” (42). His identification bares more similarity to Marx than the mere parallels in the wording *vampire-like* and *like a vampire*. Samson and Nicola literally suck the evils out of the future for the community of love. Their deaths end the conservative narratives of the postmodern sense of the end, suggesting a bursting apart of all conservative, controlling narratives by the community of love that has resulted from such sacrifice and labor. Their deaths do not guarantee that such a community or future will materialize, but their deaths reveal its possibility. Kenneth Asher reaches a similar conclusion through his Lawrentian reading of *London Fields*. He argues, “Nicola’s death becomes a matter of cosmic readjustment, the order of things being set right. (. . .) At the most abstract level Nicola’s elimination is a necessary condition of Kim’s survival” (21). Asher rightly identifies the manifestation of this loving, innocent future in Kim Talent. Through the relationship between the dead, Nicola and Samson, and Kim, we see Marx’s famous understanding of history: “The tradition of the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living”

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

Kim Talent, Keith's innocent daughter, suggests the possibility for a future outside of the corrupted narratives haunting the rest of the novel. Samson poses the question: "Now I know the British Empire isn't in the shape it once was. But you wonder: what will the *babies'* babies look like?" (283). The obvious answer is Marmaduke, the hyperactive, monstrous child of Guy and Hope. He is the consumer *par excellence*, destroying all in his path in order to complete his consumption. But by merely asking about the future, Samson indicates hope for an alternative; he repeatedly says "I must do something for the child" (120), referring to Kim. Samson sees Kim as an exemplar of Walter Benjamin's angel of history. Samson directly references the messianic quality of his death (*London Fields* 182), much like the angel who will "awaken the dead" (Benjamin 257). As we have established that his death is the revelatory act, this parallel seems warranted. Further supporting this connection with Benjamin's angel, storms, similar to those threatening the angel, literally threaten throughout the novel, at one point killing "nineteen people, and thirty-three million trees" (43). The storm for Benjamin is the essence of his philosophy of history. He says, "This storm irresistibly propels him [the angel] into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress" (258).

Malcolm Bull explains the historical conception epitomized by the angel:

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

Through *Kim*, London Fields makes the historical spaces of capitalism explained through the other characters reach its explosion. The novel ends right at this moment, leaving only traces of what may result. This novel is not about saving Kim, but instead proposing how to save all through her model.

The storm, or danger, that most threatens Kim is the inheritance of abuse, passed from the world to Keith, from Keith to Kath and finally from Kath to innocent Kim. In *Kim*, Samson proposes the monumental figure, like the angel of history, who may withstand the eschatological narratives of history, to show the need for a revolutionary, apocalyptic history. Kim is still at the stage where she will not remember the historical narrative and instead could have access to the narrative of progress and change. Because of her lack of consciousness, she is protected, but also she has no ability or knowledge of her role. Samson locates the responsibility for protecting Kim in the community, and thus sees his narrative as a warning of what will happen when and if innocence disappears. Discussing the emergence of science fiction themes in Amis's work, David Moyle concludes that Amis took up the project "because he had to, because it suddenly seemed necessary to break earth-bound rules in order to express adequately his perception of the world: a world in which horror has moved beyond the black hole, but a world in which salvation—as end, a new beginning—is up to us, only us" (315). Moyle sees a promise of salvation similar to my conclusions. Thus, when Samson says to Mark Asprey in his suicide note, "Be my literary executor: throw everything out" (468), he does not want, as the most obvious connotation would suggest, his work to be trashed, that would be an end like the metanarratives he has so completely critiqued. Instead, he wishes for the less obvious meaning of his narrative spreading and creating knowable

communities that can help the angel resist the debris and follow the storm forward. He leaves the choice to Asprey because the understanding of the second meaning of his wish proves that his end has accomplished the historical revolution necessary.

