

RE-IMAGINING THE JEWELLED ISLE: ENGLAND AND CROSS-MEDIA PROJECTS IN
THE MID-TWENTIETH CENTURY

By

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Dissertation

Submitted to the Faculty of the

Graduate School of Vanderbilt University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for

the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

English

August, 2010

Nashville, Tennessee

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the Vanderbilt University Graduate School and English Department for the financial support they have provided these five years and for the Dissertation Enhancement Grant, without which much of the archival research in my dissertation would not have been possible. I am also indebted to the British Film Institute and its dedicated librarians for guiding me through the special collections archives and allowing me to spend a week examining the Carol Reed Papers and the London Film Production Papers.

I would also like to thank the members of my Dissertation Committee for their support and advice through the dissertation process. In particular, I am grateful to my dissertation director, Professor Mark Wollaeger, for all the time he put in to reading and commenting on my work—his invaluable guidance throughout this process is much appreciated.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

With the contraction of empire and the threat of fascist powers on the continent, 1930s and 1940s Britain saw both modernist and new-generation, realist writers address the immediate political condition around them. Prompted by an impulse more pressing than merely recounting their observations of war, these writers sought to define the nation and imagine what a postwar, post-imperial nation would look like. In his pamphlet “The Lion and the Unicorn: Socialism and the English Genius” (1941), George Orwell begins with an arresting sentence: “As I write, highly civilized human beings are flying overhead, trying to kill me” (138). Describing the Blitz bombing of London, Orwell conveys the urgency of his goals: defining England and national feeling, for “[o]ne cannot see the modern world as it is unless one recognizes the overwhelming strength of patriotism, national loyalty” (138). Sardonic—yet earnest about the ties that hold the nation together—Orwell writes,

England is not the jewelled isle of Shakespeare’s much-quoted message, nor is it the inferno depicted by Dr Goebbels. More than either it resembles a family, a rather stuffy Victorian family, with not many black sheep in it but with all its cupboards bursting with skeletons. It has rich relations who have to be kow-towed to and poor relations who are horribly sat upon, and there is a deep conspiracy of silence about the source of family income. It is a family in which the young are generally thwarted and most of the power is in the hands of irresponsible uncles and bedridden aunts. Still, it is a family. It has its private language and its common memories, and at the approach of an enemy it closes its ranks. A family with the wrong members in control—that, perhaps, is as near as one can come to describing England in a phrase. (150)

Orwell is deeply bitter about the inequality of power and wealth in England, held by those whom he calls “irresponsible uncles and bedridden aunts.” Yet, he shifts to a poignant expression of loyalty to the nation: he emphasizes the fact that, in spite of the skeletons in the cupboard, England is still a “family” with “its private language” and “common memories” that cannot be discounted. Significantly, this passage points to the way “language” and the written medium, “Shakespeare’s much-quoted message,” “the inferno depicted by Dr Goebbels,” and the tropes that become epithets for England, help determine the way people conceptualize their relationship, belonging, or lack of belonging to a community and nation.

This study will look at the way novels, poetry, and film 1) define the nation, whether as a “family,” community, organic entity, or governing state, and 2) the way their self-conscious invocation of other media shapes these definitions. By the 1930s, writers could not ignore the impact of mass culture and new technology. Recognizing and borrowing from the power of these other media—film, photography, and radio—writers such as Virginia Woolf, Elizabeth Bowen, Graham Greene, and W. H. Auden used them as sources of metaphors for England and as lenses through which to scrutinize the political condition. Visual and aural media that became dominant forms of mass culture by the 1930s and 1940s affected how writers thought about sensory experience and perception. This interest in the senses, in turn, provided new ways to think about individuals’ relationship with each other and the nation. Instead of surveying the texts written during this time period, I look closely at shared impulses to imagine the nation from the perspective of citizens, rather than of rulers and lawmakers. I define communalism in terms of the idea that the nation is built from the bottom-up. Writers, such as Woolf and Auden, while working for the BBC or the British government’s propaganda projects, were also deeply interested in the way individuals make up communities. In diverse ways, the texts I examine

turn to the strikingly visual and aural dimensions of other media and their implications on writing in order to raise questions about what England could become.

This introduction will place my discussions of these authors in two large contexts: debates about the nation in the 1930s and 1940s and the significance of cross-media work during this period. The questions that drive my project are: in what ways does the notion of nation building matter in the 1930s and 1940s? In what ways do film, radio, and photography help writers articulate their anxieties about war and a post-imperial England? And what do these media say about shifting definitions of culture?

Defining the Nation: Empire, World War II, and English Culture

In *A Shrinking Island*, Jed Esty focuses on modernists, such as T. S. Eliot, Virginia Woolf, and E. M. Forster, and the way their works reveal a turn to culturalism in the 1930s.¹ Esty rightly criticizes readings that equate the loss of empire with literary decline. Instead of evaluating aesthetically the “provincialism” of post-imperial writing, Esty traces an “anthropological turn” to Englishness: “Taken together, their [Eliot’s, Woolf’s, and Forster’s] works of the thirties and forties begin to deemphasize the redemptive agency of *art*, which, because of its social autonomization, operates unmoored from any given national sphere, and to promote instead the redemptive agency of *culture*, which is restricted by national or ethnolinguistic borders” (3). Esty argues that modernists, such as Woolf, who were rooted in cosmopolitan notions of art as experimentation, turned to examining the historical roots of a specifically English culture. Thus, Esty looks at Woolf’s *Between the Acts* and Eliot’s 1930s plays in terms of their interest in communalism and twentieth-century revivals of the pageant

play as a local English rite. Marina MacKay's *Modernism and World War II*, too, looks at the particular ways in which modernists during the war turned away from the perceived inwardness of high modernism to more public modes of writing. MacKay brings to the foreground the wartime writing of modernist writers, which has often been read as inferior to their 1920s works. Like Esty, rather than evaluating the aesthetics of texts during this period, she looks at how modernism responded to changing social conditions. But where Esty focuses on the notion of culture, MacKay throws into relief the importance of war, the "primacy of the civilian experience" (6), and the way earlier modernist aesthetics paved the way for the more politically engaged modernist expressions of the 1930s and 1940s (17).

My dissertation builds on the notion that 1930s and 1940s writers were interested in culture in a broader sense than "high culture" and used their roles as public intellectuals to address national concerns. But unlike Esty and MacKay, rather than focussing mainly on modernist writers who by the 1930s were looking for ways to articulate the nation and resist fascism, I understand the culturalist, public texts of writers such as Woolf in the 1930s as one aesthetic strand of many and place modernism next to Elizabeth Bowen's less overtly experimental representations of nationality, Graham Greene's borrowing of popular genres, and W. H. Auden's documentary projects. Moreover, instead of focusing on culture in the anthropological sense that Esty does, I argue that the 1930s debates about the nation and communalism involved a turn to mass culture and other media. Although modernism was never indifferent to the power of mass culture and technology,² both modernists and the newer generation of writers, such as Auden and Greene, consciously addressed, emulated, and theorized the cultural significance of photography, radio, and film. These other media allowed writers to

look in new ways at visuality and aurality, which shed light on aspects of the nation that would not otherwise be apparent.

Bernard Bergonzi's *Wartime and Aftermath* and Valentine Cunningham's *British Writers in the Thirties* explore both "high" and mass culture in the 1930s and 1940s, and in an important way, they reveal the complex web of shared interests and concerns among very different authors. For example, Bergonzi discusses the magazines and editorial projects that arose during the war. Cyril Connolly started the monthly *Horizon* in 1940 to preserve what he saw as the ideals of "high culture": as Bergonzi puts it, "It took an unashamedly elitist line about art, and was often attacked for its cultural snobbery and its seeming indifference to the war effort; yet it had devoted readers and defenders, including many in the armed forces" (6). Part of the *Horizon's* goal was, in fact, to act as a "reminder" of better things amidst war and scarcity at home (6). A counterpoint to *Horizon*, John Lehmann's series, *Penguin New Writing*, sought known and unknown writers from all classes and those who could report their war experiences (22). Bergonzi places these projects alongside war writing, such as Richard Hillary's *The Last Enemy* (1942), which recounted his experiences as a pilot in the war, and Evelyn Waugh's wartime satire, *Put Out More Flags* (1942). In addition to looking at texts that explicitly describe war experience and cultural responses to war, such as the popularity of theater and art exhibitions, Bergonzi also discusses the political responses of Auden and Greene. He claims that the two writers "looked with concern and fascination at the disintegrating world around them" (10). Like Bergonzi, Cunningham surveys the literary and popular writing during the 1930s and discusses the impact of Auden, Stephen Spender, and Louis MacNeice on the generation that grew up during the First World War but were too young to fight. In fact, Cunningham looks closely at the

way writers during the thirties responded to the First World War and their fraught reaction to the “widely observed, world-scale collapse of the idea of heroism, this breakdown of the idea of the greatness of a life of action, this loss of ‘the sense of glory’” (156).

Alistair Davies and Alan Sinfield’s edited collection of essays, *British Culture of the Postwar*, and Sinfield’s *Literature, Politics, and Culture in Postwar Britain* also focus on the effect of war on literary texts and culture at large. Like Esty, Davies and Sinfield discuss the effect of the loss of imperial power on Britain: by 1945, Britain had become overshadowed by the US and the Soviet Union as world powers, and this loss of political power led to “a loss of confidence and ambition amongst British writers” (Davies and Sinfield 3). Surveying a broader range of postwar writing than Bergonzi and Cunningham, Davies and Sinfield note how many postwar writers, such as William Golding and John Le Carré, turned to allegorical modes, while others, such as John Osborne and Kingsley Amis, explicitly expressed “resentment and anxiety at Britain’s loss of imperial status” (3). Davies’s essay “Faltering at the Line: Auden and Postwar British Culture,” for instance, discusses Auden’s departure from England in 1939 and the way it was widely seen as an act of national betrayal. Auden’s residence in the US and prevalent anti-Americanism in Britain provoked such texts as Waugh’s *The Loved One* (1948) and the critical work of Richard Hoggart. Sinfield’s *Literature, Politics, and Culture in Postwar Britain* examines in detail Britain’s transition into a welfare state and argues that “high culture” during the war and postwar period had become synonymous with universal education and self-betterment across classes. With the establishment of the Arts Council in 1945, a continuation of the wartime Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts, and the public sponsorship of

artists and intellectuals, art became a public institution. “Culture” was, in fact, the most visible and attainable aspect of the leisure class for the lower classes.

Such research, which produces a general history of the period by cataloguing its genres and thematic trends, has helped bring into focus the main concern of this dissertation: a common tendency that ties together modernist writers in the 1930s, the Auden generation, and mass culture. Their examination of the relationship between literary texts, culture, and war sheds light on the ways in which writers sought different media to address the pressing questions of their generation. Indeed, Woolf’s *Three Guineas* and *The Years* and Bowen’s *The Heat of the Day* respond to the threat of war and self-consciously turn to other media to articulate the relationship between film, photography, radio, and the bodily sensorium. However, instead of looking at war itself as the determining factor in shaping all these narratives, I focus on the way mass culture, photography, radio and film mediated their responses to the nation near or at war. In important ways, the texts that I discuss imagine versions of England that serve as testing sites for notions of communalism and culture. The fact that none of these texts were published during the Second World War throws into relief the role of the imaginary: instead of being interested solely in the present and serving as witness accounts of war, in a forward-looking way they present versions of the nation where communal participation from citizens, perception, and work offer alternatives to present conditions.³ Woolf’s *The Years* imagines how the senses make individuals creative agents; in *The Heat of the Day*, rather than simply representing the ways in which the war affected citizens, Bowen considers the implications of wartime vision on a future England; the film *The Third Man* sees mass culture as an important source for English cultural authority in

the postwar; and Auden's verse in *Night Mail* imagines how work holds together the different regions and individuals in Britain.

Photography, Radio, Film, and Modernism

The work of modernist writers, such as Woolf and Forster, has often been read as resistant towards technology and mass culture, and modernism tends to be stereotyped as “art for art’s sake,” as high culture that is in direct opposition towards mass consumption.⁴ But recent criticism shows that modernism, in fact, actively responded to and assimilated elements of mass culture.⁵ Susan McCabe’s *Cinematic Modernism: Modernist Poetry and Film* traces what American modernism and cinema have in common. Looking at writers H. D., Ezra Pound, Gertrude Stein, and T. S. Eliot, among others, McCabe aims to show how “modernists could be profoundly cinematic even when not fully cognizant of it” (2). Although many of the authors she discusses write explicitly about film, she focuses on the way “cinematic style,” montage, and cutting translate to modernist poetry and prose. For example, McCabe links film montage to modernism’s representation of fragmented bodies: she argues that T. S. Eliot’s “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” uses a succession of images comparable to montage and that the “montage” of the woman’s arms and “close-up” of her hair reflects the speaker’s hysteria. Although McCabe draws interesting formal connections between film techniques and imagery in poetry, she limits her arguments to interart analogies between film and writing rather than exploring the cultural logic underlying such correspondences. Moreover, instead of looking broadly at the experimentalism of both the avant-garde and popular cinema, McCabe’s

discussions of film focus only on avant-garde films of the 1920s, such as those by René Clair and Man Ray.

Looking at a broader range of texts than McCabe, David Trotter in *Cinema and Modernism* examines the influence of films that include those of D. W. Griffith on modernism. Although he argues against analogical readings of films and literary texts, his reliance on biographical proof in order to establish specific “affinities” between modernist writing and cinema is equally limiting. Instead of looking at how the cinema influenced a broad range of thinking during this time, he cites, for example, specific instances in Woolf’s diaries and novels in an attempt to delve into her mind and speculate “what a writer might conceivably have known” (Trotter 2). Moreover, Trotter limits his discussions of cinema’s influence on modernism to the way writers thought of film as an indexical medium rather than an iconic one as well. He claims that because “[l]iterature is a representational medium, film a recording medium,” modernists were most interested in responding to film’s seeming “neutrality.” Trotter takes at face value viewers’ responses to the Lumière brothers’ *Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat Station* (1895) that describe filmic images as recordings of reality: he cites a reviewer who claims, “the train rushes in so quickly that, in common with most of the people in the front rows of the stalls, I shift uneasily in my seat and think of railway accidents” (qtd in Trotter 18). Citing cinema’s first audiences, Trotter claims that film creates a unique immediacy, and even hyperreality, that writers admired and emulated. He thus reads Woolf’s *To the Lighthouse* as an affirmation of the physicality of objects and common life. Indeed, the section “Time Passes” seems to record the physical world without a human subject, and, as Trotter claims, reveals Woolf’s desire to “imagine eyelessness as an element of the human condition” (172). Similarly,

in T. S. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," the speaker describes himself as if he were a camera looking down on his own bald spot. Trotter's analysis of *To the Lighthouse* and "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" thus highlights the way in which seeing by the twentieth century was no longer restricted to the human eye and the way modernists assimilated the camera's "neutral position." Although Trotter describes how writers and journalists who wrote on film questioned the idea of neutrality and, in fact, observed the "grotesque and unnatural effect...produced when, in taking a street scene, for instance, vehicles and pedestrians approach within a few feet of the camera, and jerk themselves out of the picture, so to say" (qtd in Trotter 19), he does not take into account the way film, through these distortions, is representational or delve deeply into the way film changed the way writers thought about perception.

Unlike Trotter, who relies on biography to describe the thinking of individual authors, Laura Marcus in *The Tenth Muse* uses a variety of texts to create a sense of the shared attitudes about film that emerged during the early part of the twentieth century. And although Marcus focuses on film and modernist writing, in an important way she links cinema to other technology. Discussing *Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat Station*, she argues that early representations of locomotion made the machine itself a metaphor for the "extreme motion" of film and looks at the way inventors and reviewers thought about film as a manipulation of the concept of motion (19). Cinema became synonymous with the idea of "transport," moving the spectator both with its creation of the illusion of travel through time and space and with its ability to "move" emotionally (19). As theater and film critic Alexander Bakshy stated in 1927, "The only real thing in the motion picture is *movement* without which all its objects would appear as lifeless shadows... There are, therefore, clearly defined limits for the illusionist effects of real life and nature in the motion picture: the latter can be realistic only when its shadowy world is set in

motion” (qtd in Marcus 19). For Bakshy, the significance of the cinema is not in the images in themselves, which he describes as “shadowy,” but in its projection of images to create movement.

Marcus, who takes into account film as both an indexical and iconic medium, also examines viewers’ experience of film in terms of their consciousness of filmic images as representation. For example, members of the Bloomsbury group wrote self-consciously about subjects in cinema and its relationship to writing as media. In her essay “The Cinema,” Virginia Woolf discusses the way film needs to distinguish itself from fiction. Woolf argues that film must not simply record actuality but must embrace its ability to move the audience emotionally through visual representation. She praises the accidental shadow in *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* and argues that it is this departure from recording that allows film to create an emotional effect. Moreover, she claims that cinema must not simply adapt literary works: as Marcus puts it, “The demand here is for a new mode of symbolization, one not dependent on literature but capable of conveying the emotions in visual terms” (117). In her essay, in fact, Woolf moves from arguing that the visual ought to produce an emotional effect on the audience to claiming that representation inherently embodies emotions.

In her discussion of “The Cinema,” Marcus begins to discuss the relationship between the cinema and subjective experience, but Michael North’s *Camera Works* looks in depth at how, in a radical way, photography caused modernist writers to question the objectivity of perception itself. North argues that early writers on photography saw photographs not simply as a reproduction of reality but as a language. In 1839, an early inventor of photography, Fox Talbot, called the medium “Words of Light” and thought of its usefulness in terms of its ability to copy written documents (4). And other experimenters, such as Etienne-Jules Marey, imagined

photography as being able to reproduce visually the inherent language of the natural world. Because photography could represent details within a single shot that the human eye would not normally notice, it also raised questions about perception itself and became “the context, simultaneously technical, social, and aesthetic, within which both writers and artists in the avant-garde worked out their ideas about representation” (North 16). Artists responded to the fact that camera vision in its meticulousness is very different from human vision and explored “the irrational underside of what had come to be accepted as reality” (North 10). Filmmaker Dziga Vertov, for example, through what he called the “kino-eye,” aimed to reveal what is normally hidden or “invisible” to the eye (qtd in North 10). And rather than using the photograph as the model of realism, artists, such as the Cubists, experimented with representing the limits of perception. Discussing modernist writing as well as the relationship between photography and other visual media, North examines the way American modernists such as F. Scott Fitzgerald represented spectatorship, visual subjectivity, and the limits of seeing.

Marcus, who discusses film, locomotion, and other technology in relation to modernism, and North, who in addition to photography also talks about the cinema, begin to look at the relationship between writing and multiple media. My study, however, will not be limited to modernism and will furthermore look broadly at the different media to which writers responded in the 1930s and 1940s. Here I draw on Keith William’s *British Writers and the Media, 1930-45*, which surveys the different ways in which writers during the interwar and World War II period reacted to radio, news, and film. Critics of mass media claimed that film and radio seemed to control their audiences and deprive them of their free will. Charles Davy in *Footnotes to the Film* (1938), for example, calls cinema “one of the major forces which for good or evil is shaping the civilisation of to-day and to-morrow” and worries about how “[t]he millions of

people who fill these cinema theaters receive constantly a stream of emotional suggestions from the screen; their ideals, opinions, tastes are all more or less affected by the films they see” (qtd in Williams 14). But others, from the production standpoint, saw technology as an opportunity to shape meanings of culture and to influence audiences in a constructive manner. The BBC itself aimed to use the radio to “educate” people through classical music and “good,” canonical literature such as Shakespeare. Williams explores the relationship between writers and media by looking at the way they wrote about media as a subject matter: for example, he discusses Greene’s film reviews and Louis MacNeice’s mention of the wireless. But he also looks at the way different media, such as radio programming and the newsreel, affected the form of literary works and writers’ active involvement in cross media projects.

Like Williams, I look at works whose subject matter treats other media, the way other media affected thinking about language and narrative form, and writers who worked actively across media. But, rather than writing a general cultural history of the 1930s and 1940s, I examine texts that specifically make use of cross-media thinking in order to re-imagine the nation and communal affinities. My study, like Marcus’s and North’s, looks at the relationship between writing, media, and perception and use close reading to link discussions of media as subject matter to the way writers experimented with form.

Chapters Overview

Each of my chapters closely examines the work of a writer in the 1930s and 1940s and the way these works use other media to describe, criticize, and re-imagine England. Each chapter will define 1) why particular media were important to the writer and 2) how these media shed light on the way these writers were thinking about the nation that would not otherwise be

apparent. The first part of my dissertation looks at cross-media borrowings: novels that turn to radio, photography, and film to describe perception. My second chapter focuses on Virginia Woolf's response to radio, cinema, and their effect on the bodily sensorium. I argue that these media allow Woolf to imagine a participatory communalism that disrupts the dichotomy between producers and consumers of culture. Woolf serves as an example of how late modernist writers, rather than resisting mass culture, look to other media to rethink perception and to imagine different forms of community. In this chapter, I discuss the term "late modernism" and the way it is an important literary strand of the 1930s and 1940s. I examine the way discussions of media in Woolf's polemical text *Three Guineas* and her essay "The Cinema" make perception and the body itself sites of creativity and productivity rather than passive receptors of external stimuli. In such a way, these texts shed light on the unique formal qualities of her novel *The Years*, which imagine individuals, through their perceptual responses, as participants in creating communal culture.

My third chapter focuses on Elizabeth Bowen's *The Heat of the Day*. Bowen is not traditionally thought of as a modernist, but reading her next to Woolf reveals shared concerns about the future of England. Like Woolf, Bowen wrote self-consciously about the relationship between writing and other media and thought about music, photographs, and film in terms of their ability to move audiences emotionally. However, rather than imagining agency in collective responses, she was deeply suspicious of them. In my third chapter, I discuss specifically Bowen's interest in photography and film: through her allusions to these media, Bowen's short story "Recent Photograph" and her novel *The Heat of the Day* explore vision's subjective filtering. And central to her portrayal of war, *The Heat of the Day* takes subjective filtering even further by presenting vision as always a public act of espionage. This chapter,

while not claiming Bowen for modernism, reads her work through their shared interest in other media and examines the way her essays invoke photography and film to describe writing, “Recent Photograph” as an example of how she conceptualizes vision, and *The Heat of the Day*’s treatment of England as a surveillance state.

The second part of my dissertation discusses writers who worked actively in other media. My fourth chapter looks at the intermedia work of W. H. Auden, who worked in film projects. I argue that Auden’s nonfiction and early poems set up a kind of aurality that privileges the spoken word and its ability to create communal cohesiveness. Poetic language for Auden communicates primal emotions that bind individuals together. Auden’s poem spoken in voice over at the end of the General Post Office film *Night Mail* uses this kind of language to depict England as an organic whole that, in fact, makes machinery and trains part of the natural world. Auden’s poem and this final segment of the film allow the entire film itself to be read not only as a celebration of the train system, the film’s explicit, propagandistic aim, but also as a re-imagining of England in terms of a natural symbiosis between workers and machines.

