



LONDON: MYTHS, TALES AND URBAN LEGENDS

Edited by Elena Nistor

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URBAN LEGENDS**

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Interdisciplinary Discourses

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This publication is peer reviewed.

ISBN: 978-1-9164586-8-0 (E-Book)

First published by Interdisciplinary Discourses

An imprint of London Centre for Interdisciplinary Research

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Elena Nistor

Introduction

London is the metropolis that concentrates most, if not all, human experiences and its multiple facets exerts the charm of the best of all possible worlds promising infinite possibilities. Its labyrinthine space is mesmerising particularly because it is unknowable in reality – as Peter Ackroyd remarked in his epic biography of the unique cosmopolitan conurbation, ‘London is so ubiquitous that it can be located nowhere in particular.’ (Ackroyd 2000: 734)

This collection of articles aims to formally bring together some of the recent and very recent research on the ubiquity and multifariousness of the largest European city in well-informed interpretations of particular case studies. From music to sport and from literature to cinema, the papers advance different versions of the urban tessellation, with its intriguing yet irresistible mixture of past and present, history and progression, tradition and perpetual change.

The proposed volume is devised according to a thematic logic intended to chart a map of thematic interests and formal concerns focusing upon London’s outstanding charisma.

The first part of this book outlines specific historical and cultural contexts that shaped particular habits and patterns of behaviour displayed by the inhabitants of London. **Delia Dattilo** brings evidence that voices and sounds encapsulate the spirit of the inhabitants of London in the modern period. Music archives are an important source of knowledge descriptive of the artistic manifestations of the urban society and their distinct features as shaped by the Agricultural and Industrial Revolution. The increasing economic development resulted in the rapid expansion of the city borders and, at the same time, in the population’s material resources. Consequently, public gatherings for commercial purposes began to thrive – among them, the Bartholomew Fair. One of London’s major summer events, the fair built a reputation for its amusements and found its place in the aesthetic consciousness of the community. The author analyses the numerous versions of the ballads that mention

the Bartholomew Fair since the 1600s to the 19th century, with a special focus on *Countryman's visit to Bartholomew Fair*, an accurate account of the profuse space enlivened by sanguine characters guided by leisure and self-indulgence. Another particularity of the city in those times were the cries, the calls of the street vendors enticingly inviting to buy various goods, from food to flowers, from spirits to house merchandise and from old clothes to toys. The musical transcriptions of this unique form of art reveal a simple but complex sound system that captures the baffling rhythm of the city in the process of becoming a global market hub. Dattilo investigates the dual symbolism of the 'oyster cries', songs of unambiguous eroticism referring to both the stimulating nature of the shelled mollusks and the seductive stratagems employed by the female traders. The soundscape is completed by the music and lyrics that involve geographic and historical data such as the public houses of Old London or the 1666 Great Fire of London. If the former sketch a map of the central area, in close connection with a strict social hierarchy based on occupational skills, the latter documents the life of the city and its inhabitants after the tragic devastation. The author brings arguments according to which the ballads give a detailed account not only of the damage but also of its after-effects in harsh comments of injustice and inequality. She concludes that the music productions of the period are paramount to the retrieval of certain important social, economic, political and cultural aspects of London.

In his study **Gianluca Sardi** demonstrates the importance of the Millwall Football Club and its long-term impact on the constitutional rights of both individuals and local communities. Founded as Millwall Rovers on the Isle of Dogs in 1885, the team nicknamed the Lions was forced to move south of the Thames after twenty five years, to a new stadium known under the name of The Den. However, this did not discourage its fans, as the local residents, dockers and stevedores crossed the Greenwich Foot Tunnel and the Rotherhithe Tunnel to enjoy their favourites' games at a time when pastimes were very few. Even if relocation may have put traditional rituals at risk, the move to a modern and larger ground may have helped the football club to organise many more initiatives for its

fans and the local community, thus facilitating a more effective promotion and protection of the individuals' and the local residents' fundamental rights. The synergy between the football club and its supporters was so strong that football authorities allowed Millwall to start its home games at 3.15 pm in order to enable the late-working dockers to come down to The Den. The club's strategy to attract families and young supporters was awarded the 2017 Nickelodeon Family Club of the Year trophy at the annual English Football League Awards for the first time in its history. Among other remarkable initiatives of the Millwall Football Club, the author mentions the annual Dockers Day that pays tribute to the work of the dockers and promotes the fundamental rights of elderly people, which include dignity and social involvement, and the enthusiastic volunteering and charitable work carried out by Ayse Smith, the editor of the club's journal, *The Lion Roars*. Using the power of sport to raise awareness on human values such as respect and empathy, the Millwall Community Trust and the Millwall Supporters' Club make constant efforts to improve the lives of people in Lewisham, Southwark and the wider Millwall Community in projects that are highly appreciated locally, regionally, nationally and, over the past decades, even internationally since the club has started to set up overseas Millwall Supporters' clubs. In Sardi's opinion, the positive experience of generosity and humanitarianism has established Millwall Football Club as a cherished institution beyond the boundary of football not just as a game but rather as a way of life based on the values of traditional London.

The second part of the book brings together a selection of papers whose point of convergence lies in various aspects of literary London. **Federica Torselli** investigates the relationship between gender and the choice to live in the modern city, concentrating on the perception of the urban environment in the literary work of Virginia Woolf and Doris Lessing. Innovative and forward thinking, both writers found inspiration in their personal experience of walking through the big city. Virginia Woolf capitalised on the concept of *flânerie* in her essay 'Street Haunting: A London Adventure', a eulogy of detached urban exploration which she

assimilated to male privilege. In the modernist writer's apprehension, the freedom to wander was an undeniable prerogative of men and yet a fundamental prerequisite for women's creativity. For a woman to walk freely on the streets of London was to defy domestic confinement and to nurture imagination and originality, for the multifarious dimensions of the city generate almost endless significations of the self and innumerable modes of self-affirmation. As the imaginary 'I' assumes an explorer's identity, the labyrinthine urban space provides perpetually revised versions of the self. With Woolf, the celebration of difference is asserted from the typical binary perspective shaped by the concepts of biological sex and socialised gender, resulting in the need to divert from female identity and assume an ambivalent apprehension of the public surroundings. Doris Lessing adopted the same approach to women's search for identity and understanding of the urban world: her sensorial participation in the life of London energises the mind, extending perception to the outer landscape in search of psychological and emotional balance. Her novels encode special attraction to the metropolitan area that seems to open great possibilities for spiritual development, providing opportunities for instantaneous identification with anonymity and simultaneous regeneration, authorising self-location in an imaginary locus and chronology. Torselli argues that both Woolf and Lessing call in question both the female subject and its urban experience, as their bold reinterpretation of the relationship with the city spaces forges and promotes the image of the *flâneuse*, the female counterpart to what Baudelaire described as the 'gentleman stroller of city streets'. To both writers, London can be a place of self-composure for it is precisely solitary discovery of the city's vitality and vigour that offers the promise of spiritual integration and creates a spiritual sense of harmony between inner alterity and outer identity. The ontological movement from one place to another on a temporary basis triggers inevitable changes in personal and social identity: the voyage of discovery enhances mental versatility and emotional metamorphosis, simultaneous placelessness and ubiquity that place the self on a border where all differences are erased.

Anastasia Logotheti performs a close textual analysis of London as described by Ian McEwan in *Sweet Tooth* (2012) and *The Children Act* (2014), narratives that represent London as a profoundly private space. Both novels explore the polyvalent relationship between the individual and the huge conurbation in his characteristic style intertwining omniscient perspective with references to the Victorian and Modernist literary canon that point to the unique nature of the metropolis. McEwan's keen sense of time and space translates both as interest in historic duration and geographic expansion, and concern with personal chronology and topography. Set mostly in the early 1970s London, *Sweet Tooth* focuses on the urban trajectory of Serena Frome, a Cambridge graduate with a math degree, who is recruited to work for an intelligence agency amidst the geopolitical tensions generated by the Cold War. Now in her sixties, she recollects her life as a young undercover agent living in a Victorian house located in Camden Town in a time of turmoil. *The Children Act* centres round another female character, Fiona Maye, a fifty-nine-year-old respected High Court Judge specialising in Family Law and a resident of Gray's Inn Square. Like Serena, the ageing professional displays a special relationship with the Camden area remembered by Charles Dickens in his writings: in mid-to-late 2012, it is not only her place of personal safety and protection but also the sacred place that acknowledges her as a woman of wisdom and responsibility. Considering the female experience of the urban space, Logotheti investigates the literary devices through which McEwan situates the subject within community and rewrites the paradigm of femininity in a mutable manner based on identity formation and reformation beyond conventions. In *Sweet Tooth* she emphasises the function of the historical context as a perfect metaphor for the conflict between the acts of reading and writing since Serena's reminiscences articulate a discourse that regulates the sense of being and the dynamics of personal meaning against a dystopian London - dystopian and yet fascinating as a space of infinite possibilities, as reflected in the two endings summoning the immediate imaginative creativity of the reader caught in the typically postmodern play between ambivalence

and ambiguity. Parody is another subversive stratagem employed to resolve conflicting situations: in *The Children Act* the pressure of the self trapped claustrophobic universe from which evasion seems to be prohibited is relieved by Dickensian and Joycean allusions to the urban environment as a buffer against acute feelings of emotional estrangement and dissolution. With these two novels, McEwan remains an illustrious chronicler of contemporary London and the sophisticated associations blended in his lines pay tribute to distinctive symbolism of the insular city as the quintessential locus of cyclical deconstruction and reconstruction of identity.

In her article **Elana Gomel** traces one of the most common motifs in literary London fiction, the final eradication of the city. The author discusses examples from the late 19th- to the 21st-century English literature to advance the argument that, far from illustrating possible ultimate catastrophes, they are rather expressions of progressive expectations. As overpopulation, global warming, air and water pollution have eroded the quality of life and have turned urban inhabitants into materialistic automata, extinction will trigger a revival of humanitarianism and a return to simplicity translated, in Gomel's opinion, as a distinct anti-urban system of ideas and ideals. The minute accounts of the city's apocalyptic decimation revise personal and collective values, and include a promise of redemption and reconciliation with both inner and outer world. Throughout time the existential drama of displaced individuals confined to surreal surroundings has taken different forms but has never altered the message, encoding the same nostalgia for the lost paradise and seeking to raise awareness on the need to restore spiritual comfort. At the end of the 19th century H. G. Wells imagined a London that, although permeated with extreme terror and intense horror, conceals a peculiar solace in its desolate streets. Later on, literary works by Mary Shelley, Richard Jeffreys and John Wyndham addressed the topic of definitive devastation with a hint at potential regeneration, which points to the constant vacillation of the metropolis between fascination with and trepidation at the prospect of times of acute difficulty or danger. Over the past few decades of the last century and into the new one, the increasing number of

artistic productions centred upon urban calamities illustrates the classical Freudian death drive with an intimation of strength and continuity in a post-urban environment. Capitalising on the equivalence between utopia and dystopia, Gomel reevaluates the discourse patterns of the disintegration and desired re-composition related to the metropolitan space from the viewpoint of various dichotomies: utopia versus dystopia, creation versus destruction, noise versus silence, chaos versus order, complexity versus simplicity. Since the antagonistic mechanisms of city life erase human identity, the only solution for reclaiming humanity seems to lie in cataclysmic events obliterating the vast settlement and reinstating natural order organised as urban pastoralism. The recently created concept of apocalypse-as-pastoral seems to arrest the vision of London in the Third Millennium, blending together melancholic quietude and Stygian solitude beyond time and history, which does not exclude the potentiality of unsophisticated patterns of behaviour and the reconnection with an unspoiled urban habitat.

The last chapter connects two papers dedicated to different cinematic expressions of the English metropolis. **Bogna Starczewska** examines the images of London created by Woody Allen in two of his films, *Scoop* and *Cassandra's Dream*. The American director, writer and actor chose the English capital for some of his first cinematic journeys to the Old World. The 2006 romantic crime comedy *Scoop* is the story of an American journalism student who follows the tracks of an alleged serial killer while on her holiday in London. The 2007 dramatic thriller is an account of two brothers living in South London and their dream to break away from their ordinary lives. Starczewska's analysis gives reasons according to which the directorial perspective on the city only reflects the original on the surface: although the backgrounds are easily recognisable, the vision can hardly be labeled as indisputably original. *Scoop* creates an exemplary vision of the metropolis, a social permissive and permeable space, an uncomplicated network rather than a hierarchy based on strict rules and patterns. In Allen's interpretation, it is an equalitarian London where rank and difference can be transgressed without an effort, with an unsuspecting

upper class easily ready to accept peers from across the pond. Subtle ridicule challenges stereotypes and subverts hierarchies, as the hedonistic British elite appear to be socially innocent and intellectually ignorant. In opposition, *Cassandra's Dream* adopts a grave tone in telling a story about genuine misfits and their crisis of self-representation. As the protagonists take turns in assuming a central position both in the story and in their own lives, they expose acute feelings of inadequacy and personal emptiness against the somber background of the unforgiving city. Allen is a skillful manipulator of gloomy emotions, his intensity of vision articulating a crude drama of tough heroes animated by a sense of failure and personal wrong in a somber atmosphere alluding to sorrow and despair. Avoiding tourist landmarks that often subordinate other elements of the narrative, he places the marginal selves in areas that seem to acknowledge their impossibility to transgress personal borders, acting as a reminder of human vulnerability before the unknown fate. Juxtaposing Allen's passion to New York City and attachment for London, the article further debates the perception of the latter's environments and atmospheres forged by his cinematic creativity. In *Scoop*, as well as in *Cassandra's Dream*, the director advances the same alternative utopian/dystopian portrayal of real, geographically identifiable places sublimated into imaginary, culturally constructed sites for his characters to develop their existential journeys. In both films, the English city is an intriguing mixture of empathy and cruelty, dream and failure, benevolence and indifference, as it seems to constantly plot against the protagonists' attempts to decode the urban signs of self-recognition, dismissing their pursuits of acquiring a true sense of belonging. Allen's London is an ultimately saturnine microcosm that is keenly alive and ruthless, its crude hostility and ominous inflexibility unmakes destinies, crushes personal systems of values and offers no hope for salvation and redemption, perpetuating a deep moral and spiritual crisis.

The final paper draws special attention to Senate House London. Ever since its inauguration in 1937, the central library and administrative hub of the University of London has aroused strong positive as well as negative feelings, its supporters hailing it as a

symbolic alternative to elitist Oxbridge and its opponents deploring the unimaginative aesthetics of the monolithic appearance threatening the stylish and self-composed 19th-century surroundings. In time, the skyscraper located in Bloomsbury has developed a particular symbolism in the collective imagination of the British nation and has even created its own legends. British and American film industry have cleverly exploited the unmistakable personality of the massive structure that was originally intended to operate as administrative centre and library belonging to the University of London but became headquarters for the Ministry of Information throughout the Second World War. Its dual perception as a site of learning and of propaganda has inspired numerous scriptwriters and directors who have tried to encode and decode the ambivalence of the building in words and images beyond architectural representation. If the Grade II listed construction, typical of the Art Deco style that dominated London in the Thirties, initially starred in motion pictures as a grim hyper-structure of excessive authority annihilating individuality, subsequent productions have shifted the aesthetic interest from its severe authoritarian façade to the sumptuous interiors of the Herculean building. *An Englishman Abroad* is a 1983 BBC television drama based on real life events that introduces Senate House appears as a Moscow hotel. The first shot displays the monumental staircase of Crush Hall turned into a Soviet hotel lobby, a metaphorical place of mistrust and lack of communication while the second shot features the exterior of the pyramidal structure as a symbol of stygian omnipresence and arrogant self-determination. In *RKO 281*, the 1999 American historical drama, Senate House appears as the setting for the concluding clash between the protagonists and the place of the long-anticipated success. Both films employ analogous lighting, movement and composition devices to enhance the figurative meanings of the dramatic exterior and consistent symmetry of the interiors of the London edifice as a versatile place designed for perfidious irony and dangerous dissimulation. The logic of the two narratives requires its generous space as a quiet witness to the subtle confrontation between the characters, and its dignified grace and

tasteful richness increase the dramatic effect of the complicated plots. Considering its increasing presence on the silver screen, the Bloomsbury edifice has clearly become an important emblem of British culture, its undeniable charisma adding to the character of London itself for, the paper argues, the identity of the city would be incomplete without Senate House.

This collection is as diverse as London itself. The papers within each chapter function like a kaleidoscope, their flexible symmetry standing as solid proof that most themes, topics and motifs approached by the authors and their vast range of research interests and areas of specialism enter into an open dialogue based on congruent turn-taking. Their common purpose is to apprehend the inimitable personality of London and to promote a revised philosophy of the insular metropolis and its particular spirit, based not only on individual perceptions, sources and contexts, but also on up-to-date relevant bibliographies that may constitute solid material for future investigation.

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PART ONE

Olden Days and Nowadays

Delia Dattilo

**Old London.
Sound environments and histories
of the City through music**

Abstract

In the absence of any sound recording, early music prints and broadside ballads are tools through which one can recreate historical sound portraits. Both are capable of implementing our knowledge of the past – in this case, in relation to some particular contexts, and habits of Londoners (1600s). Through them, one is able to trace maps, imagine environments, and access the interpretive and expressive universe of people, while also trying to understand how people perceived the world they lived in.

This paper will cover the following issues: (a) the origins and dissemination of the topic of *Bartholomew Fair* through its corpus of ballads; (b) the so-called “street cries” and their relation with trades and markets in Old London; (c) the connections between places and social classes, as they emerged from the ballad of *London’s Ordinary or Every Man in His Humour*; (d) the historical memory of the Great Fire of London (1666), as preserved through the transmission of the ballad *London Mourning in Ashes*.

Key Words: Ballads, Broadside, Cries of London, Fairs, Rounds, Soundscape, Urban Communities.

1. “That scene of confusion and frolic”

During the twelfth century, London became capital city of England despite the role and dominance enjoyed by the City of Winchester. King Henry I was patron of a financial bureaucratic systematization which controlled the kingdom’s resources and surveyed all the properties of his land. The Charter of 1131 enacted that “Londoners may not be penalized by an amercement greater than his *were*, that is, 100s – but also that – all London men and their goods are to be exempt from and free of toll, passage, lastage, and all other customs, throughout all England and seaports – and that – citizens have [justice regarding] their lands, pledges and debts, inside the city and outside”¹. With the Charter of 1133, King Henry I of England, William of Canterbury and George Bishop of London “grant to Rayer the Prior and the regular Canons, their Hospital free of all authority beyond episcopal usage, defend all the right of Rayer and the Canons, and forbid that any one molest Rayer – and – grant also peace and the fullest privileges to all persons coming to and returning from the Fair of St. Bartholomew”. (Morley 1859: 25)²

Around the 1300s, London’s boundaries included the areas from Holborn to Temple (Western area), from Bishopsgate to the Tower (Eastern area), and from Cripplegate to the riverside (Northern and Southern area) – with some settlements across the river, in the area of Southwark (cf. Atlas by William Shepherd, 1923-26)³.

1 - Latin to English translation of King Henry I’s Charter of 1131, transcribed in *Henry I’s charter for the City of London*, by C. Brooke, G. Keir and S. Reynolds, in «Journal of the Society of Archivists», vol. 4 (1973): 575-576. The original source may be found at the Corporation of London Records Office, Liber Horn, f. 362v. The digital source for the translation was provided by <http://users.trytel.com/~tristan/towns/florilegium/govcons01.html#trans>

2 - cfr. Webb 1921, 477.

3 - http://www.emersonkent.com/map_archive/london_1300.htm

By the end of the sixteenth century, London's boundaries went from Holborn (West) to Aldergate (East), and from Barbican-Finsbury Fields (North) to the riverside and beyond, towards the conurbation of Southwark (cf. map in Brayley 1828). By observing and comparing maps from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, one can immediately see how population growth occurred together with the Agricultural and Industrial Revolution. According to Morley, "until a date later than that of the foundation of the fair in Smithfield, fairs were held commonly in the churchyard of the sacred building about which they were assembled, or even within the church itself" (1859: 18). At this point, it seems useful to quote the complete paragraph where Paul Hentzner narrates⁴ how the fair was proclaimed by the Mayor. Such an historical reference helps to contextualize the fair itself, just as it was portrayed in 1598; on the other hand, ballads illustrate this particular and recurring event which, according to Hentzner, almost resembles a sort of initiation rite for the entire town:

It is through the eyes of this German observer that we have the following glimpse of Bartholomew Fair in the year 1598. It is worthy observation, that every year, upon St. Bartholomew's Day, when the Fair is held, it is usual for the mayor, attended by the twelve principal aldermen, to walk in a neighbouring field, dressed in his scarlet gown, and about his neck a golden chain, to which is hung a golden Flead, and, besides, that particular ornament which distinguishes the most noble order of the Garter. When the mayor goes out of the precincts of the city, a

4 - Paul Hentzner was «a German tutor, travelling in the year 1598 through Germany, France, Italy, and England, who wrote an "Itinerarium" that after his return home was published in successive editions at Breslau and Nuremberg. He wrote for a stay-at-home public, in the spirit of a stay-at-home, to whom all foreign things are strange»; this is the account provided by Morley in his *Memoirs*, p. 106-107. Hentzner's book *Itinerarium Germaniae, Galliae; Angliae; Italiae, Sumtibus Autoris, & typis Abrahami Vvagenmanni excusum, Norinbergæ was published in 1612.*

sceptre and sword and a cap are borne before him, and he is followed by the principal aldermen in scarlet gowns with gold chains himself and they on horseback. Upon their arrival at the place appointed for that purpose, where a tent is pitched, the mob begin to wrestle before them, two at a time; the conquerors receive rewards from the magistrates. After this is over, a parcel of live rabbits are turned loose among the crowd, which are pursued by a number of boys, who endeavour to catch them, with all the noise they can make (Morley 1859: 138-139).

There are many versions of ballads that mention Bartholomew Fair, either in the lyrics or in the titles; one is *Bartholomew Fair, or The Humours of Smithfield* which was printed in Great St. Andrew St. (Seven-Dials, London) by J. Pitts, and circulated between 1802 and 1819 (Bodleian 24224, Roud V4000). Yet, *A Description of Bartholomew-Fair* (presently included in the Pepys Collection of Ballads at Magdalene College) dates even further back, since it was printed in 1680 by F. Coles, T. Vere, J. Wright, J. Clarke, W. Thackeray and T. Passinger. It consists of an oblong folio with one engravings inside and the indication “to the tune of *Digby’s Farewell*”. Another ballad related to Bartholomew’s Fair was recorded by John Trundle under the title “Rome for Company in Bartholomew Faire” on October 22, 1614: the same year in which Ben Jonson’s hilarious play, “Bartholomew Fair”, was first presented to London theatre-goers. The earliest printed version of the melody is included in Playford’s “Musick’s Recreation on the Lyra Viol” (1652).

Before the Industrial Era – in London, as well as in most part of Great Britain and Europe – rural fairs were crucial meeting places for sellers and buyers from far and wide. A microcosm of gestures and expressions revolved around fairs: popular theater, dance, and puppet plays, as testified by the broadside *The Dagonizing of Bartholomew Fair* (1647). This ballad “memorializes a scene in which the mayor of London storms into the fair, claims that it has been erected prematurely, and demands that it be dismantled” (Milne, 2011: 300).

Generally, fairs – that of Bartholomew in particular – hosted ballad sellers, and more so during the seventeenth century, when broadside trade began to flourish. Their typical bustle and liveliness are also well represented in *Countryman's visit to Bartholomew Fair*, a broadside ballad printed in London by J. Jennings and dated between the end of the eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth century (Bod 22724, Roud V9761). The ballad testifies the persistence of such an entertainment environment from the point of view of a countryside man who travels to town (“I saw the man they call the mayor / He came for to proclaim the fair/ And when I saw the man approach / I wished Apollo had his coach/ After he was gone away/ The fools they all began to play”), and who is fooled by a woman (most likely, a prostitute) that takes him to Salt-Petre Bank and makes him squander all the money he had made from the sale of his hay. In his conclusion, he states: “Of all the money of my hay / I had but sixpence the next day / Then I did stamp, curse, and swear / I’ll go no more to Bartholomew fair.”