### **From Disaster to Community only *28 Days Later***

In the introduction to the collection *British Horror Cinema*, Steve Chibnall and Julian Petley lament both the status of the horror genre in Britain and the academic critical attention paid to the genre. They hope for a horror film that can set off a genre cycle like Guy Ritchie's *Lock, Stock, and Two Smoking Barrels* did for the crime film (8). Ritchie's film earned critical attention and commercial success because it addresses issues of masculinity, violence, class, and family by looking comically at the status of Englishness in a post-Thatcher Britain. Ritchie's film is as much about the high jinks of inept criminals, the inclusion of rhyming slang into everyday language, and the system of power in the London underworld, as it is about the status of English cultural identity. Danny Boyle's *28 Days Later*, released in 2002, has the potential to garner attention for the horror genre like Ritchie's film did for the crime genre. *28 Days Later* looks at the aftermath of a biological disaster that has turned almost all of England into flesh eating, rage infected zombies. Both directors appeal aesthetically to the Cool Britannia idea of popular culture that appreciates energetic pop music, club culture, and a fashion sense all distinctly British, suggesting that commercial success for the British film industry requires packaging British culture in a way that can reaffirm an independent cultural identity for the British audience while still appealing to the foreign Anglophile. Both directors acknowledge the influences of their genre's forbearers, making *28 Days Later* a postmodern pastiche of several different novels, novelistic styles, horror films, and historical events. The film looks at how disaster, real and imagined, affects the individual

and the individual's relationship to others. The understanding of identity and community that results merges the imagery of disaster through allusions and references to other texts to prove that understanding must come from a critical examination of influence, change, and connectivity.

The postmodern character of *28 Days Later* combines derivative and adapted narratives and styles with a critical examination of Great Britain's place within the global circulation of economic and cultural capital. Screenwriter Alex Garland, best known for his novel *The Beach*, cites H.G. Wells, John Wyndham, particularly *The Day of the Triffids*, and J.G. Ballard's "disaster novels" as influences for his screenplay (Osmond 38, Macaulay 40). The most obvious filmic influences are George Romero's films. Finally, although the film was completed during the anthrax scare and distributed as the SARS outbreak and monkeypox created media hysteria, Boyle explains, "We actually had a lower level of paranoia in mind—a very British one—which was the continued scare over mad cow disease and the sudden foot-and-mouth outbreak. For months, the U.K. was full of fields of burning animals—biblical images of pyres on the horizon, smoke filling the sky" (qtd. in Lim 48). The British paranoia that sparked Boyle and Garland's interest on epidemic disaster in the film was a destruction of the British live stock industry, but beyond this economic destruction, mad cow, like dementia and Alzheimer, means that rational and reasonably healthy individuals can be mentally debilitated by exposure to contaminants encountered everyday. The film pays homage to the imagery of the burning animal carcasses in a chilling shot from the empty M602 of Manchester entirely reduced to blazing pyre and a smoke filled sky. An industrial center, Manchester's destruction marks the historical end of Britain's industrial empire, a factor that the government has

aggressively attempted to preserve. *28 Days Later* critiques the aggressive attempt to maintain an ideal of British statehood and identity by equating the institutions of control, especially the church and the military, with the rage that has infected society. The small community of survivors eventually abandons their individual class and racial categories as they attempt to find an “answer to infection,”<sup>14</sup> what the radio broadcast from the military encampment offers survivors. The answer is not a return to the system of inequality and hierarchical power advocated by the military community, but instead the protection of a cooperative community based on equality and concern for the other.

*28 Days Later* examines how rage and violence are dangerous and destructive forces in our world. The film begins with a montage of images of riots, public hangings, and protests, images systemic of the rage, particularly towards the other, which haunt our political reality. The images contain police, labeled in several different languages, violently and futilely attempting to contain the riotous masses, showing a culture of violence. These masses occupy developed cities and underdeveloped locations; they are of Middle Eastern, European, and Asian descent. As these images repeat, the viewer notices that they are broadcasted on several television sets for the chimpanzee viewer in a lab. The animal looks helplessly into the camera, victimized by the media rhetoric of fear that attempts to contain the masses. The animal is the helpless victim and witness to violence just like the film’s audience. The media images of violent rebellion are meant to control the fearful observer, replacing the spectacle of public execution, which as Foucault argues ensured the power of the sovereign. He explains, “Not only must the people know, they must see with their own eyes. Because they must be made to be

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<sup>14</sup> All film quotes are my transcriptions.



afraid; but also because they must be the witnesses, the guarantors, of the punishment, and because they must to a certain extent take part in it” (58). While the images of violence broadcasted are simulacra of violence, they represent both a threat to an ordered, civilized way of life, a stereotype of Englishness, and also the potential for violence within each of us that must be contained.