My fifth chapter focuses on Greene’s collaborative project with director Carol Reed and producer Alexander Korda, *The Third Man*. I argue that Greene’s short story “The Third Man” as well as the film *The Third Man* self-consciously address the novel in order to redefine English culture. Framing modernism as irrelevant “high culture,” Greene and film take versions of “low culture” and propose that the novel and film ought to take a new realist form that directly addresses the political situation of the postwar. My chapter looks at Greene in relationship to Jean-Paul Sartre’s argument in *What is Literature?* that prose ought to take advantage of its utilitarian role. The layered narration in the story and the positioning of the main characters in

The Third Man throw light on the way for Greene, writing serves an “educative” purpose, and by proposing a new kind of British novel and cinema, Greene claims that Britain’s role in the postwar period lies in its cultural power.

Orwell’s “The Lion and the Unicorn” ultimately ends with a call to revolution: “What is wanted is a conscious open revolt by ordinary people against inefficiency, class privilege and the rule of the old... The England that is only just beneath the surface, in the factories and the newspaper offices, in the aeroplanes and the submarines, has got to take charge of its own destiny.” Although the texts by Woolf, Bowen, Auden, and Greene that I examine do not aim to incite revolution by destroying class boundaries the way Orwell’s pamphlet does, they propose that thinking beyond “high culture” and borrowing from the democratizing power of mass culture can create a viable England in the postwar. Instead of looking to Shakespeare for metaphors for England or relying solely on the written medium, they turn to media that by the twentieth century had radically changed thinking about perception, subjectivity, and collective experience. The following chapter on Virginia Woolf’s *The Years*, specifically explores how radio, photography, and film give creative agency to those whom are usually perceived to be passive consumers of culture. In her early novels Woolf was already rethinking education and the canon—in *Mrs. Dalloway*, Septimus Smith’s reading of Shakespeare is a factor in provoking his suicide—but her late novel *The Years* sheds light on how mass culture can provide alternatives to tradition and inspire new models for community.

¹ In contrast with Esty, other critics, such as Andrew John Miller in *Modernism and the Crisis of Sovereignty* and Patricia E. Chu's *Race, Nationalism and the State in British and American Modernism*, look at Britain in terms of its structure as a state and the relationship between governance, citizenship, and notion of individuality. Chu, in particular, examines how modernism responded to questions of personhood and democratic participation during the early twentieth century when the private was increasingly assimilated into governance and state institutions.

² In *The Senses of Modernism: Technology, Perception, and Aesthetics*, Sara Danius examines the way technology, such as photography, cinematography, and radiography, influenced the way modernists thought about the senses: "they [the technologies] address, involve, or interfere with the sensory apparatus in more immediate ways than do, for example, production technologies, and ultimately raise questions having to do with truth, knowledge, and verification" (5). She argues that technology, in fact, led to a division of senses: Proust's description of the telephone and vision, for example, reflected the way he was thinking about hearing and seeing as separate experiences, and these "new perceptual domains" contributed to modernism's formal experimentation (17).

³ Jed Esty's *A Shrinking Island* treats T. S. Eliot's seminal late modernist work *Four Quartets*. Esty takes into account late modernist writing during the Second World War, but my study, in contrast, looks specifically at the relationship between other media and the forward-looking qualities of texts published before and after the war.

⁴ Andreas Huyssen's *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* is a classic example of this reading of modernism. He argues that modernism actively sought to free itself from mass culture: "The autonomy of the modernist art work, after all, is always the result of a resistance, an abstention, and a suppression—resistance to the seductive lure of mass culture, abstention from the pleasure of trying to please a larger audience, suppression of everything that might be threatening to the rigorous demands of being modern and at the edge of time" (55).

⁵ The essays in *Virginia Woolf in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, edited by Pamela L. Caughie, for example, argue that Woolf's fiction consciously borrowed from mass culture and technology. Bonnie Kime Scott's "The Subversive Mechanics of Woolf's Gramophone in *Between the Acts*" examines the way Woolf was responding to the music and sound technologies of her time, and Melba Cuddy-Keane's "Virginia Woolf, Sound Technologies, and the New Aurality" argues that Woolf's fiction reflected a new perception of sound brought on by the invention of the radio.

CHAPTER II

RADIO, CINEMA, AND THE BODILY SENSORIUM IN VIRGINIA WOOLF'S *THE YEARS*

On the eve of World War II, to ignore the relationship between artistic experiment and the public at large was broadly considered a kind of political irresponsibility, and high modernist writers sought new ways to address and counter fascism's powerful propagandistic tools. In Leonard Woolf's autobiography *Downhill All the Way*, he describes life after the First World War as a single-minded "struggle for civilization" against totalitarian forces on the continent (qtd in Froula 4). For Virginia Woolf, the fight against totalitarianism and war included responding to other media such as radio and film, which by the 1930s dominated mass culture. In face of the politicization of culture and art, Virginia Woolf's *The Years* (1937) draws on cinema's and radio's radical impact on visibility and aurality to define a new form of English communalism. In ways that depart from Woolf's earlier novels, *The Years* challenges the distinction between author and audience, cultural authority and passive consumer, by foregrounding the body itself as a producer of cinematic sights and radio sounds. In doing so, the novel models a participatory culture where citizens are producers of aesthetic experience.

Woolf and Late Modernism

Critics have used the term "late modernism" to theorize the transition from modernism to postmodernism or to distinguish modernism as an independent tradition that exists parallel to postmodernism after World War II (Whitworth 275).¹ In his book *Late Modernism*, Tyrus Miller emphasizes the importance of the term because it describes the "reemergence of innovative

writing” in the 1930s (Miller 7). For Miller, this innovation is nevertheless indicative of “a distinctly self-conscious manifestation of the ageing and decline of modernism” as the political avant-garde challenged high modernism’s aesthetics of autonomy and formal experimentation (Miller 7). In *Late Modernist Poetics*, Anthony Mellors rightly criticizes Miller for dwelling on late modernism as “decay” and for ignoring the ways in which high modernists actively participated in the capitalist market. However, Miller emphasizes the way the term “late modernism” shows how these experimental writers were self-consciously responding to the pressing political and cultural issues of the 1930s. My chapter will build on Miller’s notion that politics play a large role in the shift from the high modernism of the 1920s to the overtly public writing of the 1930s, but rather than thinking about late modernism in evaluative terms, I will examine how late modernist writing borrowed from and elevated the cultural authority of cinema and radio. Defining the rift between modernism and postmodernism is beyond the scope of my chapter; instead, I will look at the shifts that occur in literary writing surrounding the Second World War and focus on late modernism as a period spanning the 1930s and 1940s in which writers traditionally associated with high formal experimentation encounter political and cultural forces that cause them to reflect on the meanings of community and nation.

Recent discussions of late modernism in England argue that writers such as Woolf, E. M. Forster, and T. S. Eliot sought politically engaged ways of responding to war, the loss of empire, and the need to define “little England” by invoking literary and folk traditions from England’s past. Two prominent discussions of modernism’s turn to the past, Jed Esty’s *A Shrinking Island* and Marina MacKay’s *Modernism and World War II*, study how high modernists discarded their cosmopolitan universalism and turned to English folk ritual, the Edwardian pageant play, and the English country house to address national culture. Faced with Fascist mythology on the

continent, modernist writers used these traditional genres “not just to rehearse the tropes of Merrie Englande but to gauge the vitality of native rituals” (Esty 55). Esty argues that Woolf, famous for her pacifist stance even when the invasion of Nazis seemed imminent, expressed an “affinity” for national culture in her last novel, *Between the Acts*, which constantly looks to nature and folk tradition in search of an “authentic” England. Along similar lines, MacKay argues that the countryside became the central image of rootedness during World War II: the country house Pointz Hall in *Between the Acts* stands as a microcosm for the nation at large, and the pageant play enacted there allowed Woolf to contemplate the relationship between literature, tradition, and empire. My chapter builds on the idea that communal experience is essential to 1930s definitions of Englishness and that formerly high modernists abandoned a cosmopolitan, international aesthetic for an overtly social mode of writing. As Esty argues, Woolf’s 1930s novels reveal her suspicion of typical images of nationalism while searching for alternative models of communalism defined by “shared rituals and traditions” (12). I argue, however, that rather than simply looking to folk ritual for a source of English authenticity, late modernist writing *modernizes* communalism, the notion of shared experience, by drawing on new media’s transformation of visuality and aurality. Thus, alongside the backwards gaze towards English tradition that Esty and MacKay examine, my focus on radio and cinema throws into relief the continuing importance of innovation, as writers continued to experiment with the form of the novel by incorporating the cultural effects of new technology.

Modernism and Media

Cross-media discussions of literary texts, cinema, and radio have theorized the relationship between new media technology and modernism from a variety of different approaches, but the ways in which literary texts drew on other media to define a new kind of communalism in the 1930s have yet to be explored. In *Cinema and Modernism*, David Trotter rejects causal and analogical discussions of technology and literary texts and limits the idea of “mutual influence” to historical and biographical plausibility. By confining himself to “the basis of what a writer might conceivably have known about cinema as it was at the time of writing” and attempting to delve into writers’ minds by citing specific biographical information, Trotter’s position is *too* limiting and discounts the deeper cultural logic that shapes both film and literary texts (2). An adequate account of “mutual influence” must take into account both evidence of writers’ active thinking about other media and the larger technological and cultural transformations within a given historical period. Timothy Campbell, in *Wireless Writing in the Age of Marconi*, describes a more nuanced model of media ecology by drawing on Friedrich Kittler’s notion of “partially connected media systems.” Campbell argues that the “communications assemblage...produced by a period’s technologies become the conditions underlying a text’s genesis” (xiv). Campbell’s description of the interconnection between media accounts for the ways in which writers during the early twentieth century were thinking and writing simultaneously about photography, cinema, radio, and other technology.²

Sara Danius’s *The Senses of Modernism* builds on the notion of “partially connected media systems” by taking into account how perception is constructed through new technology. Similar to Jonathan Crary’s argument in the seminal *Techniques of the Observer*, which traces the epistemology of vision in relation to technological devices such as the camera obscura, Danius

claims that instruments such as the camera and telephone “[articulate] new perceptual and epistemic realms” from which modernist aesthetics cannot be separated (3). She focuses on how technology created new ways of conceptualizing the senses in the early twentieth century. For example, she discusses how Proust’s descriptions of the photograph and telephone point to new forms of visuality and aurality. Seeing and hearing become independent processes that stimulate each other synaesthetically: “Proust’s telephone and camera-eye episodes articulate a theory of how a new division of perceptual labor comes into play, one that bears both on the habits of the ear and on those of the eyes. For although each of these two processes of abstraction may be traced back to its own relatively distinct technological lineage, their experiential effects...are fundamentally interrelated” (Danius 17). My chapter builds on the notion that the senses acquire their own agency in modernist representations of perception. However, while Danius and other critics such as Andreas Huyssen in *The Great Divide* assume that modernist aesthetics attempted to close itself off from “the encroachments of technology, massification, and commodification,” I approach modernist aesthetics from the standpoint that it was never as fundamentally resistant to media’s effect on culture at large as these critics claim, and I argue that modernists were actively engaging in debates about technology and responding to effects of other media in order to shape their own aesthetics (Danius 26).³ Closer to my perspective, the collection of essays *Virginia Woolf in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* proposes that Woolf, like Walter Benjamin, consciously theorized the relationship between literary texts, radio, and cinema. In “Virginia Woolf, Sound Technologies, and the New Aurality,” for instance, Melba Cuddy-Keane argues that audio media shaped Woolf’s depiction of sound diffusion in her novels, and in “Why Isn’t *Between the Acts* a Movie?” Michael Tratner explores Woolf’s attraction to film as a public art form. My chapter adopts the idea that technology and media play large roles in modernism’s

formulations of aesthetics but argues that the way radio and cinema turn the senses into kinds of media must be examined in terms of 1930s definitions of communalism.

Woolf wrote *Three Guineas* and *The Years* during a period when mass media were transforming the concept of community in Britain. In the nineteenth century, the rise of the newspaper was responsible for allowing individuals to imagine themselves in relation to a larger community; in the twentieth century, the cinema and radio formed the backdrop to Woolf's thinking about communalism as they created a dialectic relationship between producer and audience. In *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson argues that the newspaper facilitated the dominance of the modern notion of simultaneity: by imagining thousands of other readers ritualistically consuming the newspaper, individuals think of themselves as connected to a larger community, such as the nation, beyond immediate interpersonal relationships (35). The idea of an imagined community certainly persisted in the twentieth century, as radio listeners could also think of themselves as connected to thousands of invisible individuals who also tune into the same programs. However, radio and new visual media at the same time turned this imaginary sense of community into an immediately visual and aural one. Cinema allowed strangers to share in the same visual, aural experience, and producers of radio programs took into consideration audience tastes and opinions, which allowed radio to become increasingly a publicly shaped medium. Sharing the same space and seeing their tastes shape what is broadcast made participation an important facet of cultural production for English citizens in the 1930s.

A prominent example of new media as a model for a participatory culture, radio in the 1930s was shaped by both BBC's educational aims and audience demands. Sir John Reith, Director-General of the BBC in the thirties, stated that the goal of radio was "to carry into the greatest number of homes everything that was best in every department of knowledge, endeavor

and achievement” (quoted in Williams 30). Reith’s words echo Matthew Arnold’s argument that culture works “to make the best that has been thought and known in the world current everywhere,” and indeed the early BBC included a heavy dose of classical music and educational lectures (Arnold 79). However, the BBC was in practice more receptive to audience taste than Reith would have it and moved away from this prescriptive programming by taking into account audience demands for dance hall music and comedic shows (Crisell 35).⁴ In the late 1930s, the BBC began researching audience preferences and discovered that listeners widely tuned in to offshore commercial stations and their entertainment programming (Crisell 51). This information pressured the BBC to adopt fixed programming that allowed listeners to tune into shows at regular times and to increase popular serial entertainment, dance hall music, and comedic programming. In fact, during World War II, the BBC’s second network, the *Forces Programme*, which featured a higher percentage of “light” programs, became so popular that it forced the BBC to reconsider postwar programming (Crisell 60).

The radio also encouraged the audience to participate in building a sense of the nation by broadcasting shows that featured the common working population. American programming most clearly took advantage of the radio’s conduciveness to mass participation with its broadcast of quiz shows and discussion shows such as *America’s Town Meeting of the Air*, but despite Reith’s attempt to control the radio as a source of cultural authority, British programming also gave its population a voice on the air (Wilson 110). Transforming the concept of educational programming, the new genre of the “feature” used narrative, dialogue, music, and sound to create documentaries that involved interviews of ordinary people. For example, the popular Northern Region show *Harry Hopeful* (1935) followed the adventures of an unemployed glass blower and featured interviews from real people the actor encountered. In addition, the BBC made radio

relevant to the public's concerns by addressing education and poverty: the series *SOS* presented talks by a former public school master, and another, *Time to Spare*, featured talks given by the unemployed (Crisell 42-3). Such programming contributed to the sense that radio listeners and the population at large were in dialogue with the BBC. Listeners from prisoners to teachers even formed "Wireless Discussion Groups" to discuss educational topics broadcast on the radio (Cuddy-Keane 39). The radio thus reinforced the idea that community and Englishness stemmed from shared experiences rather than the cultural dictates of a vested authority.

The radio's incorporation of audience voices functions similarly to the Soviet paper in Walter Benjamin's "The Author as Producer" (1934). Benjamin argues that the Soviet paper radically challenged the distinction between author and reader. He claims that the newspaper "denies itself any other form of organization than that imposed by the readers' impatience" (224). The reader is thus not merely a passive receptor of print information but actively shapes what the paper publishes. Benjamin states that the paper "elevates" the reader to the status of "collaborator" as it "constantly open[s] new columns, opinions, and protests" (225). According to Benjamin, the Soviet press takes advantage of the interactive potential of the newspaper and turns readers into a kind of author in the production of texts: "Literary qualification is founded no longer on specialized but, rather on polytechnic education, and is thus public property" (225). Benjamin claims that the paper in Western Europe yet belongs to capital as rationalizing forces of production control both writers and readers, and he hails the elevation of the reader in the Soviet paper as a model of civic participation. In contrast with Benjamin's description of the Western European paper, the radio in Britain was owned by the government and, like the Soviet paper, in practice it made the listener a collaborator and author. By taking into account the tastes of the public, liberating the medium from prescriptive purposes, and representing the voices of

ordinary individuals, radio programming elevated the audience and provided a model of audience participation and authorship for writers thinking about community during the thirties.

Woolf's Participatory Communalism

Woolf's essay "The Cinema" (1926), *Three Guineas*, and *The Years* respond to this collapse of the distinction between author and passive consumer. In these texts, Woolf elevates the audience by drawing attention to how the senses in themselves act as media capable of creating shared aesthetic experiences. In her discussion of "The Cinema" in *The Tenth Muse*, Laura Marcus focuses on Woolf's critique of the cinema's development as an art form in relation to traditional written media and argues that Woolf saw cinema as a lesser art form because of its "primitive," immediately sensorial effect on the audience (107). Similar to Marcus, Trotter follows Woolf's critique of cinema as an art form and stresses how cinema captures events without a subjective, human presence (169). But while evaluating film as an artistic medium may be Woolf's immediate goal, the essay is as much about perception: it reveals how film creates a kind of visuality that turns the human body into an active producer and medium of aesthetic experience. Woolf describes the audience as "savages" before the screen, but rather than using the notion of primitivism to criticize film as a lesser art, as Marcus argues, Woolf draws on a familiar trope that compares the artist to a kind of savage. For instance, Bloomsbury artist Roger Fry collected African sculptures as objects of high art, and the first Post-Impressionist exhibition, which Woolf referenced as a marker of the beginning of modernism, opened with Gauguin's and Picasso's paintings, which featured both "primitive" subjects and a new "primitive" style. Fry defended Post-Impressionism against realism and critical outcry against the exhibition by invoking the "primitive" as a more authentic mode of expression: "Why

should the artist wantonly throw away all the science with which the Renaissance and the succeeding centuries have endowed mankind? Why should he return to primitive, or, as it is derisively called, barbaric, art? The answer is that it is neither willful nor wanton but simply necessary, if art is to be rescued from the hopeless encumbrance of its own accumulations of science” (qtd in Teukolsky 203). Fry positions “primitive” art as closer to the authentic artistic self and argues that in order to move away from the critically disparaged artwork in the Royal Academy, artists must strip away the trappings of the realist tradition. In his essay, “The Post-Impressionists,” Desmond MacCarthy, another member of the Bloomsbury Group, takes Fry’s point further by arguing that learning and skill atrophy original artistic “expressiveness”: “there comes a point when the accumulations of an increasing skill in mere representation begin to destroy the expressiveness of the design” (MacCarthy 177). For MacCarthy, returning to the “primitive” means returning to a childlike originality.

Like Fry and MacCarthy, Woolf in “The Cinema” elevates the savage—and the film audience—to a producer of art. Instead of focusing on film as created by directors, producers, or an artistic vision, she claims that film creates a new way of seeing that obtains its own agency and synaesthetically calls on other senses. The body becomes a medium as “the eye links it all up instantaneously, and the brain, agreeably titillated, settles down to watch things happening without bestirring itself to think” (180). According to Woolf, the body sifts through the “hubble-bubble, swarm and chaos” until “some vast form heaves itself up and seems to haul itself out of chaos” (180). Woolf separates vision from the other senses, and instead of conceptualizing the spectator as a unified center of sensory experiences, she depicts how the eye and the brain each operates under its own agency. Similar to Pater, who in *The Renaissance* values “the power of being deeply moved by the presence of beautiful objects” over “a correct abstract definition of

beauty for the intellect,” Woolf elevates the audience by privileging aesthetic experience over the actual filmic medium (xxx). Aligning herself with the ordinary spectator, she shows how vision and its evocation of other parts of perception create a communal aesthetics that endows the banal with a Paterian beauty, where everyday objects, “a herb, a wine, a gem,” can give a “special” pleasure (xxx): “We see life as it is when we have no part in it. As we gaze we seem to be removed from the pettiness of actual existence...From this point of vantage, as we watch the antics of our kind, we have time to feel pity and amusement, to generalize, to endow one man with the attributes of the race” (181). Woolf’s repetition of “we” emphasizes not only her alliance with the spectator but also the way the audience’s simultaneous bodily response—as it perceives as a whole—creates an emotional cohesion as the ordinary individual gains agency as a creator.

Critics have discussed “The Cinema” as a theoretical backdrop to Woolf’s formal experimentation in *To the Lighthouse* (1927), but it also provides an important basis for her communal thinking in the 1930s. Woolf wrote “The Cinema” and the section “Time Passes” in *To the Lighthouse* around the same time, and both bear evidence of her fascination with “arrested beauty, the beauty that appears to the perceiving eye prior to sharp definition and ‘focus’” (Marcus 153). Marcus argues that photography and cinematography allowed Woolf to conceptualize memory as a filmic projection, a “recovery of time passed” (152), and Trotter, also discussing “The Cinema” in conjunction with “Time Passes,” focuses on the idea of absence that film throws into relief: “It reminds that too often in life we look without seeing, or are looked at without being seen” (172).⁵ While “The Cinema” aptly reveals how film influenced Woolf’s high modernist experimentalism, the essay also anticipates her thinking about perception and the senses as media within a social, political context in her later works. *Three Guineas* uses the

photograph to argue for the need to think creatively and collectively against patriarchal systems that, for Woolf, are at the root of fascism, and *The Years* elevates the senses as media to depict how individuals participate in creating a communal culture.

Woolf's discussion of the photograph in *Three Guineas* takes the independence of the senses that she describes in "The Cinema" and reformulates it in relation to the 1930s political context. Like the cinema, photographs are able to create an emotional fusion that, Woolf argues, provides the basis for an alternative to the patriarchal system that promotes war. In the first "letter" of *Three Guineas*, she discusses how the photographs sent by the Spanish government during the Spanish Civil War produce a sensory fusion among individuals who look at them:

Those photographs are not an argument; they are simply a crude statement of fact addressed to the eye. But the eye is connected with the brain; the brain with the nervous system. That system sends its messages in a flash through every past memory and present feeling. When we look at those photographs some fusion takes place within us; however different the education, the traditions behind us, our sensations are the same; they are violent. You, Sir, call them 'horror and disgust.' We also call them horror and disgust. The same words rise to our lips. War, you say, is an abomination; a barbarity; war must be stopped at whatever cost. And we echo your words." (11)

As in "The Cinema," Woolf dissects what she perceives as the bodily response to visual imagery. Instead of depicting the body as responding as a whole to stimulus, she describes the eye, nervous system, and brain as acting independently and creating "messages in a flash" under their own agency. These bodily media turn the viewer into a producer of an emotional, aesthetic response that rejects the kind of destruction depicted in the photograph. Woolf's description of the photograph echoes the sensory reverberation in "The Cinema," but in *Three Guineas*, she places bodily response in context with the rise of fascism in 1930s Britain. In thinking about the relationship between technological media and the senses, Woolf believes that viewers, while each responding independently through their senses, will arrive at a cohesive group response. In

Three Guineas, the photograph, rather than leading to a universalizing fusion of bodies among spectators as film does in “The Cinema,” creates social cohesion as men and women respond in “horror and disgust” against violence. Although the sensory, emotional cohesion that seizes both men and women may recall the emotional power of fascist propaganda, to which Woolf was so opposed, and the mob mentality she argues it produces, she focuses not on the photograph as a source of authority but on the viewers’ senses as a kind of creative media. In contradictory ways, Woolf wants, on the one hand, to argue that the viewer’s response is automatic and bodily and, on the other, to claim bodily response as an act of agency in order to differentiate the photograph from fascist propaganda. For the purposes of her argument against fascism and war in *Three Guineas*, Woolf equates the agency of the eye as it responds in repulsion towards the images with men and women’s decision to resist barbarity. In “The Cinema,” Woolf describes the “fusion” that takes place as a generalizing, universalizing sense of unity with other individuals; here she frames social cohesion in terms of men and women and argues that both sexes must oppose the patriarchal system that makes Britain no better than the fascist nations on the continent. For Woolf, the cohesion that the senses generate is key to inspiring a pacifist sentiment that would separate the English from other European nations as well as from its own imperial past.