In *Broadside Ballads. London: (1600-1700)*, (Folkways Records 1962), Ewan MacColl performed his version of *Room for Company* – namely a variant of the previous one – by executing seven out of total twenty-one stanzas; the closing stanza refers to this kind of social environment: of “cutpurses and cheaters, bawdy-house-doors keepers, punkes and panders”.

2. Sounds in spaces: voices in the London markets

London cries are mentioned for the first time in a short poem titled *London Lyckpenny*, written in the fourteenth century by the monk John Lydgate:

Then unto London I dyd me hye,
Of all the land it beareth the pryse:
Hot pescodes, one began to crye,
Strabery rype, and cherries in the ryse (...) (Tuer 1885: 3).

As J.T. Smith pointed out,

the origin of our early cries might be ascribed to the parent of invention. An industrious man finding perhaps his trade running slack, might have ventured abroad with his whole stock, and by making his case known, invited his neighbours to purchase; and this mode of vending commodities being adopted by others, probably established the custom of itinerant hawkers to the great and truly serious detriment of those house-keepers who contributed to support their country by the payment of their taxes (Smith 1839: 5-6).

In 1871, the “Pedlar Act” introduced and enhanced restraints to street trading in London as well as in the rest of the current United Kingdom. It practically ended street trading as the English had always known it. Not surprisingly, it was from that moment onwards that volumes and collections concerning the world of street trading began to flourish. Such collections are crucial when it comes to identifying the features of the creativity that developed within these contexts.

The Old Cryes of London by Frederick Bridge contains a musical transcription of two compositions: *New Oysters!* a “round for three voices”, taken from Thomas Ravenscroft’s *Pammelia* (1609), and *These are the Cryes of London Town*, by John Cobb (Bridge 1921: 32-36). In the description, Ravenscroft appears to be “a celebrated composer of the early part of the 17th century [...] a Londoner [...] in daily contact with itinerant vendors – that – has left us four really good specimens of his musicianship in the form of rounds, the words of which consist of some of the well-known Cryes [...] for four voices” (Bridge 1921: 30). *New Oysters!* was written in the form of a canon: the starting musical cell epitomizes the authentic expression of a crier, the *phonophany* (from the Greek *phōné* = sound, human voice + *phāneia*, *phānein* = manifestation, to show) of an entire context: the perception of street markets’ life is

summarized and expressed through the recurrence of these pitches⁵. Along the streets, sellers, buyers and passers-by in the city of London must have created their own catalogue of sounds – recognizable, familiar sounds that each of them could associate with their own imagery of that particular space where people used to gather for their everyday work. These *phonophanies* emerged from a common ergologic-cultural universe: “Are sounds like these the proper prelude to a state of peace? / Now Industry awakes her busy sons; / Full charged with News the breathless hawker runs; / Shops open, coaches roll, carts shake the ground. / And all the streets with passing cries resound.” (Gay 1730: 20). Of course, these sounds originated in parallel contexts of acoustic and visual perception, and emerged as *figures* from the *background* (Bonanzinga 2011: 97).

From popular poetry, we can also draw some notions concerning areas of commercial exchange: in this case, oysters were brought to London’s harbour in Billingsgate

Twelve-pence a peck, Oysters.
From Billingsgate, industrious Will,
Brings Oysters for the town;
Thro’ frost or rain, he fears no ill,
But cries them up and down.⁶

in fact:

Billingsgate in the oyster season is a sight and a caution.
Boats coming in loaded; porters struggling with baskets
and sacks; early loungers looking on—it is so pleasant to

5 - In 1956, Deller Consort published a double vinyl dedicated to *tavern songs* (vol. 1) and *cries* (vol. 2). The latter includes both, Ravenscroft’s *New Oyster!* and Richard Dering’s *Cries of London* (composed between 1580 and 1630).

6 - This song is quoted from *The Cries of London for Instruction and Amusement of Good Children* (1820?, 17), for more information on London cries for children, see *The First London Cries for Children* (1998), by Sean Shesgreen and David Bywaters, in *The Princeton University Library Chronicle*, 59(2): 223-250. Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.25290/prinunivlibrchro.59.2.0223>.

see other people work—buyers and cheapeners [...] Fancy being able to purchase twelve succulent dainties for one sixpence at Ling’s or Quin’s, at Proctor’s or Pim’s, or any other celebrated shell-fish shop! (*The Oysters* 1861: 17-18)

Oyster cries were also sung by women. There is a brief series dedicated to the “Oyster Girls”, and a broadside titled “The Oyster Girl” which describes, through explicit sexual references, the encounter between a man and an oyster-saleswoman. It was not unlikely for saleswomen to grant sexual “favours”; furthermore, oysters are renowned for their aphrodisiac qualities: hence, this could justify why it was a sale system predominantly - but not only - entrusted to women.

Anyhow, compositions from the Elizabethan era, based on the cries of London, spread during the late English Renaissance and sprung from the pen of the previously mentioned Thomas Ravenscroft, but also John Cobb, Richard Dering and Orlando Gibbons. Today, we wonder why and how this repertoire was meant to be written, and to whom it was addressed. In Ravenscroft’s preface to *Pammelia* (1609) the author states that “the onely intent is to give generall content, composed by Art to make thee disposed to mirth. – and concludes – Accept therefore kindly, what is done willingly, and published onely, to please good Company”, so these “familiar mirth and iocund melodie” could have been intended for domestic use, or were meant to be played together with companions (this particularly applies to those works written for a minimum of four to a maximum of eleven voices). According to Philip Brett, the popularity of cries can be explained “in terms of the increased sophistication of a court audience bored with the grandiloquent madrigal” (Brett in Milsom 2017, 69). Practically, works such as Gibbons’ *In Nomine. Cries of London* show, from an almost early ethnographic perspective, how the essence of counterpoint, melodic motifs and vocal style were all means through which information about cultural life on the streets could be bequeathed. Bridge, being a music professor, was well aware of the number of possibilities offered by counterpoint, especially when it came to Gibbons’ style (which he named “English Palestrina”):

The Cryes introduced into Gibbon's "In Nomine" include eleven different kinds of fish, seven kinds of fruit, four kinds of liquors and herbs, six of vegetables, four of different pies, seven kinds of household goods, four of clothing, four trademen's Cryes, four trademen's Songs, three begging Songs; one Town Crier, and three Watchmen's Songs (Bridge 1921: 41).

Watchmen songs were connected to a practice dating back from the fifteenth century which was "constantly evaded" in London. It required householders to hang lanterns out during winter evenings (Bridge 1921: 43-44): the watchman held a bell, sang, and through this singing they exhorted to hang out "Lanthorns and candle light/ Hang-out mayds for all night"⁷.

In John Cobb's *These Are the Cries of London Town* (Bridge 1921, 34-35), (Add Ms 31463), "A point of particular interest", says Bridge, "is that the words, 'and some go down,' are fitted to one of the chimes so familiar to those who live near 'Big Ben,' at Westminster" (Bridge 1921, 34). Other broadside ballads, with different titles, share a similar topic as *The City Rambler or the Merry Cries of London Town* (1675-1696?) set to the tune of *The Spinning Wheel*, printed by P. Brooksby, J. Deacon, J. Blare, and J. Back and included in the Pepys Ballads Collection at Magdalene College (EBBA 21997). Another one is *The Cries of London* (Roud V17274), one of the earliest broadsides dated between 1736 and 1763 and printed in London by W. Dicey and C.

Elizabethan sensibility in observing and listening to soundscape and the attention paid to timbre details and to atmosphere may also be found in more recent compositions; it is the case of Luciano Berio's cried for eight voices titled *Cries of London* (1976). As he himself recounts, the idea of composing this work came to him in 1968, after a trip to Sicily, where he had the chance to observe and listen to the *abbanniati* of Sicilian sellers (cf. Berio, Varga 1985:

7 - cf. O. Gibbons *In Domine Cries of London*, Ulrich Alpers, bars 144-151.

149). Such material, belonging to the tradition of common people and from which the Italian composer carved out the universal “seductive” spirit of the cries, evokes the circumstantial inflection of street criers’ natural voices – regardless of where they came from. The distribution of the eight voices within the space recreates the gradual rising of all those sounds and of their dynamics within the street commerce.

3. “Every Man in His Humour”

London’s Ordinary; Or Every Man in His Humour is a broadside ballad (Roud V18996) printed between 1674 and 1679. This version was the main reference for the following editions included in various ballad books (cf. Evans 1810, I: 166-169; MacKay 1841: 31-34; Halliwell-Phillipps 1971: 269). The Roxburghe Collection also includes a reference to the earliest copy in the Pepysian Collection (Vol. I, no. 97, p. 192) “Printed at London for John Wright, dwelling neere the Old Baily, 1605-1628” (cf. *The Roxburghe Ballads* 1872: 24). Each variant contains a list of the most famous taverns, inns and pubs of Old London – all of which were strictly connected to social status. The majority of them existed prior to the Great Fire of London (1666), and was therefore burnt by the deflagration, as later proven by the discovery of a vast number of tokens (cf. Akerman 1847, 1849; Henry 1855). In seventeenth-century London, the rules for ale-house keepers were strict and rigorous. Indeed, in his *Country Justice*, Dalton writes as follows:

Any Person representing any Interlude, Play, or other Entertainment of the Stage, or acting any Part therein, for Gain, (in case such Person shall not have any legal Settlement in the Place where the same shall be acted) without Authority of a Patent from his Majesty, or without License from the Lord Chamberlain, shall be deemed a Rogue and a Vagabond within the Act 12 *Ann. Stat. 2*.

cap. 23 [...] Acting any Play, &c. unless a Copy be sent to the Lord Chamberlain fourteen Days before representing, or contrary to his Prohibition is a Forteiture of 50l. each Offender, and the License by which the Managers set up the Play-house or Company shall cease (Dalton 1746: 106).

However, for the purpose of this paper, I shall comply with the shorter version of *London's Ordinary* – as it was performed by a Sixties' English folk band, the Critics Group, who included it in the vinyl *A Merry Progress To London* (1967), since it would be excessively long to offer any historical or literary account about all the taverns mentioned in the integral version of the ballad. Below, the liner notes of the record related to this track:

The amusements of the people were always connected with pubs of one kind or another and in the 18th century they were recognized employment agencies for a large number of London trades. There were houses of call for hatters, smiths, bakers, tailors, plumbers and many others.⁸

Starting from the Royal Exchange, people went from tavern to tavern moving towards the more peripheral districts of the old metropolis. Based on a cross-search of maps and tokens of the time, I associated all these taverns to five principle areas of seventeenth-century London: the Royal Exchange, Spitalfield, Smithfield, Southwark and Charing Cross/High Holborn, which are nowadays the central areas of the City.

Through the Royal Exchange as I walked, / Where gallants
in satin do shine, / At midst of the day they parted away /
To several places to dine. / The gentry went to the King's

8 - Cf. *A Merry Progress to London*, The Critics Group, Argo Record Company Limited, 1966, ZDA 46, Album One. Liner Notes, *London's Ordinary*, John Faulkner.

Head, / The nobles unto the Crown; / The knights unto to
 the Golden Fleece⁹, / And the ploughmen unto the Clown¹⁰.
 / The clergy will dine at the Mitre, / The vintners at the
 Three Tuns¹¹; / The usurers to the Devil¹² will go, / And
 the friars into the Nuns. / The cheater will dine at the
 Checquer¹³, / The pick-pocket at the blind Ale-house. / Till
 taken and tried up Holborne they ride / And make their end
 at the Gallows. / The plumbers will dine at the Fountain¹⁴,
 / The cooks at the Holy Lamb; / The drunkards at noon to
 the Man in the Moon¹⁵, / And the cuckolds into the Ram. /
 The rovers will dine at the Lion, / The watermen at the Old

9 - In Cornhill, cf. Pepys, *Diaries*, February and March 1661; January 1664; Akerman, 1849: 61. One in Temple Bar, cf. Henry [1855: 51, n. 252], and one in Holborn [1855: 134, n. 622]. Shelley locates it in Covent Garden (1909: 127).

10 - I have found no mention of any pub, tavern or inn in Old London bearing the name "Clown". Nevertheless, the analysed area hosted an inn called "The Crosse Keys", owned by Richard Tarlton, an actor of the Elizabethan Age well known for being the best clown of his time. Therefore, it is my belief that the relation is not with the sign of the tavern, but with the owner himself (cf. Henry 1855: 121). During the times of Elizabethan Theatre, the association of ploughmen and the figure of the clown was a strong one [cf. Greenberg 2012]. The fortune and fame of this actor is well proven by a number of taverns, where he is either mentioned or portrayed (cf. Akerman, 1849: 235).

11 - In Guidehall Yard, north Cheapside (Shelley, 1909: 57); one in Newgate St. (cf. Henry, 1855: 66), in Guidehall Yard (1855: 126) and in St. Paul Churchyard (1855: 187).

12 - In Fleet St., London (cf. Shelley, 1909: 93-95 and following; Henry 1855: 100-107).

13 - (also, Chequer). One in Carter Ln., and another in Chequer Ln. [Stow in Whittaker, 1842: 87]; Near the Tower Ditch, around the Tower of London (Henry, 1855: 94, 246). The ballad places cheaters in the "Checquer", maybe in this case related to the game of chess.

14 - cf. Shelley 1909: 246; Henry 1885: 94, in *Fanchurch* [Fenchurch] *St.*

15 - In Cheapside (cf. Henry, 1855: 67; Akerman, 1849: 54, see token).

Swan, / The bawd will to the Negro¹⁶ go, / And the whores
to the Naked Man. / The fishmongers unto the Dolphin¹⁷, /
The bakers to the Cheat Loaf; / The turners into the Ladle
will go, / Where they may merrily quaff. / The hosiers will
dine at the Leg, / The drapers at the signe of the Brush; /
The fletchers to Robin Hood will go, / And the spend-thrift
to Beggers Bush¹⁸. / The goldsmiths will to the Three Cups,
/ Their money they count it as dross; / Your puritan to the
Pewter Can¹⁹, / And your papist to the Cross. / The weavers
will dine at the Shuttle²⁰, / And the glovers will into the
Glove; / The maidens all to the Maidenhead, / And the true
lovers unto the Dove. / And thus every man in his humour,
/ From the North unto the South; / But he that hath no
money in his purse, / May dine at the sign of the Mouth.

16 - Tokens representing «a Negro boy» were found in Holborn (Henry, 1855: 134); dated 1653, they most likely they belonged to William Whetstone: «the builder of several houses at the east end, between Newman's row, the north side of Lincoln's inn field, and Holborn» [Wheatley, Cunningham 1891: 490]. He was attacked by London apprentices for his great immorality.

17 - One *Dolphin Inn* at West Smithfield [Hatton, 1708: 25] and another on the easterly side of Bishopsgate St. without, near the end of Houndsditch (Hatton, 1708: 25, 103; *The Danny Archives*, 1966: 13; Stow, 1735: 723). For a full description, cf. Henry, 1855: 107.

18 - As in the previous case, it is also related to fletchers, probably in Gravel Lane, London. There might also be references to the play *The Begger Bush* by John Fletcher, published in the 1640s.

19 - Perhaps "The Pewter Pot". A pewter-pot token was found in Leadenhall St. (Henry, 1855: 152). Robert Chicheley, Mayor of London in 1423 established "that ale retailers should sell the same in their houses in pots of "peutre" (pewter), sealed and open, and that the whoever carried ale to the buyer should hold the pot in one hand and a cup in the other; and that all who had pots unsealed should be fined." (cf. Bell 1905, 64-65).

20 - (or "The Crown and Shuttle"). Associated with the category of weavers, the Crown and Shuttle inn should be located in an alley between Spitalfields and Bethnal Green, in that which at the time was the working-class neighborhood (cf. Linebaugh, 2003, 256).

In a society organised in a pyramidal and hierarchical structure (nobility, clergy, associations of arts and crafts, derelicts), each social class had its own tavern to go to.

The first and last sections of this ballad respectively represent the *incipit* and *closure* quatrains, and they contain only generic references to social classes. All the references given in the middle are extremely specific and depict all social statuses, from the highest (gentry, nobles, clergy, knights) to the lowest ones (cheaters, pick-pockets, drunkards, whores, rovers) – the latter occasionally mingled with associations of craftsmen, all of which had their own dedicated pub. Nowadays, some of the mentioned taverns, such as the Mitre, still exist – although at the time there were at least five pubs bearing the same name in Cheapside, Fleet Street, Mitre Court, Fenchurch Street and Wood Street. In the *Diary of Samuel Pepys* (particularly in the entries dated May 1661), there are several mentions of the Mitre located in Fenchurch Street, where a number of tokens were also found (cf. Akerman 1849). However, according to Shelley, the oldest Mitre was the one in Cheapside: “There was a Mitre [...] dated back to 1475 at the least, and had the reputation of making “noses red” (1909: 57). Nevertheless, the Royal Exchange – once the centre of commerce and trade for the City – was burned down on two occasions: during the Great Fire in 1666, and later in 1838. Presently, it is one of the most luxurious shopping centres in London. Some historical essays provide an account of how this tavern developed over time (cf. Shelley 1909: 172-73). A token was found in the area where the Great Fire “destroyed the original building called the Royal Exchange. The view on the reverse of this example is of the new structure, which was destroyed in 1838. In the year 1663, the notorious “German Princess”²¹, played some of her pranks at this tavern, which was then kept by a person named King.” (Akerman 1849: 161). The ballad includes certain obscure references, such as the one about the *ploughmen* category and their linking with a pub called “Clown”. Other taverns, instead, acquired their names

21 - For accounts on Mary Carleton cf. Wheatley, 1893 and Baker, 1812: 264.

according to the specific corporation that entered it as regular clientele; as in the case of hosiers (at the sign of the Leg²²), drapers (at the *signe* of the Brush²³), and weavers (at the Crown and Shuttle). Certain other connections seem to be made with the intent of mocking; it is the case of the *cuckolds* and the “Ram” Inn, located on the northern side of the Sheep Pens, in Smithfield (Hatton 1708: 68).

4. The Great Fire: “the Ruine of that Royal City”

There is plentiful literature concerning the progression and the aftermaths of the Great Fire of London. The catastrophic deflagration destroyed most of the city, and it affected the life and feelings of the citizens – and, of course, the city’s economy. Ewan MacColl’s liner notes on *London Mourning in Ashes*, included in his Folkways Records (1962), provide us with information on the origins of the tune of the ballad, and offer a brief account of the day during which the Great Fire started, namely September 2, 1666.

Two-thirds of the City of London were destroyed by “the great fire” of 1666. The Dutch, the French and the Catholics were all, in turn, deemed responsible. More moderate citizens believed instead that it was God Almighty’s will, and that worse was yet to come unless the population turned away from sinful behaviour.

The melody is included in a manuscript volume of virginal music, transcribed by Sir John Hawkins, where it bears the title of “In Sad and Ashy Weeds”. Of the total sixteen stanzas, MacColl’s version provides seven.

22 - Associated with the category of hosiers. There is *Hosier Lane*, as reported in John Lockie’s *Topography of London*, 1810); in Henry and Burn, there are a *Leg or Hosiers’ signs* in Long Acre (1855: 159) in old Upper Shadwell, now St. George St. (1855: 207) and in Wapping (1885: 254).

23 - In Southwark, cf. Henry 1855, 219.

The original reference is the broadside ballad *London mourning in Ashes* (EBBA 21888)²⁴, which provides the following historical information – also retrievable in MacColl’s notes:

Lamentable Narrative lively expressing the Ruine of that Royal City by fire which began in *Pudding-lane* on *September* the second, 1666, at one of the clock in the morning being *Sunday*, and continuing until *Thursday* night following, being the sixth day, with the great care the King, and the Duke of York took in their own Persons, day and night to quench it. The Tune, *In sad and ashy weeds*. (EBBA 21888)

Through these songs, we may still trace the route of the five-day-long fire, as observers witnessed it: spreading from Thomas Farriner’s bakery-house in Pudding Ln., it ran towards Fish St. Hill, Lombard St., Canon St., then went south along the river Thames rising up to Temple Church, Holborn Bridge, Pye Corner, Aldersgate, Cripple Gate, Coleman St., and finally ending its progression at Basing Hall. The lyrics of the variant *Londoners Lamentation* (see EBBA 31925)²⁵ do not differ from the previous version. In his Folkways track, MacColl erased the stanza which described how Londoners blamed the Dutch and the French for the catastrophe:

Many of French and Dutch were stop’d / and also are confin’d / ‘Tis said that they their fire-balls/and this plot was design’d (drop’d / By them and those/That are our foes./yet some think nothing so;/But that our God,/With his flaming Rod(?),/for sin sends all this woe. (EBBA 21888)

24 - <http://ebba.english.ucsb.edu/ballad/21888/image>

25 - <https://ebba.english.ucsb.edu/ballad/31925/image>

Of *French* and *Dutch* many were took;/ (upon suspicion
of a Plot,/ That they this ruine should provoke/ with Fire-
works) which will all be/ brought/ *Unto their tryal, but I*
fear;/ Our sinful hearts more guilty are./ Three of Gods
sharpest Arrows are/ and have been at us lately shot,/ Civil
War, Pestilence and Fire,/ for Pride and Gain, there lies
the/ Plot,/ *Beware the fourth, for if it fall,/ Grim Famine*
will confound us all. (EBBA 31925)

Nevertheless, this semi-political ballad allows MacColl's leftist ideology to emerge; and it is particularly evident in his belief that, if people did not change their way of living, then they "will dye for want of Bread" – easily comparable with the sad capitalistic trends of our times.

The ballads *London Mourning in Ashes* and *Londoners Lamentation* were not the only ones based on the disaster of the Great Fire. Indeed, as remarked by Tamsin Lewis in *London Mourning in Ashes: Three broadside ballads commemorating the Great Fire of London in 1666* (2016), the broadside ballad *A Recollection of the Times* (Rawlinson Ballads, 1666) also concerns this tragedy. The ballad was set to the tune of *In Troy Town* composed by John Wilson's (*Cheerful Ayres*, 1659).²⁶ In this case, the author enacted a replacement in the refrain by changing Troy with London: "Waste lie those fabrics that were so good, and cinders lie where London stood". The ballad was set to the tune of the ballad *Fortune my foe*, and was generally associated with disasters, evil doings and calls to repentance. "Being [that the fire was] a Warning-piece to the Wicked [...] declaring what great Judgements God hath shewn upon his Land", the ballad *A Recollection of the Times* depicts how English people (and Londoners) of the time perceived fear, as suggested by the closing stanza:

26 - EBBA 31925, University of Glasgow Library, Euing.

This good advice I give to old and young / That they offend
not God with hear nor tongue, / Then well 'twill be with
them another day, / And when soul is fled and body turn'd
to Clay. / Learn to be wise, and forsak wickedness, / Then
in your business you'l find good success; / Do not be
sinful as your souls destroy / But by repentance purchase
heavenly joy.²⁷

This brief and relatively generic overview provides interesting insights for the analysis of various heterogeneous documents; indeed, from such an analysis it may be possible to infer historical and anthropological information useful to contextualise the society of London during the 1600s-1700s. Specifically, we have seen how broadsides (as well as the comparison of the different versions prospered over time) and certain music compositions (1600s) have allowed us to do both, reconstruct environments and identify group actions and dynamics, as well as definite figures and social roles located within different spaces – markets, fairs and taverns (three emblematic places of past and present London). Such works often offer an accurate narrative about social geography as it was perceived by inhabitants themselves, and provide a description of ritual acts, functions, expressive practices and communication strategies peculiar to those times but nowadays deeply changed.