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

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

In *28 Days Later*, the lab, called the Cambridge Primate Research Center, functions allegorically. Much like Manchester represents the industrial center of England, Cambridge represents the intellectual history of England, reinforced by the password to enter the facility, "Think." The activists, who release the rage virus, encounter a scientist, a hackneyed horror stereotype of the mad scientist. The scientist justifies the experiments, proclaiming, "In order to cure, you must first understand." While the easily transferable virus is an extreme example of the dangers of biological weapons and misguided scientific experiments, the montage of images and the name rage indicate that violence is pathology already in us. The virus transforms anyone who comes into contact, the infected, into zombie-like creatures only concerned with devouring the flesh of the non-infected and spreading the infection, very easy since the infected vomit torrents of blood. The infected, characterized by red eyes and an infectious red skin condition, move very, very fast and twitch, which Boyle modeled after an epileptic fit; he also borrowed physical imagery from rabies and the Ebola virus (Osmond 39). The use of a variety of real pathological conditions suggests rage as the ultimate pathology for society.

The infected are a new breed of zombie, their speed representative of absolute efficiency. Their speed, uncommon for horror film zombies, and their efficiency directly relate to the etymology of the term from the African and Caribbean legends of witchcraft resurrecting corpses so that the zombies could be unconscious, willing laborers of the land. If the work of the infected is to spread infection, then they succeed, and in a global

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

The violence of destruction caused by the rage virus has subsided once Jim, who has been in a coma, awakens twenty-eight days after the initial infection. The first shot of this second beginning to the film focuses on Jim's eye, privileging his vision and perspective. The shot firmly establishes the connection to John Wyndham's postwar novel, *The Day of the Triffids*. Wyndham's novel likewise begins with the protagonist, Bill Masen, in the hospital recovering from temporary blindness caused by the sting of a

triffid. The strongest ideological connection ideologically between the novel and the updated film is that Boyle and Garland, like Wyndham, attempt to establish an ontology that responds to disaster. In *28 Days* as Jim wanders from the hospital and into the empty streets of London, his tourism reveals the film's distinctly British political and cultural responses. Jim's wandering takes him to many of the landmarks of London: St. Paul's, Big Ben, Westminster Abbey, Westminster Bridge, the Embankment, and the London Eye. As Jim walks on Westminster Bridge he steps on souvenir replicas of Big Ben, the scattered, discarded location of these mass-produced toys ironically epitomizing the status of the once grand metropolis. Jim's rest on Westminster Bridge recalls Wordsworth's famous sonnet "Composed Upon Westminster Bridge," which captures an equally still view of the city. In the poem, the only motion in the early morning metropolis is the Thames<sup>15</sup>. Wyndham makes a similar statement in *Triffids*: "The Thames flowed imperturbably on. So it would flow until the day the Embankments crumble and the water spread out and Westminster became once more an island in a marsh" (128). In the film the only motion we see is Jim's walking, but through these literary connections we can attach Jim's movement to the lifeblood of the city, the Thames<sup>16</sup>. The Thames is not displayed as a figure of opposition like one would find in William Blake or Iain Sinclair. Explaining the choice of locations and images in the DVD commentary, Boyle explains that he was attracted to iconic images. All of the

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

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

places Jim views, with the exception of the London Eye, also known as the Millennium Wheel, record the iconic history of the city. By merging the new Eye sore, with these majestic landmarks, the film enacts a perverse version of 'New Britain,' similar to Ballard's critique in *Millennium People*. The London Eye is part of the Blair government's Millennium Project, an effort to celebrate the cultural legacy and influence of the past in the present and for the future. The Millennium Dome, the most famous part of this failed development project was to be a center for culture, not ironically located in Greenwich, a symbol of the British Empire as the center of the world. The London Eye, which repeatedly reappears in Jim's view, merges with these iconic structures, mocking the thought of resurrecting the old British values Blair valorizes because, as de Certeau explains, the city makes clear that the past is unintelligible and the future unseen, especially when the vision of that future depends on a carnival ride.