While *Three Guineas* conceptualizes social cohesion through the photograph and vision, *The Years* uses both vision and sound to imagine a communalism among ordinary, “obscure” citizens of London. Woolf wrote the novel *The Years* at the same time as *Three Guineas* and had initially envisioned both as part of a larger project, *The Pargiters*, that would include both essays and fiction sections. Reflecting the tension that emerges in her discussion of the photograph in *Three Guineas*, Woolf feared that the essay portions of *The Pargiters* would be too close to propaganda and decided to separate the fiction and nonfiction sections (Hussey 388). The

nonfiction portion grew into *Three Guineas*, and the fiction sections, which follow the lives of the daughters of Colonel Pargiter from 1880 to “present day,” became *The Years*. Because of Woolf’s organization of the eleven chapters, each entitled with a year, which span the late Victorian period to the end of the interwar years, critics have discussed *The Years* largely in terms of its treatment of time and the Victorian past. Mitchell Leaska in “Virginia Woolf, the Pargeter: A Reading of *The Years*” and James Naremore in “Nature and History in *The Years*” discuss the novel’s selection and omission of years that the chapters treat. In *Virginia Woolf and Postmodernism*, Pamela Caughie explores the novel’s representation of time and claims that its non-teleological narrative development presents history as “continuity without progress, coherence without unity, ending without certainty” (102).⁶ At the center of these debates lies the question of whether Woolf’s representation of history imparts a sense of hope or disillusionment towards the future (Hussey 392). Looking specifically at *The Years*’s treatment of the Victorian period, Steve Ellis in *Virginia Woolf and the Victorians* and Emily Blair in *Virginia Woolf and the Nineteenth-Century Domestic Novel* argue that the novel’s portrayal of the generational gap between the young and old Pargiters reveals Woolf’s fraught relationship with the Victorian past and the “angel in the house.”⁷ But if *The Years*’s treatment of the past resonates with Woolf’s linkage of patriarchy and imperialism in *Three Guineas*, the descriptive sections that frame each chapter are more interested in the present than they might at first appear: they play out the kind of shared experience and participation that define Woolf’s thinking about new models of communalism.⁸

Similar to Woolf’s high modernist novel *The Waves*, *The Years* starts each chapter with descriptive sections that provide a panoramic picture of place rather than delving into the particularities of the characters. In *The Waves*, Woolf uses images of the ocean at the beginning

of the chapters to create a sense of an overarching collective consciousness that binds the individual voices of the characters to the natural world.⁹ Similar to the way the images of the ocean stand apart from the rest of *The Waves*, the descriptive sections in *The Years*, which have remained under-discussed in criticism, can be read separately from the strikingly different, dialogue-based meat of the chapters. Unlike *The Waves*, in which nature becomes a metaphysical presence that links together individual consciousnesses, however, in the descriptive sections of *The Years*, Woolf focuses on how citizens cohere and create a communal aesthetic experience within London as a specific, metropolitan space. As in “The Cinema” and *Three Guineas*, Woolf uses images in which the senses operate independently and evoke each other synaesthetically. In *The Years*, Woolf’s comparison of humans to objects creates hybridized bodies in between the organic and the machine and emphasizes the way in which the senses function under their own agency. In the chapter “1907,” Woolf imagines a scene with no distinction between humans and objects, as both seem to come to life at daybreak in London. She describes the “solid objects” under the moonlight as having a “burnish and a silver plating” in a way that foreshadows her comparison of the surfaces of objects to eyes in a later chapter, and rather than focusing on the merchants who drive the carts, she gives agency to the carts as they “plod” and “migrate” to London. In Woolf’s descriptions, both humans and objects seem to operate technologically. In the descriptive section of the chapter “1917,” Woolf describes how the surface of the external world is covered with “the stillness of glass,” and “the puddles made glazed eyes in the roads” (279). The “glazed eyes” of the puddles echo the image of the glassiness that is “spread over England”; for Woolf, the English landscape, which seems to be covered with a glassy yet organically eye-like surface, becomes a hybrid of the natural and mad-made. In these descriptive sections, the independence of humans, objects, and these hybridized

“eyes” resonates with the way she endows the eye or the brain itself with agency in “The Cinema.”

Not only does the novel link the human body and objects as agents of perception, it defines vision as active spectatorship by presenting seeing as an act of creation. In the chapter “1911,” Woolf’s description of England at dawn shows how the world comes into existence with the appearance of eyes to capture light: “Very gradually the clouds turned blue; leaves on forest trees sparkled; down below a flower shone; eyes of beasts—tigers, monkeys, birds—sparkled. Slowly the world emerged from darkness” (192). Similar to the images of the eye-like hybrids in “1907” and “1917,” Woolf depicts the world at dawn as covered in a lens-like skin of light, but here the image of “the world emerg[ing] from darkness,” which follows her description of the “eyes of beasts,” emphasizes the way in which seeing creates a sense of the world as an integrated whole. The novel moves from piecemeal images of clouds and leaves to a broad statement of how they form an emerging world with the appearance of vision. The section then closes in on Maggie and her point of view as she sees “her husband’s book cracked across with shadow from the vine above” (192). Maggie’s perception of the shadow making cracks on the book departs from the narrator’s preceding neutral statement that “the sun [is] coming through the slats of the blinds” (192). The way in which the scene focuses in on Maggie’s point of view and the contrast between her perception and the narrator’s omniscience throw into relief how the eye becomes a creative medium as it interprets the relationship between objects: instead of simply seeing shadows and a book, Maggie creates an illusion of the book “cracked across with shadow” (192).

So many of the descriptive sections begin with vision, but they also synaesthetically move from seeing to the other senses and show how individuals’ perception becomes part of a

larger sense of communalism. In the 1891 chapter, Edward Pargiter self-consciously “note[s] smell, sound and colour” (90), and the chapter 1907 moves briskly from images of “caravans” on their way to London to “the hum of London in the distance” to an image of “the fiery gauze of the eternally burning city” (129). Woolf draws attention to the resonance between visual images and sound by alliterating “crates of cabbage,” “carnations,” “caravans,” and “kerb” and repeating the phrase “cabbages, cherries and carnations” as a cadence in the opening paragraph. Moreover, the cinematic moment where the drivers collectively see the “fiery gauze” of London leads into an image of the citizens of London participating in creating a collective “hum” or “waltz.”

All the windows were open. Music sounded. From behind crimson curtains, rendered semi-transparent and sometimes blowing wide, came the sound of the eternal waltz—After the ball is over, after the dance is done—like a serpent that swallowed its own tail, since the ring was complete from Hammersmith to Shoreditch. Over and over again it was repeated by trombones outside public houses; errand boys whistled it; bands inside private rooms where people were dancing played it. (129)

Although the “eternal waltz” seems to work as a metaphor for the kind of collective consciousness Woolf depicts in *The Waves*, she shows how this “waltz” is produced by the sounds of London citizens. Music from inside of a window is echoed by trombones, whistles, and bands. In this particularly radio-like moment, London becomes a broadcast as its citizens contribute their own sounds. The image of the “serpent that swallowed its own tail” and “the ring complete from Hammersmith to Shoreditch” echoes the “leaden circles” of Big Ben in *Mrs. Dalloway*, which serve as a reminder of mortality, but despite such intimations of death, the descriptive frames of *The Years* focus mainly on the everyday activities of the present. Following the description of the communal waltz, *The Years* describes people sitting at tables at inns, Martin flirting with women after returning to London from Africa, and “ladies with high headdresses and gentlemen in white waistcoats” riding in cabs (130). While the idea of an

“eternal waltz” seems abstract and metaphysical, Woolf shows how it is a concrete, collective sound that Londoners create.

The climatic moments in the last chapter of the novel, which reunites all of the characters at a party, encapsulate the social cohesion Woolf argues England needs. The chapter is particularly aural and radio-like as the characters repeat each other’s words, and at the end of the party, they reach an emotional consensus that the new generation must contemplate its responsibility to the nation and the world at large. Peggy and North, part of the younger generation, realize simultaneously that their “present day” demands a way “to live differently”: “He felt her feeling now; it was not about him; it was about other people; about another world, a new world” (*The Years* 422). Like the waltz that unites individuals in London, the words that Peggy blurts out, “to live differently,” echo in other characters’ minds at the party. Eleanor and Lady Lasswade urge Peggy to give a speech that sums up the thoughts of the younger generation, but significantly, Peggy refuses to provide an authoritative stance on their “present day.” Instead of having Peggy voice a panacea for England’s ills, Woolf imagines a communalism in which individuals resonate with each other’s thoughts and spontaneously participate in creating an emotional consensus. Just as men and women unite in *Three Guineas* in their revulsion from war, ordinary, “obscure” individuals in *The Years* decide that their present day urgently needs different models for living.

This echoing of words and representations of perception in *The Years* are part of Woolf’s advocacy of a democratic, intellectual community. In *Virginia Woolf, the Intellectual, and the Public Sphere*, Melba Cuddy-Keane describes what communalism meant for Woolf. Unlike critics who assume that Woolf’s unabashed highbrowism is a form of elitism and classism, Cuddy-Keane claims that Woolf radically reframes highbrowism as a mode of reading and

experiencing that cuts across class.¹⁰ In her essay “Middlebrow,” rather than framing intellectualism in terms of typical 1930s polarizations of “elite” and “mass,” Woolf reclaims the term “highbrow” for anyone interested in ideas, whether “duchesses” or “charwomen” (Cuddy-Keane 25). Woolf saw herself as a “common reader” with no formal education, and her essays in *The Common Reader* privilege personal impressions of texts and the process of reading rather than academic knowledge. Cuddy-Keane argues that Woolf’s essays allowed her to ally herself with a broader readership beyond the largely Oxbridge-educated Bloomsbury: “At a time of growing specialization and increasingly objective methodology in academic English studies, Woolf defended an amateur status and a wide-ranging and catholic reading practice” (2). Woolf’s ideal, democratic community is based on the intellectualism of this amateur readership, and as a writer, she “promoted a dialogic rather than an authoritarian relation between writer and reader” (Cuddy-Keane 2). But Woolf was not simply rethinking intellectualism in terms of a broader, “common” readership. For her, perception, a creative process equal to authorship, was part of her conceptualization of a democratic communalism. *The Years* imagines this democratic communalism by bringing into view the creative faculty of the senses in the opening sections of its chapters.

While the descriptive sections create an omniscient perspective on the communalism of the senses in London, the meat of the chapters show how the characters produce the kind of dialogue that was so important to Woolf’s understanding of democracy. Similar to the way radio brings on air voices from the general public, the main body of *The Years* imagines a participatory English culture by democratically bringing to the forefront “common,” “obscure” voices that have been ignored in traditional accounts of the nation that glorify the lives of “great men.” In *A Room of One’s Own* and *Three Guineas*, Woolf argues that the lives of “obscure” women that

have been largely overlooked provide an alternative history of the nation and urges women to cultivate a new tradition that departs from patriarchal systems of power. *The Years* builds on these polemical texts and Woolf's advocacy of "common" readership by inscribing the voices of obscure, middle-class women. *The Years* presents the mundane concerns of the Pargiter daughters within a domestic setting, and different from *Mrs. Dalloway* or *To the Lighthouse*, it uses extended sections of dialogue without a subsuming narrative voice. Instead of delving into the interiority of the characters or creating a sympathetic center, Woolf focuses on the external, and by reproducing on paper the sounds of ordinary family life, she makes audible what had been ignored in biographies of "great men" public. Characters constantly interrupt each other, and the dialogue follows the brisk pace of the Pargiters' quotidian activities.

"And what have you all been up to?" he [Colonel Pargiter] asked. He looked round him with the smoky but shrewd gaze that could be genial, but was surly now.
"Delia had her music lesson, and I went to Whiteley's—" Milly began, rather as if she were a child reciting a lesson.
"Spending money, eh?" said her father sharply, but not unkindly.
"No, Papa; I told you. They sent the wrong sheets—"
"And you, Martin?" Colonel Pargiter asked, cutting short his daughter's statement. "Bottom of the class as usual?"
"Top!" shouted Martin, bolting the word out as if he had restrained it with difficulty until this moment. (13)

Colonel Pargiter's return home is a moment of drama for the Pargiter children, and Woolf conveys Milly and Martin's emotions and their vying for the attention of their father not through indirect discourse but through the abruptness of the dialogue. Milly is forced to account for her activities during the day; Colonel Pargiter expresses his indifference to their mundane activities by cutting her off; and Martin wins his father's approval by being at the top of his class. Woolf sets up an opposition between Colonel Pargiter's oppressive authority in the household and the Pargiter daughters' lives at home in his absence. Colonel Pargiter is complicit in what Woolf

sees as the patriarchal system in Britain by being only interested in his son winning prizes and not in his daughters' music. Woolf exposes the dynamics that she argues is inseparable from ideologies like fascism, but she also gives Milly and the other Pargiter daughters a protesting voice. For instance, Milly defends Eleanor's charity work during the day: "Eleanor always would stick up for the poor. She thought Eleanor the best, the wisest, the most remarkable person she knew" (31). And although Delia romanticizes her father's meetings with his fellow officers "with a huge silver trophy in the middle of the table," her most vivid memory is of her father serving dinner, "flicking cutlets dexterously on to plates with his left hand" (26).

Despite the oppressive atmosphere at home as they wait on a dying mother and serve a domineering father, the Pargiter daughters form an alternative community apart from their father's authority by voicing their fantasies about lives that are defined neither by housework nor prize winning. They critique the daily "ceremony of tea-drinking" they perform with their father and discuss what they would do once they leave home. When Delia expresses frustration at having to stay at home, Eleanor tells her, "'Look her Delia... you've only got to wait...' She meant but she could not say it, 'until Mama dies'" (19). Relishing her escape from the home and disobedience by going out alone, Rose imagines her trip to the Lamley's shop as a secret mission and exclaims, "I am Pargiter of Pargiter's Horse...riding to the rescue!" (27). And out in the city, Eleanor imagines the noises of women shopping as forming a communal bond between them: "This was her world; here she was in her element. The streets were crowded; women were swarming in and out of shops with their shopping baskets. There was something customary, rhythmical about it, she thought, like rooks swooping in a field, rising and falling" (94). Similar to the opening section of "1907," where sounds connect Londoners in an "eternal waltz," for Eleanor the sounds shopping link the women together as they create a communal symphony. As

in *Three Guineas*, Woolf privileges the ordinary, the women's unconscious ability to create, over the kinds of public recognition that Colonel Pargiter values.

Through the descriptive sections and dialogue, Woolf's *The Years* models a participatory communalism that imagines the nation as formed by individual citizens rather than governmental dictates. In her final novel, *Between the Acts*, written during the Second World War, Woolf continues her experimentation with communal performance and, in fact, incorporates elements of mass culture (the gramophone) and traditional genres (the pageant play), but rather than producing a sense of wholeness, they lead the spectators to become aware of how fragmented they are from each other.¹¹ Written during the Second World War, Elizabeth Bowen's *The Heat of the Day*, too, incorporates public performance and mass culture to reveal a fragmented London during the Blitz. My next chapter will look at how Bowen not only sheds light on the isolation of individuals but also reveals a deep suspicion of the state and the kinds of communities the state produces.

¹ As Whitworth rehearses in his edited collection of criticism on modernism, the term "late modernism" first appeared in the 1970s: Robert Kern uses it to compare the postmodernism of Charles Olson and the continuing modernism of William Carlos Williams, and Charles Jencks uses it to discuss architecture in *The Language of Postmodern Architecture* (1977). Influentially in "The Epistemology of Late Modernism," Alan Wilde defines "late modernism" as a transitional period between modernism and postmodernism by showing how the emerging aesthetic of flatness in the 1930s prefigures postmodernism.

² In “Annexing the Oracular Voice: *Form, Ideology, and the BBC*,” Debra Rae Cohen argues that “critics who take note of the formal influence of broadcasting tend either to conflate its textual traces with those of the cinema or to single out as “radiogenic” only those elements, like montage, that can be construed as subversive of radio’s perceived homogenizing and totalizing effects” (142). I argue, however, that while it is important to take into account radio’s independent formal effects on literary texts, to discuss radio and cinema together is not necessarily to conflate their “textual traces.” Rather, radio and cinema were part of a larger debate on media and media’s effects on aesthetics and perception to which modernists such as Woolf responded. The simultaneous response to radio and cinema within Woolf’s texts sheds light on the way both were part of early twentieth-century conceptualizations of perception from which she drew to articulate new kinds of communalism.

³ Trotter’s *Cinema and Modernism* also criticizes Danius and James Lastra’s *Sound Technology and the American Cinema* for posing the relationship between literary texts and film as one of “crisis” and “threat” (9). While I agree with Danius’s position that technology in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries sparked a rethinking of the senses, I argue that the relationship between modernism and new media technology was never inherently one of violence. Instead of resisting the changes in twentieth-century definitions of perception and employing synaesthesia to create a “lived totality,” in *The Years* Woolf uses the agency and separation of the senses to emphasize the ways in which the body as media – and the ordinary citizen – participate in shaping communal culture through aesthetic experience (Danius 186). Danius claims that modernism is indebted to modernity *in spite of* its aesthetic goals. I argue, though, that modernists such as Woolf did not simply attempt to reject technology in the first place, and modernist texts both consciously and unconsciously borrowed from radio and cinema during their time.

⁴ Debra Rae Cohen discusses BBC broadcasting as a “product [that] bore the impress of Reith’s own emphatic prejudices” whose “democratizing mission has already become, rhetorically, a totalizing one” (143). However, others such as Todd Avery in *Radio Modernism* take a more nuanced examination of the extent to which Reith actually controlled the radio. Avery argues that despite Reith’s attempt to impose a particular cultural value to “educate” the public, the BBC broadcast controversial debates that brought contemporary art and a plurality of voices, such as Bloomsbury dissent, into the limelight. Avery builds on Paddy Scannell’s position in “Public Service Broadcasting and Modern Public Life” that radio was able “to mix the public and private spheres, its expansion of access to elite cultural and social venues and activities, and its ‘domestication’ of address, as qualities conducive to a type of ‘democratization’ different from that envisioned by Reith—that is to say, to the inclusion of increasing numbers of people from all classes and subcultures in the cultural life of the nation as well as in civic and political processes” (Avery 26).

⁵ Throughout *Cinema and Modernism*, Trotter bases his argument on the presumed neutrality of film: “This emphasis [in the 1920s film journal *Close Up*] on film’s ability to ‘record’ and to ‘reveal’ the common life later found an echo in Siegfried Kracauer’s *Theory of Film* (1960), a theory formulated in the light not only of developments such as Italian neorealism, but of Erich Auerbach’s discussion, in *Mimesis* (1953), of the novels of Proust, Joyce, and Woolf. Kracauer relied heavily on Auerbach’s argument that in *To the Lighthouse* Woolf had dwelt on ‘random occurrence’ as an event in itself, rather than as background to a ‘planned continuity of action’” (162). My chapter, however, argues that rather than being a “neutral” recorder of physical reality, film and other early twentieth-century media shape the senses, and it is this impact on perception that allows Woolf to endow the body as a medium with creative agency. Moreover, my argument is based on the idea that Woolf’s novels, rather than didactically revealing truths about an “element of the human condition,” explore historically rooted problems and imagine alternatives to existing social structures.

⁶ Other examinations of form involve comparing *The Years* with Woolf’s original project, *The Pargiters*. In *Virginia Woolf: Public and Private Negotiations*, Anna Snaith looks at how Woolf’s research for *The Pargiters* figures into her development of public and private voices in the evolution of the novel. Snaith traces in detail the changes Woolf made in her drafts of *The Pargiters* and *The Years*.

⁷ In “The Novels of the 1930s and the Impact of History,” Julia Briggs describes the progression of *The Years* as a movement from women’s constraint under Victorian patriarchy to “freedom” and “self-determination”: “*The Years* echoes and enlarges upon the movement first outlined in *To the Lighthouse*, from the warmth and oppression of Edwardian family life as depicted in ‘The Window,’ to the much more open relationships of post-war society shown in ‘The Lighthouse,’ where individuals interact with tolerance, and even warmth, yet do not want to sacrifice their identities or their personal satisfactions to the larger group” (80-1). Unlike Caughie, Briggs sees a teleological progression in *The Years*’s treatment of time. While I agree that the novel moves towards a kind of freedom that is not present in Woolf’s depiction of the Victorian household, I argue that Woolf’s thinking about the “present day” involves imagining a viable way to exist among others as a “larger group.”

⁸ In “*The Years*: A Feminist Novel,” Laura Moss Gottlieb claims that the novel looks at the world from a female, “outsider” perspective (Hussey 393). However, I examine the ways in which this “outsider” perspective, which Woolf articulates in *Three Guineas* as “society” that refuses to participate in ceremonies and professions that reinforce patriarchy, forms a communal cohesion in *The Years* that includes both men and women.

⁹ In “Britannia Rules *The Waves*,” Jane Marcus recuperates *The Waves* as a political, anti-imperialist, anti-patriarchal text. She argues that through the different voices, the novel critiques the white imperialist male as the arbiter of cultural authority: “While *The Waves* does present the making of the London metropolis as civilization out of a common dream of the disorder, silence, and immobilization of Indian natives as an explicitly patriarchal act of Cambridge intellectual... it does not avoid showing white women’s complicity in the process. Rather, each specific type of white alienated speaking subject is shown to contribute to Bernard’s modernist making of a discourse for his generation—the postcolonial carnivalesque. Yet the reader overhears each soliloquizing speaker as if to remind us that what seems like a hegemonic discourse of the center/metropolis was made of many dissenting voices, like the marginalized voices that make the “voice” of *The Waste Land* (71). I argue that *The Years* accomplishes what Marcus claims *The Waves* does here. While the voices in *The Waves* are yet disembodied and elevated aesthetically by the novel’s poeticism, Woolf makes voices in *The Years* “common” and situated within their social context. The descriptive sections of each chapter are rooted in the daily activities in London, and the “voices” in the main body of the chapters are actual dialogue. Rather than turning “dissenting voices” into high art, *The Years* embraces the mundane, “obscure” concerns of the Pargiter women.