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<https://www.vwml.org>

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Gianluca Sardi

**The most traditional football club in
London in terms of history and newness
and its impact on the constitutional
rights of the individuals and of the local
communities**

Abstract

This essay aims to analyse the importance of Millwall Football Club, a very traditional team based in South London, and its impact on the constitutional rights of the individuals and of the local communities. First of all, the first 25 years since its foundation on the Isle of Dogs will be analysed. Moreover, the South London era will be taken into account. In addition to that, the activities organized by Millwall Community Trust and by Millwall Supporters' Club will be examined carefully. Finally, I will again highlight the vital role pursued by Millwall FC, whose fortunes and difficulties over the course of history coincided with those of the capital city of the United Kingdom and whose relevance for protection and safeguard for the fundamental rights of the individuals and of the local communities remains unquestioned.

Key Words: Millwall, London, constitutional rights, local communities, Millwall Community Trust, Millwall Supporters' Club, fans.

1. Introduction

This paper aims to analyse the relevance of Millwall Football Club, which was founded in the East End of London on the Isle of Dogs in 1885¹, and its impact on the constitutional rights of the individuals and of the local communities over the decades. Firstly, it should be noted that Millwall FC, initially called Millwall Rovers, was created by some employees of the JT Morton jam & marmalade factory on West Ferry Road².

After having spent twenty five years on the aforementioned Isle, the team was forced to look for a new ground south of the River Thames, but its fans continued to be made up largely of dockers working in the London Docks, who used to cross both the Greenwich Foot Tunnel and the Rotherhithe Tunnel to reach their new stadium, which was named The Den.

Over the course of history, the club's fortunes and difficulties coincided with those of the capital city.

In this regard, it is worthwhile remembering the years of the Second World War, when the club risked becoming extinct after some bombings had destroyed the stadium grandstands.

But the effort of its supporters and of the local community saved Millwall. Although it has changed its stadium again, today like in the past it organises praiseworthy initiatives to support the residents of its neighborhood and its fans from all over the world.

1 - The exact date of foundation of the club is not certain, but it is likely to have happened between the 1st and the 2nd of October, 1885. The first football game was on the 3rd of October, 1885 against Fillebrook FC, which at that time used to play in Leytonstone, East London. The celebrations of the 125th year since its foundation, instead, were held at The Den, situated in Zampa Road (London), on the 2nd of October, 2010, before its home clash against Burnley.

2 - This factory was created in Aberdeen in 1849 in order to prepare food for sailing ships. Its founder was John Thomas Morton, who was born in Oxford Street, London, in 1830 (<http://letslookagain.com/tag/j-t-morton/>). It opened its first branch in the London Docklands area -precisely at Millwall Dock- in 1872.

This is done looking towards the future, but without forgetting the values of traditional London and its lasting mission to protect the fundamental rights of the individuals and of the local communities.

2. The years on the Isle of Dogs

Founded in 1885 as Millwall Rovers, the club came to life in the district of Millwall, on the southwestern side of the Isle of Dogs, which is now part of the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. They had their first ground by a rubbish tip at the western end of what was Glengall Road (now Tiller Road), a site covered by new houses (Glinert 2009: 74).

In order to find a more useful and proper pitch, in the following year they moved to a ground situated behind the Lord Nelson Pub on East Ferry Road, which is now completely full of housing.

After some months, Millwall Rovers joined the London Football Association, which had been established in 1882. In 1887, after just two years since its foundation, this young football team was able to win the East End Cup, then a very important trophy. Since they managed to lift this trophy for three consecutive years, the body who organised it enabled Millwall Rovers to keep the cup in the club's headquarters.

Even if the football team used to attract a huge following, not only from the Isle of Dogs, but also from the whole East End of London and in addition to getting many successful results on the pitch since its foundation, some severe problems emerged off the pitch. In fact, in 1889 they were told to leave their football ground, because a newly-formed company had plans -never realized- for a switchback railway and recreation area on the site (Inglis 1987: 263). After the pub landlady had given Millwall only one year's notice to leave, there was a real risk of extinction. The disappearance of the club would have been a deathblow for the whole Docklands community, because following Millwall was a way of life for local

residents, stevedores and for their families too, in an era during which the majority of people living in that part of London could not afford many hobbies after having finished their working day. Since the future of the club appeared to be in danger, officials and players called a meeting in the pub to decide on Millwall's fate, the vote going to those who wished to carry on (Glinert 2009: 74).

Now called Millwall Athletic, the club opened its new ground on East Ferry Road, near Millwall Docks station³ in 1890. In a legendary FA Cup run, which led the dockers⁴ to the semi-finals of the oldest national football competition in the world (Faccendini 2018: 15), for the first time in its history some journalists called the club the Lions, which Millwall adopted as their nickname in the following years.

Even if the prestige of the football club kept on growing, in 1901 the Millwall Dock Company asked it to leave, because they were going to build a timber yard on the site of their football ground. It looked like the end for Millwall, but those who turned up for a meeting at Poplar Town Hall vowed to continue and found a new site at the tip of the isle in what was then optimistically called North Greenwich (Glinert 2009: 75).

Millwall's last home in East London was a pitch full of clay and sand, where it was difficult to play while it was raining. Since the board aimed to improve the club status, local players and supporters started to look for a new ground on the Isle of Dogs. However, in the summer of 1910 it was clear the club would be forced to leave the Isle in order to keep on growing. From then on, supporters had to bid farewell to such pre match institutions as Uncle Tom's Cabin sweet shop on British Street and forgo having their hair cut after the game at Elija Moor's Toilet Club on East Ferry Road (Glinert 2009: 76).

3 - This station, which was situated on the corner of Glengall Road and East Ferry Road, opened on the 18th of December, 1871 and closed on the 4th of May, 1926. Nowadays, Crossharbour DLR (Docklands Light Railway) station is situated on the site of the old Millwall Docks station.

4 - This was the original nickname of the club, which was due to the social background of its fans, most of whom used to work in the London Docklands.

However, even if a relocation to another part of the capital city of the United Kingdom may have put traditional rituals at risk, at the same time a move to a modern and larger ground may have helped the football club to organize many more initiatives for its fans and for its local communities and, consequently, may have favoured a more effective promotion and protection of the fundamental rights of the individuals and of the local residents.

3. The South London era

The new Millwall stadium was built south of the River Thames on Cold Blow Lane, New Cross and was opened in 1910 by the then Football Association President Lord Kinnaird. Its main stand was designed by Archibald Leitch, an excellent architect from Glasgow, who was Britain's foremost football architect.

The new ground on Cold Blow Lane was immediately named The Den, since it was home of "The Lions", and although hemmed in considerably by railways and narrow lanes, it had the advantage of being within walking distance of three railway stations⁵ and in the midst of a rapidly growing residential area (Inglis 1987: 263).

Already during the building of the stadium, the importance of Millwall supporters emerged. In fact, volunteer labour raised the banking on this former vegetable patch, using up to 400 cart-loads of rubble per day (Inglis 1987: 263).

With regard to the background of its supporters, it has to be highlighted that a significant part of Millwall fans was still made up of dockers working on The Isle of Dogs, who used to cross both the Greenwich Foot Tunnel and the Rotherhithe Tunnel to reach The Den. Such was the symbiosis between the football club and its supporters, that for many years football authorities allowed Millwall

5 - The nearest railway stations to The Den were New Cross Gate, New Cross and South Bermondsey. The last one is just a five minute walk to The New Den, which is the current stadium of Millwall Football Club.

to start its home games at 3.15 pm in order to enable the dockers who used to work until late even on Saturday to come down to The Den and watch the game from its hallowed terraces. It should be highlighted that the decision taken by the aforementioned authorities was fully respectful of the right of the workers to rest, which has a constitutional dimension not only in a common law country such as the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, but also in a civil law one such as Italy⁶.

Even if the club was never able to reach the then First Division during those years, it used to attract several thousand people both in the league and in the Football Association Challenge Cup (FA Cup) games⁷.

However, the outbreak of the Second World War caused great damage to The Den. In fact, similarly to what happened to several parts of south east London and to the Docklands area, Southwark, New Cross and Lewisham were directly affected by the Blitz. The Main Stand was hit by a bomb in April 1943, while the Ilderton Road End and the Cold Blow Lane terrace were significantly damaged.

Because of the aforementioned damage, the club's future was put at risk once again, but the commendable effort of its fans and of local residents accelerated the renovation work. In 1946, The Lions were able to get back to their home ground and in October 1953 floodlights were used for the first time in the club's history for a friendly match against Manchester United. This significant event was conducted by the President of The Football League, Arthur

6 - In fact, the second paragraph of Article 36 of the 1948 Italian Constitution prescribes that any employed person has the right to weekly rest and cannot renounce it.

7 - The highest ever crowd at The Den was reached on the 20th of February, 1937, when 48,672 people attended the FA Cup fifth round tie against Derby County, which was won 2-1 by The Lions. After that victory, Millwall was able to beat Manchester City (which would eventually win the First Division title) 2-0 at The Den in the Quarter-finals of the FA Cup, before losing out 2-1 to Sunderland -which eventually won the trophy- in the semi-finals at Huddersfield.

Drewry CBE⁸, and was attended by a crowd of 20,000 (Ryan 2013: 154).

During that era, Millwall fans admired the never give up mentality of their players. In this regard, past, present and future generations will never forget the life of John Herbert Edwin Shepherd, who, after having spent several months in hospital in order to fight against polio, was able to realize a terrific mission. In fact, on the 25th of October, 1952, he scored four goals in his first ever English Football League away game. On that day, John's goals were vital in helping Millwall beat Leyton Orient 4-1 at Brisbane Road. A symbol of loyalty, fairness and courtesy on and off the pitch, John Shepherd is still the most prolific Millwall goalscorer in the FA Cup.

During those years, The Den was a fortress. Despite the somewhat primitive facilities, the compact nature of the ground and the close proximity of the terraces to the pitch, coupled with zealous and vocal supporters, generated an exciting atmosphere for the home players and fans, and a somewhat intimidating one for visiting teams (Ryan 2013: 151). Such was the strength of the club at The Den, that from the 22nd of August, 1964 to the 14th of January, 1967 Millwall got a record of 59 home games without defeat. During that era, two of the most prolific players were Joe Broadfoot, who scored 66 goals from 1958 to 1968, and Peter Burridge, who scored 64 times in two years (Marianella with Conte 2015: 163). The club was able to get many positive results on home soil even during the 1987/88 season in the second division. On that occasion, thanks to the excellent performances of players such as Brian Horne⁹, Nicky and

8 - In 1955 Arthur Drewry CBE became President of FIFA, the world governing institution of association football.

9 - The Millwall goalkeeper, who played very well during the whole season, saved a vital last minute penalty against Bournemouth on the 19th of April, 1988.

Phil Coleman¹⁰, Terry Hurlock¹¹, Jimmy Carter¹², Teddy Sheringham¹³, Tony Cascarino¹⁴ and of their teammates, Millwall reached the top tier of English football for the first time in its 103 years of history. In that season, the manager of Millwall was the Scot John Docherty. This had something of a poetic symmetry considering the historical links between the clubs formation in the heartland of the East End Docks, and the Scottish dockers who made up a large balance of their early membership (Nelson 2010: 160).

After having spent 83 years in its Cold Blow Lane home, the club changed the ground once again in 1993. In fact, Millwall FC have been playing at The Den, situated on Zampa Road, for twenty-seven years. The new stadium, which has a capacity of over 20,000, is in a very traditional part of London. The nearest railway station to the ground is South Bermondsey, which is only a five minute walk from the Zampa Road gates. There are regular trains connecting London Bridge and South Bermondsey in just four minutes.

One of the most successful managers of Millwall is Neil Harris, who managed The Lions for four and a half years until the first days

10 - In *I left my heart at Cold Blow Lane Annual 2018*, Phil Coleman said that his most memorable match in his Millwall career would be a tough choice between the Fa Youth Cup Final and his Football League debut against West Ham United.

11 - While he was playing for Millwall, Terry Hurlock was able to win three England B international caps. While wearing the Three Lions shirt, he scored one goal and played with Paul Gascoigne.

12 - After having spent four years at The Den, Carter played with Arsenal and Liverpool.

13 - In addition to having been a very prolific goal scorer during his spell at Millwall, Sheringham became a regular in the England national football team and he also scored for Manchester United in the 1998/99 UEFA Champions League final.

14 - Cascarino won 88 Republic of Ireland caps.

of October 2019¹⁵, when he resigned and was replaced by Gary Rowett. In addition to having achieved excellent results as a manager, Harris is also the club's all time leading scorer, with an impressive number of 138 goals in all competitions.

In 2017, Millwall FC won the Nickelodeon Family Club of the Year trophy at the annual English Football League Awards in London for the first time in the club's history. This shows once again the efforts of the club to support families who come down to The Den to support their heroes. The Zampa's Family Stand, situated in the Dockers Stand, is an area dedicated to families. It is equipped with games console, confectionary stalls, a mock dugout as well as face painters, regular raffles with prizes and so much more¹⁶. All of this is evidence once again of the attention paid by this South London football club to the fundamental rights of families, with particular reference to children. In fact, its initiatives enable younger generations to grow up in a particularly friendly atmosphere, where everybody is free to develop his/her own personality, in accordance with the provisions contained in the international conventions about the rights of children¹⁷.

15 - In fact, Harris managed to reach the play-off final in the season immediately following the relegation to the third tier of the English football pyramid; to win the play-off final in the following season and to consolidate the club in the second tier of the English football pyramid in the 2017/18 and 2018/19 seasons.

16 - <https://www.millwallfc.co.uk/news/2017/may/millwall-win-family-club-of-the-year/>, 1 May 2017.

17 - For instance, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which was ratified in the United Kingdom on the 16th of December, 1991 and which can be applied to any person under the age of 18. Moreover, according to an illustrious doctrine, a system for the protection of children's rights can also be obtained from the combined provisions of Articles 1, 8 and 34 of the European Convention on Human Rights (Lanza 2015), which was ratified in the UK in 1951. However, at the moment the UK has not approved a law that specifically regulates children's rights. Within a comparative perspective, the second paragraph of Article 31 of the 1948 Italian Constitution, instead, clarifies that the Republic of Italy protects, among others, childhood, favoring the institutions which are necessary for this purpose.

Moreover, the club organizes the annual Dockers Day, a very appreciated initiative to pay tribute to the dockers who have made London great over the decades. This project aims to promote the fundamental rights of elderly people, which include dignity and social involvement, that constitute two corollaries of the principle of substantial equality.

In addition to that, there are many Millwall fans who organize praiseworthy projects in order to support people in need of help. One of them is Ayse Smith, the editor of *The Lion Roars*¹⁸, a journal for Millwall supporters which has just celebrated its first thirty two years. She is very well known not only at The Den, but in London, in Kent and in the whole Millwall family for her volunteer tireless work, which includes gathering sleeping bags, blankets, hats and gloves for homeless veterans. She collects them before Millwall home games at the Zampa Road gate of The Den. Among other charitable initiatives organized by Ayse Smith, we should also remember the one concerning the sale of badges, whose profits go to charities which do cancer research and help homeless ex service personnel. Ayse's initiatives once again are evidence of the vital importance of Millwall fans for South London and the whole Millwall family, in respect for the supreme values of solidarity and help towards people in difficult situations.

4. The Millwall Community Trust

The Millwall Community Trust uses the power of sport to improve the lives of people in Lewisham, Southwark and the wider Millwall Community¹⁹. For example, Millwall Premier League kicks (Millwall PL kicks) organizes football sessions for people in the heart of local communities. Moreover, DS Lions offers an opportunity for

18 - This fanzine, which was born in 1988, offers an independent voice to Millwall fans and is a symbol of passion and bond for the traditions of Millwall. Its longest contributor is Neil Bradley, with his column Uwe for Hollywood.

19 - <https://www.millwallcommunity.org.uk>

anyone aged 5-9 years with Down's syndrome to enjoy themselves playing football and other sports together. In addition to that, the Walking Sports for Older people sessions are a good opportunity for older people in Southwark to go out together and meet new friends while enjoying themselves through participating in sporting activities. And there are many other initiatives, such as the MCT Traineeships programme, which involve young people from across all regions and aim to give them all the skills needed to get an apprenticeship, training or employment at the end of the course. Consequently, the role of Millwall Community Trust shows once again the fundamental actions taken in order to tackle some of the most threatening problems affecting local residents, taking into consideration the principles of social solidarity, which is a bulwark of modern democratic countries.

5. The Millwall Supporters' Club

It is now very important to mention the role of Millwall Supporters' Club, which is an independent voice on matters affecting Millwall Football Club and its supporters²⁰.

As Kathryn Gale, MSC chairwoman, recently said, "The Millwall Supporters' Club exists to ensure every fan enjoys being a Millwall fan and, if they attend a match, that they have the best experience possible". The chairwoman added that the MSC does that "by generally making sure everything runs smoothly for fans, but we also try to look at groups of fans who may have difficulties not always obvious to the club. That includes problems with local transport, so we lobby the local authorities to ensure that fans can access the ground as easily as possible. We also engage with any registered disabled fans to find if they have specific problems. For example, the club provides very good access for disabled supporters and a special

20 - <https://www.millwallsupportersclub.co.uk>

area to sit in which allows wheelchairs etc., but it was then highlighted that once in situ, it was difficult to access the food and drink stations. So we lobbied the club and they now provide people to take orders for food and drink and fetch it for those affected fans”²¹.

But the Millwall Supporters’ Club always organises many other praiseworthy projects, which make it very appreciated not only by Millwall fans living in London, but also by overseas supporters and local residents. In fact, Kathryn Gale highlighted that “we also try and help out financially where we can”²². For example, the MSC “provided tracksuits for a British Army regiment’s football team who have their barracks close to the club. We also provided some training kits for Fisher Football Club U16s (a very local club²³)”²⁴. The MSC chairwoman also said that their latest fundraising “is to try and provide the money to renovate a garden for a seven year old fan, who was born with cerebral palsy and cannot walk on uneven ground”²⁵. This is another very good initiative, which shows once again how the whole community can benefit from the projects of the Millwall Supporters’ Club.

In addition to that, the MSC “also provides all the media and communication for Millwall Lionesses, the ladies team”, free of charge. Even this service is very appreciated and should be highlighted as clearly as possible, because funding is much lower in

21 - Kathryn Gale said it in an e-mail interview that she gave me on the 3rd of January, 2019. a

22 - *Ivi*.

23 - Fisher Football Club was founded in 2009 by members of the Fisher Supporters Trust, after Fisher Athletic Football Club folded. They are now playing in the Southern Counties East League Premier Division and their stadium, whose name is St Paul’s Sports Ground, is situated on Salter Road, Rotherhithe, just two kilometres away from The Den.

24 - Kathryn Gale said it in an e-mail interview that she gave me on the 3rd of January, 2019.

25 - *Ivi*.

the women's game than it is in the world of men's football²⁶. Similar actions offer valuable help in achieving an effective promotion of women's football and implement the supreme constitutional principles for the protection of gender equality, which is guaranteed also by Article 14 of the European Convention on Human Rights²⁷.

Kathryn Gale added that the club is "also setting up overseas Millwall Supporters' clubs. Apart from putting the whole Millwall family in touch, it will also mean that should a fan travel abroad they will have readymade contacts in that country should they need them"²⁸.

To sum up, the MSC chairwoman said that "we try and provide for every type of fan, we are anti-discriminatory and open to any fan contacting us. We cannot solve every problem, but we will do our best to minimise any negative issues, at the same time providing a positive experience for as many as possible through their contact with the club, be it as a fan or part of the local community"²⁹.

6. Conclusion

To sum up, it is useful to remember once again the vital role of Millwall Football Club and its supporters, not only for people who love the game, but for the whole South London community. In fact, the continuous initiatives organized for young people, its supporters and local residents make Millwall a very appreciated institution, with a look to the future without forgetting the values of traditional London.

26 - *Ivi*.

27 - The European Court of Human Rights said that the aforementioned provisions include even indirect discrimination in *Zarb Adami v. Malta* (2006), Reports 2006-. For an in-depth analysis of gender equality, see I. Radacic, *Gender Equality Jurisprudence of the European Court of Human Rights*, in *The European Journal of International Law*, Vol. 19, no. 4, 2008, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 841-857.

28 - Kathryn Gale said it in an e-mail interview that she gave me on the 3rd of January, 2019.

29 - *Ivi*.

Following this club is a way of life and nobody will prevent old and new generations from doing it.

Long may it go on spreading its imperishable ideals across a world made up of appearances.

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PART TWO

London in Literature

Federica Torselli

Literary Londoners: Issues of Gender and Urban Spaces

Abstract

Angela Carter wrote that cities have sexes and that London is a man. Even Peter Ackroyd, in his *London: The Biography* acknowledges that London is generally believed to be a male city. Its buildings, symbols of power and *grandeur*, perpetuate a male ideology that inevitably affects the way urban space is perceived by female citizens. The aim of this paper is to shed some light on the relationship between gender and movement in the modern city, concentrating on the perception of the urban environment in the literary work by two Londoners with an outstanding feminist perspective: Virginia Woolf and Doris Lessing. Given the early definition of *flâneur* by Baudelaire, it is interesting to consider the relationship that generated from the interaction of two female sensibilities with the urban spaces of London. In terms of gender, Virginia Woolf challenges the identification of the *flâneur* with men and yet poses some important issues concerning the relationship between gender and movement (e.g. the perception of constriction and of subjugation of the female identity in a male society), suggesting a gender-based reconsideration of the extent of freedom she (as an outsider) could enjoy in a society of male insiders. A few decades later, the sense of exclusion has not totally disappeared. However, Doris Lessing draws attention to women's changing relationship with the spaces of the city and the urban map, advancing in the process of more conscious and secure appropriation of the alternative figure of the *flâneuse*.

Key Words: city, London, gender, movement, flaneur, flâneuse, Woolf, Lessing.

The aim of this article is to shed some light on the relationship between gender and movement in the modern city, concentrating on the perception of the urban environment in the literary work by two Londoners with an outstanding feminist perspective: Virginia Woolf (1882-1941) and Doris Lessing (1919-2013). Women ahead of their time, both of them were profoundly inspired by the London cityscape to the point that personal experience around the city fed their literary work. Furthermore, both of them experienced the consequences the war had on the urban space and on the female self-perception, leading to a gender-based reconsideration of the extent to which freedom could be enjoyed by the *flâneuse* in a society of male insiders. All these issues will be explored in some of the fictional and non-fictional works of the authors, taking in due account the biographical and historical details behind the literary texts that enhance or impede the creativity of the two writers.

This paper deals with the years from 1880 until 1940s/1950s, that is the period ranging from the first generation of New Women, who succeeded in gaining access to the spaces of their cities, to the post-war generation. Until the Victorian *fin de siècle*, the traditional view of the feminine had been the Victorian domestic ideology that revolved around two central ideas. The first one was the figure of the middle-class domestic woman endowed with a naturally self-sacrificial spirit and the representation of familial virtues. The popular image of “Angel in the House” came from the title of Coventry Patmore’s long poem, known for the way it idealised women as devoted and docile wives and mothers. The second idea was the binary logic of separate spheres, whereby the feminine domain of private life opposes the masculine domain of public life and work. The city, which was part of the public sphere, was regarded as dangerous and corrupting, the location of crime and poverty. Respectable women, according to this ideology, could not be part of the public sphere of city life. If they left the safety of the home and were on the streets, they became corrupted by the transgressive values of the city. They would be thought to be either prostitutes or working women (https://www.bbc.co.uk/history/trail/victorian_britain/women_out/urban_life_o3.shtml).