The excessive accumulation of the city is also marked by the toppled red double-decker bus, the end of transportation or the circulation of people, and the scattered £20 notes, the end of the circulation of capital. The critique of the symbolic value of capital continues in Boyle's 2005 *Millions*, as the UK switches over to the Euro, leaving unspent and unconverted pound notes worthless, except as wallpaper. The status of the circulation of capital is a direct critique of globalization. Neither film makes a conclusive statement about globalization, but both look at how the increasingly global circulation of narrative and capital affects individual and national identity. Similarly commenting on the globalization of the image, Jim's tour stops as he ventures into Piccadilly Circus to find the giant advertisements supplanted by a message board of notes to missing family members. The disaster necessitates the substitution of messages of human relationship

and emotion for the messages of consumer desires, the advertisements. The scene of the message board, based on photos from the Kobe earthquake in 1995, emphasizes that the initial response to disaster is an attempt to reclaim relationships and thus a connection to the community. The historical and global repetitions of these images of people's grief proves that the imagination of disaster always returns the consciousness to the interpersonal relationships that can remain and protect the individual throughout unintelligible events, even with very different political and historical causes, from natural disaster, to terrorist attack, to technological mistake. There is always the danger that such repetitions erase difference and enact a traumatic forgetting of singularity that is its own apocalyptic violence. To avoid such a result, the trauma must be internalized on both an individual and historical level, returning logic to emotional extremism.

The more local concern for identity plays out in *28 Days Later* through the small community of non-infected. It comprises Jim, Selena, a chemist, Frank, a cab driver, and his daughter, Hannah. Jim first encounters Selena after turning to a church for sanctuary from his confusion; he has to attack an infected Anglican priest to save himself, Jim's first reluctant refusal of institutions. Selena then saves Jim from the chasing infected, taking him to her hideout in a mini-mart in the underground. She explains the situation to Jim, and he immediately asks what the government is doing about it; he cannot imagine that the leaders could become infected like everybody else. At this moment, Jim still believes "there is always a government." Conversely, Selena has completely abandoned all conventions of relationships and emotions as a defense to the confusion caused by disaster. Similarly, her race and gender do not matter remotely as survival rules their consciousness. She is so focused on survival that later she brutally kills another

companion before he can become infected and then tells Jim she would do the same to him. She says that “plans are pointless” and attempts to persuade Jim to the same position, sarcastically attacking his nostalgia by asking him, “Do you want to save the world or just fall in love and fuck?” In this statement, Selena makes her first vulgar connection to Jim, but it does start to break down her survival instincts so that she can return to the interpersonal relationships that actually will protect her survival. This exchange takes place amongst pristine countryside ruins. The scene recalls the trip to the Scottish Highlands by the gang in Boyle’s *Trainspotting*. Tommy believes that a return to nature will help the group identify with their cultural heritage and identity, saving them from the relationship problems they all encountered the previous night. Renton, instead, lambastes the Scottish identity and colonial history. His pessimism is much like Selena’s. Selena’s initial outlook epitomizes Susan Sontag’s argument that the imagery of disaster “is above all the emblem of an *inadequate response*” (130). Sontag’s argument explains that as we can never actually extend our narrative beyond a disastrous end, we are not equipped to deal with the very forces that could cause this end. Selena, who now has to live beyond the end, can only propose these two clichéd solutions that satisfy the two destinies of “unremitting banality and inconceivable terror” (130) that Sontag says define our age of extremes, which are a fascist return to the previous mode of history or a reestablishment of patriarchy. Ironically, both of Selena’s propositions could lead to terror. To avoid this terror, Jim and Selena unite with Frank and Hannah to form a postmodern family unit that reworks power relationships and ultimately refuses patriarchy; as they leave London, they go through a gradual withdrawal from the

capitalist system of labor and consumption and thus redefine their collective identity through interpersonal relationships instead of through historical determinism.