¹⁰ Cuddy-Keane specifically criticizes John Carey’s *The Intellectuals and the Masses* and Patrick Brantlinger’s *The Reading Lesson*, which argue that modernist art is a reaction to nineteenth-century democratization of reading and a rejection of popular culture. Both she and Todd Avery point out that Woolf and other Bloomsbury intellectuals gave BBC talks that opposed Reith’s authoritarian agenda for radio programming: “the BBC talks became a lightning rod for Woolf’s broader cultural concerns. Innumerable things coalesced in her mind: the critical reception of her work, the social regulation of women’s lives, cultural valuations of the intellectual, the prevailing controls and restrictions governing such public institutions as education and broadcasting—more precisely, the whole operation of public discourse in her time” (Cuddy-Keane 23).

¹¹ Although Esty argues that what is important in *Between the Acts* is Woolf’s expression of “affinity” towards the nation, the pageant play itself ends with the players holding up mirrors that cause the audience to see itself in fragmented pieces.

CHAPTER III

PHOTOGRAPHIC AND CINEMATOGRAPHIC VISION IN ELIZABETH BOWEN'S *THE HEAT OF THE DAY*

Elizabeth Bowen's thinking about the relationship between media, sensory experience, and community overlaps with Woolf's interests in *Three Guineas* and *The Years*. Like Woolf, Bowen explores the way in which the senses can create an emotional and social cohesion. In her review of Angus Calder's *The People's War* in 1969, she looks back on the World War II period and describes how radio broadcasts powerfully produced a "community of sensation, [that] was emotive...served entertainment" (*The Mulberry Tree* 184). The first scene of her 1948 novel, *The Heat of the Day*, explores the creation of this "community of sensation" by depicting how lighting and music at an outdoor music concert cause strangers to adopt the same expression on their faces: "the light was so low, so theatrical, and so yellow" (7), and "heroic marches made [people] lift up their heads; recollections of opera moulded their faces into unconscious smiles, and during the waltzes women's eyes glittered with delicious tears about nothing" (8). Here, the music actively "moulds" the listeners' faces into expressions they themselves are unaware of, and although Bowen describes the lighting as "theatrical," the way the "yellow" lighting tinges the entire scene also recalls the recurring metaphors that Bowen uses throughout the novel to convey the visual subjectivity of photography and film. Bowen emphasizes how the music and lighting take away the concert-goers' individual agency and cause them to behave as a synchronized group. Both the lighting and the music hypnotize the concert-goers as they lift their heads and the women start to cry "about nothing."

Although the opening scene looks at the effects of both lighting and music, the body of the novel focuses on photography and film as metaphors for vision to express a suspicion of the social cohesion that vision produces. While Woolf in *Three Guineas* and *The Years* saw communal experience as an alternative to top-down definitions of nationalism, Bowen frames cohesion as social control; published ten years after Woolf's *The Years*, *The Heat of the Day* departs from the optimistic hopes of 1930s late modernism that communal experience will create a model for a democratic culture and addresses instead what Bowen saw as the actual communities the war produced. Telling the story of Stella Rodney, whom Robert Harrison, a government spy, blackmails for sex because her lover, Robert Kelway, is a traitor to the country, Bowen traces the evolution of London society from the intimacy among strangers that the first Blitz produced to the "deadening acclimatization" of 1942 (92). Bowen uses images of photography and film in the novel to reveal a suspicion of the paranoia that wartime citizenship produces, and she uses the photographic and cinematographic vision of Stella, her son Roderick, and Louie, the working-class wife of a soldier, to express a pessimism about England's future. Although the novel seems to deal with the private, interpersonal dramas of individuals, Bowen shows how wartime vision reinforces communal conformity and national coherence and how this vision is always public, technological, and potentially fallible. Vision, in *The Heat of the Day*, is always a public act of espionage.

Late Modernism: Media, Vision, and Community

Bowen's texts have been largely omitted from debates on modernism and late modernism, and critics who write on *The Heat of the Day* tend to read it as either a 1940s witness

account of war or a domestic novel only peripherally interested in public forms of betrayal.¹ In the collection of essays *The Fiction of the 1940s: Stories of Survival*, Maud Ellmann's chapter on Bowen examines the novel's depiction of the Blitz as an expression of personal loss and a meditation on absence.² Eluned Summers-Bremner's essay "Monumental City: Elizabeth Bowen and the Modern Unhomely" in *Modernism and Mourning* builds on Ellmann's explication of absence in *The Heat of the Day* by looking specifically at the death of the Anglo-Irish Big House and Bowen's fraught nostalgia for domestic space and pre-Great War domesticity in her fiction. These essay collections compare Bowen to other World War II novelists, and her vivid account of what it meant to live in London during the Blitz certainly serves as an example of domestic wartime experience. But, rather than serving simply as a witness to war, *The Heat of the Day* participates in broader 1930s and 1940s debates on the relationship between fiction, other media, and nationalism. Like other writers in the period, Bowen was interested in the way film and photography affected the senses, and she used images of visual media to shape fictional narrative. The novel's representations of photography and film as ways to probe questions of national identity participate in a larger aesthetic tendency in the 1930s to consider the relationship between communal experience and national survival.

Reading Bowen as part of the late modernism of Woolf, Eliot, and Forster, which in *A Shrinking Island* Jed Esty argues is characterized by an "anthropological turn" to culture, reveals how she was thinking about communal relations as a microcosm of the nation at large. Those critics who do discuss Bowen in terms of larger aesthetic movements tend to look at her work more generally in terms of modernism. In her chapter on Bowen in the collection *Troubled Legacies: Narrative and Inheritance*, Maria Dibattista shows how her work intersects

thematically with the concerns of modernists of her generation: “Novelists from Joseph Conrad, Ford Madox Ford, James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, and E. M. Forster to later modernists such as Evelyn Waugh and Ivy Compton-Burnett wrote of their time and social prospects with all the mixed emotions of those consciously addressing the last of their line” (219). Like modernists of the 1920s and 1930s, who were faced with possible loss on several fronts, Bowen expressed fears that peace was transient, “that her inherited world is in imminent danger of succumbing to the onslaught of war, the erosion of time, financial reverses” (221). Placing Bowen in context with writers of the 1920s and 1930s sheds light on her identification with both the Anglo-Irish tradition and the writers of her generation at large.³ But reading Bowen specifically in terms of *late* modernism reveals how she was thinking about the relationship between media, sensory experience, and communalism. Like Woolf in *The Years*, Bowen raises the question of whether shared perception can provide a viable model for national culture. I argue that Bowen’s focus on photography, film, and their relationship to perception reveals a suspicion of communal and national conformity.

Jonathan Crary’s *Techniques of the Observer* throws into relief the way Bowen focuses on vision and its inherently subjective, and possibly fallible condition. Crary argues that in the nineteenth century, vision was no longer analogous to the Enlightenment model for objectivity, the camera obscura, in which the eye, like the camera, records physical reality and transfers this reality directly to the brain. Instead, philosophers such as Goethe and Kant considered the individual’s body as a subjective producer of impressions and examined how the eye registers representations from the external world. For instance, Goethe observed the way in which the eye, after fixing on a spot of sunlight, transfers this image of light to other areas in its field of

vision: “The colored circles that seem to float, undulate, and undergo a sequence of chromatic transformations have no correlative either within or without the dark room; as Goethe explains at length, they are ‘physiological’ colors belonging entirely to the body of the observer and are ‘the necessary conditions of vision’” (Crary 68). Thus, the eye and, by extension, the human body process the external world through a subjective filter and create images which may have no correlation to the physical world outside. Another nineteenth-century theorist of optics, Johannes Müller took the notion of subjective vision even further by suggesting that perception makes the human body subject to technological control: the eye “is again and again shown to be defective, inconsistent, prey to illusion, and, in a crucial manner, susceptible to external procedures of manipulation and stimulation that have the essential capacity *to produce experience for the subject*” (Crary 92). In fact, nineteenth-century devices such as the thaumatrope or the phenakistiscope, which work under the same principles of the flipbook, and the camera itself take advantage of the mechanics of optical illusion to create seemingly real movement before the eye. For Bowen, vision and visual judgment are always subjective and tinged with the possibility of deception: at the heart of *The Heat of the Day* lie questions of whether Stella can determine if Robert is a spy merely by observing him and whether the act of observing itself changes what actually happens. Thus, in her writing, photography and film play an important role: rather than perpetuating the idea that an illusion corresponds to an actual physical reality, they draw attention to the fact that vision is always subjective and potentially fallible. Bowen associates photographs with character and authorial points of view, and photography becomes a metaphor in her fiction for the visual lens. She references film, too, in her essays and fiction, but instead of looking at film as having its own language or particular way of expressing narrative

structure, she emphasizes its visually subjective position by focusing solely on camera angle, Technicolor, and freeze frame.

In her nonfiction, Bowen self-consciously discusses photography and film in order to rethink fiction. In the 1930s and 1940s, the language of photography and film was very much a part of her vocabulary, and she uses it to describe how narrative point of view should not act as a transparent window to an actual world. In her 1937 review of W. Somerset Maugham's *Theatre*, Bowen seems to praise transparency when she argues that his narrative style does not resemble film: "Mr. Somerset Maugham still writes the classic, or straight, novel: there is nothing tricky about his construction; he does not make telling cuts, shoot from unlikely angles or vary his distance from the object in view. *Theatre* is straight narrative, not photography" (*Collected Impressions* 132). Here, Bowen creates an opposition between "classic," "straight" novels and novels that mimic film: while "classic" novels give an objective view of the world and do not draw attention to the narrative point of view, filmic novels use "cuts," "angles," and "distance" to present the world through a subjective lens and make readers conscious of this subjectivity. Bowen seems to praise Maugham's novel for its objectivity, but further on in the review, she implicitly criticizes its limitations by describing it in mechanical terms: "neutral, functional, and fully efficient" (*Collected Impressions* 133). And admiring film's ability to create suspense, she cannot help but to compare the moments of "excitement" in Maugham's novel to "a film in which someone will not see what is coming" (*Collected Impressions* 133). Bowen reveals her own beliefs about what a novel should look like when she automatically associates excitement with film and its subjective vision; despite her attempt to praise the "straight novel," she

implicitly extols the very “trickiness” of narration that resembles film by not being “neutral” and transparent.

In her “Notes on Writing a Novel” (1945), Bowen explicitly makes photography and film sources of emulation for fictional narrative. Bowen imagines point of view in terms of the “camera-eye” and asks, “Where is the camera-eye to be located?...In the breast or brow of *one* of the characters?” (*The Mulberry Tree* 42-3). Here, she uses the notion of the camera-eye to consider the degree of omniscience in fiction and imagines a camera is placed on “the breast or brow” of the character to describe first-person narration. Further on in her “Notes,” Bowen more broadly uses photography and film to theorize the relationship between author and work. In her description of how to write a scene, she writes, “Again, pictures, photographs, the screen are sources of supply” (*The Mulberry Tree* 40), and in her section on “angle,” she compares camera work to the author’s own subjective vision: “In a good film, the camera’s movement, angle and distance have all worked towards one thing—the fullest possible realization of the director’s idea” (*The Mulberry Tree* 43). For Bowen, the camera’s position draws attention to the way that a photograph, frame, or scene always reflects a particular subjective vision, and an ideal novel should translate this positioning to writing.

“Recent Photograph” and Visual Filtering

Bowen’s short story “Recent Photograph” (1926) sheds light on the way Bowen was thinking about visual subjectivity. To understand fully the importance of photography and film in *The Heat of the Day*, one must look at the story’s in-depth treatment of the way the photograph creates a shared story for a community. Bertram Lukin, a newspaper reporter, is Bowen’s author

figure who seeks to find an “angle” for his story on a mysterious murder-suicide, and eventually it is his version of the crime that shapes the other characters’ perception. “Recent Photograph” begins with an abrupt, factual account of the unexplained murder-suicide from the perspective of a neutral narrator.

A Mr and Mrs Brindley lived for some years quietly and unknown to history in one of the more rural of London’s outlying suburbs. One spring evening Mr Brindley, returning from business, cut his wife’s throat with a razor, and afterwards turned in for the night with his head inside the gas oven, having mitigated the inside’s iron inclemency with two frilly cushions. (*The Collected Stories* 211)

Bowen sets up a clinical, ironic account of the murder, in which Mr. Brindley nonchalantly “turned in for the night” after killing his wife and, in a darkly comic gesture, uses “frilly cushions” for his head in the oven. The apparent lack of motive in the murder places the burden on Lukin, whom the *Evening Crier* sends to investigate, to find a “personal” angle for his story. Lukin goes to the Brindley house to interview the police, but the police turn him away. Indifferent to the fact that he has failed to get the facts of the crime, he eagerly looks for neighbors to interview in order to find “a bit of colour,” “[t]he personal touch,” for his story (215). Reflecting Bowen’s notion of the author, Lukin does not seek to write an objective account of the murder-suicide but instead looks for “colour” to tinge the story’s perspective. Significantly, he is only able to find motive to drive his narrative when he meets a neighbor’s daughter, Verbena, who shows him a photograph of the Brindleys. When Verbena mentions her possession of the photograph, “To Lukin’s vision the whole room shifted and lightened” (217), and after he sees the picture and learns about the events leading up to the taking of the photograph, he looks at his own surroundings “as though through a mile of ether” (219). By describing the way the room changes in Lukin’s vision and comparing his field of vision to ether,

Bowen shows how the photograph becomes a subjective filter for Lukin's vision through which the facts of the murder must pass. In such a way, Lukin plays out Bowen's notion of the writer who uses the camera-eye as a model for authorial vision.

Although "Recent Photograph" begins with an ironic perspective on the events of the murder, after Lukin views the photograph, his immersion in the lives of the Brindleys begins to dominate the narration itself. Verbena, whose name not only refers to a plant but also hints aptly at her verbosity, tells Lukin about the events leading up to the taking of the photograph.

Although the photo only captures the static figures of Verbena, Mrs. Brindley, and Mr. Brindley — "[t]he male figure...[with] a faintly perceptible outward slant" standing in the garden—

Verbena tells Lukin that just prior to the moment captured in the photo, Mr. Brindley had run into a tree. Instead of having Verbena recount this event through direct discourse, Bowen writes the scene in the garden that day from a third-person perspective that reflects both Verbena's "ecstasy of reconstruction" and Lukin's vicarious experience of the events as he "yearn[s] to violate her memory": "He [Mr. Brindley] was a near-sighted man, and his glasses had leaped from his nose and swung at the end of their chain wildly. So blinded, he had headed straight into an apple tree and cut his lip, and Mrs. Brindley, who couldn't stick the sight of blood, had turned momentarily a pale green" (218). The description of Mr. Brindley's glasses "leaping" and "swinging" "wildly" and the quick succession of events in the narrative reflect the excitement that Verbena and Lukin add to the scene. Lukin's desire to "violate" Verbena's recollection, in particular, is oddly erotic and metaphorically links his authorship with procreation. Although the photograph captures only the static figures of the Brindleys, Verbena's retelling of the day's events and Lukin's immersion in them allow the picture to be read as an image of conflict between the

couple. According to Verbena, Mrs. Brindley sadistically enjoyed laughing at her husband's clumsiness, and in light of this information, visual signs in the photograph that Mr. Brindley "was tugging away" from his wife in an attempt to leave the scene after crashing into the tree can be read as indicative of larger marital problems. In such a way, the photograph creates a context with which Lukin can write his story. The picture, which recalls Mr. Brindley's ineptness, also prompts Verbena to recall the fact that Mr. Brindley had lost his job and pretended to go to work every day anyway. Lukin ends up using the memories and information that the photograph evokes to write a story entitled "Wife's Discovery Precipitates Tragedy of Disappointed Man."

Both Verbena and Lukin's re-experiencing of the events that lead to the taking of the photograph and Lukin's writing of the story precipitate the creation of an official, communal consensus on Mr. Brindley's motives. While Mr. Brindley, "blinded" in the anecdote, has no control over the story and leaves no sign of his own perspective, Lukin's vicarious experience of the events determines the narrative and the townspeople's interpretation of the murder-suicide. The photograph catalyzes Verbena and Lukin's "ecstasy of reconstruction" as they examine the Brindleys through the memories they evoke. Verbena's story causes her mother, too, to look retrospectively at the Brindleys and read details of their lives through the lens of the photograph. When Lukin first interviews the mother at the beginning of the story, she merely laments the general "horror and tragedies" of murders, but after hearing her daughter's story about Mr. Brindley's clumsiness and joblessness, she claims that she had always noticed strange details about Mr. Brindley. She remembers that Mr. Brindley would stand outside his own home as if fearing it, and she claims that "[i]t gave her the creeps, somehow; it didn't seem right" (219). Although Verbena and her mother cannot quite articulate a narrative that links Mr. Brindley's

behavior to the murder-suicide, Bowen shows how the photograph gives significance to particular aspects of the Brindleys' relationship that support the idea that they were unhappily married. Even more broadly, Lukin's formulation of a narrative out of Verbena's and her mother's observations—"Wife's Discovery Precipitates Tragedy of Disappointed Man"—creates an official story for all those who read the newspaper. Bowen, rather than telling the story through either Mr. Brindley's or Mrs. Brindley's point of view, approaches the murder-suicide from the outside and uses the image of the photograph to throw into relief the way seeing and witnessing are always from a particular, subjective perspective. For Bowen, the photograph is not a neutral medium that serves merely as an imprint of facts but functions as a subjective filter similar to Goethe's conceptualization of the eye. The interpretation that the photograph catalyzes is analogous to vision tinged with an after-image as it physically alters Lukin's perception of the world around him. Moreover, Bowen draws attention to the idea that shared experience is always filtered through a particular perspective as Verbena, her mother, and *The Crier's* readers derive their beliefs about the Brindleys from Lukin's interpretation.

The Heat of the Day and Public Vision

In *The Heat of the Day*, Bowen builds on the connection she makes between photography and subjectivity in "Recent Photograph": she uses photography and film to highlight the way seeing is a subjective, bodily act, but instead of simply exploring the emergence of shared experience, she shows how vision in London during the Blitz becomes a public, political act that prescribes communal and national coherence. Critics who discuss the plot of *The Heat of the Day* disparage its focus on interpersonal relationships for which political espionage only serves

as a backdrop. However, I argue that for Bowen, because the interpersonal is always public, the political is at the forefront of the novel's concerns. Relegating the war to mainly a contextual concern, Gill Plain in *Women's Fiction of the Second World War* writes, "The novel is set in 1942; its principal characters are engaged in war work, and the dynamic of plot focuses on the question of treachery. Yet for all its contextual engagement with war, on every other level *The Heat of the Day* strives to shut the conflict firmly out of its complex examination of interpersonal relationships" (166). Plain argues that the contrast between the novel's sparse treatment of the war and the complexity of the characters' relationships with each other reveal Bowen's privileging of the latter, but she fails to consider how the personal and the public are intimately linked. Plain's claim echoes the *Times Literary Supplement's* dismissal of domestic fiction wholesale during the war: "it is faintly irritating to find these young men and women pursuing the intricate round of their love affairs entirely unaffected by what was going on around them until they were actually hit by a bomb" (Hartley 5).⁴ Here, the *Times* paints a picture of the men and women in novels—and implicitly their authors—as citizens who are indifferent to the actual destruction and suffering surrounding them unless they are immediately affected. According to the *Times*, which reflects widespread debates during the period on the social responsibility of literature, novels that focus on interpersonal relationships are irrelevant, and in order to be socially responsible, they must directly address the political situation. Bowen's novel seems to fall into this category of domestic fiction because it appears to reframe national treachery as personal betrayal, and Stella indeed appears more distraught by her suspicion of her lover than the gravity of his crimes or her responsibility to her "not unimportant" government work.

But if *The Heat of the Day* frames espionage in terms of romantic betrayal, the photograph as a recurring image explodes the distinction between official and private acts of watching. Throughout the novel, Bowen shows how the characters become spies in an atmosphere of paranoia as they watch each other and become acutely aware of being watched. When Stella returns to London from Mount Morris in Ireland, she compares passengers at the train station to the “[a]rrival of shades in Hades, the new dead scanned dubiously by the older” (181). Not only does Bowen borrow from T. S. Eliot’s image of the dead “flowing” through London but also she describes the dead as “scanning” each other suspiciously as if they could identify traitors through vision alone. At the outdoor concert that opens the novel, Louie, a working-class soldier’s wife who spends her afternoon with other men, describes Harrison’s uneven eyes as giving her “the feeling of being looked over twice—being viewed then checked over again in the same moment” (12). Reciprocally, Harrison notices that “she had given him, the watcher, the enormity of the sense of having been watched” (14). Bowen’s repetition of the notion of looking, viewing, checking, and watching emphasizes the way Louie, Harrison, and the other Londoners obsessively gauge each other and seek to identify those who do not belong. Later, when Louie meets Stella, Louie continues the spying begun at the concert and makes it a verbal act by reporting to Stella Harrison’s nervous behavior at the concert. At moments the novel even defines vision in public, legal terms. Although Louie does not know that Harrison is a government spy, under his gaze “[s]he could be felt to falter behind the barricade; and the programme, let go of by her as though incriminated, fluttered to the ground” (13). Characteristic of the strangely contorted syntax that pervades the novel, this passage displaces Louie’s sense of being “incriminated” onto the concert program itself.

Objects, particularly the photograph, make seemingly private acts of seeing and watching public acts that equate the citizen with the official spy. Objects constantly betray their owners and subject them to public scrutiny, and the photograph both serves as an example of evidence and highlights the way seeing becomes a public act of gathering evidence. Stella's son, Roderick, questions her about the cigarette ash that Harrison leaves behind; Stella compares her relationship with her late husband to "the lost sheet of a letter or missing first pages of a book" (133); and after Harrison announces to Stella that Robert is an enemy spy, she observes suspiciously that Robert "showed no shred or trace of having been continuous since they last met" (14). The cigarette ash, the idea of a "lost sheet," and Stella's search for a "shred or trace" of Robert highlight the way the characters perceive each other in terms of the evidence they leave behind. Stella cannot conceive of Robert as having a continuous, essential self and externalizes signs of his duplicity by attempting to look for a physical "trace." The notion of "trace" becomes so essential to the characters' sense of self that they even look to objects for signs of their own existence. Louie and her friend Connie obsessively collect newspapers, and Louie looks in them for versions of herself: "Dark and rare were the days when she failed to find on the inside page of her paper an address to or else account of herself. Was she not a worker, a soldier's lonely wife, a war orphan, a pedestrian, a Londoner, a home-and-animal lover, a thinking democrat, a movie-goer, a woman of Britain, a letter writer, a fuel saver, and a housewife?" (152). For Louie, the descriptions in the newspaper are like the cigarette ashes that Harrison leaves behind, and she relies on them to confirm her own presence and continuity within wartime London society. However, the different roles that the newspaper lists also cause her to think self-consciously about the public identities she performs. The pathos of identities

such as “soldier’s lonely wife,” “war orphan,” and “a home-and-animal lover” confirms for Louie her loyalty to Britain. By showing how “trace” for Louie leads to her self-consciousness about what it means to be a citizen, the novel shows how during war citizenship does not simply indicate residence; instead, wartime England places the burden on individuals to prove their citizenship and loyalty.