Nonetheless, “evidence of the everyday presence of ordinary women on the city streets can be found in many historical sources from the period” (https://www.bbc.co.uk/history/trail/victorian_britain/women_out/urban_life_04.shtml). The division between the two spheres was not as fixed as it may appear, and it became increasingly blurred towards the end of the nineteenth century, when the figure of the New Woman appeared as a response to the period’s gendered expectations. She was “a threat to the status quo” (Ledger 1997: 11) and played a significant part in the complex social changes that led to the redefining of gender roles. The representations of the New Woman in the late-Victorian discourse were heterogeneous and ambivalent. She was believed to lack femininity in her appearance and at the same time to have an extreme susceptibility to feelings, to the point that her freedom in relationships with the other sex was seen as a display of her independence. (<http://www.victorianweb.org/gender/diniejko1.html>)

At the beginning of the 20th century, gender and sex codes were famously questioned by the Bloomsbury Group, which was founded in an increasingly expanding urban reality. Among the most prominent members of the group, Virginia Woolf was born in London in 1882 and spent her childhood there, at 22 Hyde Park Gate in Kensington. In 1904, after the death of her father, she moved to 46 Gordon Square. Bloomsbury was, according to her, “the most beautiful, the most exciting, the most romantic place in the world” (Woolf 2002: 46). In the essay entitled *Old Bloomsbury*, the new district is repeatedly compared with Kensington, where she had previously lived. At the beginning, she finds the din coming from the street even shocking, as her previous home had been surrounded by a muffled silence. However, Bloomsbury turns out to be much more interesting and Virginia, from her windows, looks at sinister and strange characters walking past her house, showing an early attraction to the different aspects of modern urban life.

One of her greatest pleasures was walking the streets of her home town and her writing is full of walks. The best known and most discussed of these walks is that of Mrs. Dalloway through Westminster and Mayfair to buy flowers in Bond Street at the

beginning of the novel (Larson 2017: 1). London is also the main topic in a number of her essays. *The London Scene* is a collection of six essays (*The Docks of London*, *Oxford Street Tide*, *Great Men's Houses*, *Abbeys and Cathedrals*, *This is the House of Commons*, *Portrait of a Londoner*) published by Good Housekeeping magazine in 1931 and 1932. In particular, *Street Haunting: A London Adventure*, written in 1927 and published three years later, captures the pleasure that the narrator takes in an evening walk through the city. The winter walk allows the author to examine the city's inhabitants and the spaces they occupy.

The experience of walking through the streets of a city is undoubtedly linked with the figure of the *flâneur*. In the late 1850s, Baudelaire defined the perfect *flâneur* as a passionate spectator, who rejoices immensely to be «in the heart of the multitude, amid the ebb and flow of movement» (Baudelaire 1995: 9). When Baudelaire wrote this essay, Paris was experiencing a period of transformation and modernization and the ever-changing spaces of the modern city continued to attract these wanderers and spectators. As suggested, the *flâneur* came to be identified with “a passionate, invisible, male observer of diurnal and nocturnal life in the arcades, parks, boulevards, and cafés” and “he identified with the public spaces of the city” (O’Byrne 2014: 72).

The identification of the *flâneur* with a male figure is so well-established that, as Lauren Elkin points out, most French dictionaries do not even include the word *flâneuse* (Elkin 2016: 7). In addition, feminist criticism has tended to support the masculine definition, denying the possibility of the female equivalent of the *flâneuse* (Parsons 2000: 4-5).

For this reason, it is interesting to consider the relationship that generated from the interaction of two different female sensibilities with the urban space of London, which inevitably poses them as observers and intruders in a male dominated field. In terms of gender, the essay by Virginia Woolf *Street Haunting* is a case in point, since it challenges the identification of the *flâneur* with men and yet poses some important issues concerning the relationship

between gender and movement. At the beginning of her essay, Virginia Woolf has to invent an excuse (buying a lead pencil) in order to fulfil her desire to ramble the streets of London, giving the reader a perception of constriction and of subjugation of the female identity in a male society.

In *Street Haunting*, the house becomes a symbol of restlessness and solitude, even though inside it the identity of the author may be well defined. Leaving the house signals the passage between identity and anonymity, between solitude and society:

We are no longer quite ourselves, as we step out of the house on a fine evening between four and six, we shed the self our friends know us by and become part of that vast republican army of anonymous trampers, whose society is so agreeable after the solitude of one's own room. (Woolf 1993: 70)

The contrast between domestic and public spaces is clear. Virginia Woolf famously scorned the idea of the Angel in the House and was extremely concerned with the possibilities that were precluded to the women of her age by domestic ideology.

Once the threshold has been crossed and the house left, the experience of Virginia Woolf around the streets of London in *Street Haunting* has been considered ambivalent. As Susan Squier wrote, "Whether she thought it "the most beautiful place on the face of the earth" or "the very devil," to Virginia Woolf the city of London was the focus for an intense, often ambivalent, lifelong scrutiny" (Squier 1983: 488). In *Street Haunting*, Virginia Woolf herself considers an ambivalent attitude in the approach to the city. At first, she states that her experience of rambling the streets of London is highly perceptive and the walker turns into an oyster of perceptiveness, an enormous eye:

But when the door shuts on us, all that vanishes. The shell-like covering which our souls have excreted to house themselves, to make for themselves a shape

distinct from others, is broken, and there is left of all these wrinkles and roughnesses a central oyster of perceptiveness, an enormous eye. How beautiful a street is in winter! (Woolf 1993: 71)

The movement of the eye, like that of a butterfly moving from one flower to the next, is that of the author across the streets of London. The superficial and visual perception of the surrounding spaces determines the acknowledgment of the beauty of the city: “How beautiful a street is in winter!” (Woolf 1993: 71), “How beautiful a London street is [...]” (Woolf 1993: 71).

However, the twofold (and sordid) nature of the city is soon implicitly revealed. The author warns against the risk of penetrating deep into surfaces, lest “the army of human beings may rouse itself and assert all its oddities and sufferings and sordidities” (Woolf 1993: 72). Probably, it is this warning that made Susan Squier claim that, in *Street Haunting*, social criticism is restrained. Nevertheless, it could be argued that social commentary and criticism emerge prominently in the scenes of urban life that Woolf depicts. For instance, she halts at the door of a boot shop and through the depiction of the episode she witnesses, Virginia Woolf conveys the mediocrity of the girl’s character, which parallels her physical deformity. The sense of physical deformity which emanates from the dwarf-girl pervades also the following scene, when two blind men appear, marching down the street. The imagination of the author takes over and the two men and the dwarf girl seem to take part to a “hobbling grotesque dance” (Woolf 1993: 74), which engages all the other people on the street. Furthermore, the author wonders in which crevices or crannies these figures (she calls them derelicts) may live, as if they were more obscure creatures than human beings. These imaginative thoughts and explicit contrasting images turn into a more implicit social commentary and political debate, denouncing inequality and the misery of these derelicts, who often lie near buildings which are symbols of wealth and commerce.

The debated involvement of Virginia Woolf, which Squier doubts, calls into question her position as an outsider or insider. The role of the outsider, Squier argues, could also be suggested by the position of the woman in society. Indeed, a woman walking alone through London at twilight was always “at risk of being seen as a streetwalker, and treated as such, by the men she encounters” (Squier 1983: 48).

The role of the woman as an outsider appears to be a significant issue in the text by Virginia Woolf *A Room of One's Own*. The essay contains Woolf's famous argument that, “A woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction” (Woolf 2001: 2), which claims the importance of financial freedom and independence for women in order to achieve intellectual freedom. Intellectual freedom can be thus achieved through financial possessions, but at the same time she claims the right for women, especially writers, to wander the streets of their cities, as a way to enhance female creativity. In the essay, a central role is played by the walk of Woolf's alter ego, which takes her from the men's college in the centre of the fictitious university town of Oxbridge to the women's college on the outskirts of the same town. On her visit, Woolf's narrator finds herself repeatedly locked out from the chapel and the library. The exclusion from these buildings leads to a different perspective and challenging attitude of the author towards existing gender codes: “I thought how unpleasant it is to be locked out; and I thought how it is worse perhaps to be locked in.” (Woolf 2001: 19)

According to Susan Squier, in *A Room of One's Own* the city embodies the difficulties in a woman writer's position in a patriarchal culture. Woolf meditates upon the secular exclusion of women from literature, that is also their exclusion and marginalization from the spaces occupied by men. Woolf's readers just need to imagine a fictitious sister of William Shakespeare, called Judith and born with as much talent as his brother. But in the 16th century England, as a woman, Judith cannot develop her talent. As Virginia Woolf imagines, Judith is never sent to school, is pressured into marriage, and is consistently denied her independence. She runs away to London but her escape ends not with fame and fortune but with her

death. Judith's struggle to create a place for herself as a writer in London fails and her story represents the impact of the urban environment on a woman writer's creativity.

In *Street Haunting*, the comparison between male and female experience is part of the meditation on the variety of human nature and on the relativity of the perception of reality, which is generated from the variety of perspectives from which the city can be told. The issue of relativity permeates, firstly, questions about our true nature:

Or is the true self neither this nor that, neither here nor there, but something so varied and wandering that it is only when we give the rein to its wishes and let it take its way unimpeded that we are indeed ourselves? (Woolf 1993: 76)

Then, the variegated nature of human beings is clearly in contrast with the unity required by the bourgeois life, where good citizens have their defined identity and place in society. The identity, the whole compelled by convenience, is a male figure:

Circumstances compel unity; for convenience sake a man must be a whole. The good citizen when he opens his door in the evening must be banker, golfer, husband, father; not a nomad wandering the desert, a mystic staring at the sky [...]. (Woolf 1993: 76).

In this passage, Woolf seems to suggest that the male is constricted too. As previously mentioned, one of the main themes of the essay by Woolf turns out to be the opposition between movement and constriction. This opposition is explored through the contrast between a settled life and a nomad wandering the infinite space of the desert. In the following scene, this contrast is conveyed again in the description of a second-hand bookshop. More specifically, the

bookseller's wife stands for the feeling of safety deriving from a fixed identity and status. By contrast, the books are wild and homeless, and resemble the experience of homelessness of the *flâneur*. The variety and multiplicity of human nature the narrator recognizes affects deeply the identity of the wanderer and the way he/she moves and suggests further reflections upon it. Interestingly, the experience of wandering through books is compared to the act of walking across the streets:

The number of books in the world is infinite, and one is forced to glimpse and nod and move on after a moment of talk, a flash of understanding, as, in the street outside, one catches a word in passing and from a chance phrase fabricates a lifetime (Woolf 1993: 78).

The sociability the author finds in the streets is explored through the act of dipping in and out of people's minds, which implies, as Woolf claims in the final part of her essay, the estrangement of the author from her own identity:

And what greater delight and wonder can there be than to leave the straight lines of personality and deviate into those footpaths that lead beneath brambles and thick tree trunks into the heart of the forest where live those wild beasts, our fellow men? (Woolf 1993: 81)

A decade later, the psychological impact of the war hinders creativity for Virginia Woolf. The loss of self and identity now experienced in the wartime city is not any longer a mark of freedom. As she writes in her diary in 1940, the house becomes again a place of security: "The war [...] has taken away the outer wall of security. No echo comes back. I have no surroundings." (Woolf 1975: 324-325)

The consequences of the war and its impact on the perception of the female urban stroller links Woolf's experience to Doris Lessing, winner of the Nobel prize in 2007. Like Virginia Woolf, she refused to be classified as a feminist writer and an advocator for the feminist movement in its narrowest meaning of what she refers to as "sex war" in her Preface to *The Golden Notebook* (Lessing 2007: 8). However, women's issue and perception of the world has been an important concern in most of Lessing's works, alongside the development of women's consciousness and their search for identity.

Doris Lessing moved from Rhodesia to London in 1949, after World War II. The city represented for her "a clean slate, a new page" (Lessing, 1997, 3). At the beginning, she "returned to a child's way of seeing and feeling, every person, building, bus, street, striking my senses with the shocking immediacy of a child's life, everything oversized, very bright, very dark, smelly, noisy" (Lessing 1997: 4), that recalls Virginia Woolf's sensory perception of the world, her powerful oyster of perceptiveness.

When she arrived in London, the city was war-damaged:

It [London] was unpainted, buildings were stained and cracked and dull and grey; it was war-damaged, some areas all ruins, and under them holes full of dirty water [...]. No one who has known only today's London of self-respecting clean buildings, crowded cafés and restaurants, good food and coffee, streets full until after midnight with mostly young people having a good time, can believe what London was like then (Lessing 1997: 4).

Unlike the previous conflict, the Second World War intruded drastically on civilian life. Women lost or gave up their homes because of the bombing and gained new economic and social freedoms because of the nation's need for them to be involved in war work. From 1941, women were called up for war work, in roles such

as mechanics, engineers, munitions workers, air raid wardens, bus and fire engine drivers. Therefore, they were forced to grow accustomed to a nomadic rather than settled lifestyle.

The experience of a woman moving around post war London is at the centre of the first part of Doris Lessing's *The Four-Gated City* and is significant in terms of the female self-perception and identity in the urban environment. *The Four-Gated City*, published in 1969, is the fifth book of the autobiographical series *Children of Violence*. Martha Quest is the central character, who grows up in South Africa and settles in England in the aftermath of World War II. Having left her native Africa to enjoy the freedom of being an outsider in London, Martha is portrayed in the first part of the novel "as a wandering and placeless figure" (Parsons 2000: 214). She enjoys the anonymity and the freedom of the metropolis, which she compares to her previous life in a small town, where people have to wear a mask and conform to expectations. In London, the masks of identity are uncovered:

For a few weeks she had been anonymous, unnoticed, - free. Never before in her life had she known this freedom. Living in a small town anywhere means preserving one's self behind a mask. Coming to a big city for those who have never known one means, first of all, before anything else, and the more surprising if one has not expected it, that freedom: all the pressures are off, no one cares, no need for the mask. For weeks then, without boundaries, without definition, like a balloon drifting and bobbing, nothing had been expected to her (Lessing 1995: 12).

At first, in the modern city of the 1950s, Martha's gender does not hinder her movement. However, this changes at Bayswater Road, where men prowl amidst the trees after women:

In this stretch of the Bayswater Road, men prowled after women. Invisible boundaries, invisibly marked territories [...] Martha now walked fast, protected by the thick ugliness of Mrs Van's coat; but she was a "young woman", category "young woman" – yes, she must remember that she was, and that along these pavements, a category of being, "man", prowled beside or behind her. That was what she must be for a few minutes, not Martha or "Matty", only "young woman" (Lessing 1995: 42).

In some parts of the city, women get a label and turn into an object of consumption. The spaces described have been especially designed for men and crossing the borders means becoming immediately associated with a streetwalker. However, along the prostitute-lined Queensway she actually feels quite free and safe in her obvious distinction from these other streetwalkers.

Again, a few pages later, a more conscious appropriation of her role as a *flâneuse* and of her connection with the city stands out clearly:

Since she had been in London, she had been alone, and had learned that she had never been anything else in her life. Far from being an enemy, it was her friend. This was the best thing she had known, to walk down streets interminably, to walk through mornings, and afternoons and evenings, alone, not knowing where she was unless she walked beside the river (Lessing 1995: 46).

The act of walking without a clear purpose and destination becomes associated with a deep and complex process of building her identity. She experiences solitude but at the same time she recognizes a friend in the city, that gives her no direction but a fixed point: the Thames.

Furthermore, the act of walking and her desire to go on walking seems to mirror the incapability to step into a single and defined identity, identified by the jobs she is offered and that she is unwilling to accept:

She didn't want to choose this slot or that, this or that job, this or that person [...] If only she could go on like this, walking for ever through the interminable, damp, hostile street of this doomed city, all cracked and thin and darkened by war [...] her mind was swinging slowly from light to dark, dark to light (Lessing 1995: 46).

The process of building her identity is therefore in progress and the urban space is where her identity is continuously negotiated.

The issue of movement calls into question a brief consideration of the role of the home. Until now, the domestic spaces had been seen as constrictive and repressing. However, it is important to underline their function as retreat and protection, too. As the war approaches, the loss of self experienced in the street, that is a mark of freedom for the *flâneuse* of 1930, becomes an intensified condition in the city. As previously mentioned, houses become places of security for Virginia Woolf, when they are threatened by destruction. The theme of the room as a place of retreat from social expectations can be found in *To Room Nineteen* by Doris Lessing. The short story is a psychologically penetrating study of a woman who finds ultimate fulfilment in neither her marriage nor her children and, feeling trapped by traditional gender roles, seeks solitude in – to echo the title of Virginia Woolf's famous essay – a room of her own.

In conclusion, anonymity is what women seek in the streets of a city, which becomes the place where they get free from social demands. At the same time, the city is the place where they confront issues of identity and roles. From this short analysis it is clear that, even after the war, urban spaces still perpetuate a perceptible male ideology. In both Woolf and Lessing, the buildings of the city, icons

of power and grandeur, are seen as symbols of a patriarchal society which inevitably affects the way urban space is perceived by female citizens. In *Three Guineas*, walking past Westminster Abbey and The House of Parliament, Virginia Woolf notes that it's there that "our fathers and brothers have spent their lives [...] preaching, money-making, administering justice" (Woolf 2001: 19). Doris Lessing too, in her short story *Her*, deals with the theme of women in politics, and how their presence in spaces traditionally occupied by men is still clearly discriminated. Like Virginia Woolf, she made a great contribution to the cause drawing attention to women's changing relationship with the spaces of the city and the urban map, advancing the process of more conscious and secure appropriation of the alternative figure of the *flâneuse*.

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Anastasia Logotheti

**“Best Urban Prospect in the World”:
London in the Recent Fiction of Ian
McEwan**

Abstract

Set in London, two of Ian McEwan’s recent novels, *Sweet Tooth* (2012) and *The Children Act* (2014), treat the city as an intensely personal space. The depiction of London in McEwan’s work has received some critical attention, most notably by Sebastian Groes: this critic considers the representation of the metropolis as dystopian or utopian, mediated through intertextual allusions to Victorian and Modernist canonical works (Groes 2013). While Groes (2013) and other scholars, such as Marcus (2013) and Ryle (2010), focus on McEwan’s novel *Saturday* (2005), the depiction of London in this author’s more recent works remains unexplored. This essay problematizes the evolving relationship of “England’s national author” (Zalewski 2009) to the metropolis and considers how characters in McEwan’s recent fiction experience the city in ways which echo the literary canon, self-consciously viewing London as the “best urban prospect in the world” (McEwan 2014: 91).

Key Words: Ian McEwan, London, contemporary British fiction, city, urban, English novel.

“Wordsworth was right ... best urban prospect in the world.”

The Children Act (McEwan 2014: 91)

Set in London, two of Ian McEwan’s recent novels, *Sweet Tooth* (2012) and *The Children Act* (2014), treat the city as an intensely personal space. In *Sweet Tooth* Serena Frome, a “clerical officer of the lowest grade” in MI5 in the early 1970s (McEwan 2012: 42), lives in an “unmodernised” room in Camden Town, typical of a time when the houses in the area had “not yet escaped their inheritance of Victorian gloom” (McEwan 2012: 63-4). The protagonist of *The Children Act*, High Court Judge Fiona Maye, who enjoys the exclusivity of residing at Gray’s Inn, to her a “familiar sanctuary” (McEwan 2014: 125), displays “a north Londoner’s ignorance of and disdain for the boundless shabby tangle of London south of the river” (McEwan 2014: 93). In both novels McEwan associates urban culture and the relationship the characters have with the city of London to themes of identity by paying homage to the literature which has shaped the representation of London as a city.

The depiction of London in McEwan’s work has received some critical attention, most notably by Sebastian Groes: this critic considers the representation of the metropolis as dystopian or utopian, mediated through intertextual allusions to Victorian and Modernist canonical works (Groes 2013). While Groes (2013) and other scholars, such as Marcus (2013) and Ryle (2010), focus on McEwan’s novel *Saturday* (2005), the depiction of London in this author’s more recent works remains unexplored. This essay problematizes the evolving relationship of “England’s national author” (Zalewski 2009) to the metropolis and considers how characters in McEwan’s recent fiction experience the city in ways which echo the literary canon, self-consciously viewing London as the “best urban prospect in the world” (McEwan 2014: 91).

1. Sweet Tooth

Published in 2012, Ian McEwan's twelfth novel, *Sweet Tooth*, is set in London and Brighton in 1972-74. Under the guise of a spy thriller and a love story, this novel is a self-reflexive narrative which depicts this author's continuing interest in the history and geography of England. McEwan himself terms *Sweet Tooth* a “muted and distorted autobiography” (Cooke 2012) since aspects of his own education and early literary career have been revisited and assigned to one of the major characters, young novelist Tom Haley, resulting in “a weirdly refracted fictional autobiography” (Stossel 2012). McEwan's own editor at Cape, Tom Maschler, appears in the novel (McEwan 2012: 224-25) and, like the legendary editor of *The New Review*, Ian Hamilton, who makes another notable cameo (McEwan 2012: 259-63), propel Haley, like the young McEwan, towards public notice. Thus, *Sweet Tooth* draws equally on McEwan's own literary production and the geopolitics of the early 1970s.

Conflict in *Sweet Tooth* emerges through domestic secret-service operations related to Cold-War politics: in the 1960s cultural propaganda involved the covert sponsorship of anti-communist intellectuals who, through their artistic work, promoted Western ideology unaware they are employed by intelligence agencies. Building on the well-known example of CIA-funded magazine *Encounter* (McEwan 2012: 90), McEwan invents such an MI5 operation and codenames it “Sweet Tooth” (McEwan 2012: 97), suggesting both the pleasure and the damage such an operation inevitably produces. A seemingly harmless habit provides a childish and comical term behind which hide state institutions which seek to control ideology and “extend” their own “dominion” (McEwan 2012: 305) while seeming to defend Western freedoms. In the final chapter Haley explicitly states that “the project was rotten and doomed from the start” (McEwan 2012: 318). “Sweet Tooth” is an apt title for a novel full of secrets and lies exploring the “soft Cold War” (McEwan 2012: 305). Recorded throughout *Sweet Tooth* in almost every chapter are highlights of historical events: “energy crises and power

cuts, weak government, unions with insurrectionary ambitions, nukes. Decadence, decay, decline, dull inefficiency and apocalypse...” (McEwan 2012: 24).

Narrated in the present, *Sweet Tooth* explores the relationship between authority and authorship through a plot which toys with the conventions of spy fiction associated with Graham Greene and John le Carré. Fact and fiction mingle in *Sweet Tooth* and inform the metaphors which highlight the similarities in evidence-gathering actions common to the production of any story: “silence, discretion, patient watching, and writing” (McEwan 2012: 307). Over twenty-two chapters narrated in a chronologically forward manner, an MI5 low-level clerk, speed-reading Serena Frome, “a simple sort of reader” who makes “no claims to sophistication” (McEwan 2012: 159), is assigned to recruit Haley so as “to have a novelist on the list” of Sweet-Tooth-sponsored young intellectuals (McEwan 2012: 92). Before meeting him, she reads and analyses, in the first half of the novel (chapters 8-10), Haley’s published stories which are presented in condensed paraphrases with quotations in italics. Readers familiar with McEwan’s early stories recognize that Tom Haley’s fiction is a reworking of some of McEwan’s own published material from the short-story collection *In Between the Sheets* (1978).

Historical events related to the Cold War in Britain, such as the ongoing attempts to recruit Cambridge graduates for MI5 and MI6, the domestic and foreign branches of the secret services respectively, create an authentic context for McEwan’s fictional undercover agents. A context of crisis also acts as a metaphor for the conflict between views of reading and writing literature represented respectively by the two main characters: twenty-two-year-old Serena, “a girl with untutored tastes” in literature and in life (McEwan 2012: 7) and “the basest of readers” (McEwan 2012: 104), who believes that “writers owe their readers a duty of care, of mercy” (McEwan 2012: 105); and twenty-seven-year-old Tom, an aspiring novelist, who prefers the experimental fiction of John Fowles (McEwan 2012: 184) and therefore practices, in Serena’s view, “wilful narrative sadism” in the fiction he produces (McEwan 2012: 109).