The path toward the utopian community requires them to refuse the labels, especially consumer and class, which define their location and perspective in the city. Just as Jim's understanding of the disaster requires a visit to his parent's suburban home, the tower block occupied by Hannah and Frank permits a shift in the group's focus. Brought to the block by flashing lights, another reference to *The Day of the Triffids*, Jim and Selena encounter a barricade of shopping trolleys. The trolleys, previously used to increase and aid consumption, now stand as a barricade between the preservation of civilized life and the rampant infection. The tools of capitalism have been made useless, but they can be reinvented in a new formation. The imagery of the building, the barricades and the battle in the hallway, resonates with Ballard's novels, especially *High Rise*. Frank has dealt with the apocalypse by redefining these tools in hopes of protecting himself and his daughter. The excess of the shopping carts is repeated in the myriad of buckets of all different sizes and colors, which Frank has placed on the roof to collect water. The lack of water shows that even the tower building, a symbol of modernity, no longer functions, and thus the community must leave behind the skeleton of the metropolis. As they leave the building in Frank's black cab, another iconic image of London, Frank turns on the meter and jokingly says, "Just so you know, I don't take checks or credit cards." Despite the horrors around, they find solace in their freedom from labor and money. This solace continues as they stop for a "supermarket sweep."<sup>17</sup> The supermarket looks serene in comparison to the chaos outside. All four take immense

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<sup>17</sup> This event is almost directly repeated from Romero's *Dawn of the Dead*. The repetition of this scene more firmly connects *28 Days Later* to the zombie genre.



pleasure in their free shopping. Copying the comparison of bread loaves by Stephen and Peter in Romero's film, Jim and Frank look for the best scotch. Whereas Romero's men allude to phallic imagery, Jim and Frank's decision to take the quality scotch shows that they have embraced the destruction of their working class status. They now have the freedom to acquire products that previously would have been unavailable. The characters' choices in consumption emphasize that they still have their consciousness and thus responsibility. In a symbolic leaving behind of capitalism, Frank places his credit card on the check out counter.

Now that the community has left behind the alienation of capitalism, they can construct a community based on equality. Just as class categories no longer matter, race never factors into the narrative of the film. Instead of basing respect for difference on historically or genetically based markers, respect for difference should lead to respect for everyone's difference from each other. As their communal bonds strengthen, Selena realizes that love for another is reason to live, and Jim realizes that the infected must be violently destroyed to preserve the love that remains. However, the members of the military community attempt to preserve the system of patriarchy and capitalism crumbling around them. They have occupied a mansion, collected stockpiles of electronic equipment, and cannot contain their sexual urges. Thinking they have killed Jim, the military men make Hannah and Selena dress in ball gowns, constricting costumes of patriarchy<sup>18</sup>. In anger, Jim returns, unleashes the chained infected held on the grounds, and kills the remaining military men. Jim's release of the infected into the

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<sup>18</sup> The connection between femininity and costuming likewise occurs in Ballard's *High Rise*. By adorning these dresses in moments of crisis, both texts reveal the ridiculousness of the ornamental and non-functional female attire.

corrupt, or infected, house reaffirms that rage has always been a part of patriarchy. The most aggressive sexual predator, Corporal Mitchell, dies by Jim's hands. Jim has become so enraged by the attack on his community that he proves that rage can also be a productive human emotion. He has become covered in blood, looking like an infected, but his goal is always to reunite with Hannah and Selena. When he pokes out the eyes of Corporal Mitchell, he proves that oppressive patriarchy has always been a form of blindness and unconscionable societal organization. This image evokes the Surrealism of Luis Bunel's and Salvador Dali's famous image from *Un Chien Andalou* of an eyeball being cut open by a razor. The use of Surrealist techniques parallels Ballard. As Colin Greenwood explains, "The Surrealist techniques that Ballard has used involve deliberate dissociations and mystifications. The object is taken from its usual context and dismantled, or put in a new context, or confused with other objects. But the result of the process is not mere nonsense, but a revaluation" (104). In the image of the eyes from *28 Days Later* takes on such a variety of meanings and connections: from the blindness of *The Day of the Triffids*, to the Surrealist desires of *Un Chien Andalou*, to violent retribution for the sins of patriarchy. On one level this destruction of the eyes instead of the cutting of the Surrealist image is a violent refusal of modernity, and the end of the movie then asks what visibility means for postmodernity. What results in *28 Days Later* is a revaluation of the meaning of vision, envisioning, and premonitions, or the future and its potential.