The photograph is a particularly loaded example of trace in *The Heat of the Day*. In “Recent Photograph,” the photo becomes a metaphor for a subjective filter, but in *The Heat of the Day*, Bowen emphasizes its ability to record in order to convey the public nature of vision during the war. As an indexical medium, photography seems to imprint physical reality onto film and record evidence in an impartial manner. Bowen makes literal the photograph’s ability to imprint and record as the novel returns repeatedly to photographs as traces individuals leave at a scene. For example, Robert’s photograph sits on Stella’s mantelpiece and asserts his presence in Stella’s life, and when Harrison blackmails Stella, he turns the photo to the wall as if to erase Robert’s existence. Before he leaves for the war, Tom gets a photograph taken of himself, and his portrait in Louie’s flat reminds her of her guilt as an unfaithful wife. Robert’s room in Holme Dene is covered with photographs of his past, which he calls his “criminal record” (118). If the photograph serves as a record or even as an extension of an individual, the characters internalize the evidentiary nature of the photograph and turn it into an accusatory way of seeing. Connie uses Tom’s photo to accuse Louie of disloyalty to her husband and watches Louie as if she were a public official who attempts to prescribe “virtue” to soldiers’ wives at home, and when Stella looks at all the photographs on Robert’s wall at Holme Dene, she asks him insistently, “[W]hat were you doing *then*—and *then*—and *then*?” Stella’s questioning of his past reflects her

suspicion towards him. For Stella, the photographs literally become Robert's criminal record: it is as if by examining his criminal "file," she can figure out who he is.

Connie's and Stella's use of photographs for surveillance points to the way that through the narration, Bowen uses images of photography and cinematography to draw attention to the way the war transformed subjective vision from a private to a public act. In her descriptions of seeing, photography becomes a metaphor for the visual lens. Louie watches Harrison at the outdoor concert through a "photographic half-light" (12); Stella looks at the Kelway family through a "chemically yellowing light" and observes that "Late afternoon striking into the blue of [Robert's] eyes made him look like a young man in Technicolor" (114); and as she speaks to Harrison at her flat, she constantly "frames" and reframes him in the mirror above the fireplace where Robert and Roderick's photographs also sit. Bowen explicitly alludes to photography and Technicolor in these descriptions, and these images point to the way the camera not only imprints actuality but also creates its own tinge. For Bowen, seeing and watching are deeply rooted in the body, and the idea of seeing through a tinged photographic lens—like Goethe's eye, which creates its own afterimage—emphasizes Stella's visual subjectivity as each individual before her becomes an object of suspicion. Through the novel's repeated return to the motif of the photograph, Bowen makes watching a public performance. Stella's framing and reframing of Harrison in the mirror—the "unloving squares"—creates a photographic criminal record (like Robert's) that holds him up for examination, and the very notion of "framing" or framework points to the way Stella automatically places Harrison within a mental structure in an attempt to condemn his crimes. She accuses Harrison of acting "like the Gestapo" (33) and exclaims, "Your behavior staggers me. Is this country really so badly served?" (39). Stella's

words convey the fact that the home front had become an actual war zone and has transformed private perception into national policing. In this sense Stella's accusation towards Harrison, "Below one level, everybody's horribly alike. You succeed in making a spy of me," rings literally true. The novel does not simply use espionage as a metaphor to describe Stella's private suspicions about Robert; it points to the way wartime Britain transformed civilians' private lives into public roles. Stella's sense of seeing through a photographic lens turns her everyday behavior and interactions with others into work that upholds national unity and seeks out traitors. In fact, Bowen even makes seeing and watching obviously, detectable acts by others. The characters' motives become mutually transparent: after Stella learns about Robert's role as a spy, he becomes immediately aware that she is watching him as if her suspicion towards him were immediately obvious. Bowen's depiction of espionage as a pervasive, public act by ordinary citizens point to the way that for her the cohesive wartime community is not held together by democratic participation but by suspicion.

Not only does photography become the lens through which Stella examines Robert's and Harrison's criminality, it forces her to look at the way in which she is implicated in Robert's betrayal of England. Images of visual framing convey Stella's self-surveillance and paranoia that she has betrayed England. During her visit to Mount Morris in Ireland, Stella calls herself an "accomplice" and examines herself in the mirror: "indeed, it was most of all with the sense of some sense in herself missing that she looked, from mirror to mirror, into misted extensions of the room" (173). Similar to the way Stella frames Harrison in the mirror above her mantel piece, here Stella frames herself visually and becomes the object of her own surveillance and suspicion. Bowen emphasizes the way she looks "from mirror to mirror" as if in search of what is

“missing” in herself. Bowen’s image of disjunction, where Stella’s image and images of “misted extensions of the room” never meet in the mirror, throws into relief her lack of belonging, both at Mount Morris, a house that seems to exist apart from the effects of war, and in London, where her flat is filled with someone else’s furniture. The sense that she and her surroundings exist in different dimensions forces her look inside the mirror to confirm her own existence, but she is never able to situate herself in the mirror. Like Bowen, who struggled throughout her career to make sense of what it meant to be Anglo-Irish, Stella is unable to define herself as solely English or Irish, and the novel shows how her ambivalence towards her national identity causes her to question whether she, like Robert, is traitor. Robert confirms Stella’s worst suspicions after admitting to being an enemy spy when he tells her, “[T]here’s been you and me in everything I have done” (270) and “In accepting me, I thought, you must somehow be in your own way accepting this” (271). Robert assumes that in loving him, Stella has already accepted his betrayal. He even talks about Stella’s complicity in the past tense, “[T]here’s been you and me,” as if the very act of being with him makes her unwittingly an accomplice in his betrayal of England. Robert’s words imply that he believes that she places interpersonal relationships before the nation, and they reinforce Stella’s fear that her lack of belonging itself is a form of national betrayal.

Surveillance destroys the distinction between England and its enemies on the continent: seeing and watching as public acts make English nationalism during the war no better than German nationalism. Bowen compares the Kelway house, Holme Dene, to a totalitarian state where family members’ “private hours, it could be taken, were spent in nerving themselves for inevitable family confrontations such as meal-times, and in working on to their faces the required

expressions of having nothing to hide” (256). Bowen shows how even within the seemingly private space of home, the Kelways treat each other as potential spies and actively mold their expressions to give an illusion of “having nothing to hide.” The descriptions of the Kelways “nerving” themselves and “working” their face emphasize the strained, public nature of their relationship with each other. Robert Kelway may be an actual spy for England’s enemies, but Bowen conveys the sense that every family member surveys and oppresses each other by prescribing “required expressions.” Bowen overtly makes Holme Dene stand for England at large when she compares the interaction between family members to an “intelligence service” complete with messengers” (256). Again, Bowen shows how seemingly private relationships become public roles, and the Kelway household serves as a microcosm of the interactions between all English citizens. For Bowen, the oppressive espionage of Holme Dene and England make them no better than Nazi Germany. She compares the hallways of the house to “swastika arms,” which point to the twisted, secretive nature of the Kelway household and English complicity in totalitarianism across Europe.

Vision and Plots of England’s Future

As much as *The Heat of the Day* examines what Englishness meant during the war and reveals a suspicion about national cohesion, it uses descriptions of vision to pose questions about who will inherit Britain’s and Ireland’s future and what this future will look like. The central narrative of the novel follows the intrigue between Stella, Robert, and Harrison and ends with Robert’s mysterious rooftop fall to his death. Robert’s demise and Stella’s ultimate defeat as she turns to her blackmailer for comfort represent the death of the older generation. Bowen presents

Roderick and Louie as the younger generation who will inherit England's future, but the plot surrounding Roderick's inheritance of a house and Louie's encounter with Stella paint a pessimistic picture of the younger generation's ability to shape the nation's future. The inheritance plot uses descriptions of Stella's and Roderick's vision to convey their inability to conceive of life after the war. When Cousin Francis leaves his Irish Big House, Mount Morris, to Roderick, Stella travels to Ireland to survey Roderick's newly inherited estate, but Stella's experience of Ireland is always described in terms of passive vision. Similar to the way Bowen shows how music and lighting create a mirage that hypnotizes the audience at the beginning of the novel, she describes Stella's vision of Mount Morris—and Ireland, by extension—as a “mirage” that controls her. She fantasizes that Ireland exists untouched by war, but the house always forces her to realize that it does not exist outside of time. Bowen emphasizes the way Stella's vision is part of an idealized, outside perception of Ireland over which she has no control by repeatedly using the passive voice.

This was the peace of the moment in which one sees the world for a moment innocent of oneself. One cannot remain away: while she looked up at sun pierced triumphant golden fans of leaves it began to be she who saw them...In the hush the dead could be imagined returning from all wars; and, turning the eyes from arch to arch of boughs, from ray to ray of light, one knew some expectant sense to be tuned in to an unfinished symphony of love...The seeming of this to be for ever was astonishing—until a leaf fell slowly, veering towards her eyes as though she had brought time with her into the wood. (177)

Here, when Stella looks out at the landscape, she at first perceives Mount Morris as a place outside of her subjective vision, “innocent of oneself,” but quickly realizes how the place is contingent on her perception and time itself. Bowen's use of the strikingly roundabout, passive phrases “it began to be she who saw them” and “The seeming of this to be for ever” as well as the way the leaf “veer[s] towards her eyes” highlights the way Stella is not in control of her

perception of Ireland. Although Stella desires to see Mount Morris as a place outside war, Bowen shows how the landscape forces her to realize that this insularity does not exist and that her first impression of Ireland is shaped by her subjective comparison of the seeming peacefulness of Mount Morris with the violence of the Blitz in London. The words “One cannot remain away” and Stella’s gaze “up at sun pierced triumphant gold fans of leaves” indicate the landscape’s effect on Stella; it causes her to realize that her vision is subjective and faulty. Stella realizes that Ireland is not insulated from the effects of war and imagines “the dead...returning from all the wars.”

If Bowen reveals how Stella and, by extension, the older generation have no agency over their perception of the present and provide no guidance for the future, she also reveals a skepticism about the younger generation’s agency and ability to separate itself from the past. The novel emphasizes the limits of Roderick’s vision, perception, and ability to interpret. When Stella and Robert discuss Roderick’s inheritance, Stella mistakenly calls it his “legacy” and corrects herself. This confusion of “legacy,” what one leaves behind, and “inheritance,” what one obtains, reflects questions about the extent to which Roderick must see himself as continuous with a tradition. Throughout the novel, Roderick looks to Cousin Francis as a lost father figure and obsesses about his intentions towards Mount Morris. Francis’s parting instructions to Roderick in his will are ambiguous: “In the hope that he may care in his own way to carry on the old tradition” (87). These words cause Roderick to wonder, “Did he mean, care in my own way, or, carry on the tradition in my own way?” (88). The first meaning of the phrase would indicate that Roderick is free to *care* in his own way but must follow a set tradition. The second meaning would allow Roderick to interpret freely what it means to carry on a tradition.

Instead of articulating the way he wants to define “caring” or “carrying on the tradition,” Roderick focuses on attempting to decipher Francis’s meaning. Like Stella at Mount Morris, Roderick has no agency over his perception, and he fails to imagine a version of England and Ireland that does not rely on following instructions from the past generation. Just as Roderick cannot conceive of his purpose in the future without Francis’s instructions, his perception of his mother, public roles, and respectability are thoroughly conventional and rooted in a desire to conform. Similar to Louie, who looks to the newspaper to define herself in terms of various public roles, Roderick relies on old rumors that his mother was unfaithful to his father to shape his conception of marriage. Stella tells Robert that they should not marry because when Roderick takes charge of Mount Morris, he would not want her to be a “disreputable mother” (196). When Roderick finally learns that his father was the unfaithful one and had run away with his nurse, he repeatedly tells Stella, “It throws quite a different light on so much” (219). Roderick frames his perception of his mother and social conventions explicitly in visual terms, and his words reveal how his perception of her and his reliance on the old rumor, like Verbena’s picture of the Brindleys in “Recent Photograph,” color his view of marriage, respectability, and the world at large.

Roderick’s conception of respectability is rigid, but as England and Ireland’s future and as an English soldier, he fails to condemn Robert as a traitor to the country. Given Roderick’s shock at finding out about his father’s affair and Stella’s reluctance in telling him about Robert in the final scene with mother and son, one would expect Roderick to be outraged at Robert’s betrayal. But when Stella tells him that Robert had been working for enemy nations, Roderick remarks, “He must have been pretty brave?...The other way around, he might have got a V.C.,”

quite likely?... You don't think if you had married him it would have given him more of a stake in the country?" (298-9). Instead of being enraged, Roderick wonders if Robert had been "brave" and seems to believe that loyalty to one's country is arbitrary. For Roderick, Robert could just have easily won the V.C., the Victoria Cross for bravery, if he had been persuaded to spy for England. Again, Roderick attempts to look at events through his perception of his mother and her apparent defiance of the convention of marriage. Robert's unwillingness to condemn Robert reflects an uncertainty about Britain's relationship with enemy nations in the aftermath of World War II. Deploring his limited, subjective vision, Roderick self-consciously remarks that Robert's death should not define the future, "You want me to be posterity? But then, Robert's dying of what he did will not always be there, won't last like a book or a picture," and exclaims, "if I could even only see the thing as a whole, like God!" (300). Roderick recognizes the fact that he and his generation are responsible for the fate of England after the war, but he claims that the seeming horror of Robert's death will not last to serve as a moral compass for the nation. Indeed, for Roderick himself, it does not help him reach any moral conclusion in the first place. Roderick recognizes the limits of his vision when he wishes he could "see the thing as a whole, like God" or, at least, have Robert's death as a lasting lens through which he can judge what should become of England in the future. Roderick's words express the novel's question of what will or what ought to define the nation after the war is over.

If Roderick's role in the novel raises questions about what kind of vision should define England in the future, Louie at the end signals a shattering of the public role that citizens perform and public vision reinforces. When Louie reads in the paper that Stella's lover had fallen from her building, "[v]irtue became less possible now it was shown impossible by Stella, less to be

desired because Stella had not desired it enough. Why Louie should have attached her own floating wish to a face watched for an hour cannot be said” (306). Here, Louie reveals that she had imagined Stella to be the model of respectability, and after losing this illusion when she learns that she had a lover, Robert, Louie no longer wishes to be the ideal citizen and decides to abandon her own self-surveillance. Bowen describes Louie’s relationship with Stella in visual terms: she compares Louie and Stella’s encounter at a café to “an hour” of “watching” and describes how Louie “attaches” “her own floating wish” to Stella’s face. Stella’s face and Louie’s associations with it become the lens through which Louie after the encounter sees her own life. After having her perception of Stella proven wrong, Louie thinks, “No unextinguished watch-light remained, after all, burning in any window, however far away” (307). Louie’s words not only create an image of a light “burning...far away,” but also resonate with her sense of being watched. Thus, if Stella is her “watch-light,” Robert’s fall from the roof becomes a catalyst for Louie’s self-consciousness: Louie realizes that wartime roles have no real meaning without the possibility of someone watching her. Her comparison of Stella to a watch-light indicates the way Stella had been both a standard to which Louie aspired and a representative of the kind of spectator that Louie imagined was surveying her.

The novel ends ambiguously with Louie and her child, who seem to represent the future but, like Roderick, have no answers towards what it will look like. The child, Thomas Victor, is oddly named after both Louie’s and Stella’s late husbands. Similar to Roderick’s interest in deciphering the intentions of the older generation rather than creating his own sense of the future, the child’s name points to an entrenchment in the past. In the final seaside scene, Bowen connects the limits of Louie’s vision with this uncertainty about the future: “Louie wheeled the

perambulator some way out of the town, along the canal path, towards the marsh. Reeds grew out into the still water; ahead, there was distance as far as the eye could see—a thoughtless extension of her now complete life” (329). Although Louie evidently rejects the respectability and wartime duty that Stella had represented for her, Bowen does not reveal what roles and what ways of seeing will replace surveillance. The novel instead ends with Louie’s gaze towards the “thoughtless extension” of her life. Bowen projects Louie’s thoughtlessness onto the landscape itself: the bleakness of the landscape reflects Louie’s inability to imagine what her life will look like in the future. Baby Tom, too, fails to bridge the past and the future. Louie hears sound of flying swans, which she mistakes at first for bombers, and holding up Tom, she “[hopes] he too might see, and perhaps remember” (330). But Bowen never reveals what Tom ought to remember—whether bombers, swans, or the lessons of war. In fact, with the unexpected appearance of the swans, the novel seems to refute the idea that war should be remembered. The novel ends with an image of the limits of vision: Louie mistakes the swans for bombers, and Tom’s vision of the swans fails to generate any meaning about the future.

Bowen’s novel reveals a pessimistic attitude towards England’s future and the relationship between state, communities, and citizens. In *The Heat of the Day*, Bowen criticizes the way the state and war turn seemingly private acts into public ones, and unlike Woolf, she cannot imagine viable communities created by citizens themselves. My next chapter, however, returns to the 1930s and examines a text that looks at the nation in terms of a participatory communalism. Although the next chapter looks again at the pre-World War II thirties, this second part of my dissertation shifts to discussing texts by writers who actively worked in cross-media projects. Auden’s verse for film provides a lens to rethink GPO documentaries. His film

collaborations turn to speech, aurality, and orality to conceptualize the nation in terms of communalism: Auden uses sound to imagine England as a organic whole built from individuals and their interactions with each other.

¹ In terms of critics who focus on Bowen's oeuvre, in *Elizabeth Bowen: An Estimation*, Hermione Lee surveys her novels in relation to biography. Lee is particularly interested in Bowen's Anglo-Irish heritage, and in her discussion of *The Heat of the Day*, she compares Stella's governmental work to Bowen's own occupation as a spy. During World War II, the British government sent Bowen to Ireland to report on Irish attitudes towards the war and neutrality (Lee 166). Lee argues that "Elizabeth Bowen's war work lies behind both the sinister secret pursuits of Harrison and Robert, and the novel's acute sense of Ireland's preserving itself as a place apart" (166). Lee also relates Bowen's work as an ARP warden during the Blitz to the vivid descriptions of bombing in the novel and places it in context with other texts, novels, and diaries that convey the mood of wartime London. In *Elizabeth Bowen and the Dissolution of the Novel*, Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle argue that Bowen's novels "present dissolutions at the level of personal identity, patriarchy, social conventions and language itself—up to and including the language of fiction and criticism" (xix). In their chapter on *The Heat of the Day*, Bennett and Royle attempt to follow Bowen's intentionality and argue that the novel subverts unity by employing multiple genres, such as drama, spy fiction, and the ghost story, and different narrative strands. In *How Will the Heart Endure: Elizabeth Bowen and the Landscape of War*, Heather Bryant Jordan explores Bowen's Anglo-Irish identity in her novels in relation to her depiction of the two World Wars. Like Lee, Jordan discusses her work biographically, and in her description of *The Heat of the Day*, she argues that the novel reflects Bowen's sense of loss and conflicted loyalties to England and Ireland.

² Rod Mengham and N. H. Reeve write in the introduction of *The Fiction of the 1940s* that the goal of the collection is to draw attention to literature of the 1940s that "is only now beginning to receive the kind of attention regularly afforded to decades such as the 1910s and 1930s, and to movements or phenomena such as Modernism" (xi). While the collection recovers non-canonical literary texts of the period, it glosses over the deeper cultural movements and contexts that run across decades. My goal is to explore *The Heat of the Day's* as a novel that shares the interests of 1930s late modernism in community and public forms of political engagement.

³ The collection *Challenging Modernism: New Readings in Literature and Culture, 1914-45* reads Bowen with other non-canonical modernists, such as Stevie Smith, Rosamond Lehmann, and Kay Boyle. In the essay “‘There is No Ordinary Life’: Privacy and Domesticity in E. H. Young’s *Celia* and Elizabeth Bowen’s *The Death of the Heart*” Stella Deen examines domesticity in *The Death of the Heart* and argues that it is important to take into account the “woman’s novel” during the 1930s and 1940s. She discusses Bowen’s representation of privacy and the middle class and argues, “For Bowen, more optimistically, an essential civilization is learned and maintained in the furniture and domestic spaces of private homes; this civilization offers a reassuring counterweight to contemporary habits of private life, especially the refusal of both the past and present” (99).

⁴ In her chapter “Surveillance, Allegiance, Complicity,” Hartley opposes this perspective by relating *The Heat of the Day* to the spy novel. She discusses women’s work during World War II as “voluntary spies” and the way Bowen used her own experiences as a spy in the novel.

CHAPTER IV

W. H. AUDEN, AURALITY, AND THE ASSIMILATION OF THE MACHINE IN *NIGHT MAIL*

The years leading up to the Second World War saw heated debates about the relationship between politics and art. Although Virginia Woolf's novels and essays show that she never divorced herself from political concerns and was, in fact, attempting to find new ways to imagine community, she berated W. H. Auden, Stephen Spender, Cecil Day Lewis, and their fellow writers for allowing their politics to make their work "full of discord and bitterness, full of confusion and of compromise" (Woolf 172). According to Woolf, these writers allowed their guilt about their middle-class privilege and consequent desire to preach classlessness to mar their poetry. She imagines these writers atop a "leaning tower": "they do not look any class straight in the face; they look either up, or down, or sidelong. There is no class so settled that they can explore it unconsciously. That is perhaps why they can create no characters" (Woolf 171). According to Woolf, in order to create convincing characters, writers must be immersed in their particular class. Not advocating a "return" to what she sees as a nineteenth-century "unconscious" attitude towards class, however, she claims that the Auden generation's class-consciousness must lead to a new social order, "a common ground" and "a world without classes" (Woolf 178). Her image of Auden and his fellow writers atop a "leaning tower" emphasizes their class anxiety as they look "up, or down, or sidelong," the precariousness of the bourgeois status quo, and their inability to build—or even to imagine—a new, egalitarian society.

I argue, however, that Auden's use of what I will call aural montage in his essays, early poetry, and documentary work creates a model of a "new" England by imagining a unity among classes and regions. Auden's early poetry and his essays link the aural quality of verse to spoken language and imagine how oral language forms community. In his film work, Auden builds on this emphasis on aurality and imagines how it is linked to national unity. His verse voice-over for the General Post Office (GPO) film *Night Mail* (1936) uses sound to imagine Britain as an organic whole, and the main body of the film, in turn, uses montage that privileges sound over the visual to mirror what Auden conceives in his verse. From 1935 to 1939, Auden collaborated on six documentary film projects, *Coal Face* (1935), *Beside the Sea Side* (1935), *Night Mail* (1936), *The Way to the Sea* (1937), *The Londoners* (1939), and *God's Chillun* (1930), which promoted British industries from mining to tourism. Like many poets and novelists of his generation, Auden worked overtly in political projects and was fascinated with representations of working classes.¹ This chapter will focus specifically on Auden's creation of verse voice-over for his most complex GPO film, *Night Mail*. Although the film's goal was to familiarize the public with the intricate workings of the General Post Office and Auden's verse certainly celebrates the importance of postal labor, it simultaneously establishes a kind of aurality that revises the film's seeming visual glorification of machinery. Through both his verse in *Night Mail* and his exploration of aurality in his essays and poetry, Auden imagines the nation as an organic body, uniting classes and regions, where humans ultimately reign over machines.