The daughter of an Anglican Bishop who grew up in a “small city in the east of England” (McEwan 2012: 1), Serena introduces herself as “both clever and beautiful” (McEwan 2012: 4) despite her unsophisticated taste in reading (McEwan 2012: 6) and her struggle when studying Mathematics at Cambridge where she only “managed a third” (McEwan 2012: 5). Throughout the novel Serena is tutored by her lovers, first by professor Tony Canning and then by Tom Haley. Both seek to make her more cultured as well as more erudite since Serena’s formal education seems to have left her ignorant in matters of politics, history and art. Thus, *Sweet Tooth* appears to be not only a tale of romance and espionage but also a novel of education, a *Bildungsroman*, which echoes *Great Expectations* (1861) and *Jane Eyre* (1847).

A first-person narrative, *Sweet Tooth* focuses on a character who is in her early sixties at the time she tells her story. Like the narrator of a traditional, nineteenth-century novel, Serena summarizes her childhood and Cambridge education in chapter 1, focusing on being recruited into MI5 by an older, married man, Tony Canning, “an old MI5 hand himself” (McEwan 2012: 14), who remains a mystery until the end. Their brief affair, Serena’s successful interview with MI5, the bureaucratic and patriarchal environment of the civil services which treats female recruits as lowly clerks are presented in chapters 2-6: “I was just one more office girl. ... typing straight-backed ... in a smoky room. ... a clerical officer of the lowest grade” (McEwan 2012: 42). After months of unglamorous office routine and minimal wages, Serena is finally given a mission (in chapter 7) which entails reading the work of a young academic, like McEwan a Sussex-University graduate, and convincing him to receive financial support from “Freedom International”, an existing Foundation. MI5 hopes that Tom’s work, once he devotes himself to writing, will support their propaganda efforts to “encourage the right people” (McEwan 2012: 93). For the next three chapters (8-10) Serena reads Tom Haley’s work and puzzles over the author of such disturbing fiction. The following three chapters (11-13) record their initial meeting at the Sussex-University campus and Serena’s continuing fascination with Haley, who eventually agrees to the sponsorship.

Chapters 14-21 narrate the developing romance and emerging literary success of Tom Haley. Working for MI5 in London during the week and travelling to Brighton to spend weekends with Tom, Serena unsuccessfully seeks to keep the personal and the professional separate, inevitably betraying her mission and her lover: “For all the mess I was in, I didn’t know how I could have done things differently. ... I was trapped and I always had been” (McEwan 2012: 283). Chapter 21 focuses on Serena’s entrapment and Tom’s disappearance, preparing us for the final chapter all of which is Tom’s letter to Serena. Through the eighteen-page letter, which includes “a declaration of love and a marriage proposal” (McEwan 2012: 319), we find out that Tom has discovered Serena’s spy mission and has himself engaged in counter espionage: “You didn’t ask me if I wanted to be part of Sweet Tooth, I wouldn’t ask you if you wanted to be in my story” (McEwan 2012: 308). The brown-paper parcel left for Serena at Haley’s (now empty) Brighton flat contains the only draft of a novel, that is, *Sweet Tooth*. Serena can destroy it or agree to assist Tom in revising her story to publish decades later: “this letter, with your consent, will be *Sweet Tooth*’s final chapter” (McEwan 2012: 320). The mystery at the heart of this novel is left unsolved: who is the author and who is the voice? Like urban sleuths, the readers have to retrace clues in the narrative to build a hypothesis.

As the narrator is also a reader and a writer, narrative itself, as storytelling, as meaning-making process, as imaginative reworking of information, becomes the focus of this novel which concerns itself with the self-as-text: how we read and write ourselves and the world we inhabit. The collection of intelligence, for spies and ordinary readers of novels alike, is based on processing facts and the suspension of disbelief. Empathy is required in both cases: “I had to become you and understand you”, Tom declares, “this is what novels demand” (McEwan 2012: 318-19). While spying is an act of betrayal, “mutual surveillance” may also develop into “the business” of “watching” over each other (McEwan 2012: 319). The novel’s final words, “it’s up to you” (McEwan 2012: 320), refer to the reader as much as to the fictional recipient of this invitation to

determine the kind of novel this is. With equal ambivalence the dystopian aspects of life in the metropolis balance against the fascination with London, a space of infinite possibility.

Rejecting conventional closure, *Sweet Tooth* provides readers with two endings and a variety of possible outcomes based on the choices readers make regarding the genre in which they prefer to place the novel. If this is predominantly a tale of espionage, then Serena is a failed spy who has exposed herself, her operation and MI5. The final chapter, i.e., Tom's letter, signifies the end of their affair in such a reading. On the contrary, if this work is viewed as a romance, then the lovers will survive the exposure and the betrayal inherent in mutual spying and lies. Tom's letter in this case is the final chapter in Serena's memoir penned by Tom (eventually in collaboration with his wife?) and published when the Official Secrets Act allows (McEwan 2012: 319). Whatever the readers' choice, the open-endedness of the plot, which invites immediate rereading, makes this a recursive text typical of a postmodern novel produced by a metropolitan author for a sophisticated, metropolitan reader.

From the first paragraph the narrator presents herself as a fatal woman in her youth and a wise one in her later life, adopting a more distant and ironic tone towards her younger self:

My name is Serena Frome (rhymes with plume) and almost forty years ago I was sent on a secret mission for the British Security Service. I didn't return safely. Within eighteen months of joining I was sacked, having disgraced myself and ruined my lover, though he certainly had a hand in his own undoing (McEwan 2012: 1).

To the careful reader, the protagonist reveals herself from the start as more than a disgraced spy about to narrate the events which

led to her dishonourable dismissal from MI5 and “ruined” her lover. Her fanciful name is the first clue: while her first name, Serena, suggests the allure of the mythical siren, her last name is counterintuitive in its sound. Since the text immediately corrects readers in terms of how to pronounce the narrator’s last name, the apparent meaning in this pair of words (from(e) / plume) signifies that Serena’s origin is a writer’s quill, exposing her as a *nom de plume*, an authorial mask.

This opening makes the novel immediately self-conscious by alerting us that we are reading a metafictional account: throughout the story clues abound which suggest that the “hand” holding the “plume” belongs to the “ruined lover” (McEwan 2012: 1). When at the end of the novel Tom’s letter declares that we have been reading Haley’s version of Serena’s story, and readers are invited to construct their desired version of the novel’s ending, the reflexivity becomes dizzying: McEwan is writing Tom who is writing Serena; but McEwan, as Tom Haley, is also rewriting early McEwan. If readers react as Serena does, claiming that “I didn’t like tricks, I liked life as I knew it recreated on the page”, then Tom’s response to Serena’s complaint suggests McEwan’s attitude towards fiction: “It wasn’t possible to recreate life on the page without tricks” (McEwan 2012: 189). As Peter Childs notes, *Sweet Tooth* is “a complex, polyreferential, sly, refracted novel” (2013: 103).

Foregrounding the artificiality inherent in the creative acts of producing and consuming literature, *Sweet Tooth* questions expectations of “naive realism” and insists that the author is a “double agent” (McEwan 2012: 65-6). As befits a metropolitan novel, vigilance is required since clues are offered throughout the text: “the end is already there in the beginning” (McEwan 2012: 249) is one paradoxical fact readers can decipher only at the end of this work. Thus, *Sweet Tooth* combines the sophistication of a writer who is an urban denizen with the innocence inherent in the reader’s surrender to authorial trickery.

2. The Children Act

Published in 2014, Ian McEwan's thirteenth novel, *The Children Act*, begins with the word “London” thus foregrounding the setting: a wet Sunday evening in June “tyres hiss[ing] on drenched asphalt” (McEwan 2014: 8). Set predominantly in London, the novel explores the geography of Gray's Inn and the Courts of Justice. As the novel's action moves forward from June to December of 2012, making passing references to the news stories at the time (such as the crisis in Syria and the Leveson inquiry), the protagonist, High Court Judge Fiona Maye, is predominantly focused on the multitude of Family Division cases that demand her attention. Due to her own domestic crisis, however, Fiona considers that the cases have increased in number and intensity (McEwan 2014: 131). Thus, setting of time and place relate implicitly to Fiona's motivations and actions.

The Children Act underlines the significance of the principles of justice by examining the character of the judge through the interrelatedness of private life and public roles. Through its title the novel references the 1989 Children Act, the legislation which ensures that the practises of the judicial system regarding minors will consider their well-being above parental ideologies. McEwan's protagonist presides as High Court judge over fictional versions of authentic but controversial Family Division court cases which made headlines in the last 30 years. Fiona believes in “the provisions of family law” which she views “as a significant marker in civilization's progress” (McEwan 2014: 4).

Like the protagonist of *Saturday* (2005), neurosurgeon Henry Perowne, who also lives and works in central London, fifty-nine-year-old Fiona is more comfortable in the role of contemporary Solomon, even when required to preside over a case of conjoined twins, than confronting her own marital problems. The reputation of Mrs Justice Maye among her peers is impeccable: she combines “godly distance” with “devilish understanding” while her writing is characterized by an “exactitude” which may allow in future her

judgements to be cited as she now cites the eminent judges of the past (McEwan 2014: 13). At the pinnacle of a successful career, Fiona enjoys the exclusivity of residing at "Gray's Inn, her familiar sanctuary" (McEwan 2014: 125), leading a rational life which includes visits from the children of nieces and nephews as well as her participation, as a talented pianist, in amateur concerts. Contentedly married for thirty years to a "bohemian academic" (McEwan 2014: 18), Jack, a professor of ancient history, the protagonist is childless: "she belonged to the law as some women had once been brides of Christ" (McEwan 2014: 45).

At the beginning of the novel Fiona, the judge "who had dispatched a child from the world, argued him out of existence in thirty-four elegant pages" (McEwan 2014: 31), is also "a woman in crisis" (McEwan 2014: 41). On a rainy Sunday evening in June, when Fiona is the High Court judge on duty, and she is also desperate to finish polishing "the draft of a judgement" (McEwan 2014: 1), the protagonist is not allowed to give her attention to her professional obligations. Instead, she is asked to confront her husband's "unmet sexual needs" which are causing him "great unhappiness" (McEwan 2014: 7). Fiona is shocked by the frank request of her sixty-year-old husband to revive their "sex life" or to allow him to have an "affair" with a "twenty-eight-year-old statistician" (McEwan 2014: 5). The couple have had a long and satisfying love life without infidelities or need for negotiations so far; in this instance Fiona is unnerved by a demand which brings to the fore her current lack of "passion" (McEwan 2014: 21). Jack's insistence, met by Fiona's unwillingness, places them in an impossible position: "If he stayed, humiliation, if he left, the abyss", she thinks (McEwan 2014: 20).

Fiona responds by withdrawing: she denies Jack access to her emotion, she views his physical needs as an ill-timed imposition, and she dreads to consider the repercussions that this domestic crisis will have on her professional life. Following her uncompromising response, Jack leaves with a suitcase; she changes the front-door lock but does not discuss the matter with anyone. Burying herself in her work as duty judge, Fiona succumbs to an unarticulated need to escape her vulnerability by regaining control. Her unwitting victim

is a minor on whose case she adjudicates: Adam Henry is a seventeen-year-old leukaemia patient whose parents refuse, on the basis of their religious beliefs as Jehovah's Witnesses, the blood transfusion required for his treatment. Intelligent and well-versed in the scriptures, Adam is gravely ill; sustained by religious faith, he is shown to be prepared to die for his convictions.

Prior to pronouncing her judgement in response to the hospital's request to treat the patient against his will, the judge takes an “unorthodox excursion” to the hospital (McEwan 2014: 92). When initially introduced to the case, Fiona dismisses the possibility of visiting Adam as a “sentimental whim” (McEwan 2014: 36) but she changes her mind. She finds that Adam is a precocious youth who writes poetry and is learning to play the violin. Fiona speaks to him of his talent as a poet (McEwan 2014: 110); she encourages Adam to live so as to play music; she even sings for him Yeats's poem “Down by the Salley Gardens”, set to music by Benjamin Britten, which Adam is struggling to master on the violin (McEwan 2014: 115). Almost of legal age but intensely innocent, Adam is a “lovely boy” (McEwan 2014: 121) who experiences Fiona's visit to his sick bed as an invitation to a world of secular culture. “Are you coming back?” he enquires as Fiona leaves; he seeks to maintain communication so she gives him her professional address and implicitly her approval to write to her: “Mrs Justice Maye, Royal Courts of Justice, the Strand” (McEwan 2014: 118). Back at court Fiona acts as a wise judge who operates within the parameters of the 1989 Children Act: by granting permission to the hospital to transfuse, she saves Adam's life without compromising his family's religious convictions.

The novel's climactic third section, which centres on the encounter between the judge and the patient before transferring the action back to the courtroom, is a suspenseful celebration of well-functioning institutions, medicine and justice. Fiona's compassionate stance during the hospital visit, followed by her assured and practised performance in court, showcase the rationality and secular wisdom enshrined in the Children Act. Quoting “Mr Justice Ward” and explaining at length why “it will not promote” Adam's “welfare”

if he suffers “an agonising unnecessary death”, Maye demonstrates through her judgement why Adam’s “life is more precious than his dignity” (McEwan 2014: 121-23). The first half of the novel (sections one to three) ends with Fiona vindicated not only as a judge but also as a wife; when she returns home after her long day at court, outside the locked apartment door Jack waits for her with his suitcase, seeking reconciliation (McEwan 2014: 130). The second half of the novel (sections four and five) is anti-climactic, juxtaposing professional integrity to private conduct. Although conscious of the gravity of her presence at the hospital, Fiona appears to have underestimated the bond created with the dying adolescent. Fiona’s vulnerabilities are exposed, questioning the judge’s ability to shoulder the unexpected repercussions of saving that young man’s life.

Weeks later, first through letters detailing his loss of faith and rejection of Jehovah’s Witnesses and then through an impromptu visit, Adam makes demands on Fiona: he seeks guidance and spiritual nourishment. Fiona feels more annoyed than flattered: “she couldn’t face knowing what he wanted from her” (McEwan 2014: 157). In her judgement she acknowledges that Adam is “an exceptional child” (McEwan 2014: 121) so she is almost conscious that he is the son she would have been happy to have raised. But he is “too vivid” (McEwan 2014: 157): she is troubled by his “beautiful face” (McEwan 2014: 160). Although she does not dare admit it, Fiona is also aware of Adam’s potential as a young lover: he could wake in her that forgotten desire, the passion the absence of which led her husband to demand a “sex life” (McEwan 2014: 22). Adam’s craving for connection is met by Fiona’s inability to empathize; his demands threaten her settled personal life and force her to confront her marital crisis.

Too proper to acknowledge her own desires and too frightened to consider the repercussions of her childlessness, Fiona rejects Adam’s suggestion to accept him as a live-in apprentice, a surrogate son (McEwan 2014: 166-67). She offers him no meaningful alternative to his “fantasy” and she denies him an explanation which would encompass “all the years, all the life, that separated her from

him” (McEwan 2014: 167). Dismissively referring to the lack of space in their apartment, Fiona repeats that Adam “must go” (McEwan 2014: 169). This frustrating encounter ends with a farewell kiss on the lips: it is both “chaste” and “more than a mother might give her grown-up son” (McEwan 2014: 169). Adam experiences the kiss as a sign not of love but of betrayal; Fiona’s self-serving yearning for a relationship reveals her inability to connect; she is a judge without empathy. Ironically, Fiona’s final encounter with Adam, the one which ends with a kiss, takes place in Newcastle, which is part of her circuit of four cities in the north of England. Newcastle is Fiona’s “favourite English city” (McEwan 2014: 141), which she associates with her first sexual experience and the only adventures she had in adolescence in the late Sixties.

Back in London Fiona regrets the “impulsive folly” of the kiss but remains silent; in the following weeks her own breach of protocol, which she considers “professional and social madness” (McEwan 2014: 172), floods her every thought. She wonders whether anyone else witnessed the kiss and whether she will be formally reprimanded, even disbarred (McEwan 2014: 173). When the biblically-named youth mails her a poem casting himself in a Jesus-like role and herself as Judas, she becomes convinced that “he would soon move on” (McEwan 2014: 181). Six weeks later, in December, right before she performs triumphantly at a Gray’s Inn Christmas concert, Fiona learns of Adam’s death; her final encore, a performance of “The Salley Gardens”, receives a standing ovation (McEwan 2014: 201). As soon as she is back home from the concert, Fiona seeks to find out the particulars of Adam’s demise: his leukaemia recurred and, no longer a minor, he refused to be transfused. The hospital had no legal right to deny the wishes of an adult patient. Fiona’s conviction that his refusal was a form of “suicide” precipitates her emotional collapse (McEwan 2014: 210). Realizing that her “petty fears” for her own career had resulted from an “unforgivable impulse” (McEwan 2014: 212), Fiona recognizes the effect her emotional withdrawal had on Adam. Unable to speak, she makes a “terrible sound” and weeps uncontrollably in front of her shocked husband

(McEwan 2014: 210). The novel concludes with Fiona's confession of “her shame” to Jack: the ending does not include her narrative but it suggests that this act of conscious sharing initiates the painful process of marital rehabilitation (McEwan 2014: 212).

About six months apart, the opening and closing pages of the novel take place in the Mayes London apartment as the couple struggle to repair a long-term relationship which is defined more by dysfunction and betrayal than understanding. While the novel's concluding paragraph notes that the couple “uneasily resume” their marriage (McEwan 2014: 213), the hesitant communication and explicit guilt Fiona experiences suggest a slow return to domesticity. *The Children Act* is not only a novel about the conflicts emerging from the demands of the private self on the public persona; it also concerns the place of religious faith within a secular society and its relationship to welfare and freedom. In addition, through the exploration of Fiona's personal relationships, it is, in McEwan's own words, also “a story about unspoken love” (Broad 2014).

At 55,000 words, *The Children Act* is short, extremely readable for a work full of legal cases and deceptively simple at first reading. Tightly structured in five sections, each of which is approximately forty to fifty pages, the novel is a complex investigation of the many themes deriving from the intersection of the protagonist's private and public life. Upon subsequent readings patterns emerge which enrich characterisation and tighten the thematic motifs. Self-consciously paying homage to the canon of the English novel, the opening paragraph of *The Children Act* echoes, as some reviewers noted (Friedell 2014; Robson 2014), Charles Dickens's *Bleak House* (1853), another novel preoccupied with London and with the English judicial system. Dickens's Chapter I begins with the sentences “London. Michaelmas term lately over, and the Lord Chancellor sitting in Lincoln's Inn Hall. Implacable November weather” which McEwan parodies as “London. Trinity term one week old. Implacable June weather” in *The Children Act*.

For the denizens of the city justice in its various forms contributes to the power structures which govern lives. Through the

novel's ending McEwan alludes equally explicitly to James Joyce's *The Dead* (1914). Although London rain falls instead of Dublin snow, the motif of a grief-stricken wife who confesses to her unaware husband her guilt over the death of a “lovely boy” (McEwan 2014: 210), a confession precipitated by a mournful Irish song, evokes the encounter of Gabriel and Gretta Conroy at the end of Joyce's story. An admirer of Joyce's work, McEwan discusses in detail *The Dead* in a 2012 essay, characterizing it “the great novella” and “one of the loveliest fictions in the English language”. Furthermore, in-text references to William Wordsworth's London sonnet “Composed upon Westminster Bridge, September 3, 1802” as well as various Shakespeare plays and the early poetry of W. B. Yeats are the most obvious instances of the cultural context McEwan evokes and celebrates in this sophisticated and evocative work.

Like Serena Frome, Fiona becomes an apt representative of the metropolis as a site of rationality and order as well as the locus of transgression. As McEwan suggests in an illuminating *Guardian* essay in which he discusses *The Children Act* at length, “the law is human and flawed. [...] It embodies all that is brilliant and awful about humankind” (2014). The extremes which the narrative explores through Fiona signify London's potential for creation and for destruction. Like the judge who must find balance navigating a variety of perspectives, the novelist offers the reader the metropolitan landscape of London as the locus of life and death, empathy and apathy.

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Elana Gomel

Apocalypse as Pastoral: the Destruction of London and the Utopian Imagination

Abstract

The destruction of London is a central motif in many works of speculative fiction, from Richard Jeffries' *After London* (1885) and H. G. Wells' *War of the Worlds* (1897), to J.G. Ballard's *The Drowned World* (1962) and Tim Lebbon's *Toxic City* series (2012-2013), to name but a few. Such fictions have been extensively analyzed in scholarly literature as dystopian warnings against specific natural and social threats (global warming, nuclear war, political unrest). But I would contend that many texts describing the erasure of this global city covertly express utopian hope, rather than dystopian despair. The utopia they articulate is a pastoral simplification of the urban, technological, global civilization, which is perceived as unbearably complex and weighed down by history. The "post-London" utopia has specific narrative features, which justify seeing it both as a separate genre and an expression of a particular anti-urban ideology. Its representations of space and time hinge on the oppositions of chaos versus order, complexity versus simplicity, and history versus millennium. This genre rests on the historical identification of London with the forces of modernity. But recently it has also absorbed some of the powerful forces of anti-globalization and nostalgia operative in the political sphere.

This article discusses the poetics of the pastoral "post-London" utopia by addressing several texts hitherto viewed as exclusively dystopian, and briefly outlines its connection with the broader trend of the politics of nostalgia.

Key Words: apocalypse, dystopia, utopia, pastoral, ruins, urban fantasy, fictions of London.

In H. G. Wells' *The War of the Worlds* (1897), perhaps the most memorable moment comes when the unnamed protagonist walks the streets of London emptied of human presence by the invasion of Martians:

Where there was no black powder, it was curiously like a Sunday in the City, with the closed shops, the houses locked up and the blinds drawn, the desertion, and the stillness...

The farther I penetrated into London, the profounder grew the stillness. But it was not so much the stillness of death—it was the stillness of suspense, of expectation... It was a city condemned and derelict. . . .

In South Kensington the streets were clear of dead and of black powder. It was near South Kensington that I first heard the howling. It crept almost imperceptibly upon my senses. It was a sobbing alternation of two notes, "Ulla, ulla, ulla, ulla," keeping on perpetually. When I passed streets that ran northward it grew in volume, and houses and buildings seemed to deaden and cut it off again. It came in a full tide down Exhibition Road. I stopped, staring towards Kensington Gardens, wondering at this strange, remote wailing. It was as if that mighty desert of houses had found a voice for its fear and solitude...All the large mansions on each side of the road were empty and still, and my footsteps echoed against the sides of the houses" (Wells 1897: 260).

After the incessant action of the previous chapters, after the landing of Martian ships, the massacres, the losing fights, the streams of refugees, come stillness and repose. The London of this description is a city without people. Seemingly, it is a city that has lost its reason for existence: a vision of urban apocalypse, echoing the Biblical description of the desolation of Babylon the Fallen in

the Book of Revelation: “Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great! She has become a home for demons and a haunt for every evil” (Revelation 18:2). However, underneath the horror a strange exaltation lurks. The narrator is spellbound by the “stillness” of the empty city. When the Martians are defeated and crowds return to fill the streets, his response is ambivalent:

I remember how mockingly bright the day seemed as I went back on my melancholy pilgrimage to the little house at Woking, how busy the streets and vivid the moving life about me. So many people were abroad everywhere, busied in a thousand activities, that it seemed incredible that any great proportion of the population could have been slain. But then I noticed how yellow were the skins of the people I met, how shaggy the hair of the men, how large and bright their eyes, and that every other man still wore his dirty rags. Their faces seemed all with one of two expressions--a leaping exultation and energy or a grim resolution. Save for the expression of the faces, London seemed a city of tramps (Wells 1897: 263).

A living city is dirty, noisy, and polluted; a dead city is horrifying but sublime. So, does Wells’ novel and its innumerable imitators celebrate the rebirth of London or long for its demise?