To confirm a new notion of equality within the community of the remaining survivors, the women must now save Jim's life just as he has saved them. Selena's transformation from an aggressive malcontent to a protector proves that this film

imagines a form of family that integrates traditional gender roles while still allowing for the transformative events of apocalypse. Selena can sew, but her sewing is an effort to include the family into the process of recivilization and not an effort to care for the family in the more traditional sense of clothing and feeding. Even the alternate ending projects the women as the new watchdogs of society—ending with the final image of them leaving behind Jim’s body, the death of patriarchy, and walking forward into a new world where they will protect themselves and be just fine. The camera angle of this final shot of the alternate ending indicates the film’s position as the remnants of patriarchy, but as they woman walk away they progress into a future beyond the gaze or imagination of the viewer.

The space that nurtures the alternative family is the country, a common theme of postwar apocalyptic narratives. The film does not insinuate that the natural will provide a utopian space. The military country-home proves that capitalist alienation extends to the spaces of the country. Eventually, the community’s retreat to the modest cottage in the Lake District proves that a self-sufficient space can still provide, as Raymond Williams explains, “an affirmation of vitality and of the possibility of rest in conscious contrast with the mechanical order, the artificial routines, of the cities” (252). As the last infected lays emaciated on the ground and the community is rescued, it becomes clear that the epidemic has been contained within Great Britain. This has been, as Boyle explained, a particularly British epidemic created by the violent need to uphold the iconic history of Britain. Discussing this view of history in terms of his most recent film, *Millions*, Boyle explains, “It’s about saying goodbye, how important that can be particularly for the British. We love hanging on to the past here” (qtd. in Lim 50). *28 Days Later* proves

that it is dangerous to hang on to the past with too strong of a grip, especially when that past is an epic fallacy that creates an unproductive nostalgia and propagates a violent patriarchy. Instead, the film imagines a feminist idea of family based on mutual protection and sufficiency.

### **Conclusions: The Nature of the Family in the Twenty First Century**

Throughout the postwar period, apocalyptic narratives continue to evoke disaster as a means to critique the political organizations of community and imagine new formations of community. In many of these cases, the new formations present revised visions of the family. From the female caregiver collective in *High Rise*, to *London Field's* nurturing of youth and innocence, through *28 Days Later's* rural feminist family, each vision unites different generations, classes, and races by freeing them from the oppressive politics of their moments. In extending this dialogue into the future, I am drawn to Ian McEwan's *Saturday* (2005) as an indication of the direction of the apocalyptic narrative. McEwan posits that the twenty-first century does not need to imagine disaster because the violent political climate of global politics in the Blair/Bush era makes everyday life open to disaster. He explains in an interview with Zadie Smith, "well, to go back to where we started this conversation, to 9/11, and the sense of invasion, one can only do it on a private scale. If you say the airliner hit the side of the building, a thousand people died, nothing happens to your scalp. So I, in a sense, tried to find the private scale of that feeling" (61). Following in the tradition of Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*, McEwan's narrative follows Dr. Henry Perowne through a day that begins in the early morning by witnessing a fire plane landing in the distance, proceeds to a street meeting with Baxter, a violent thug, and ends by his upper-middle class family life being burst apart by the intrusions of the criminality and the violence of the

underclass that his privileged life and family have ignored. Baxter's disruption forces Perowne to realize that "London, his small part of it, lies wide open, impossible to defend, waiting for its bomb, like a hundred other cities" (286). Perowne's assessment that London "wait[s] for its bomb" is not a passive acceptance of inevitable destruction; his words indicate a shift in perspective from isolated privilege to collective concern. He realizes, "He lives in different times—because the newspapers say so doesn't mean it isn't true. But from the top of his day, this is a future that's harder to read, a horizon indistinct with possibilities" (286). *Saturday* concludes that ignoring the consequences of violence indicative of both the treatment of the underclass in New Britain and the coalition war against Iraq will foreclose the utopian imagination of collectivity by the disaster narrative. McEwan makes us understand violence as the real material effects of life in the twenty-first century. Only through this realization can Perowne return to his loving wife and family, and only through this realization will all the bombs waiting for their cities be defused.