The Auden Generation, Modernism, and Political Engagement

Critics have tended to divide Auden's work in the late 1920s and 1930s into his early "modernist" poetry and the more public poems, essays, and film work that helped establish the political aesthetics of the British left in the 1930s. In *W. H. Auden: Contexts for Poetry* (2002), Peter Edgerly Firchow claims that Auden's "difficult" early poems emulated T. S. Eliot's poetry by alluding to a "private realm of sacred experience" (26) and infusing "serious" poetry with popular songs and a "burlesque, cabaret style" (28). Firchow argues that Auden's poems were essentially modernist because although they alluded to mass culture, they privileged the private over the public. As Auden's Oxford tutor Neville Coghill put it, "Auden explained with clarity and pity that to 'understand' a poem was not a logical process, but a receiving, as a unity, a pattern of co-ordinated images that had sprung from a free association of subconscious ideas private to himself" (28). Thus, according to Firchow, Eliot's and Auden's allusions to popular songs do not aim to make poetry political by democratizing culture; instead they reflect the poet's personal associations. For Firchow, these personal associations are part of Auden's primary interest in interiority: he reads Auden's *The Dog Beneath the Skin*, a play about spying, as an exploration of the divisions within characters' psychic realm, which "for the early Auden is often deeper and more important than outward or public difference" (55). In *Power, Plain English, and the Rise of Modern Poetry* (2006), David Rosen also sees Auden as an heir to Eliot's language, but instead of linking Auden to Eliot through the privateness of their allusions, Rosen sees both as adopting a voice of "impersonality." Rosen thus reads Auden's early poem "The Watershed" (1929) as evidence of his adoption of a distanced perspective from the reader and an "aged voiced" similar to Eliot's in "Gerontion."

Samuel Hynes's seminal *The Auden Generation: Literature and Politics in England in the 1930s* (1976), however, emphasizes the way in which modernism, rather than simply influencing Auden's early privatism, helped form his social, political outlook. Hynes argues that Eliot's "immediate and authoritative expression" of a "society...decadent and emptied of values" both reflected the disenchantment of the Auden generation (as he names Auden and his fellow writers of the 1930s) with post-World War I England and spurred their desire to give art moral value (27). Unlike Firchow, who assumes that all readers in the 1920s and 1930s read *The Waste Land* as a reflection of Eliot's private associations, Hynes claims, "From its first appearance, *The Waste Land* was read as a work of primarily social and moral import, a public poem on public themes" (27-8). Although many reviewers did read the allusions in "The Waste Land" as private, Hynes's emphasis on the poem's "social and moral import" to its readers sheds light not only on the diversity of readings of the poem even in its early reception but also on readers' self-conscious desire to define their time. Hynes traces Auden's political consciousness back to his generation's response to the First World War. George Orwell, in *The Road to Wigan Pier* (1938), recalls his peers' simultaneous envy towards those who fought in the war and their "curious cult of hatred of 'old men'...held to be responsible for every evil known to humanity, and every accepted institution" (qtd. in Hynes 19). In *Oxford Poetry* (1927), which Auden edited with Cecil Day Lewis, they described the world they inherited as an "environment... [characterized by a] chaos of values" (qtd. in Hynes 31). Hynes reads Auden's collage-like book of prose polemics and poems, *The Orators* (1932), then, as an attempt to address this world of "chaos" by exploring in "parabolic" terms the implications of leadership (89). Hynes traces the Auden generation's politics back to its early work and the Oxford Journals, and in a historically

illuminating way, he explores the shared attitude of Auden, Spender, Day Lewis and Louis MacNeice towards the older generation and their role as the new one. However, he ignores Auden's collaborations in documentary projects and his politics in film.

Like Hynes, Marsha Bryant, in *Auden and the Documentary in the 1930s* (1997), traces Auden's political engagement through his texts, but instead of looking broadly at the Auden generation's prose and poetry, Bryant brings Auden's film work and "documentary" travel books to the forefront. Examining texts that range from Auden's poems to his collaborations with the GPO and his travel volume of prose, poetry, and photographs, *Letters from Iceland*, Bryant aims to "read Auden and documentary *through one another*, revising the one-way dynamic of the traditional influence study in which an artistic movement casts light on a writer's work" (8). Contextualizing Auden's GPO work within 1930s documentary representations of industry, she builds on Judith Walkowitz's examination of Victorian "cross-class spectatorship" and reads film's fascination with coal miners and other laborers' bodies as a continuation of nineteenth-century urban "exploration," where writers intentionally "toured" seedy urban areas for literary material (Bryant 21). Texts from Orwell's *The Road to Wigan Pier* to the Empire Marketing Board's *Industrial Britain* portrayed workers both as objects of envy by focusing on their "strength and endurance" and as threats to middle-class morality (Bryant 22). The use of light and dark, camera angles, that "position the viewer as a voyeur," and the framing of workers' torsos in Grierson's *Coal Face* reveal the homoerotic dynamics of documentary spectatorship (Bryant 40-41). Moreover, Auden's chorus for female voices in the film facilitates this homoerotic spectatorship by serving "as a voice through which a male observer expresses documentary desire for a coal miner" (Bryant 44).

Bryant reads *Night Mail*, however, as a departure from these representations of male desire: the film's fully-clothed men, abrupt cuts away from their bodies, depictions of workers moving the mail, hidden from the sleeping nation, and Auden's pastoral imagery in the voice-over repress the homoerotic and "[participate] in forming an *industrial unconscious* of Britain's 'other' country" (48). Bryant examines the contradiction between Auden's text and the film's visual images: for example, images of factories clash with his voice-over descriptions of the countryside. But, she does not look at the connections between Auden's early poetry, his verse in *Night Mail*, and the way the early "modernist" poems shed light on Auden's aurality and politics in the film. And while Bryant claims that the film's repression of homoeroticism and industry—both images of difference within England—participates in the 1930s rhetoric of nation-building, she does not examine what kind of nation the film and Auden's verse imagine. Building on Bryant but ultimately departing from her reading of the film, I argue that in the 1920s Auden had already begun formulating the aurality and orality which *Night Mail* develops cinematographically to describe the nation.

Auden's Essays, Early Poetry, and Spoken Language

Many of Auden's early essays and poetry theorize and put into practice his thinking about sound.² In *Auden's Apologies for Poetry* (1990), Lucy McDiarmid focuses on Auden's writing about orality: she divides Auden's career into his early privileging of the spoken word and his 1940s shift to thinking about poetry specifically as written language. Like Hynes, McDiarmid sees Auden's early poems as deeply interested in the parable and the moral power of verse: "Auden voices the tentative hope that poetry can be like loving spoken words,

transforming and redeeming, themselves carriers of value” (8). She posits that in his early work, Auden imagined his audience as listeners receptive to “spiritual change” (20-21).³ Although McDiarmid explores the political implications of Auden’s orality when, in his introduction to *The Poet’s Tongue* (1935), he contrasts poetry’s goal of “extending our knowledge of good and evil”—not an apolitical attitude in itself—with propaganda’s imperatives for “a particular course of action,” she does not link Auden’s theories on orality with his attitudes towards the nation (qtd. in McDiarmid 22). McDiarmid points out that “[s]o long as Auden lived in England, his model for poetry was implicitly oral,” but she does not explore the connections between his aesthetic formulations and his participation in explicitly nation-building propaganda (20). Rather than being separate from his aesthetics, Auden’s model of the nation, I argue, is deeply rooted in his “oral” early poetry, and this orally based language becomes the foundation for the sound montage of *Night Mail*.

In his essay “Writing” from *An Outline for Boys and Girls and Their Parents* (1932) and his introduction to the anthology *The Poet’s Tongue* (1935), Auden argues that verse originates from the human desire to express emotion through sound. In “Writing,” he discusses how language arose from universal and primal emotions:

If an Australian aborigine sits down on a pin he says ‘Ow.’ Dogs with bones growl at the approach of other dogs. English, Russian, Brazilian, all mothers, ‘coo’ to their babies. Sailors at any port, pulling together on a hawser: watch them and listen—heaving, they grunt together ‘Eee-Ah.’ (303)

Unlike Jean-Paul Sartre in *What is Literature?* who claims that language is fundamentally utilitarian, Auden believes that language’s first purpose was to allow humans to communicate their emotions to one another (303). He argues that this desire to express oneself stemmed from the rise of “self-consciousness”: “he [man] began to feel, I am I, and you are not I; we are shut

inside ourselves and apart from each other” (303). Thus, in order to recover the sense of being a part of a whole, humans “felt the need to bridge over the gulf, to recover the sense of being as much part of life as the cells in his body are part of him” (303). Auden specifically frames “wholeness” as community and emphasizes the necessity of sound to express communal effort and toil. He not only compares human sounds of pain to the primal growl of a dog but also posits that shared expressions of toil, such as the “grunt” of sailors “pulling together,” allow humans to recover a sense of wholeness that they had lost through gaining self-consciousness. Auden differentiates between speech, which he equates to group communication, and writing, a solitary activity, and argues that verse, which he describes as a “repeated pattern,” is an extension of “noises made during group excitement” (307). For Auden, poetry recreates the kind of shared emotion that communal speech is able to evoke.

In his introduction to *The Poet's Tongue*, Auden sums up his definition of poetry as “memorable speech”: “it must move our emotions, or excite our intellect, for only that which is moving or exciting is memorable, and the stimulus is the audible spoken word and cadence, to which in all its power of suggestion and incantation we must surrender, as we do when talking to an intimate friend” (327). Here, Auden again emphasizes speech and poetry’s ability to “move” and, in fact, describes communalism as a loss of individual agency: verse hypnotizes with its “power of suggestion” and “incantation” while the listener has no choice but to surrender. Unlike Elizabeth Bowen, who in *The Heat of the Day* expressed a suspicion of this kind of hypnotic group emotionality, Auden, by comparing verse to the voice of an “intimate friend,” reveals his desire to emulate the hypnotic power of speech because poetry’s first purpose should be moral. Walter Benjamin, in his essay “The Storyteller,” too, argues that the written word

should imitate the spoken: “Experience which is passed on from mouth to mouth is the source from which all storytellers have drawn. And among those who have written down the tales, it is the great ones whose written version differs least from the speech of the many nameless storytellers” (84). Benjamin explores the anthropological and cultural implications of storytelling and claims, like Auden, that the spoken word and writing that approximates its power have an important moral purpose in communicating experience and advice. However, unlike Benjamin, Auden claims special significance for poetry. For Auden, the power of spoken word is not necessarily storytelling—or narrative. Instead, the proximity of poetic language to expressed emotions promotes orality and communal speech.

In his article for the *Daily Herald*, “How to Be Masters of the Machine” (1933), Auden’s image of those whose lives are dictated by machines contrasts the organic, speech-based communalism that he describes in his essays on poetry.⁴ Auden deplores both the rote, mechanized lives of workers, who “screw one nut on to each of a succession of chassis moving along a belt,” and the leisure-driven lives of consumers, who have “[their] own car, a wireless in the sitting-room, an electrical refrigerator in the kitchen, everything that the advertisements tell you you need” (316). Equating all machinery, including industrial apparatuses and consumer appliances, Auden claims that instead of giving individuals security, machines cause anxiety by taking away the factory laborers’ jobs, depriving individuals of any sense of achievement, and forcing them to worry about their material “investments” (316). Moreover, unlike the effort of pulling together in Auden’s description of sailors in “Writing,” mass production takes away the worker’s sense of being a “man” (316). Although Auden condemns the mindless work in factories, he does not dismiss labor wholesale: “The case of the machine-carter is different.

Engine or crane drivers, for example, who have a powerful machine completely dependent on their judgment, or skilled electricians installing a lighting system, have a real job, needing all their faculties of body and mind” (316). According to Auden, then, instead of allowing machines to control their lives, humans must use machines to serve their desires. Auden makes the “engine or crane driver,” whom he imagines to be in complete control of a machine that is more “powerful” than the human, the ideal kind of laborer and emphasizes, in true Marxist fashion, the way work should employ all “faculties of body and mind.” At the end of the article, Auden returns to the subject of desire and emotion that, for him, make verse so important to community and advises his readers, “Do not let the possession of a motorcycle oblige you to use it at times when you really want to go for a walk. Find out what you want first of all, and then if a machine will help you, use it” (317). Although Auden phrases this decision-making process in very clinical, logical terms, his privileging of feeling even in a matter as seemingly trivial as determining whether one wants to walk or take the motorcycle, reveals that in his ideal society, both humans and machines should be governed by spontaneous emotion. Auden’s critique of the machine aligns with his belief that poetry ought to be based on spoken language. For Auden, everyday life, like poetry, ought to be spontaneous and organic, and machines, analogous to the written word, should be subordinate.

Auden’s poems in the late 1920s and early 1930s not only express his privileging of aurality and orality as keys to community, but they also imagine this kind of communalism put into practice.⁵ His poem “It was Easter as I Walked” (1929), written about his stay in Germany, explores the connections between speech and its moral influence on the individual. The poem begins with an image of spring: the speaker strolls in “the public gardens / Hearing the frogs

exhaling from the pond, / Watching traffic of magnificent cloud” (7). The sounds of the “frogs exhaling” and the movement of the clouds point to the primal wholeness that Auden describes in “Writing,” but this image also shows how Auden reframes and assimilates the mechanical —“traffic”— as part of the organic. For Auden, the natural world possesses the first authentic voice, and “lovers and writers” must “find / An altering speech for altering things” in nature (7). The speaker here describes how, with the changing of the seasons, lovers and poets must find a “new” language, “new names,” for the world around them. Auden emphasizes the oral nature of this language by describing it specifically as “speech”: it is as if by speaking, the poet can replicate the voice of the natural world and become part of its original wholeness. Auden’s description of friendship in the poem moves away from these images of nature and imagines an ethics that emerges directly from speech. The poem abruptly shifts to the speaker’s encounter with a “solitary man...weeping on a bench, / hanging his head down, with his mouth distorted / Helpless and ugly as an embryo chicken” (7). In contrast with the speaker, who is able to find an “altering speech for altering things,” the “solitary man” can only weep, and his mouth is “distorted,” unable to produce any coherent speech. The image of the man prompts the speaker to remember “all of those whose death / Is necessary condition of the season’s setting forth” and a friend’s “analysis of his own failure, / Listened to at intervals throughout the winter / At different hours and in different rooms” (8). Here, Auden creates an ethics of communalism: in a moralizing way, similar to many other of his early poems, this poem values the “winter dialogue” between friends and emphasizes the continuity of this relationship with the words “different hours” and “different rooms” (8). Although the speaker describes the friend’s complaints as petty, “always with the success of others for comparison,” the poem draws attention to the fact

that by valuing friendship and listening to these complaints, the speaker becomes a model for a kind of communalism that stands in opposition to the grotesqueness of the “solitary man.”

Through dialogue, Auden’s “O Where are You Going” (1931) from *The Orators* puts into practice the model of orality that the speaker of “It was Easter as I Walked” presents. In “O Where are You Going,” Auden creates a poetic round where a “reader” warns a “rider” of the dangers he will face on his journey. The poem consists almost entirely of dialogue as the “reader,” interchangeably called the “fearer” and the “horror,” asks the “rider,” “O where are you going?... That valley is fatal where furnaces burn, / Yonder’s the midden whose odours will madden, / That gap is the grace where the tall return” (20). The poem’s iambic rhythm and the paralleling consonance of “fatal” and “furnaces,” “midden” and “madden,” and “gap” and “grace” draw attention to the orality of the dialogue and the aurality of the poem. The poem’s foregrounding of speech not only plays out Auden’s aesthetic doctrine on speech and verse but also imagines the relationship between community, poet, and leadership. By the end of the poem, in response to the “reader’s” repeated warnings, the “rider” tells the “reader” that at least *he* dares venture “Out of this house” (20). Although the “rider” leaves the “reader” within the poem behind, the “rider’s” words ask the actual readers of the poem to sympathize with his desire to travel to places of danger. If the “rider” is the leader whom Auden intends the readers to follow, however, the poem also unexpectedly makes the fearful “reader” voice a poetic figure who is able to employ language for persuasive purposes. The “reader” vividly describes the danger of the valley, “fatal where furnaces burn.” The poem’s turning of the “reader” into a *writer* actually creates a dialectic where the ideal author figure must have the audacity of the “rider” and the savvy linguistic abilities of the “reader.” In *W. H. Auden: Contexts for Poetry*,

Firchow argues that the “rider” stands for the writer and that the poem serves as a warning to those who are too timid to follow (26). However, the “writerly” abilities of the “reader” figure show that the “rider” and the “reader” are not opposing characters: instead, together they serve as a model for the kind of socially engaged, persuasive writer that Auden imagines would be able to lead a community.

In his poem “Easily, my dear, you move” (1934), Auden states explicitly the purpose of the poet-leader who has the qualities of both the “reader” and the “rider.” In this poem, Auden deliberately contrasts political leaders with poets. Deriding political leadership, Auden lumps together “Hitler and Mussolini in their wooing poses / Churchill acknowledging the voters’ greeting / Roosevelt at the microphone, Van der Lubbe laughing” (34). Here, Auden takes no position on political ideology, siding neither with fascism nor Churchill: he instead groups them together because for him, all politicians pander to the public rather than lead. In contrast with poetry, which for Auden is spontaneous, these leaders deliberately “pose” and use technology—the “microphone”—to “woo” the public instead of attempting to set a moral tone. He even describes these political leaders as part of the “Ten thousands of the desperate marching by” (34). By depicting them as merely part of the “desperate,” marching soldiers, Auden derides their supposed role as leaders. In contrast with the amorality of political leaders, “love”—the aesthetics of poetry, defined by its interest in the private—has the ability to affect the public: “But love, except at our proposal, / Will do no trick at his disposal; Without opinions of his own, performs / The programme that we think of merit, / And through our private stuff must work / his public spirit” (34-5). For Auden, art and poetry do not serve a particular political agenda and do not attempt to subordinate individual will: without “trickery,” they shape, via private lives, the

“public spirit.” The sentiment that Auden expresses here anticipate the idea of culture in one of his most famous poems, “In Memory of W. B. Yeats” (1939):

For poetry makes nothing happen: it survives
In the valley of its making where executives
Would never want to tamper, flows on south
From ranches of isolation and the busy griefs,
Raw towns that we believe and die in; it survives,
A way of happening, a mouth.

Although Auden states that “poetry makes nothing happen”—it can neither make laws nor create wealth—he claims it has broad and deep-rooted effects on individuals and culture as a “way of happening.” Auden compares poetry to a river that “flows” through “ranches of isolation,” “busy griefs,” and “[r]aw towns that we believe and die in.” For Auden, poetry becomes a part of a way of life that affects people in ways that they may not even be conscious of. The word “mouth” refers to the river, poetry’s source, and the moment when it begins to seep into the public’s consciousness. But “mouth” again highlights the connection Auden makes between poetry and speech. Poetry becomes a lasting voice that continues to affect individuals and communities even after the death of the poet.⁶

In his early poems, as well as in his later “In Memory of W. B. Yeats,” Auden formulates his ideas on the way art, through private emotions, ultimately affects the public as a whole, but at the same time, these poems imagine what the nation as a whole looks like. In his poem “To Geoffrey Hoyland,” by describing the moon, Auden creates an all-seeing perspective above the rest of the world.

Now North and South and East and West
Those I love lie down to rest;
The moon looks on them all:
The healers and the brilliant talkers,
The eccentrics and the silent walkers,

The dumpy and the tall.

She climbs the European sky;
Churches and power stations lie
 Alike among earth's fixtures:
Into galleries she peers,
And blankly as an orphan stares
 Upon the marvellous pictures. (30)

By listing the directions “North and South and East and West” and those the moon looks upon, Auden aims to paint a broad picture of the English about to go to bed. While he gives the “healers,” “brilliant talkers,” “eccentrics,” “silent walkers,” “the dumpy,” and “the tall” particular qualities, the moon remains largely impersonal and distant from the world below. In a later stanza, Auden describes the moon as an entity “To gravity attentive, she can notice nothing here” (30). However, in the second quoted stanza, Auden depicts the moon in movement as it “climbs the European sky,” passes by “[c]hurches and power stations,” and “peers” and “stares” at the images below. The broadly-defined “European” sky contrasts the specificity of the small-town English scene that Auden describes. And although impersonal, the moon’s movement turns the human and the industrial into elements of the natural world. Auden describes how the “[c]hurches and power stations lie / Alike among earth’s fixtures”: it is as if they have become part of the natural landscape, and the images of humans become part of the larger, “marvellous pictures” upon which the moon stares. This image of organicism anticipate the image of England that Auden creates in his verse voice-over in *Night Mail*.

Night Mail and Aural Montage

In the 1930s, Auden collaborated with film directors and composer Benjamin Britten on several GPO films that promoted national industries and interests. In *Coal Face* (1935), Auden

wrote the verse set to Britten's choral music, and in *God's Chillun* (1938), he helped write the script. *Coal Face*, directed by avant-garde filmmaker Alberto Cavalcanti, who was heavily influenced by 1920s Soviet film, and *God's Chillun*, originally an even larger Auden-Britten project, experimented with sound and montage (BFI Screen Online). As Bryant writes in *Auden and the Documentary in the 1930s*, framing in *Coal Face* situates spectators as voyeurs of the miners' work and bodies and the choral verse helps express the film's homoeroticism. *God's Chillun* exposes the horrors of the slave trade in the West Indies, cuts between maps of old slave routes and 1940s images of West Indies farmlands, and uses voices, such as a chorus of "emancipation! equality!", to reveal the desire of the people to possess the power to improve their own communities.

However, both films, rather than allowing images and sound to speak for themselves, use a voice-over narration that dominates the films' messages. *Coal Face*, for example, begins with an image of the mine silhouetted against the sky while a voice-over narrator states, "Coal mining is the basic industry of Britain." The narrator then describes the amount of coal produced each year, the number of miners are injured or killed, and the way the village next to the mine "depends on the pit" for survival. Although the film allows miners to remark, "Coal is burning today," and the choral voices chime in halfway through the film, the voice-over largely dominates the film and directs the audience's attention to the danger of coal mining, the heroism of the miners, and the importance of the industry to the nation at large. *God's Chillun*, too, uses a voice-over narrator that controls the film's message. Although the film allows West Indies citizens to take part in the narration and describe the horrors of the slave trade and the injustices of European control, the white, European narrator of the film opens the film with the voice-over:

“The people are cosmopolitan. They come of European, African, Asiatic, and mixed stock.” From the very beginning, he asserts control by defining them in terms of national character and ethnicity. And although the film later presents sympathetically the people’s desire to be free from European landowners, the narrator, who after the first scene becomes a diegetic figure standing in an office, pointedly insists that they do not desire self-governance: “they have one bond in common: namely, loyalty to the British crown.” The narrator exposes the injustices of European rule in imperial colonies and the film ends with a West Indies woman saying, “Light falls equally on black and white,” but, speaking to a white European audience, the film aims to reassure its audience that equality does not mean independence.