1. Dreaming of ruins

London loves its own destruction. No sooner did the city become a global industrial metropolis at the beginning of the 19th century as fantasy fiction started imagining its demise. *The War of the Worlds* is not the first novel to paint the end of London. In Mary Shelley’s *Last Man* (1826), London is the epicentre of the plague that eventually depopulates the whole planet; Richard Jeffreys’

After London (1885) depicts swamps and jungles covering the site of Westminster; in Wells' first novel *The Time Machine* (1895), the millennia that passed had erased all traces of the city except for the majestic Thames valley, with "great palaces dotted about among the variegated greenery, some in ruins, some still occupied" (Wells 1895, Chapter 4). And since then, London has been destroyed by water (Mark Morris, *The Deluge* 2007); ambulatory plants (John Wyndham, *The Day of the Triffids* 1951); zombies (David Moody, *Autumn* series, 2001-2012); and nightmares (Tony Ballantyne, *Dream London* 2013). And this is not even counting movies, such as *28 Days Later* (2002), with its stunning visuals of the empty city; video games (*Hellgate London*); and comics.

Undoubtedly such urban disaster narratives express disaffection with city life. This disaffection relates both to what the city represents – capitalism, inequality, alienation, and technology; and to what the city is – a cauldron of sensory overload, pollution, tension, and crime. Urban dystopia is a well-known subgenre of fantasy fiction. But I will argue that many such texts hide a secondary layer of meaning which expresses a cultural desire for the end of urban civilization. Urban apocalypse may function as a prelude to a post-urban millennium. Dystopia is not the opposite of utopia; dystopia is utopia.

Of course, this requires clarification. I will limit my inquiry to contemporary dystopian fictions dealing with an empty or ruined London in the aftermath of a disaster; and I will argue that while we often speak of dystopias as articulations of cultural fears, they may equally speak of cultural longings. The opposition between utopia and dystopia largely depends on point of view. Every utopia implies an ideological vision of a better life – ideological simply because there is no universal agreement of what that might be. The utopian vision that an empty ruined London gestures at is anti-urban, anti-technological, and anti- historical. In other words, it is pastoral.

The definition of utopia that I am using here derives from the work of Fredric Jameson and Tom Moylan. Moylan, in his influential 1986 book *Demand the Impossible: Science Fiction and the Utopian*

Imagination makes a distinction between utopian project and utopian impulse. The latter is embodied in what he calls “critical utopia”. Texts belonging to the tradition of “critical utopia”, “reject utopia as blueprint while preserving it as a dream” (Moylan 2014, 10). The utopian impulse, in other words, is not limited to what we might think of classic literary utopias but may manifest itself in a range of generically diverse texts. Fredric Jameson’s extensive work on the utopian impulse and “the desire called utopia” is summed up in his 2005 collection *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions*, in which he analyzes an inchoate yearning for a different and better world, which he opposes to the failed utopian ideologies of the last century. Utopia requires the negation of the present: the utopian impulse maps “the radical break from the status quo” (Wegner 49).

It is hard to imagine a more radical break from the modern urban experience that the emptying out of a city, especially a city like London that has traditionally been a symbol of capitalism and the Industrial Revolution, with all their concomitant social trends: overcrowding, frenetic pace of life, and ceaseless change. However, while the notion of critical utopia in Moylan and Jameson assumes that any utopian alternative is better than the status quo, this assumption is based on the unexamined notion of value (largely derived from the two critics’ Marxist framework). What is seen as “better” depends on one’s underlying value system, which is itself an ideological, and thus deeply historical, formation. “The desire called utopia” may lead to a dead-end.

In my view, images of London’s destruction adumbrate a conservative utopia, which attempts to transcend modernity not by opening into the unknown futurity but rather by escaping back into the familiar past. The millenarian hope that permeates depictions of empty London is for an anti-modern, anti-technological pastoral that spells an end to the process of change and dissolution that Marx characterized as “all that is solid melts into the air” (Marx 1848). In escaping urban capitalism, this apocalyptic pastoral rebels against the forces that shaped modernity. It is utopia as the end of history.

2. Escaping the Crowds

Since Edgar Allan Poe's iconic story "The Man of the Crowd" (1840), London has been identified with incessant, feverish activity; with masses of people flooding its streets day and night. Poe's narrator, sitting in a coffee-shop, observes "the dense and continuous tides of population [that] were rushing past the door" (Poe 1840). His classification of various types of London dwellers becomes the staple of urban anthropology, from Charles Baudelaire to Charles Mayhew, trying to get a handle upon what appears to be the chaos of urban life. And though London is neither the largest nor the most crowded world city (today this title would probably go to Shanghai), it was the first. In his magisterial biography of London, Peter Ackroyd describes how in the 19th century, the city's "immensity [was] registered by its endless crowds" (590). These crowds are documented by Dickens in his "Sketches by Boz", in which the sheer volume of people flooding the city (and of course, most of them were pedestrians) combined with the smells, noises and pollution to generate an overwhelming sensory overload. Some people found this overload exhilarating. In Baudelaire's famous description of the flâneur in "The Painter of Modern Life" (1863), crowds are what makes the city a source of modern energy and vitality:

The crowd is his element, as the air is that of birds and water of fishes. His passion and his profession are to become one flesh with the crowd. For the perfect flâneur, for the passionate spectator, it is an immense joy to set up house in the heart of the multitude, amid the ebb and flow of movement, in the midst of the fugitive and the infinite. To be away from home and yet to feel oneself everywhere at home; to see the world, to be at the centre of the world, and yet to remain hidden from the world - impartial natures which the tongue can but clumsily define. The spectator is a prince who everywhere rejoices in his incognito. The lover of life makes the whole world

his family, just like the lover of the fair sex who builds up his family from all the beautiful women that he has ever found, or that are or are not - to be found; or the lover of pictures who lives in a magical society of dreams painted on canvas. Thus the lover of universal life enters into the crowd as though it were an immense reservoir of electrical energy. Or we might liken him to a mirror as vast as the crowd itself; or to a kaleidoscope gifted with consciousness, responding to each one of its movements and reproducing the multiplicity of life and the flickering grace of all the elements of life (Baudelaire 1863).

But for others, being surrounded by a multitude of strangers was enervating, frightening and ultimately unbearable. So it is not surprising that as London grew and became more crowded, an imaginative counter-reaction gathered strength. Writers, dreamers and urban planners came up with utopias of decongestion. In William Morris' *News from Nowhere* (1890), quasi-medieval small towns and villages supplant the forgotten metropolis. The "garden city" movement of Ebenezer Howard planned small townships, of no more than 30,000 people, to quieten down the intolerable pace of urban life. As Jurgen Tietz points out "all the utopias that were developed at the beginning of the twentieth century said goodbye to the old city" (Tietz 41).

However, in parallel with explicitly anti-urban utopias, a more ambivalent urban genre came into being: apocalyptic visions of the city's demise, which surreptitiously contained a vision of its renewal. I have already noted this ambivalence in Wells' vision of the London emptied of its people. Richard Jeffries' *After London* (1885), presenting the abandoned city as a "miasmatic wasteland", nevertheless contained a wistful depiction of the beauty of its ruins (Ackroyd 447). The same aesthetics of decay, of nature taking over the ruined works of humanity, can be found in J.G. Ballard's *The Drowned World* (1962) and in Alan Weisman's *The World Without Us* (2007). In these texts, the empty, abandoned city is simultaneously pitiful and sublime; a warning and a spectacle.

In Ballard's novel, global warming has raised the sea levels to such an extent that most of Europe is now underwater. Exploring the cityscape of half-submerged ruins, its protagonists enter a twilight world of primordial archetypes and unconscious memories. But what is remarkable is the sheer beauty of the empty, abandoned city:

Apart from a few older men... there was no one who remembered living in them... the cities had been beleaguered citadels, hemmed in by enormous dykes and disintegrated by panic and despair, reluctant Venices to their marriage with the sea. Their charm and beauty lay precisely in their emptiness, in the strange juncture of two extremes of nature, like a discarded crown overgrown by wild orchids (Ballard 1962: 21).

The beauty of the city's ruins comes not merely from nature taking over and obliterating the works of humanity but rather from the "strange juncture" of the two. The empty city becomes a gateway to the past, in which individual yearning for lost childhood seamlessly merges with the collective desire for return to the Garden of Eden. In the last paragraph of the Ballard's novel, the protagonist Keran journeys into the drowned world of prehistory, searching to re-enter the Garden of Eden through the gateway of the apocalypse:

So he left the lagoon and entered the jungle again, within a few days was completely lost, following the lagoon southward through the increasing rain and heat, attacked by alligators and giant bats, a second Adam searching for the forgotten paradises of the reborn sun (Ballard 1962: 171).

Jeffries, Wells' and Ballard's empty vegetation-choked cities evoke Wordsworth's iconic description of London in "Composed upon Westminster Bridge, September 3, 1802":

This City now doth, like a garment, wear
The beauty of the morning; silent, bare,
Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie
Open unto the fields, and to the sky;
All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.
(Wordsworth 1802)

Wordsworth's city is without inhabitants, without crowds, without the signs of commerce, industry, conflict or resolution. Its "mighty heart is lying still". Nature, invoked through the images of "fields" and "empty sky", is erasing the signs of human activity. Empty London is a city outside time; a city without history.

"Naturalized" into the sublime ruins, the cityscape becomes a pastoral space. The notion of the pastoral has a long and complex cultural history, which it is not possible to revisit here. But I use "pastoral" in the sense derived from Paul de Man's question: What is the pastoral convention, then, if not the eternal separation between the mind that distinguishes, negates, separates, and the originary simplicity of the natural?" (quoted in Skoie 2006: 9).

The pastoral is not a straightforward evocation of "the originary simplicity of the natural" but rather the seam between nature and culture, an attempt to recreate what has been lost to civilization through an elaborate system of narrative conventions that testify to their artificiality in the process of denying it. The pastoral is a landscape of ruins.

In her discussion of city ruins in modern poetry, Cecilia Enjuto Rangel argues that empty, devastated cityscapes "reveal an apocalyptic vision of history" (Rangel 2010: 9). But she also points out how these cityscapes can embody cultural nostalgia "for another time and space in their strong criticism of progress and the failures of modernization" (Rangel 2010: 16). While she believes this criticism to be progressive, I would argue that, in fantastic fiction in particular the apocalyptic pastoral of emptied-out, ruined and hushed cities can become the site of a regressive utopia, based not on the hope for the future but on the longing for the lost past.

3. Silence and noise

As an example of the utopian longings that ruined London can give rise to in contemporary fantasy fiction. I want to refer to several texts by the prolific British writer Tim Lebbon. Lebbon's oeuvre covers various shades of horror, dark fantasy and dark SF, but it is unified by his focus on cityscapes. From the fantastic *Echo City* situated in its own world and consumed by its monstrous past (*Echo City* 2012) to the invocation of contemporary London in *The Silence* (2015) and the *Toxic City* YA trilogy (2012-2013), Lebbon's concern with cities under threat articulates common themes of the apocalyptic pastoral.

The Silence (2015) depicts an invasion of "vesps", predatory bat-like creatures unearthed in a cave in Moldova¹. Hunting by sound, vesps quickly overrun the UK, emptying out large cities where noise is inescapable. As with many such apocalyptic narratives, *Silence* focuses on one family, trying to run away from the approaching menace. What makes the novel particularly interesting, however, is its almost metafictional awareness of its own generic conventions, particularly in the juxtaposition of the noise-polluted cities and the quiet Welsh countryside where Huw's family are trying to find shelter. The scenes of the evacuation of London deliberately invoke both Wells and the historical events of World War 2:

I've never seen such a mass of humanity on the move...
In scenes that have not been witnessed since the Dunkirk
evacuation during the Second World War, the Thames
is clogged with ships and boats...I can't believe it's
happening. London, our capital, the world's greatest city,
is in utter turmoil, and there is no one or nothing that can
help (Lebbon 2015:loc. 2141).

1 - The novel was the basis for a disappointing Hollywood movie of the same title. By transplanting the action to the rural US and largely eliminating urban scenes, the movie became just another run-of-the-mill creature flick with not very impressive monsters.

But the countryside is not safe either as vesps are everywhere. As opposed to the monsters of many horror flicks, they are not deliberately malevolent creatures but rather animals driven by the natural imperatives of breeding and feeding. Their unstoppable procreation that floods Europe obliquely refers to the effects of global warming: a natural process gone awry through misguided human intervention. Cities, especially London, become emblems of self-destroying civilization. Urban noise, lamented by so many critics of modernity, literally kills in *The Silence*: “*The cities have fallen first. Loud and chaotic as they were, finding a quiet, safe place in built-up areas must have been next to impossible*” (Lebbon 2015: loc. 2978).

The Silence becomes part of the growing trend in apocalyptic fiction and film of what might be called *sense reduction*: the notion that salvation lies precisely in toning down or even eliminating the sensory assault of urban civilization. This trend is expressed in such novels as Josh Malerman’s *Bird Box* (2014), Jose Saramago’s *Blindness* (1997); and in the successful movies based on these novels, along with the 2018 *Quiet Place*. While none of these novels or movies take place in London, they register a rebellion against the distraction and noisiness of city life. What is celebrated by Baudelaire as the sensory pleasure of city life becomes deadly overload. The very senses that the city dweller needs most – sight and hearing – become deadly vulnerabilities. Noise and spectacle are death; silence and darkness are life. This is graphically expressed in the scene in *The Silence*, in which people literally tape their mouths shut.

And yet in the devastated terrain of *The Silence* there are intimations of a better – or at least quieter world – coming into being. Huw ponders the rapacity of vesps that has upset the natural balance of prey and predator and will almost surely lead to their extinction: “The balance of nature had already been upset, perhaps cataclysmically. If and when the vesps died out, a very different world would grow out of what is left behind” (Lebbon 2015: loc. 3861).

The world that is emerging out of the vesps’ invasion is a simpler, more “natural” world: without electricity, iPads, cellphones, all the noisy machinery of urban civilization. The Grey – a total blackout –

is blanketing the country, returning it to the “Dark Ages”. But Ally, the deaf girl who is an occasional first-person narrator in the novel, is still looking forward to the future molded in the image of the quiet past:

...when we come out on the other side – and we will, I have no doubt of that – it will be into a whole new world. But that’s the future.

For now, all is silence (Lebbon 2015: loc. 4648)

An even clearer pastoral emerges at the end of *Bird Box*, in which the Earth is overrun by creatures whose very sight drives people to suicide. Like the gags of *The Silence*, the blindfolds of *Bird Box* figure the sense reduction as a utopian longing for a simpler, more “natural”, less frenetic life. In *Bird Box* the movie, the last scenes set in the idyllic green environs of the school for the blind that becomes a utopian community create a strong visual contrast to the ominous claustrophobia of the city scenes.

Another modality of apocalypse-as-pastoral emerges in Tim Lebbon’s YA trilogy *Toxic City* (2012-2013). The series, especially the first book *London Eye* (2012), depicts London devastated by what appears to be a terrorist attack and surrounded by a cordon. The teenage protagonists band together to go into the poisoned city to find their families. They discover that London has become a monstrous wonderland, both horrible and sublime. Its remaining inhabitants develop strange powers but also mutate in dangerous and unpredictable ways. The city is largely deserted, its crowds gone. Abandoned and silent, London appears “strangely peaceful and serene...a picture postcard image of hell” (Lebbon 2012: 210). In this description, peace and desolation blend together into an inherently ambivalent image of the city outside history, suspended outside time. The emblem of this post-apocalyptic London is Big Ben with its “clock faces blown out” (Lebbon 2012: 210). Much like the terrorists in Joseph Conrad’s *Secret Agent* tried to blow up

the Greenwich Observatory in order to kill time itself, the attack in *Toxic City* brings an end to London's immersion in history. Instead of being the heart of urban modernity, London becomes "another world...a different place entirely, a different reality, not just the ruin of a city so close to home" (Lebbon 2012: 196).

But this "different reality" is also the breeding-ground of a mutant future, in which the Irregulars – those affected by the attack in peculiar and unpredictable ways – are poised to break out of their cocooned existence and impact the rest of the world. A London apocalypse is never final. It always marks a decisive break in history in which a catastrophe becomes a prelude to a millennium. This millennium may be variously imagined as restoration of a quasi-medieval simplicity, a cleansing of the city's iniquities, or even a superheroes' reign. The important thing is that it signifies a total break with historical continuity. Whatever comes after London will not be the city of crowds, businesses, commerce and entertainment. In other words, it will not be the London of modernity.

4. Politics of nostalgia

In her classic essay "Nuclear Holocaust as Urban Renewal" (1986), Martha Bartter pointed out how dystopian warnings against a nuclear war were used to convey an ambivalent longing for an end to the "old, worn-out, dirty, dysfunctional" cities. But the reason cities are "worn-out" is that they are palimpsests of history. Desire for apocalypse is the desire to end history. Hostility to cities is hostility to the perpetual change that has created global metropolises. Behind it lies a pastoral longing for simplicity, homogeneity and stasis of the idealized small town:

We cling to this myth of the small town, no matter how often it is debunked. Ideal communities, we somehow believe, could exist if only our world were renewed as a

better (less urban, mechanized, depersonalized) place. We demonstrate the power of this dream by continually destroying cities in our fiction (Bartter 1986: 150).

But of course, this pastoral desire is antithetical to the very nature of modernity. Thus, it is utopian but only in a very specific way in which utopia may be defined as the opposite of history. The fictions of London's demise are not dystopian warnings against specific natural and social threats (global warming, nuclear war, political unrest), as they are often seen in scholarly literature. They are rather articulations of a utopia.

Their utopia is regressive. It is a pastoral simplification of the urban, technological, global civilization, which is perceived as unbearably complex and weighed down by history. The "post-London" utopia has specific narrative features, which justify seeing it both as a separate genre and an expression of a particular anti-urban ideology. Its representations of space and time hinge on the oppositions of chaos versus order, complexity versus simplicity, and history versus millennium. This genre rests on the historical identification of London with the forces of modernity. But recently it has also absorbed some of the powerful forces of anti-globalization and nostalgia operative in the political sphere.

Recently – and especially after the election of Donald Trump – the politics of nostalgia has become a byword among scholars. But even without delving too deeply into this complex subject, it is easy to see how pastoral utopias of London's demise fit into the longing for the golden past that has never existed. By erasing the traces of multiple histories that have made London into a palimpsest of the modernity, we may try to go back to a simpler, more organic, more "natural" way of life. But as Diego Rubio argues in his op-ed on the subject:

nostalgia makes for bad politics because it takes us on a journey to the impossible. In movies, remakes are usually bad. In politics, they are simply impossible. Societies can't

go back – none of us can – and when they try, results are usually catastrophic... (Rubio 2017).

The apocalyptic fictions of London's demise often start with a catastrophe as a prelude to a nostalgic millennium. But they also show that the millennium never comes. History cannot be cleansed away; time cannot be stopped; and London, for better or worse, remains a city of noisy crowds, feverish growth, and perpetual change. Even YA literature – and perhaps especially YA literature, addressed as it is to young people who will face the cities of tomorrow, acknowledges that pastoral utopia is a mirage. In *The Eye of London*, the young protagonist exploring the ruins of London, is seized by a mixture of longing for the past and presentiment of the future:

He's never really known nostalgia as a powerful emotion, but he did now. Before today he'd labored under the belief that things could, by some miracle, go back to normal... But now he acknowledged the firm reality that his family had changed forever. Nostalgia, as he experienced in there in a stranger's bed, could not allow for things ever being the same again (Lebbon 2012: 168).

Perhaps this is the ultimate lesson of urban life: things cannot ever be same again. But if we want to avoid the dystopia of ruined cities and empty streets, we should also give up the nostalgic utopia of going back to the Golden Age of pastoral simplicity.

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PART THREE

Metropolitan Myths

Bogna Starczewska

**One city, different visions:
Woody Allen's image of London
in *Scoop* and *Cassandra's Dream***

Abstract

Woody Allen, a well-known American filmmaker associated closely with New York suddenly decided to make four movies set and filmed on location in London. This article discusses his vision of London in *Scoop* and *Cassandra's Dream*. It is worth asking whether Allen treats London with a similar fondness he granted over the years to New York, creating a cinematic love letter to the English capital? This paper focuses on *Scoop* and *Cassandra's Dream* as they not only present contrasting film genres, but also provide a clear juxtaposition in terms of its characters' social standing as one movie focuses on the indulgent yet somehow rotten upper class while the other aims to provide an image of the working class struggle and the price of hasty social advancement. I will consider how successful are those two movies in unveiling an authentic vision of London and what comment on modern London and its inhabitants do they offer. I will also examine the similarities and differences in London's portrayal in *Scoop* and *Cassandra's Dream*. Finally I will establish what lasting impression of London is created by each of the movies.

Key Words: image of London, Woody Allen, portrayal of a city, class.

Over fifteen years ago, Woody Allen, a filmmaker perceived as a quintessential New Yorker, faithful to his beloved city, suddenly ventured abroad, pursuing a cinematic career in Europe. Why would a writer and director so heavily attached to New York decide to leave the city he has continuously, and often lovingly, portrayed on the screen over the years by suddenly emigrating to Europe? In an interview with Stuart Husband, Allen admitted dreaming of being a foreign filmmaker, noting that ‘now I’ve become one by accident, because no one would bankroll me in America’ (Husband 2013). Tom Shone claims that *Match Point*, Allen’s first movie set and filmed entirely in Europe, was originally:

set in America-in the Hamptons-but since *Deconstructing Harry*, which earned \$10.6 million, Allen’s US grosses had dipped to about \$5 million a picture, against budgets that averaged about \$20 million. Fox Searchlight did not even bother to bid on distributing *Match Point* because of *Melinda and Melinda*’s \$3.8 million domestic gross. Instead, a lifeline came his way from BBC Films, in England, who agreed to partly fund the film if he made it in the UK with a largely local cast and crew (Shone 2015: 232)

In the light of these two quotes it is safe to assume that Allen’s motivation for his cinematic journey through Europe was mainly financial. However, there were also other potential reasons – Husband provides an explanation for Allen’s artistic longings and inspirations: ‘when he was growing up, his ambition was to be a foreign filmmaker, like all his heroes – Bergman, Fellini, Kurosawa’ (Husband 2013: R4). Hence Europe must have presented itself as an entirely new creative space, full of possibilities, with a rich and proud cinematic tradition. According to John Macready, ‘The dislocation of artist becomes a place of deprivation and liberation – a space in which a break with the past is both necessary and impossible, and a new period of creativity emerges as a possibility’ (2013: 96). It was, therefore, a chance for a new beginning for Allen, an artistic rejuvenation. He began his cinematic exploration of

Europe with London, where he set and filmed a London trilogy of sorts – *Match Point* (Luxembourg and UK, 2005), *Scoop* (USA and UK, 2006) and *Cassandra's Dream* (France, USA and UK, 2007). After completing *Cassandra's Dream* he made one movie in Spain and one in the USA, only to return to London once more to film *You Will Meet A Tall Dark Stranger* (Spain and USA, 2010).

In this article I will discuss Allen's vision of London in two movies: *Scoop* and *Cassandra's Dream*. My choice was dictated by the fact that they present contrasting film genres and provide a clear juxtaposition in terms of its characters' social standing as one film focuses on the indulgent yet rotten upper class while the other aims to provide an image of the working class struggle and the price of a hasty social advancement.

Scoop focuses on the British upper class's life perceived through the eyes of an outsider – Sondra Pransky (Scarlett Johansson), an American journalism student on holiday in London who pursues what appears to be a scoop of a lifetime, received from a highly valued, but recently deceased journalist Joe Strombel (Ian McShane). She suspects that a wealthy aspiring politician, distinctively representing the upper class, Peter Lyman (Hugh Jackman) might be a serial killer. In order to investigate him she poses as an upper class member herself. She secures the reluctant and rather clumsy help of an awkward magician Sidney, aka Splendini (Woody Allen), who poses as her father. Sam Girgus claims that 'Laughter and comedy in Allen's films invariably destabilize and deconstruct conventional meanings and perceptions', as 'laughter dethrones' (2013: 564). In *Scoop* the social differences between characters are emphasized for comedy's purpose, providing much needed comic relief. The comedic convention also allows for a satirical and entertaining critique of the British upper class. *Scoop* plays with the notion of identity and ridicules the social gap.

Cassandra's Dream tells the story of two brothers, who dream about an escape from their mundane, working class existence. Ian (Ewan McGregor) hopes to undergo a social upgrade through a hotel investment in California while Terry (Colin Farrell) gambles in order

to win enough money to buy a house for himself and his fiancée Kate (Sally Hawkins). As Terry's gambling leads him to a huge debt, brothers seek the help of their wealthy uncle Howard (Tom Wilkinson) who offers to help them in return for a gruesome favour – murder. Their decision to help him leads to a tragic end. The film aims to question the relevance of morality in today's world, asking whether a serious crime such as murder can ever be justified. Moreover it reveals that the psychological impact of an immoral action can be dramatically different even if the people who have committed it are not just closely related, but also grew up together, in the same social circumstances.

The movies are significantly different in terms of their tone which is signified by their respective posters. *Scoop*'s poster uses a red background, which might imply an association with a murder, but given the presence of Scarlett Johansson and Hugh Jackman gazing into each other's eyes it may symbolise love and blossoming romance. Johansson and Jackman are portrayed in contrast to each other, as Johansson is dressed in white and seems to be drawn towards Jackman who is dressed in an elegant grey suit, holding a tarot card in his hands. *Cassandra's Dream*'s poster stands in contrast to the image used to promote *Scoop*: it utilizes a black background, showing the two protagonists, Colin Farrell and Ewan McGregor using black-and-white imagery. Both brothers look very serious, although McGregor appears to be harbouring a hint of a smile. Poster features a slogan: "Family is family. Blood is blood." The second sentence of the slogan, as well as the word *Dream* from the movie's title, are in red, certainly symbolising blood which might be understood as blood spilled due to a crime as well as close family relatives connected through sharing the same blood, such as brothers. Hence while *Scoop*'s poster suggests romance and mystery, *Cassandra's Dream*'s poster sets out a dark, pessimistic mood, aiming to evoke serious, troubling questions in regards to the notion of one's ability to rely completely on one's family and the lasting strength of family bonds.

It is interesting to consider whether Allen treats London with a similar fondness he granted over the years to New York, creating a cinematic love letter to the English capital. Initially *Scoop* appears to

be a love letter to London. When Sondra meets Peter, she pretends to drown in order to get his attention, and it works like a charm. He romantically rescues her and asks her to a party in his family's country estate. We can admire the beautiful and impressive estate (30:15), followed by the wonderful interiors which include a room filled with art, cosy furniture and what appears to be hand-painted floral patterns on the wall, the room's overall design revealing wealth and class. Later on we can admire a vast, magnificent garden, containing living sculptures. Sondra spends idyllic moments in Peter's company during a romantic stroll, passing by various pink flowers, enjoying the charming scenery of an English garden. Despite her hidden motives – the plan to secretly investigate Peter – she seems to be enchanted by both the surroundings and Peter himself.

Richard Blake points out that 'Sid and Sondra, as Americans, inhabit a world apart from the titled Lymans' (2013: 547) and the movie accurately portrays that contrast, utilizing the class dissonance as a tool for delivering a notion of comic relief. For instance Sidney, posing as Sondra's father, mentions that he bought a Rubens with poker winnings. When Peter's upper class acquaintances are impressed, thinking he means a painting, he explains he meant a sandwich. In this comedic manner Allen reveals the basic differences between classes which seem to begin on the association level. Sidney remains sceptical and continues to suspect Peter even though Sondra becomes convinced of his innocence after someone else is arrested for the Tarot Killer murders. Another reason for Sondra's sudden disbelief in Peter's potential guilt is the fact that she develops feelings for him. As she eventually reveals her true identity to him which Peter seems to fully accept and continues their relationship, she must be relieved that he still finds her appealing despite the fact that she has been lying to him, moreover he accepts their social differences.

In the case of *Cassandra's Dream*, we are offered a number of beautiful locations, such as during the brothers escapade on their boat named *Cassandra's Dream* which seems to bring them much needed happiness and cheerfulness, literally adding colour to their lives as the shots taken on the boat trip contrast heavily with their gloomy everyday life, for instance when compared with shots of Terry

at work: he works as a mechanic, his clothes and hands stained, the setting gloomy and painfully mundane when compared to the boat trip's setting. The boat provides an opportunity for an enjoyment of the vast sea, away from the financial problems and job unfulfillment. Ian also enjoys time away from the city during his trip to the countryside, where he spends some idyllic moments surrounded by serene nature, basking in the sunshine absent from his daily life. However on the whole, Allen's vision of London in *Cassandra's Dream* is far from a love letter as the dark vision of London prevails in the film. Brothers' working class entrapment is emphasized by shots such as those during the Sunday lunch at their parents' house – unfashionable wallpaper and very modest amount of dishes on the table suggest the family's troubled financial situation, and as we know most of the family members need money. Ian and Terry rely on uncle Howard, therefore they ask him for financial help. To their surprise uncle Howard asks for a murder in return for that and many other favours he provided for them and their parents over the years. The film uses the pathetic fallacy in shot 34:46 in order to convey the mood: it's raining, hence Ian, Terry and Howard hide from the rain under the tree. However due to the topic of their conversation it seems that they might be hiding from more than merely the rain. As the weather seems to have worsened just before Howard began revealing the details of his troublesome situation to his nephews, we may assume that it illustrates the sinister nature of his request and symbolises the tragic fate which awaits the brothers following that conversation. Later on in the film Ian and Terry wait for their victim in his house – that scene demonstrates that as the plot darkens, so do the shots. The scene stands in stark contrast to the boat trip and countryside shots and may suggest that following his uncle's request the men are sentenced to lurk in the shadows.

Next I would like to examine how successful are *Scoop* and *Cassandra's Dream* in unveiling an authentic vision of London. In his discussion of *Match Point*, Shone points out that: '*Observer's* Jason Solomons complained that the film "takes place in a London that's recognizable but doesn't really exist." To which one can only say: Welcome to the club. They've been saying that about Woody

Allen's New York for decades. It didn't seem to hurt him any' (Shone 2015: 237). Similar point to the one made by Solomons can be applied to *Scoop* and *Cassandra's Dream*. Both movies seem to provide rather inaccurate visions of London, as even though the city seems 'recognizable', one would refrain from referring to Allen's portraits of London as genuine.

Scoop shows an indulgent, idealized image of London, where one can easily establish a connection with an upper class representative which will quickly allow that person to immerse in the upper class world. We mainly observe parties and other than preserving reputation, upper class members do not seem to have any real concerns or obligations, they enjoy a certain standard of living and are portrayed as naïve as both Sondra and Sidney are accepted by them as their social equals despite for instance Sidney's social awkwardness and persistence with performing magic tricks rather than talking about his business. British upper class is therefore not granted much intelligence, as all its representatives featured in the movie fail to recognize Sondra and Sidney as imposters. The film also demonstrates the value of reputation, as it is due to Peter's high social standing that Sondra and Sidney are unable to investigate him openly. When Sondra and Sidney aim to publish their big scoop in a newspaper they are denied publication – admittedly there are lacking unquestionable proof and the police are convinced that the real killer already is in custody, however the journalist's first, automatic reaction to their revelations seems to be doubt and distrust. It proves that appearances and reputation go a long way and may enable an individual to conduct immoral affairs, successfully escaping scrutiny.

Cassandra's Dream appears to provide a certain level of authenticity, however it fails to produce an entirely accurate image of the English capital. As Shone aptly observes, 'brothers sound like cockneys but think like Americans, dreaming of yachts, vintage cars, and lunch at Claridge's' (2015: 241). And indeed, Ian and Terry seem to be following the American dream rather than face their London reality head on and aim to make the best of it. Even though we are meant to perceive them as working class representatives due to their

upbringing and current jobs, if we take a closer look at their social standing it seems more like an imperfect costume Allen's film tries to enforce. For instance, their father owns a restaurant – while the restaurant might not be very profitable, ownership of a business is hardly working class. Similarly when Terry has money, instead of putting it to a sensible use he spends it on an extravagant bag for his fiancée. And yet the movie wants us to believe the class-trapped version of the brothers in order to understand their choice of committing murder to progress into a brighter future, potentially achieving a social upgrade. However, their choices can be perceived as a simple act of escapism, a willingness to experience a different and hopefully better life. They misinterpret their happy childhood memories of the boat trips: it was not necessarily the boat itself that made them happy, but rather each other's company and the lack of any concerns. In order to recreate their happiness, they buy a boat, failing to perceive it as an unnecessary expense. It is especially an illogical choice for Ian, as surely if he is planning to invest in the hotel business in California, every extravagant purchase delays his business plan.

Furthermore I would like to analyse how Allen's films comment on modern London and its inhabitants. *Scoop* provides a rather negative vision of London and those who inhabit it, as beyond the façade of friendliness, great manners and politeness Peter Lyman, supposedly a shining example of an English gentleman is exposed as a cunning killer who almost got away with his crimes. Moreover, both Sondra and Sidney are convinced that in order to mingle amongst the British upper class, they have to pretend to belong to the upper class themselves. As their hastily constructed fake identities allow them to fit in surprisingly well, it seems that their assumption was correct – social stance is portrayed as an important criterion in the contemporary London, which not only influences one's pastimes, but also shapes the perception of other people and opens doors to private clubs or fancy garden parties. The movie also features an alternative image of a London's inhabitant, as Sondra's friend Vivian (Romola Garai) seems to represent a positive image of an upper class member, as she helps Sondra to get into a private club where she meets Peter, and always seems very supportive of Sondra.

We never witness Vivian belittling Sondra due to her lower social position as she accepts her the way she is.

Cassandra's Dream paints a very bleak and pessimistic image of London, its inhabitants condemned to a certain way of living, any attempts of changing their fate being as futile as if they lived in a modern version of the myth of Sisyphus. Every time a character seems to have made progress and improved their life somehow, they soon discover that their luck has run out and they fail, similarly to mythological Sisyphus who no matter how much time or effort spends pushing the stone up, always ultimately ends up with the stone falling down just before Sisyphus reaches the top. In Allen's film, Terry engages in gambling as a way to gain cash and buy a house. But he underestimates the addictive force of gambling, which leads him towards a huge debt which in turn forces him to commit a crime in order to pay off two debts: a financial debt and a debt of gratitude his family owes to uncle Howard. Ian hopes that by investing money into the hotel business in California he will not only be rich, but also secure the love of a beautiful actress, Angela (Hayley Atwell). He participates in the crime to help his uncle and gain money for his investment. The efforts of both brothers are futile and ultimately lead into their demise. London is portrayed as a place where honest, hardworking people struggle – for instance Ian's and Terry's father. Blake explains the film's mythological background:

In Greek myth, Cassandra has the gift of prophecy but, sadly, her gift did little good, because she also received a curse from Apollo, whose attentions she spurned. Because of the curse, no one would ever believe her prophecies. [...] While the Trojan leaders believe that their enemy has sailed away, she tries to warn them about the treachery of the Greeks with their wooden horse. Of course, the leaders of Troy regard her message as the ravings of a lunatic, and welcome the wooden horse within their walls [...] Cassandra thus represents a warning of doom that goes unheeded. Allen uses her name as a title to underline his theme of hopelessness (2013: 549 – 550)

I disagree slightly with Blake, as in my opinion Cassandra symbolises 'a warning of doom' which is ignored rather than unheeded. It is ironic how the boat's name comes to be, as even though it implies mythological knowledge and perhaps one's naïve and careless attempt to challenge fate, the brothers named it after a dog which brought Terry money during a dog race. Allen's film plays with the audience's potential awareness of the doomed meaning behind the boat's name which is extended to the movie's title and the protagonists' unawareness of fatality linked to their cherished vehicle of escapism which will ultimately serve as a location of their deaths. The 'theme of hopelessness' Blake mentions accurately describes the movie. It also fits my perception of the brothers' actions within the movie as connecting to the myth of Sisyphus, as no matter how hard they try or how successful they believe themselves to be at certain points of the film, they eventually fail and continue to find themselves in a more and more desperate position – the closer to the end of the movie, the less options both brothers have. Albert Camus, in his brilliant essay *The Myth of Sisyphus* which along with other thought-provoking essays published in that volume provides one of most important works for existentialism, says that 'If this myth is tragic, that is because its hero is conscious' (1975: 109). Allen's movie seems to enforce existentialistic thought through its disbelief in one's ability to alter and better their existence, as any efforts of that kind are in fact futile. However *Cassandra's Dream's* heroes, in the light of Camus' words, should not be perceived as tragic as they are unaware that despite their efforts and decisions demise awaits them. Is it unclear whether if they have continued their normal lives without attempts to improve them they could have avoided such a harrowing finale – or would they have helped uncle Howard all the same? Albert Camus observes the link between mythological Sisyphus and the contemporary man: 'The workman of today works every day in his life at the same tasks, and this fate is no less absurd. But it is tragic only at the rare moments when it becomes conscious' (1975: 109). Ian certainly seemed aware of the mundanity which working in a restaurant presented. He has desperately yearned for something more, and the movie illustrates him chasing after a better woman, better job, better life. He is prepared to go to great

lengths to escape his current existence which he appears to perceive as pointless. Terry might be somewhat aware of limits presented by his current job and social standing as he gambles which allows him to improve his financial situation, enabling him to afford to surprise his fiancée with a gift and pay a substantial amount of money towards the boat. However he does not despise his job the way Ian hates his. Perhaps it is due to his relative content with his current living circumstances that he struggles so much with the crime him and his brother commit, deep down knowing that wealth and reputation are not the ultimate values in life.

I would also like to examine the similarities and differences in London's portrayal in *Scoop* and *Cassandra's Dream*. Macready discusses the theme of exile in Allen's European phase, claiming that:

his use of European backdrops in England, Spain, and France represent a break with his traditional New York cityscapes and interiors. These backdrops serve as exilic frames for his dislocated characters struggling to find redemption [...] In *Cassandra's Dream*, the two brothers, Ian and Terry Blaine, are seeking an exile from their working class existences [...] In *Scoop*, Sondra Pransky is an American college journalist living abroad, and her ghostly source, Joe Strombel, is living in a permanent exile from living (2013: 97)

Therefore, both movies utilize London as an exilic frame which emphasizes the exile of its characters, whether it is an exile from one's country or an attempt to escape one's existence. Not all characters seem to be looking for redemption, as Howard tries to escape the mistakes of his past and Ian and Terry decide to commit a crime just so that they can help their uncle and potentially better their existence, but the result alienates them not only from the world, but also each other as they respond differently to the immorality of their actions. Sondra and Sidney spend their time in "exile" from America investigating a potential murderer, which stands in stark contrast with main characters from *Cassandra's Dream*.

Scoop's opening credits are combined with music from one of Peter Tchaikovsky's most iconic ballets, *Swan Lake*. The music is playful and frivolous, as it is the Dance of the Little Swans, which sets a cheerful mood for the movie. The cheerfulness turns out to be ironic as the very first scene is Joe Strombel's funeral. The motif of death re-appears throughout the movie, however it is hardly limited to a morbid association as we see Joe successfully trick Death on a number of occasions. Perhaps apart from aiming to get his last big scoop he is actually looking for a redemption for some past mistakes by helping to catch a murderer. The film appears to idealize London, showing all it has to offer, providing Sondra with not only a chance to engage in investigative journalism, but also to fall in love with a handsome, well-mannered, aspiring politician. Sidney enjoys success as a magician in London, as whenever we see him during one of his magic shows, he has a grand and an appreciative audience.

Cassandra's Dream portrays London as grim and depressing. The opening credits are accompanied by Philip Glass's music which establishes a serious tone for the movie. The music piece is quite daunting, as if preparing the viewers for an impending doom which awaits the characters. The movie offers its characters brief moments of escapism and hope, for instance when the brothers purchase the boat early on in the film: they seem excited and happy, having gained an escape route from the gloom of the English capital. However, it seems that the boat is not enough for Ian, as he might be able to escape the United Kingdom altogether by moving to California.

As the movie progresses, *Scoop* reveals the charming site of London. Sondra successfully sustains a relationship with Peter, who seems to be smitten with her. She continues her investigation into Peter, just as Sidney continues to pursue his career in magic. It appears that London is a city full of promising possibilities, as both Sondra and Sidney are able to pursue their passions. Nevertheless, as time progresses it is revealed that the British capital is capable of being quite dangerous and threatening: the Tarot Card killer murders until apprehended, Sidney dies in a car crash, unable to get use to the left-side traffic, and Sondra almost dies, saved only by the fact that Peter was unaware of her swimming skills.

Cassandra's Dream allows London certain charms – Ian pursues a relationship with a Angela who over time really falls for him. He seems convinced that his future is rosy and he will be able to move to California. We get to see Claridge's, a renowned and luxurious restaurant during a meal celebrating the birthday of protagonists' mother. The boat trips and the escapades to the countryside provide exciting escapes from London's grey, mundane reality. Ultimately the movie, similarly to *Scoop*, provides a dark and pessimistic finale: both brothers die, as Terry accidentally kills Ian and, unable to live with that crime, takes his own life. Uncle Howard however probably will get away with his crimes, avoiding responsibility for his nephews' demise.

Scoop focuses on displaying a variety of attractive places within London, such as the Lymans' country estate, Peter's home with an impressive collection of art and music instruments. In contrast, *Cassandra's Dream* places an emphasis on featuring mundane locations which evoke working class associations, such as Terry's workplace, Ian's and Terry's family home, their flats, the gloomy streets of London which the brothers utilize to stalk their victim. Philip Glass's score continues to establish a sinister, pessimistic, daunting atmosphere. By contrast, *Scoop* uses motives from *Swan Lake* in order to provide a comic effect.

Both films ultimately provide a pessimistic final image of London. In *Scoop*, it proves to be a place hard to adjust to, as Sidney dies in a car accident caused by his inability to adapt to the left-side traffic. Sondra discovers that the man she perceived as innocent and wonderful, someone she possibly fell in love with, maybe even hoped to marry, turned out to be a calculating, cold-blooded killer who even attempts to kill her. In *Cassandra's Dream*, London's image is negative and individuals seem unable to better their existence no matter how hard they are trying to change their life and social standing. The possibilities London has to offer seem to be limited and family values prove to be deceiving.

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Elena Nistor

**Luxury and Extravagance:
Cinematic Metamorphoses
of Senate House London
in *An Englishman Abroad* (1983)
and *Rko 281* (1999)**

Abstract

As a global city, London concentrates most, if not all, human experiences and nurtures multiple identities. Its successive ages and cultural progression have continuously shaped the natural landscape into a specific architectural semiotics whose consistent presence is part of the English capital's particular character. One of the iconic London symbols is Senate House, the central library and administrative hub of the University of London overlooking Bloomsbury since 1937. Originally designed as a radical alternative to exclusivist Oxbridge by proposing a flexible and dynamic approach to higher education, the building was requisitioned by the authorities and turned into headquarters for the Ministry of Information during the Second World War, and subsequently returned to the University for administrative purposes in 1946. The turbulent history of the impressive edifice has inspired writers and film-makers who provided fictional accounts perpetuating the idea of Senate House as a stern location of omnipotence or a grim site of ultimate control. Although there are numerous severe literary and cinematic representations, public perception of the gargantuan building has changed over the past decades. The solemn but generous façade and the rich interiors of the ground floor and first floor allow the artistic metamorphosis

of Senate House into a civil space, an elitist place of lavishness and sophistication, an actual inhabitable place for the financially potent, a chameleonic structure that inspires and accommodates double play and betrayal. This paper focuses on the alternative images of ultimate elegance proposed in *An Englishman Abroad* (1983) and *RKO 281* (1999).

Key Words: *An Englishman Abroad*, cinematic symbolism, London, *RKO 281*, Senate House, University of London.

1. Introduction

Many iconic buildings and monuments of London are often captured in literary and visual arts, for their outstanding charisma stands for the city's truthfulness and distinctiveness. Such a place of inspiration is Senate House overlooking Bloomsbury since 1937. The imposing building raised eyebrows and sparked criticism but never passed unnoticed, becoming an iconic insignia of the English metropolis.

2. Perceptions and implications

The skyscraper, the second tallest building in the English capital after St Paul's in its time (today No 291 on the list of London's muscular buildings) has prompted ambivalent feelings, ranging from wonder at and sympathy for the solid assembly aimed to nurture a significant part of London's intellectual and academic life to disillusionment with the cumbrous erection that overshadows the elegant Georgian houses and peaceful gardens and squares.

To some, the compacted, angular-shaped entity, with the relative simplicity and forthright symmetry of its Cornish granite and Portland stone façade completed with vertically rectangular windows, was symbolic of its practicality, as English architect Charles Henry Holden (1875-1960) had designed it as a radical alternative to the colleges of Oxford and Cambridge, ‘the type of the ancient English Universities, collegiate, residential, dropped as it were from heaven’ (Simpson 2005: 4) that practised the politics of Anglican adherence excluding Jews, atheists and women from university education. In the vision of Sir William Beveridge, vice-chancellor of University of London and one of the masterminds behind Senate House, the new building was aimed to be a ‘university for the nation and the world,... a civic university for the ten millions of grater London’ (Simpson 2005: 4), as quoted by Prof. Richard Simpson in his history of Senate House. Its intertwined horizontality and verticality emphasised its commitment to counterbalance the mainstream exclusivist education provided by the oldest and most famous institutions in the UK by proposing a more expansive and dynamic approach to learning at a high level, for the new site of education was devised as ‘an academic island in swirling tides of traffic, a world of learning in a world of affairs’ (Simpson 2005: 4).

However, others considered that the streamlined aesthetics of the monolithic appearance, with its continuous strings of windows, little ornamentation and flat roofs, posed a threat to the stylish and self-composed surroundings. Architectural historian Nikolaus Pevsner did not fail to notice the ambivalent nature of Senate House in his Architectural Guide series. In the fourth volume dedicated to the English capital, published in 1952 and examining the buildings of north London, he described Senate House as ‘a strangely traditional, undecided modernism; the general block shapes are clearly of the 20th century, and ornament and mouldings reduced to a minimum. But the window shapes remain Georgian, and steel window frames in such windows always look unpleasantly mean. What there is of mouldings is heavy, especially the odd broad buttresses leading with set offs up the centres of the East and West sides of the tower. Equally baffling are the small balconies representing the only

emphasis on the centre of the Senate House front and the balconies and arches squeezed into the corners between the tower block and the lower projecting wings of the tower before the upper parts step back' (Pevsner 4:276).

The vertical emphasis of the chunky structure was perceived by its contemporaries as inappropriate as a 'bleak, blank, hideous and already vast whited sepulchre' (Beerbohm 1946: 80), a 'gross mass of masonry' and a 'vast bulk... insulting the autumnal sky' (Waugh 2000: 61). Even today, its opponents highlight that, even if it was originally conceived of as 'England's answer to the American skyscraper' (Crook 1990: 27), it looks 'incomplete, marooned, melancholic as a beached whale, ... timeless for all the wrong reasons' (Crook 1990: 27).

Even in the 21st century, the architecture of Senate House seems to prompt strong adversarial reactions. In December 2005 journalist and writer Simon Jenkins wrote an article for *The Guardian*, stating that: 'It's time to knock down Hitler's headquarters and start again', for 'the University of London is a pointless institution that has let Bloomsbury become steeped in squalor'. In a harsh language, he advocated the inadequacy of the institution nowadays, seeing it as 'a relic of history', 'a miserable parody', governed by 'dyed-in-the-wool, do-nothing, leave-it-to-tomorrow conservatism' (Jenkins 2005).