Night Mail departs from the dominating voice-over of *Coal Face* and *God’s Chillun* and allows poetry, voices of workers, and sounds of the train to speak for themselves. The film and Auden’s verse for it build on the image of national wholeness that Auden depicts in “To Geoffrey Hoyland.” The film aims to familiarize its audience with the workings of the postal service, from its sorting of the mail to delivery of letters on its way to Glasgow. Although Auden’s verse voice-over only comes at the end of the film, this final segment effectively reinterprets all the film’s images of the train and postal workers that precede it. Auden’s verse imagines the train as an organic entity that unites the entire nation across class and geographical distance. This section of verse begins with a description of the night mail crossing from England to Scotland: “This is the night mail crossing the border / Bringing the check and the postal order / Letters for the rich, letters for the poor / the shop at the corner and the girl next door.” Auden’s listing of “the rich,” “the poor,” “the shop at the corner,” and “the girl next door” emphasizes citizens’ common need for information and the postal service’s indiscriminating meeting of that national

need. The opening line, “This is the night mail crossing the border,” too, implies that the train not only crosses the geographical boundary between England and Scotland but also unites the nation across distance and differences. Although the train is a potent image of industrialization, Auden and the film actually imagine the train, like the “[c]hurches and power stations” in “To Geoffrey Hoyland,” as part of the natural world. Rather than starting with a close-up image of the train, the first two shots in the verse voice-over segment of the film begin with a valley, in which the train emerges as if it were an organic body. Highlighting the train’s fluidity instead of its quality as hard machinery, this first shot draws attention to the white steam blowing out of the train as it moves through the valley. In fact, the train itself is barely visible: the second shot draws the audience’s attention to the billowing steam moving across the screen, and the steam becomes a metonymy for the train’s presence on screen.

After the film begins to use close-ups of the train, Auden’s verse again draws attention away from the fact that the train is a machine and compares its looming, noisy presence to a beast: “Past cotton-grass and moorland boulder / Shoveling white steam over her shoulder, / Snorting noisily as she passes / Silent miles of wind-bent grasses.” Here, Auden depicts the train as a creature that labors as much as the postal workers inside it: instead of describing how the train’s engine workers “shovel” coal into its furnace, he personifies the train as a laborer who “shovel[s] white steam over her shoulder.” Moreover, the train “snort[s] noisily” like a beast through the country landscape, and “Birds turn their heads as she approaches.” Auden’s placing of the train in context with the natural world sheds new light on the visual images and sounds in the film. The line “Birds turn their heads as she approaches” is spoken over visual images of the train’s wheels churning, and shots of trees alongside the train’s path immediately follow this shot

of the wheels. Given Auden's comparison of the train to a beast and the film's framing of the wheels with other images of nature, the wheels and cogs of the train no longer seem merely mechanical: they instead adopt an organic quality and appear to move on their own volition like the legs of a beast. Although both the visual images and Auden's verse depict the natural world, the voice-over drives the images when it maintains a pace that the cutting cannot replicate at every beat. The aural quality of the verse also competes with the visual movement of the wheels. The words seem to want to outpace the train, and the irregular rhythm and asymmetric syllable count of the lines—e.g., “Stare from the bushes at her black-faced coaches. / Sheep-dogs cannot turn her course”—steers the audience towards a perception of the train as a living beast.

The voice-over segment of the film further melds the manmade and the natural through contradicting visual images. While the film gives the audience close-ups of the top of the train as it is speeding on its tracks, the verse describes a pastoral image of sheepdogs that “slumber on with paws across” and a farm where “no one wakes, / But a jug in the bedroom gently shakes.” Although the visual images seem to depict the train as a roaring machine, the verse describes the train as creeping by so inconspicuously that the sheepdogs and farmers remain asleep. Even though images of the train appear to clash with the verse's description of farmlands, the idea that it does not wake up even the sheepdogs attempts to transform the audience's visual impression of the train: instead of being a machine that is essentially foreign to the pastoral world surrounding it, the train becomes a natural part of the landscape. Although in her discussion of *Night Mail*, Bryant claims that the film represses the industrial and labor, Auden's language instead attempts to assimilate the industrial into an organic, national whole, where the train, laborers, and the farmers each have their own role and occupy the same space harmoniously. In fact, halfway

through the verse voice-over portion of the film, the pace of the recitation slows; Auden's verse descriptions and the visual images match to create an atmosphere of harmony and wholeness as the train slows into Glasgow. The camera pans across the sky and shows from a perspective inside the train its descent into the city. Auden's mention of the dawn and industrial "furnaces" match the visual images of the sky and smokestacks. This coordination of words and images create a sense of harmony in Glasgow, where both the train reaching its destination and the citizens waking up are enveloped in an atmosphere of rest. Benjamin Britten's symphonic music, written specifically for the film, too, uses rich, full orchestration to convey a sense of unification between the train, its workers, Glasgow, and its citizens.

The second half of the verse-over section returns to a listing of the different kinds of correspondence that the postal service will bring to citizens and images of the train in motion. But here, the visual images, as if following the verse's lead, pick up Auden's comparison of the train to a beast. While the voice-over enumerates the "Letters of thanks, letter from banks, / Letters of joy from girl and boy, / Receipted bills and invitations / To inspect new stock or visit relations, / And applications for situations / And timid lovers' declarations / And gossip, gossip from all the nations," the film alternates between close-ups of the train's wheels and shots of animals one assumes to be running alongside the train. Again, the film assimilates the train into nature: the montage, whose images shift from the train's wheels to images of a running dog, leaping deer, and birds taking flight, implicitly compares the train to those animals. Thus, although both the wheels and the pace of the narrator's recitation seem to have a mechanical, chugging quality, Auden's early comparison of the train to a "snorting" creature and the

juxtaposition of the train with a dog, deer, and birds integrate it and its laborers into the natural world that defines the England of the film.

Fittingly, the film ends with the voice-over describing the citizens' common anticipation of the mail's arrival and conveys an atmosphere of communal unity. The voice-over returns to a description of the train ready to deliver its mail in Scotland and both the pace of the recitation and the cutting slow.

Thousands are still asleep
Dreaming of terrifying monsters,
Or of friendly tea beside the band at Cranston's or Crawford's:
Asleep in working Glasgow
Asleep in well-set Edinburgh,
Asleep in granite Aberdeen,
They continue their dreams,
But shall wake soon and long for letters,
And none will hear the postman's knock
Without a quickening of the heart,
For who can bear to feel himself forgotten?

Auden's explicit purpose here is to praise the postal service, which works behind the scenes at night to deliver mail while "Thousands are still asleep." The film draws attention to the labor that the public takes for granted and praises the postal service because it allows the citizen to send and receive news and not "to feel himself forgotten" Although the film may appear to act solely as an advertisement for the GPO and to arouse national pride in governmental institutions, in more subtle ways it also promotes national unity. The repetition of "asleep in working Glasgow," "asleep in well-set Edinburgh," and "asleep in granite Aberdeen" both praises the uniqueness of each city by presenting its defining characteristic ("working," "well-set," and "granite") and imagines a unifying commonality as all their citizens are sleep and awaiting the same mail train. Auden depicts how, in contrast with the "monster" in their dreams, the mail

train is a benevolent beast that fulfills their need for news and gossip. At the end of the verse, Auden imagines that every citizen feel the same emotion, “a quickening of the heart,” when they “hear the postman’s knock.” With Auden’s description of shared emotions, the GPO film not only serves as a propaganda piece that informs and promotes national pride but also it attempts to make British citizens conscious the way in which they are linked to one another. The train in the film acts as a connecting thread that both transports information to one another and metaphorically stands for the commonality among British citizens.

Auden’s portrayal of the mail train in the verse voice-over section sheds light on the image of the nation that the preceding portion of the film creates. The film begins with a voice-over explanation of the workings in the mail train: during its journey to Scotland at night, forty postal workers sort half a million letters and pick up and deliver correspondence. Documenting every step of the process, the film shows telegraph communication at stations, workers loading heavy bags of mail, and sorters on the trains working through the night. Although the film tells the audience through voice-over the train’s destinations, it largely lets the images and the workers on screen speak for themselves. For example, the film cuts from station workers communicating with each other to workers pulling levers to move the tracks to an image of the train rushing by. Rather than explaining that the workers are preparing for passage of the mail train, the film allows its audience to focus on the process, see through montage, and reach a conclusion about what is happening inductively. The film appears to glorify the machinery of the train and communication systems: its close ups of the levers and cuts between images of the train and cable wires aim to demonstrate the sophistication of the post, train, and telegraph systems as they coordinate tasks. The film’s images of cables and tracks that dominate the

landscape also seem to show the way in which technology is essential to the unity of all the different regions in Britain.

However, seen through the lens of Auden's orality and his privileging of the aural in his verse, the portion of the film that precedes the voice-over creates a kind of aural montage that imagines the nation as a organic whole and assimilates the technological into the natural. Although the film cuts to the different processes that allow the train to pass the stations and deliver its mail and visually demonstrates to the audience the complex workings of that mail system, it also creates a montage of sound and draws the audience's attention to the voices of the workers. In the beginning of the film, as all the workers in the stations are preparing for the passage of the mail train, the film cuts from the sound of a bell that the worker on the tracks rings to warn the others that the train is passing to the voice of the station worker inside directing other workers and the clicking of the telegraph machine. Not only does the film demonstrate each step of the process but it also gives each shot a unique sound: the bell that rings outside the station prompt the worker inside to respond and tap out his message. Responding to the warnings that the train is about to approach, a worker prepares the tracks: the loud clanking of the levers that he pulls down inside the station lead to the sound of track shifts outside and the roaring of the train as it passes. Through these distinct steps, the film creates a reverberation of sound that travels between workers and machine. This scene ends with the long whistle of the train as it speeds away from the station. The juxtaposition of the workers' voices, the noises of the machines, the ringing of the bells, and the final whistle of the train creates an image of communal wholeness where the train and the workers are synchronized in perfect harmony.

The film makes this aural montage of community an image of the nation as a whole when it shows workers along the way from England to Scotland as part of the mail delivery process. After the train leaves the station, the film shows laborers repairing the tracks on the train's path. The overseer's whistle warns the workers that the train is coming, and the workers, shown in medium shots, remark to each other that the train is right on time. The film portrays the workers as proud of the rail system and their labor, and the juxtaposition of their voices with the rumble of the train when it passes adds to the sense of harmony between human and machine. Visually, the film also presents the train at eye level from the perspective of the workers. Rather than deifying the machine, the film presents the train, the workers, and the landscape as part of the same space. When the train passes the countryside, the film further creates a sense of national unity by showing how the train and the rural community are connected. In this key scene, a farmer looking at his watch as he waits for the mail train to pass. He hears the sound of the train's whistle, which gets louder and louder as it approaches, and when it delivers the daily paper, the farmer reads the piece of news he was waiting for and calls out to a fellow farm worker. Shots of the train's whistle and the farmer's call create a reverberation that emphasizes how the train allows for the rural community to be part of the national whole. On a literal level, the newspaper itself allows the farmers to be in touch with the rest of the nation, but the reverberation of the train's whistle and farmer's call emphasizes how the farmer is an active participant in creating a sense of national unity by spreading the news.

The film also uses aural montage to show how the train and the workers are intimately tied through labor. When the train is on its way to Scotland, the film uses a series of shots that demonstrate how bags of mail are delivered to towns while the train is still moving. Several of

the shots feature a postal worker telling a new hire how to prepare the bag for the mechanism that drops the mail from the moving train to the postal station. Without voice-over, these shots allow the audience to focus on the diegetic sounds. For example, the worker explains in detail exactly how to tie up the bag, and the film cuts to the new hire whenever he acknowledges that he understands what to do. Later in the scene, the film uses sound to tie the workers to the labor of the train. As the two workers prepare to launch the bag from the train, the film cuts back and forth between the workers' faces as they time the drop and images of the train from the perspective of the workers. These shots are intended to show how precise the workers need to be in order to time the drop perfectly. But the medium close-ups also draw the audience's attention to their communication with each other, and the shots that feature the train's chugging noise emphasize the machine's labor. In fact, the sounds of the workers' counting the seconds until the drop become synchronized with the train's noise, and when the drop takes place, a series of quick shots features the worker's command "now!", the train's whistle, the thudding of the drop, and the chugging of the train's wheels. In an important way, this aural montage connects sound to labor and shows how the workers and the train, working in a perfectly synchronized way, form a unified whole. If the film presents the workers and the train as a whole, it also shows how citizens in different parts of England and Scotland are also connected through their shared labor. In the scene where the train is loaded with new bundles of mail at the Midland station, the film allows the audience to listen in as workers call to each other. In other scenes, the film presents the dialogue between the railroad workers and, of course, the call of the farmer who alerts his fellow workers of the arrival of the news. The reverberation of sound in the film characterizes

England not only as an organic nation that assimilates the machine but also as a network of citizens connected by labor.

For Auden, labor in *Night Mail* is a perfect example of the kind of work that employs, as he describes it in “How to Be Masters of the Machine,” all the “faculties of body and mind.” The film throws into relief the physical labor and precise skill required to work in the postal system. Moreover, in the film, the train itself seems to become a live being equal to the workers who work on it. While film is very much a visual medium, Auden’s verse sheds light on the importance of the aural in *Night Mail*. My next chapter, however, will look at how the film *The Third Man* uses specifically visual cues to establish whom the audience ought to sympathize with. A reading of the film that allows the character of Major Calloway to emerge as the audience’s center of sympathy reveals important implications about Graham Greene and the film’s vision of England’s future. Unlike *Night Mail*, however, *The Third Man* considers British culture in terms of its international potential—the way its realism can provide an alternative to Americanism in the postwar.

¹ Incited by the war in Spain, writers, such as George Orwell and the English poet John Cornford, joined the International Brigades, which “drew volunteers from around the world to join ‘the good’ fight for democracy” (Bryant 99). Auden, Orwell, and Spender all wrote witness account pamphlets about the Spanish Civil War. After the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War, Auden and Isherwood also traveled to China and wrote *Journey to a War* (1939), a documentary text that puts together poems, dairy entries, and photographs (Bryant 130).

² In his 1974 tribute to Auden, Christopher Isherwood half-jokingly describes Auden as “a musician and a ritualist”: “As a child, he enjoyed a high Anglican upbringing, coupled with a sound musical education. The Anglicanism has evaporated, leaving only the height: he is still much preoccupied with ritual, in all its forms. When we collaborate, I have to keep a sharp eye on him—or down flop the characters on their knees (see *F6 passim*): another constant danger is that of choral interruptions by angel-voices. If Auden had his way, he would turn every play into a cross between grand opera and high mass” (7). Although Isherwood jokes about Auden’s religiousness, even more pronounced in his later writing, his description throws into relief the importance of sound, morality in Auden’s writing, and the way the two were intimately tied together in Auden’s thinking.

³ McDiarmid argues that Auden’s later, American poetry draws attention to his sense of the failure of communication and that in the 1940s, Auden turned to a “literate” model of poetry directed at a reading audience (21). McDiarmid cites Auden’s later interest in “the physical details of composition,” such as typescript, and in the idea of anonymous readers that are his audience. McDiarmid aligns Auden’s shift from “oral” to “written” modes with his optimism and skepticism about poetry’s ability to affect its audience. As I later argue, however, reading Auden’s early poems and his later “In Memory of W. B. Yeats” together shows that this correspondence is not so simple.

⁴ Early critical work argued that Auden is indifferent to the effects of the machine. Published surprisingly in 1935, two years after “How to Be Masters of the Machine,” Babette Deutsch in *This Modern Poetry* claims that “Auden takes both machinery and war for granted in a fashion impossible to his seniors. He expresses neither praise nor dispraise” (Deutsch 40). Implicit in this criticism is Deutsch’s comparison of Auden to the earlier generation of World War I, elegiac war poetry. In contrast with her appraisal of Auden, Deutsch describes the poems of Siegfried Sassoon and Wilfred Owen as verse filled “with appalling pain” (40).

⁵ In “Auden’s England,” Patrick Deane reads Auden’s early poems in terms of “the decline of England” as “a recurring theme” (26): “Relics of an industry now ‘comatose’ litter the landscape, as in ‘Who stands, the crux left of the watershed,’ and human relationships are mysterious and enigmatic, played out within what seems a post-apocalyptic milieu” (26). The poems I discuss, however, show a more optimistic attitude towards community and nation. Instead of simply conveying a “malaise” about the nation, they reveal a faith in orality and the moralizing nature of poetry.

⁶ In “Auden After the Thirties,” Frederick Buell describes the relationship between Auden’s 1930s poetry and his political attitude: “Auden was attempting to formulate a way in which a poet’s voice could be of compelling political relevance without being subservient to any particular program of action” (47). Buell cites Auden’s review of Rilke, in which he argues that the best course for the poet is to “give now and then a perhaps clearer meaning to endurance, and develop for ourselves the means of expressing the suffering within us and its conquest more precisely and clearly than is possible to those who have to apply their powers to something else” (48). Thus, according to Auden, by thinking and meditating on the “distresses” of their time, poets can provide a guide for action that would not be tainted by the biases of direct involvement in political action.

CHAPTER V

THE THIRD MAN AND THE “NEW” POSTWAR REALIST NOVEL

Graham Greene, who wrote a large body of film reviews and participated in the filmmaking process by writing screenplays, looked at film as a unique medium that records movement: “When one describes something, it is in moving terms, as if one were going down the street in a taxi, looking from one side to the other. That’s the way I’ve been influenced just as Victorian novelists like Scott were influenced by paintings or, later Henry James by the theatre” (Falk 4). Greene argues that the cinema is the primary visual medium of the twentieth century, displacing painting and the theatre, and he explicitly describes the way in which his novels attempt to replicate the dynamism of film by imitating point-of-view shots. By placing himself next to Scott and Henry James, Greene not only affirms the cinema as an influential art form but also asserts his own place as an inheritor of the novel.¹

As much as Greene adopted “filmic” qualities in his fiction, the film *The Third Man* (1949), a collaborative project involving British director Carol Reed, British producer Alexander Korda, and American producer David O. Selznick, self-consciously treats the medium of the novel as a marker of British cultural authority and a representative of culture at large. The film follows the adventures of Holly Martins, an American writer of westerns, in Vienna immediately after World War II as he investigates the death of his longtime friend, Harry Lime. Martins at first defies the British investigator, Major Calloway, who accuses Lime of having run a penicillin racket that injured and killed countless children, and attempts to prove Calloway wrong. But

after interviewing Lime's friends in Vienna to discover who carried away the body after the car accident that supposedly killed Lime, Martins finds that his friend is, in fact, alive and on the lam. During a comic but key moment in the film, Holly Martins reveals to the audience at the British Council's "re-education" program in Vienna, at which he was haphazardly invited to speak, that he plans to write a new novel, also entitled "The Third Man," based on his investigation of Lime's mysterious "death." The highbrow Viennese audience mistake Martins for a "high art" novelist and are confused when he claims not to know who James Joyce is and professes his literary hero to be western writer Zane Grey. The film's representation of a cultural "re-education" program in Vienna, I argue, underscores central questions that the film poses about what constitutes culture and what the role of British culture should be in postwar Europe.

Critics tend to accept Holly Martins as a satirical caricature of the brash American and a figure of low culture to be rejected by the film audience, and indeed Martins repeatedly compares himself to a "cowboy" who will humiliate the British Major Calloway, playing the role of "sheriff." Yet the film disrupts such easy dichotomies. *Both* Martins and Major Calloway, as well as the novels mentioned within the film and the narratives Martins and Calloway create, reflect the film's desire to break down the polarity of "high" versus "low" culture. Martins's proposed "Third Man" novel serves as a self-reflexive test case for the film, in which Greene and Reed reject assumptions about "high" and "low" culture that derive from postwar perceptions of modernism and instead propose a "new" realist novel as the model for art. For Greene and Reed, the importance of British culture in a postwar Europe that must be "re-educated" lies in Britain's potential for redefining the notion of culture itself. Greene's writing and the film reject the idea that only "high culture" (canonical modernist works) can educate; instead they propose that by

revising realist forms of low culture and injecting them with moral purpose, Britain can create new “educative” forms.

Cultural Politics in the Postwar

Although recent discussions of the role of location in *The Third Man* tend to look at Vienna as a mere backdrop for the film’s political drama, the international elements are closely linked to central cultural issues that the film raises. Location reminds the viewer repeatedly that the war has just ended: the film begins with a montage of images of Vienna while Carol Reed’s voice-over narration explains the Allied control of the city, and throughout the narrative portion of the film, the camera returns to images of ruins from Allied bombing. Charles Drazin’s *In Search of the Third Man* follows the actual filmmaking process in this setting and uses Vienna to contextualize the film within Cold War politics. Drazin provides explanatory background for the film’s depiction of the Allied division of Vienna into French, British, American, and Russian sectors and an Innere Stadt of joint control.² In fact, Alexander Korda of London Film Productions sent Greene to survey the city for an “original post-war continental story to be based on either or both of the following territories: Vienna, Rome” (Drazin 5).³ As a result, Greene’s story, which provided the basis for his screenplay, was inspired by the cooperation and rivalry between Allied nations there, the postwar ruins, and the pervasiveness of the black market (Drazin 5). Rob White looks at this context specifically in terms of the “mock-documentary” at the beginning of the film: paradoxically, “[t]he damage done in the war is evident in the sequence even though Reed’s voice-over and the fast cutting (twenty-eight different shots in sixty-six seconds) discourage the viewer from dwelling on it” (8). The opening shots of Vienna

thus reflect the film's simultaneous desire to expose Vienna as a grimy setting and to reflect Allied optimism about a "new Vienna" that, in the words of the voice-over narrator, "doesn't look any worse than a lot of other European cities—bombed about a bit" (White 7). Judith Adamson focuses on the conflict between Allied nations and describes how Cold War politics seeped into both the production and the film itself. She notes how Greene's anti-Americanism and Selznick's "stormy cold war attitude" may have shaped the resulting depiction of Americans, the British, and Russians in the film (65-6).

Yet, while Cold War politics serves as an important backdrop for the film and provides an explanation for its representation of the tensions between the British, Americans, and Russians, the film is not so much interested in the dealings between nations in their control of Vienna as in the meanings of culture. The film, in other words, specifically frames political authority as cultural authority and uses Martins and Calloway to imagine a British assertion of power in postwar Vienna. I argue that the film's treatment of these characters is much more complex than criticism has recognized and that the film draws from a broader network of associations regarding the novel, narrative, and their relationship to definitions of culture.

Although modernism was never isolated from popular culture, the new generation of British novelists writing in the 1930s and 1940s, including Greene, positioned themselves against modernist formal experimentation by turning to and legitimizing popular genres and social realism. By the mid-1940s, high modernists Joyce and Woolf had died, and modernism, "already being historicized, defined, monumentalized, given its name and structure," had lost its perceived radicalism (Bradbury 405). Writers of the new generation saw modernism's focus on formal experimentation as politically irresponsible and were disenchanted by those such as Ezra Pound

and Wyndham Lewis who were attracted to authoritarianism. Reacting against this version of modernism, Greene turned to popular genres to revitalize fiction. While the years between the late 1880s and the 1930s traditionally demarcate the modernist period, they simultaneously saw the “solidification” of modern genres and genre fiction (Bloom 13). Detective fiction, for example, became one of the most widely read genres in the 1920s and 1930s, and writers such as Agatha Christie, Dorothy Sayers, Marjorie Allington, and Raymond Chandler quickly formulated the familiar formal patterns of the genre (Diermert 18). The modern detective narrative, established by Wilkie Collins and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, not only entertained but also propagated middle-class values, reinforcing the idea that “society could be restored even after such a serious disruption as crime” (Hayes 91). Moreover, with the continuing rise of literacy, the pulp paperback novelette trade boomed in the 1930s and 1940s as readership increased and production became standardized. The diminishment of the supply of American pulp magazines during World War II in Britain led to the rise of British novelette writers “armed with maps of Los Angeles and a line of gangster patois...selling everything from crime fiction to wartime adventure, westerns, science fiction, horror, and soft-core pornography” (Bloom 64). By the 1940s and 1950s, British pulp “mushroom” publishers had perfected a system where authors produced novelettes “to order” under multiple names for different genres (Bloom 68).