Despite all criticism, Senate House has character, distinctive attributes and a definite, unmistakable personality given by its functionality and individuality. It stands tall in Central London, as a reminder of the status acquired throughout the 20th-century history: as administrative centre and library belonging to the University of London for two years after inauguration, as headquarters for the Ministry of Information between 1939 and 1946 (which accounted for damage produced by repeated Nazi bombings between 18 September and 18 November 1940), and then back to the organisational structures of the University after the Second World War. Its dual nature, the oscillation between learning and propaganda, scholarship and censorship (symbolically, between the unobstructed acquisition of knowledge and the suppressed

communication of facts) have established its reputation as a mega-structure of superpower, capturing the imagination of artists who attempt to decipher its ambiguity in words and images that transcend the boundaries of architecture into cultural representation.

For the Grade II listed edifice, acknowledged in 1969 as a building of great architectural significance and historical interest, defies any aesthetic considerations and contradictions. It falls, however, into the Art Deco categorisation, a style characterised by relatively simple geometric forms (spheres, polygons, rectangles, trapezoids, zigzags, chevrons, sweeping curves, lightning bolts and sunburst motifs) arranged in symmetrical patterns, the decorative and lavish ornamentation based on hard-edged, low-relief designs, stylised images, nature motifs and theatrical contrasts.

The building encapsulates Holden's personal beliefs and professional principles:

- simplicity and solidity, resulting from the architect's admiration for the philosophy of life expressed by Walt Whitman in *Leaves of Grass*. God is present in all aspects of creation, and thus it permeates all aspects of life. This was a crucial idea for Holden's notion of the 'daily renewal of Creation' – in his own words: 'Creation did not come to an end with Genesis; it is daily being renewed... every act is a prayer' (Karol 2007: 435).

- obsession with towers: The 92 feet wide and 215 feet high obelisk between the North and South wings was intended by the architect to 'appear with quiet insistence'. Its design was not based on any system or formula of proportion but entirely on Holden's personal response to aesthetic geometry. It dominates Bloomsbury, as architect and historian Eitan Karol observed in his 2007 study dedicated to Charles Holden and his work, 'in much the way that cathedral towers dominated medieval roofscapes' (Karol 2007: 413). Majestic in its Whitmanesque glory, the tower conveys the idea of hierarchy, power and authority: the power of knowledge and the authority of learning on the one hand, and political power and authority of information on the other.

- appreciation of Portland stone: In the exterior, the ground floor and the first floor were finished with Cornish granite, one of the world's finest building stones renowned for its aesthetic qualities doubled by its impressive ability to withstand wear, pressure and damage. For the remaining 17 floors, the architect chose Portland stone, a very popular white-grey limestone quarried on the Isle of Portland, Dorset – in Holden's opinion, 'a stone identified with London for centuries and known to withstand the smoke and acid-laden atmosphere' (Karol 2007: 412). Holden often praised 'the peculiarly silver beauty of its weathered surface' which he regarded as 'essential to the full realisation of the design' (Karol 2007: 412), notwithstanding the particular architectural effect of grandeur and affluence.

The outside appearance of the structure lacks the flamboyance typical of the 1920s' and 1930s' eclectic movement, as Holden decided to sacrifice external ostentatious ornamentation in favour of moderation and workability. And yet, since Senate House was specifically designed as a Babel of knowledge, the architect released his creative energy inside the building. For the interiors, Holden preferred another natural building material: Tivoli Travertine, also known as travertine limestone or travertine marble, brought from central Italy. Although it retains 'a serenity and dignity that is reminiscent of Greek architecture' (Karol 2007: 419), the maze of lavish grand halls with intricate textures and polished finishes illustrates the enthusiasm and emotional engagement of their creator, reflecting his taste for unconventionality and opulence.

3. Destination and predestination

The fate of the building is a good example of personal experience turned political. What was to become Holden's ultimate masterpiece, commenced with ambition and great enthusiasm, ended up as the architect's lifetime punishment. Under the financial constraints of a never-ending project and the political pressures of an increasingly conflicting Europe, its commissioners began to see Senate House as an anachronistic burden – and the fact that it looked very much like

the emerging buildings of the totalitarian regimes of Fascist Italy, Nazi Germany and Communist Russia did not help much.

It was probably its location and authoritarian massiveness that determined the Ministry of Information to take over the building in August 1939, at the onset of World War II. Until February 1946 the lower floors were mostly occupied by the thought police while the roof of the building provided an indispensable observation post for the Royal Observer Corps, a defence organisation made up of civilian volunteers trained for the visual detection, identification, tracking and reporting of aircraft over Great Britain. And thus, Senate House 'became the home of a bureaucracy on a wholly new scale' (Harte 1986: 236).

Badly damaged during the Blitz in autumn 1940, it underwent serious reconstruction after the war when the institutes began to return to the main building, with the library being reopened in August 1945. In 1969 Senate House was acknowledged as a building of great architectural significance and was included on the National Heritage List for England as a Grade II building of the highest architectural significance and historical interest. This triggered refurbishment projects required by 'general usage and perhaps, the changes of taste, and of visual and environmental expectation' (Simpson 2005: 58), the latest being completed in 2006.

If film industry has commonly exploited the traditional image of the majestic construction either as a grim hyper-structure of excessive authority and power that annihilates individuality and humanity, or as a liberal site of higher education, staying true to its original purpose, it has continuously restructured its position towards the authoritarian exterior and sumptuous interior of the Herculean building over the recent decades. Thus, Senate House has come to be perceived as an elitist place of lavishness and refinement, as illustrated by the cinematic disguise of the grandiose locus of authority and learning into an actual inhabitable place for the financially potent in *An Englishman Abroad* (1983) and a chameleonic structure that inspires and accommodates double play and deception in *RKO 281* (1999).

4. *An Englishman Abroad* (1983)

An Englishman Abroad is based on the 1958 meeting between the Australian-American actress Coral Browne and the British diplomat turned Soviet agent Guy Burgess in Moscow. The English playwright and screenwriter Alan Bennett was so fascinated with the story of the meeting that he fictionalised it twice, first as a screenplay for the BBC in 1983 and then as a play that premiered at the Royal National Theatre in London, in December 1988. Both versions are meditations on alienation and solitude, integrity and deceit. The 60 minutes' film adaptation, released by BBC 1 on 29 November 1983, stars Alan Bates, Coral Browne herself, Charles Gray, Harold Innocent, Vernon Dobtcheff, Czeslaw Grocholski, Douglas Reith, Peter Chelsom, Molly Veness, Denys Hawthorn, Charles Lamb, Trevor Baxter. For their roles in the production, both Browne and Bates won BAFTA Television Awards in 1984, for Best Actor and Best Actress, respectively.

Although the film is set in Moscow, its topic and the political conditions of the time prohibited filming in the Soviet Union, so the director John Schlesinger decided to use several locations in Glasgow, Dundee, Cardonald and London that, nevertheless, proved convincing settings for the development of the story.

Among them, Senate House appears as Coral Browne's hotel in Moscow, first towards the middle of the film and second, ten minutes before the end.

Between minutes 17:38 and 18:09, for 31 seconds, the plot makes use of both the opulent Crush Hall as the hotel reception and the exterior façade of the building, to create a grandiose yet off-putting surrounding.

The simple panning shot introduces an impatient Coral waiting for her turn politely while a nervous man argues with the receptionist in Russian. Once in front of the desk, she is forced to confront the same ill humour and ineffectiveness, as the two receptionists (Faina Zinova and Ljubima Woods) seem unable to help the actress in locating the spy's address.

The predominantly black-and-white shot alludes to difficult communication which is further amplified by the language barrier, somewhat contemptuously emphasised by the short-tempered Russian woman. The tense atmosphere contrasts with the generosity of the place, captured in the full shot of a friendly character named the General (played by Czeslaw Grocholski) descending the ceremonial stairs of Crush Hall. The wide frame displays the white travertine marble of the expansive stairs and the monumental hall filled with tall potted palms and heavy furniture, while the General approaches the reception, in an attempt to establish a sense of solidarity with the exasperated Coral:

Coral: Please, how do I get there?

Hotel Receptionist [looks at Coral suspiciously, then grimaces unknowingly and turns to the other receptionist – in Russian:] Tell me, do you know this address?

Girl at reception [in Russian]: No, I don't know. But let me check it.

Coral: Somebody must be able to tell me how to get there.

[While the girl is copying the address, Coral sees the General and waves at him.]

Hotel Receptionist [in Russian]: This address does not exist I don't know!

Coral: This is ridiculous! Haven't you got a street directory, an A to Z?

Hotel Receptionist [in Russian]: What are you talking about? I don't understand a thing!

Coral: Can I get a taxi?

Hotel Receptionist: No taxi!

General: Are you in trouble?

Coral: Oh, no! No! (*An Englishman Abroad*)

The place acquires a metaphorical interpretation in this scene, as Crush Hall, turned into a Soviet hotel lobby, is seen as a locus of impossible dialogue, suspicion and mistrust, unkindness and rigidity. The feeling deepens in the next scene, with Coral leaving the hotel. Although it remains in the background, the exterior of Senate House is shot from a slightly low angle, which alludes to its assertive self-sufficiency as a luxury hotel in the capital of the largest country in the world. An unfriendly place, where individual needs are ignored with apathy and indifference, as Coral finds herself unable to stop a taxi on the street. It is a dystopian universe that nurtures the dissolution of identity into silent conformity, as shown by the identically black-coated passers-by and the resigned chords of the slow Russian instrumental tune (the original soundtrack was entirely composed by George Fenton).

Crush Hall appears again towards the end of the film (minutes 48:50 to 50:06) in a 75 seconds' long scene. The long shot taken in a slightly high angle and the powerful song sung by a choir and an opera singer, makes the two main characters (Coral Browne and Guy Burgess, played by Alan Bates) appear almost insignificant in the grandiose surroundings. The smooth track-out shot zooms out, to follow them in the overwhelmingly luxurious hall lit by rectangular vertical wall lights profusely reflecting the marbled walls and floor. It is the opposite angle of the same foyer full of indoor plants, brown furniture, black leather armchairs. The bright red carpet in the middle of the hall cannot stifle the clacking of heels, hinting at estrangement, loneliness, hopelessness... It is the moment of leave-taking:

Guy: I gave you the old mum's number, didn't I?

Coral: Yes.

Guy: I... do like it here. Don't tell anyone I don't. And thanks again... in advance. (*An Englishman Abroad*)

As a melancholic Coral watches Guy disappearing through the revolving doors, the bare stairs glitter white in the background, as if reflecting her contemplation of fate and coincidence.

5. *RKO 281* (1999)

RKO 281 is an American historical drama film written by John Logan and directed by Benjamin Ross. Inspired by *The Battle Over Citizen Kane*, a 1996 documentary by Richard Ben Cramer and Thomas Lennon, the film stars Liev Schreiber, James Cromwell, Melanie Griffith, John Malkovich, Roy Scheider and Liam Cunningham. Produced by Scott Free Productions, BBC Films and WGBH Boston, and released in 20 November 1999, the 86 minutes long film is centred on the problematic production of the 1941 film *Citizen Kane*, considered the greatest film of all times, and on the conflict between the actor/writer/director Orson Welles and the newspaper magnate William Randolph Hearst. The title refers to the original code of *Citizen Kane*, given by the production and distribution company Radio-Keith-Orpheum Pictures, one of the big five studios of Hollywood's Golden Age.

The plot focuses on Hearst's attempts to block the release of Welles' film after he learns that *Citizen Kane* is loosely based on the biographies of several American tycoons, including his. The film is eventually released and receives critical acclaim, but Hearst bans its mention in his publications, which limits its commercial success, failing to recoup its costs at the box office. With nine nominations at the 1941 Academy Awards, it received only the award for Best Writing (Original Screenplay). It soon disappeared from public attention but was revived by French film critic and theorist Andre Bazin. In the first volume of *What Is Cinema?* he noted that *Citizen Kane* 'marks more or less the beginning of a new period' because Orson Welles's 'case is the most spectacular and, by virtue of his very excesses, the most significant' (Bazin 2004: 37).

RKO 281 transplants the visual narrative of this ‘spectacular’ case in several quintessential edifices in London: St Pancras Chambers (for the Gothic stairwell in Hearst Castle), the Gamble Room in the Victoria and Albert Museum (for Hearst’s private quarters and office), the Great Hall of the Guildhall (for the dining hall and ballroom in Hearst Castle).

Senate House could not be overlooked: it appears ten minutes before the end of the film (1:13:31-1:15:55), as the site of final confrontation between the ‘Boy Genius’ (Liev Schreiber) and the ‘Press Baron’ (James Cromwell). For two minutes and 22 seconds, the action moves from the Grand Lobby on the first floor to Crush Hall on the ground floor via a sumptuous lift that fails to pass unnoticed owing to the large mirrors with thick black edges and the metal decorative panel at the back. (It is, in fact, a false structure, specially fabricated to comply with the purpose of the scene, and placed behind the doors of Macmillan Hall, as the actual lift is located next to the entrance hall of the building, in front of the Reception desk.)

The lavish decoration of the closed space creates a severe ambience, subtly underlined by the formal clothing of the two men. The static medium two shot and the characters’ economy of gestures amplify the implied tension between the opponents: past and present, young and old. The scene closely follows the instructions in the script written by John Logan:

INT_HOTEL. NEW YORK_NIGHT

Title: APRIL 30, 1941 Welles is rushing to catch an elevator as the doors close. He nips in at the last minute and punches his button. He turns. The elevator is deserted but for one other person: William Randolph Hearst. Welles and Hearst recognize each other instantly. As the elevator ascends the two men look at each other.

A very long pause as we watch their faces -- the young man and the old man -- both men of mad grandeur

and malevolent passion and stunning inspiration
-- both men of incalculable achievement and measureless
poignancy.

Finally:

Welles: Mr. Hearst, I'm not sure you remember who I am,
my name is Orson Welles.

Hearst: I know who you are.

Welles: Oh, maybe you also know that I've got a picture
opening tomorrow. I'll be happy to arrange some tickets
for you if you like to come.

A pause as Hearst regards Welles. Then Hearst carefully
reaches over and presses the stop button on the elevator.
The elevator stops. An exceedingly quiet exchange: A beat.
A pause.

Hearst: I wonder... Have you any idea what you have done?

Welles: Do you?

Hearst: Intimately. For every sin you have placed on my
head I could give you a hundred others. But I believe that
a man's private life should not be made public property.

Welles: How... when you have made your name through
your papers. I like to think that my film is more than a
cheap expose of a man's life.

Hearst: And what would you call it?

Welles: A man gains the world and loses his soul. I suppose
in some circles that would be considered a... fair exchange.

(RKO 281)

The brilliant visual interpretation provided by the repeated
reflections in the mirror seems to reveal the multiple facets of the
protagonists' identity. Perfidy, disloyalty, duplicity are captured

in Welles's Faustian rumination according to which 'a man gains the world and loses his soul'. Hearst, however, rejects any kind of analogy; he presses the stop button again and the lift continues descent, in a metaphorical fall from the heaven of absolute control.

Hearst: It's not my life you sabotaged with your film, Mr Welles. My battle with the world is almost over. Yours, I'm afraid, has just begun.

The doors open on Hearst's floor. Before he leaves the elevator, he looks at his adversary and says in a quiet voice:

Hearst: Good luck, Mr Welles.

Welles dashes out of the elevator, determined to give a harsh reply. He hesitates for a moment, then shouts:

Welles: Kane would have taken the tickets! (*RKO 281*)

Like in *An Englishman Abroad*, Crush Hall is the set of another leave-taking from the same double perspective: the feisty aspirant to success, haloed by the artificial radiance of the spherical ceiling lights that brighten the naked stairs and – again – the rectangular wall lights of the ground floor, and the defeated yet dignified media patriarch slowly walking down the long hotel foyer, like a black shadow that disturbs the symmetry of the white tunnel guarded by green palm trees and a lily lotus torchiere floor lamp.

Also, like in *An Englishman Abroad*, the next scene features the exterior of Senate House, this time at night. The Dutch (oblique) tilt shot reveals the sophisticated, authoritative building now turned into the legendary Palace Theatre in New York. We easily recognise the white, angular tower of Senate House against an intensely dark blue sky, although it is unimpressively yet conspicuously guarded by the Chrysler Building, another Art Deco masterpiece, cautiously planted on the left, to give the impression of Midtown Manhattan. It is the night of the premiere (1 May 1941) and acute tension is

perceptible, as the front of the theatre (the courtyard of Senate House) swarms with luxurious cars and people in formal evening clothes.

And, again, the visual adaptation provides an exact translation of the directions included in the original screenplay:

On the Palace marquee "ORSON WELLES" is spelled out in enormous six foot tall electric letters. Below that is "CITIZEN KANE" also in electric letters. Above the marquee is a series of towering, flashing neon Charles Foster Kane and the words "IT'S TERRIFIC." (RKO 281)

The two films use similar techniques to promote the imposing exterior and lavish interior of the South Wing of Senate House as a definitive locus of elegance and refinement. With the help of cinematic imagination, the pyramidal configuration acquires an august grace and tasteful richness that increase the dramatic effect of the plot. The logic of the two narratives requires its generosity of space and dignity of circumstance as a quiet witness to the interaction between characters. The elaborated network of halls and corridors magnifies the emotional authority of the protagonists, while the consistent symmetry of the exterior significantly highlights the cosmopolitan grandeur of an architectural masterpiece. The contradictory nature of Senate House recommends the monolithic structure as a charismatic filming location of sophisticated versatility: the eclectic style of its angular horizontality and verticality adds to the character of London itself but it can easily cross the border of Englishness to any significant conurbation that wants to be culturally established as a global hub of wealth and power.

Perhaps that is why many visual adaptations have still perpetuated the idea of Senate House as a stern location of omnipotence or a grim site of ultimate control. In time, the magnanimous structure has inspired a multitude of severe portrayals: *Dunkirk* (1958), *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1984), *Richard III* (1995), *Spy Game* (2001),

Fast and Furious 6 (2013) and *War Machine* (2017). Some of the films featuring the building stay true to the original purpose of the construction: *The Most Dangerous Man in the World* / US title: *The Chairman* (1969), *The Day of the Triffids* (1981), *Inspector Morse: Dead on Time* (1992). Other productions lighten up the inflexible image of the massive building with a tinge of humour that subverts the very epitome of repression and intimidation inspired by Senate House: *You Must Be Joking!* (1965), *The Hunger* (1983), *Batman Begins* (2005), *Nanny McPhee and the Big Bang* (2010) and *Muppets Most Wanted* (2014).

Nevertheless, in parallel, more and more recent visual productions propose alternative approaches to the gargantuan building, proposing alternative images of Senate House on screen whose solemn but rich interiors of the ground floor and first floor allow its artistic metamorphosis into a cultured and refined civil space, an exclusivist locus of finesse and style: *Blue Ice* (1992), *The Veiled Lady* (1990) and *The Double Clue* (1991) of Agatha Christie's Poirot TV series, Part 3 of *Any Human Heart* (2010), *The Dark Knight Rises* (2012), and *Jack Ryan Shadow Recruit* (2014).

6. Conclusion

Senate House London is clearly an important part of the cultural paradigms of British and American cinematography as its conspicuous presence successfully complements the stories and the development of the protagonists. As a cultural symbol, the edifice is acknowledged by the public as a robust construction whose unique features 'could not have been built in any earlier generation than this, and can only be at home in London' (Simpson 2005: 16). Its status is given by its compliance with the essence of modernism residing in its angular shapes, horizontalities and verticalities, logicity and functionality, in perfect harmony not only with the British Museum across the street but with the whole urban environment of London. This unparalleled architectural masterpiece adds to the character of

the city itself, standing for London's originality and authenticity as it is 'a building with a continuity of active life over many centuries' (Simpson 2005: 46).

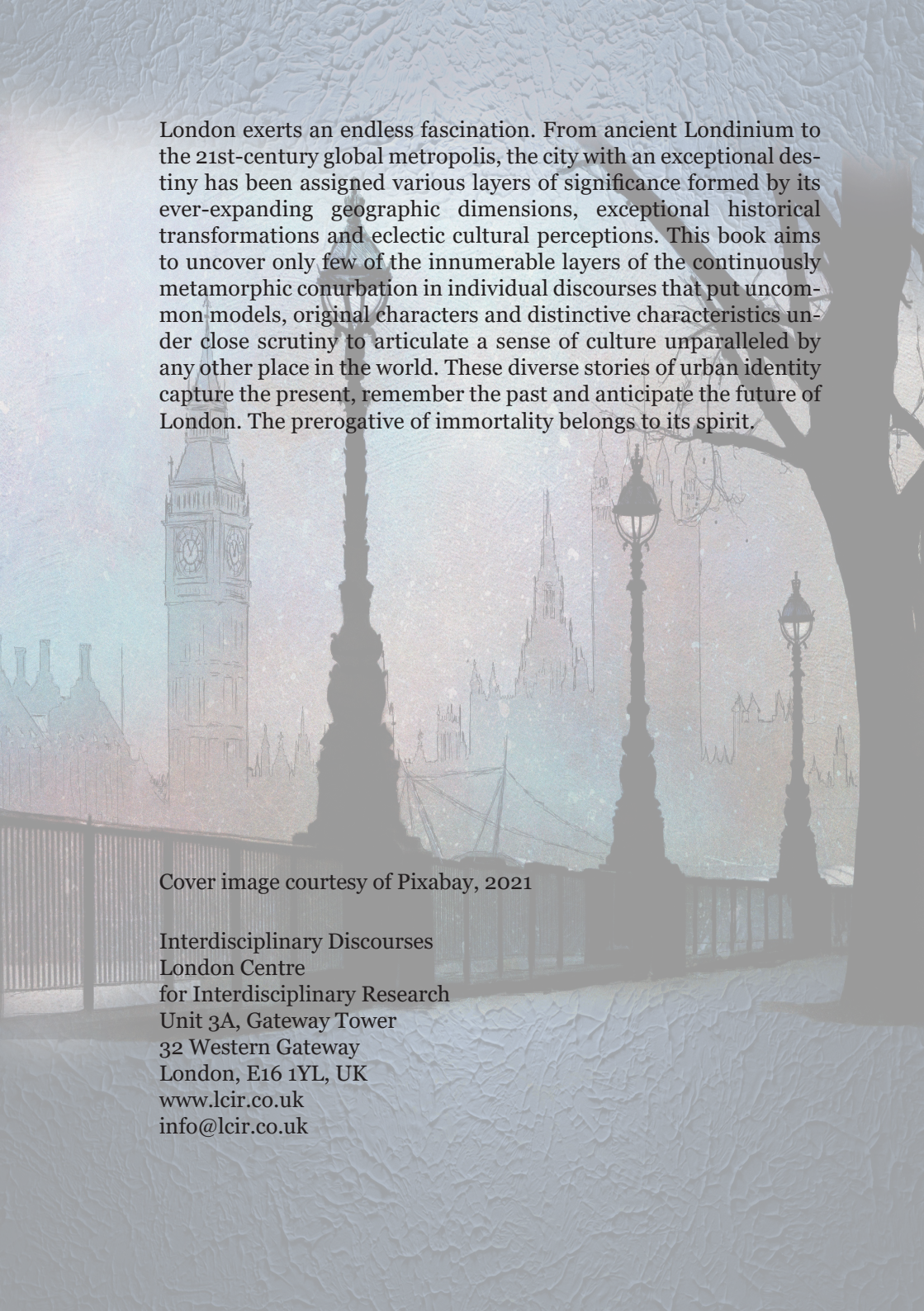
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London exerts an endless fascination. From ancient Londinium to the 21st-century global metropolis, the city with an exceptional destiny has been assigned various layers of significance formed by its ever-expanding geographic dimensions, exceptional historical transformations and eclectic cultural perceptions. This book aims to uncover only few of the innumerable layers of the continuously metamorphic conurbation in individual discourses that put uncommon models, original characters and distinctive characteristics under close scrutiny to articulate a sense of culture unparalleled by any other place in the world. These diverse stories of urban identity capture the present, remember the past and anticipate the future of London. The prerogative of immortality belongs to its spirit.

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