Greene’s writing, in fact, often invoked and reflected the power of popular fiction. In his autobiographical “The Lost Childhood” (1952), he recalls the excitement he felt encountering a new novel as a child: “Of course, I should be interested to hear that a new novel by Mr E. M. Forster was going to appear this spring, but I could never compare that mild expectation of civilized pleasure with the missed heartbeat, the appalled glee I felt when I found on a library

shelf a novel by Rider Haggard, Percy Westerman, Captain Brereton or Stanley Weyman which I had not read before” (13). Despite his admiration for Forster, Joseph Conrad, and Henry James, Greene argues here that popular melodrama and adventure tales tap into a primal, childhood excitement and even impress upon the body in a way that gives the genres a shaping power over culture. While Forster inspires Greene’s cerebral, “civilized” appreciation, popular fiction leads to “missed heartbeat[s]” and “appalled glee.” In his essay, Greene privileges this primal, bodily spontaneity over the rational: “Perhaps it is only in childhood that books have any deep influence on our lives” (13). Here, Greene emphasizes the power of emotions that popular fiction evokes and values the effect novels have on personal lives over their canonical status.

Between 1936 and 1969, Greene himself labeled fiction explicitly inspired by the thriller “entertainments”: *A Gun for Sale* (1936), *The Confidential Agent* (1939), *The Ministry of Fear* (1943), *The Third Man* (story form published in 1950), *Loser Takes All* (1956), and *Our Man in Havana* (1958) (Diermert 5-6). Although Greene attempted to use the label “entertainment” to distinguish these thrillers from his other novels, the line between “entertainments” and novels was never very clear: Greene considered calling *The Quiet American* (1955) an entertainment and inconsistently labeled *Brighton Rock* (1938) an entertainment in its first American edition but not in its British edition (Diermert 6). And in his autobiography *A Sort of Life*, he compares all writing, not just thriller narratives, to spying because of the writer’s ability to observe the actual world and create motive, character, and plot (Sinyard 37).⁴ Rather than serving as a genuine dividing line between his works, the label “entertainments” reflects a range of contradictory associations with popular fiction that both Greene and his readers held. In a 1955 radio interview, Greene framed the difference between an “entertainment” and a novel in terms

of formal distinctions: “In one’s entertainments one is primarily interested in having an exciting story as in physical action, with just enough character to give interest in the action...In the novels I hope one is primarily interested in the character and the action takes a minor part” (qtd. in Diemert). Here, Greene argues that entertainments focus on the development of plot while novels prioritize characterization over action. Instead of reading “entertainments” and his other fiction in terms of purely formal difference, however, his reviewers have looked at his work in terms of genre and the assumptions regarding genre fiction as “low” culture.⁵ In an interview with Anthony Burgess, Greene expressed an anxiety about this division of “high” and “low”:

“The more I think of it, the more I worry about this division of literature into the great because hard to read, the not so great—or certainly ignoble by scholars—because of the desire to divert, be readable, keep it plain. You don’t find Conan Doyle dealt with at length in literary histories. Yet he was a great writer. He created great characters—...Something ought to be done about this double standard” (qtd. in Diemert 8). In his essay “The Last Buchan” (1941), he also praises writer John Buchan for taking advantage of the dramatic potential of everyday situations and seemingly unadventurous characters (Sinyard 101). In his thinking about Conan Doyle and Buchan, Greene disavows the idea that popular or genre fiction cannot deal deeply with character and reveals a desire to separate himself from the modernist canon, which by the 1930s was being read as apolitical and irresponsible. In fact, in the 1960s, Greene discarded the term “entertainment,” effectively getting rid of the hierarchy between “low” “entertainments” and “high art” novels (Watts 38).

While Greene and other writers of the 1930s were reacting in part to general conceptions of modernism and literary writing, Greene also “saw popular forms as offering the possibility of

a genuine art” and argued that popular forms must give the public “a mass feeling of collective strength” (Diemert 38). In the 1930s, thrillers and detective fiction, in fact, provided a way to treat the political and social situation. Through the intrigue between characters, Greene’s “thrillers” *Stamboul Train*, *It’s a Battlefield*, and *England Made Me* critique the English class system and “traditional public-school values” (Diemert 48). As evident in “The Third Man,” Greene’s use of an international cast of characters also allowed him to express his disdain for “American” “sentimentality” and the United States in general (Watts 37). Although his fiction revealed his at times pettiness against the United States, crime and the conflict between protagonists and their villains allowed Greene to accomplish what he claims fiction’s humanitarian purpose should be: in *Why do I Write?* (1947), Greene argues that the writer has a political responsibility towards both friend and enemy and must protect them from injustice by “draw[ing] his own likeness to any human being, the guilty as much as the innocent” (qtd. in Diemert 49).

One way of understanding how *The Third Man* addresses “high” and “low” art, Michael Sinowitz’s “Graham Greene’s and Carol Reed’s *The Third Man*: When a Cowboy Comes to Vienna,” argues that the film bridges “high” and “low” by borrowing tropes from both modernism and the western. Sinowitz compares the modernist notion of author as hero (for example, in Joyce’s *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*) to the western hero figure: “the Western acts as a sort of fantasy in which the individual—almost inevitably male—reasserts autonomy, corresponding with the modernist artist’s attempt to order his or her world through the aesthetics of literary creation” (410). Sinowitz argues that Martins, the “cowboy” figure, both asserts autonomy against Calloway, his “sheriff,” and frames this independence as “literary

creation” when he attempts to “write” Lime’s innocence. In such a way, Sinowitz identifies elements in the film that he labels “modernist” or “western.” But, rather than look at the film as a conglomeration of “modernist” or “western” elements, I argue that the film, in turning away from modernism, attempts to create a new kind of fiction, one that integrates the thriller plot with social awareness, in order to reinstate Britain’s cultural power in the postwar period. Indeed, by making Holly the “cowboy” from whom the audience must distance itself through Calloway’s fuller consciousness of the postwar situation, the film signals a turn away from America as stereotyped by its Hollywood naiveté.

Greene’s “The Third Man” and the Utilitarian Purpose of Prose

Like other writers during the 1940s, Greene was beginning to think of the medium of prose as utilitarian and directed at a particular, historically specific public. In *What is Literature?* Jean-Paul Sartre attempts to create a distinction between poetry and prose in order to advocate prose as a tool for political change. While poetry focuses on the materiality of words themselves, prose treats words as instrumental. Sartre argues, “Prose is, in essence, utilitarian. I would readily define the prose-writer as a man who *makes use* of words. M. Jourdan made prose so that he could ask for his slippers, and Hitler, so that he could declare war on Poland. The writer is a *speaker*; he designates, demonstrates, orders, refuses, interpolates, begs, insults, persuades, insinuates” (34). For Sartre, composing prose, whether communicating with others, writing a novel, or declaring war, is always an action—it produces an effect on the actual world. His listing of the various uses of language—“demonstrates, orders, refuses,” etc.—emphasizes the idea that the writer always speaks with intent and towards an audience. In fact, Sartre

disavows the idea that literature aims to convey universal meaning, “archetypes,” and “human nature” (43). Although he argues that prose is by nature utilitarian, Sartre also prescribes that “good” writers must actively direct their words at a particular public in a specific historical context. He traces, for example, the rise of the bourgeois writer who aligns himself with the moneyed class over the aristocratic ruling class. He even argues that writers address particular racial segments of a nation and takes as an example Richard Wright, whom he describes as writing for sympathetic whites or blacks who share Wright’s “personal situation” instead for a universal reader (79). Thus, for Sartre, a “committed” novel must overtly address the specific political and social concerns of a particular public and aim to affect this public in some way.

Through its layered narration—a combination of Calloway’s and Martins’s perspectives—Greene’s story “The Third Man” (published in 1950 after the release of the film) proposes, as Sartre does, that prose should aim to affect the actual world. However, rather than arguing that imaginative sympathy is limited, Greene’s writing reveals a belief that prose can “educate” and persuade people to take particular positions. The story makes Rollo Martins (Holly Martins in the film) explicitly a writer, but *both* Martins’s and Calloway’s roles as creators of narrative suggest what Greene’s “new” realist novel would look like. In the story, Martins and Calloway are British; Martins goes to Vienna under the summons of his old friend Lime to “write up the business of looking after the international refugees”; but because Martins writes under the pseudonym “Buck Dexter,” Crabbin of the British Council in Vienna mistakes him for literary author Benjamin Dexter (modeled after E. M. Foster) and invites him to give a lecture on “the contemporary novel” (331). Greene uses Martins’s “lecture” to mock the irrelevance of high modernists and the pretension of those who read them. When asked where he would “put James

Joyce,” Martins replies, “If you want to know, I’ve never heard of him,” and avows no knowledge of “the stream of consciousness” (361). Greene uses this comical moment in the story not only to highlight the absurdity of the British Council—as Crabbin and the audience assume that “[o]nly a great writer could have taken so arrogant, so original a line”—but also to reveal the disparity between the esotericism of audience members’ desire to know about the stream of consciousness and the immediacy of the ruins of Vienna that Greene himself so vividly depicts. For Greene, Joyce and the stream of consciousness are no longer relevant because they do not deal with the actual situation of postwar Europe.

Greene uses Martins to mock modernist writing, but Martins provides no socially conscious alternative for postwar literature. While Greene makes Martins the voice of popular fiction in the story, Greene frames Calloway as a writer of a different sort whose narrative actually subsumes Martins’s and serves as the social conscience of Martins’s tale. As the story’s first-person narrator, Calloway pieces together the narrative—Martins’s investigation of Lime’s “death”—through interviews and notes. Greene constantly draws attention to Calloway as narrator by having him refer to his police files. In fact, the story begins with Calloway quoting from his file on Martins: “When I saw Rollo Martins first I made this note on him for my security police files: ‘In normal circumstances a cheerful fool. Drinks too much and may cause a little trouble’” (318). Greene from the beginning underscores how the story is filtered through Calloway’s analysis of events, and although Martins effectively solves the “third man” mystery, Calloway controls the events and Martins’s ability to investigate by revealing or withholding information. When Martins and Calloway first meet at Lime’s “funeral,” Calloway lures Martins, who has no money and does not know that Calloway is a detective, into discussing his

friendship with Lime by buying him drinks. Moreover, only after Martins seeks out Lime's fellow racketeers Kurtz and Cooler does Calloway tell Martins the truth about Lime's racket: diluting penicillin for sale and killing children along the way.

Calloway's reconstruction of what Martins tells him takes into account the state of Vienna after World War II. Martins plays out the kind of plot that his own adventure fiction would feature, but Calloway as narrator adds the elements that situate the tale and recognize the hardships in postwar Vienna. For Calloway—and Greene—Martins's unreflective, Romantic interest in adventure is far too naive to provide a model for British fiction. After describing Martins as a "cheerful fool," Calloway gives an extensive overview of the state of Vienna after the war and comments on the "grimness" of the surroundings: "If you are to understand this strange, rather sad story you must have an impression at least of the background—the smashed dreary city of Vienna divided up into zones among the four powers" (318). Here, Calloway claims that readers' understanding of events depends on their knowledge of both the political situation and their ability to visualize the landscape of ruins. Unlike Sartre, who claims that writers must address a specific audience, Greene does not simply write for a British public and speak to the circumstances it can observe first hand. Instead, Greene claims that readers, whether British, continental European, or American, can "understand" Calloway and Martins's "strange, rather sad story" once he has described the situation in Vienna for them. In a way that highlights Greene's desire to convey the atmosphere of the "real" postwar Vienna, Calloway insists that he has made nothing up: "I have reconstructed the affair as best I can from my own files and from what Martins told me. It is as accurate as I can make it—I haven't invented a line of dialogue" (319). Calloway's account to Martins of Lime's penicillin racket echoes this

insistence on factuality as he produces evidence, such as notes and photographs. Greene's layering of Martins's and Calloway's narration thus incorporates both the "thrill" of popular fiction that he admired and the social relevance and factuality that he criticizes modernism for lacking. The detailed rendering of the background and Calloway's "accuracy" point to the way that Greene, like Sartre, believed that "committed" prose is based on historical specificity, but through Calloway's desire to help readers "understand," Greene emphasizes the ability of prose to reach a broader audience beyond the author's nationality or immediate audience.

Conradian Influence

The layered narration in Greene's "The Third Man" recalls Conrad's textuality, but rather than using narration to highlight subjective experience, Greene's use of Calloway as the story's narrator privileges his perspective as the arbiter of objective truth. Greene was self-consciously aware of Conrad's influence on his novels. In fact, he claimed that his early novel *Rumour at Nightfall*, which he tried to disown, had been tainted by his reading of Conrad's *Arrow of Gold* (Sinyard 25).⁶ And, looking back at his writing in *A Sort of Life* (1972), Greene claimed that at one point in his career, he swore never to read another novel by Conrad in order to escape the older author's oppressive influence (Pendleton 13). In *Graham Greene's Conradian Masterplot: The Arabesque of Influence*, Robert Pendleton argues that as much as Greene desired to assert his independence as a writer, his use of overlaying genres revealed his inability to escape Conrad. Pendleton claims that both Conrad and Greene "transformed" "the adventure story by means of a more detailed examination of the characterological interiority" (29). Conrad, for example, used the popular nineteenth-century adventure story established by writers such as Robert Louis

Stevenson to examine characters' psychological journey: *Heart of Darkness* is not so much about Marlow's travels in Africa as it is about his "interior journey towards Kurtz" and his own internal turmoil in face of racial "darkness" and the psychological unknown (Pendleton 30). Pendleton points out that in the film *The Third Man* Greene, too, transforms the adventure story into a "psychological investigation" when Martins seeks to understand Lime's motives as well his own in his impulse to protect him. Comparing Greene to Conrad, Pendleton argues, "Holly's interior narrative begins a quest for selfhood almost as fraught with ambiguity as Marlow's" (83). Martins comes to question one's ability to know another when he realizes that Lime, a friend he thought incapable of murder, was never the individual he thought he was.

Although Greene certainly adopts Conrad's revision of the adventure genre, his approach to narration departs from Conrad's embrace of the subjective. In *Heart of Darkness*, Conrad's narrator famously describes Marlow's mode of storytelling:

The yarns of seamen have a direct simplicity, the whole meaning of which lies within the shell of a cracked nut. But Marlow was not typical (if his propensity to spin yarns be excepted) and to him the meaning of an episode was not inside like a kernel but outside, enveloping the tale which brought it out only as a glow brings out a haze, in the likeness of one of these misty halos that, sometimes, are made visible by the spectral illumination of moonshine. (9)

Unlike other seamen's "yarns," which reach a definite meaning for their listeners, Marlow's tale fleshes out the ambiguity of motives and the complexity of circumstances. Conrad's narrator describes the "meaning" of Marlow's tale as a "haze" or a "misty halo." Instead of giving its listeners a "kernel" of "meaning," Marlow's narrative makes his listeners interpreters who must attempt to look through the "haze." In fact, Marlow disavows the very idea of a shared "truth": although he is repulsed by the "savagery" he encounters in Africa, he is unable to condemn Kurtz, who, in his attempt to rule as a god, had "gone native." When Kurtz dies, Marlow reveals

his great admiration for Kurtz and his identification with Kurtz's expression of "horror" in face of the "conquering darkness" within his own psyche (Conrad 72).

In *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (1988), James Clifford explores the multiplicities of "truths" in Marlow's narrative. By lying to Kurtz's Intended, telling her that his last words were her name, Marlow "recognizes and constitutes different domains of truth—male and female as well as the truths of metropole and frontier" (Clifford 99). Clifford claims that the novel's "outermost" narrator is an attempt to stabilize the narrative by ironizing Marlow, his partial truths, and his "fictions of cultural life" (99). Although Clifford makes a strong case for *Heart of Darkness* as an ethnographic narrative, he discounts the ways in which this outermost narrator can never quite successfully distance himself from Marlow and Marlow's tale. Conrad's narrator calls Marlow an "idol" (7) and defines him as an exceptional individual with a unique attitude towards seafaring. This narrator even interrupts his account of Marlow's narrative in order to describe his own enchantment: "There was not a word from anybody. The others might have been asleep, but I was awake. I listened, I listened on the watch for the sentence, for the word that would give the clue to the faint uneasiness inspired by this narrative that seemed to shape itself with human lips in the heavy night-air of the river" (Conrad 30). Here, Conrad reveals that the outer narrator is no objective listener documenting Marlow's tale. Just as Marlow becomes mesmerized by Kurtz's transformation, the narrator cannot help but sympathize deeply with Marlow's "uneasiness." His repetition of "I listened" conveys his anticipation and immersion in Marlow's tale, and the image of the narrative "shap[ing] itself with human lips" shows how the narrator attributes the tale itself with supernatural, godlike agency.

Although Greene's "The Third Man" uses a layered narration similar to Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, Calloway remains the story's stable, objective voice. In the story, Vienna is Greene's "heart of darkness": the rampant racketeering in Vienna requires the Allied powers' civilizing rule, and—an overt reference to Conrad—Kurtz, who is Lime's chief conspirator in Vienna, is named Kurtz. Like Marlow who cannot help but sympathize with Kurtz in *Heart of Darkness*, Martins is tempted to help his friend escape even when he finds out that Lime's penicillin has been killing children. However, unlike the outermost narrator in *Heart of Darkness*, Calloway is never in any danger of "going native" and sympathizing with the criminals. His grounding of Martins's narrative in facts and information from his police files constantly distances the narration from Martins's perspective and makes Martins himself an object of inspection. Calloway even turns the irony on himself: he admits that he was originally wrong about Lime's death, "You win, you've proved me a bloody fool," to prevent the reader from blindly sympathizing with any one character. "The Third Man" ends with Calloway's sarcastic remark, "Poor all of us, when you come to think of it" (Greene 395). Calloway's attitude towards his own "failure" as detective and police presence in Vienna at large encourages readers to examine Calloway and the Allies as objectively as they are to judge Lime.

The Third Man and Fantasies of Cultural Authority

Although the film is not rooted in any one character's point of view, it uses visual cues to establish an "objective" attitude that it encourages the audience to adopt. The film builds on the story's layered narration by using Martins's and Calloway's perspective to imagine how their stories exert a cultural and moral authority. As in Greene's story, Martins drives the events

forward as he investigates Lime's "death," but it is Calloway who gives Martins's "Third Man" story moral relevance for the "re-education" of postwar Europe. In the first major scene with Martins and Calloway, Calloway has lured Martins to the bar and questions him about Lime. Martins idealizes his friendship with Lime, calling him the "best friend I ever had," and ends up attempting to punch Calloway when he calls Lime a murderer. The film links Martins to the creation of fictional narratives in his nostalgic description of his friendship with Lime, and Calloway draws attention to the fact that Martins is, by profession, a writer by calling his reminiscence a "cheap novelette" and telling his lackey Payne, "He's only a scribbler with too much drink in him." Although Calloway disparages Martins's "cheap novelette" nostalgia, Martins feels no shame about his profession and responds, "Well, I write cheap novelettes"

The film visually emphasizes Martins's role in driving the plot forward and affirms the importance, compared to modernism, of the kind of popular fiction that Martins writes and his actions represent. The very scene after the introductory "documentary" of postwar Vienna shows Martins getting off the train in Vienna. The film immediately sets up Martins as the figure of action who will move the plot forward and provide the kind of suspense that his own westerns privilege. The scene at the train station starts with a shot of Martins telling an American soldier checking his papers that his friend Lime is not there to meet him. The dialogue between Martins and the soldier alerts the audience to the fact that Lime is missing, and despite the voice-over narrator's ironic attitude towards Martins ("Anyway, there he was, poor chap, happy as a lark"), the film, by presenting his face in close up, invites the audience to sympathize with Martins and to wonder, too, where Lime is. The second scene, inside Lime's building, emphasizes Martins's role as an active figure by showing his progression from the bottom of the winding staircase to

Lime's flat. In one continuous shot, the film captures Martins's entire figure at the bottom of the stairs and his movement towards the camera, positioned at the level of Lime's flat; the shot ends with Martins's stopping to talk to the porter in medium close up. Unlike Calloway, whom the film portrays as a stationary figure, Martins is always in motion. His travel across spaces creates suspense by leading to questions about the plot (why was Lime not at the train station? Exactly how much does the porter know?). In such a way, Martins plays out the "cowboy" role in his own fiction. Although the film rejects Martins's simplistic understanding of Vienna and his "American," naive belief that he can right all wrongs by finding out who murdered his friend, it yet values the investigative, plot-driven role he plays.

The film elicits the audience's sympathy for Martins and his desire to investigate the circumstances of his friend's death by immersing the camera in Martins's point of view. At the beginning of the film, when Calloway tells Martins at the bar that Lime was "about the worst racketeer that made a dirty living in this city," the camera cants to convey Martins's increasing suspicion of the police and Vienna as a whole. While one may argue that the canting and the film's use of shadows and visual contrast is characteristic of film noir in general, in *The Third Man* these visual details do not simply follow the conventional cinematography for the genre but place the audience in Martins's point of view as he visually takes in the foreignness of Vienna and sifts through them for clues about Lime's "death." When Martins interviews Lime's Viennese friend fellow racketeer Baron Kurtz, the camera captures Kurtz in close up and extreme close up, as if the camera adopts Martins's visual perspective to inspect Kurtz's veracity. The camera's registering of Kurtz's shifty glances and sly smiles through close up invite the audience to be as suspicious of him as Martins is.

However, the film criticizes also Martins's limited, Romantic understanding of Vienna when he thinks of the other characters not in terms of the particular historical circumstances of postwar Vienna but in terms of individual motivations. When Martins first meets Anna, Lime's lover, backstage at the Josefstadt theater, he tells her that he saw her at Lime's funeral and asks her, "You were in love with him, weren't you?" Anna replies cryptically, "I don't know. How can you know a thing like that afterwards? I don't know anything anymore except I want to be dead, too." Even though Anna admits that Lime could have been murdered and remarks, "What does it matter? He's dead already, isn't he?", Martins assumes that Anna wants to investigate the suspicious circumstances surrounding Lime's death, too, and elicits her help in interviewing the porter and Lime's friends. In the scene backstage, the film draws attention to the way Martins fails to understand Anna's more immediate worries related to the financial hardships of living in postwar Vienna. When Martins refuses Anna's offer of brandy, Anna tells him she was planning on selling it anyway, and her dismissal of Martins's questions about her love for Lime reveals her focus on the present and the misery of living in war-wrecked Vienna. Anna's wish to be dead reflects a pessimism that Vienna can ever recover from the war and rebuild itself. In a later scene, when Martins and Anna discover that Calloway and his team of policemen are searching her flat for information about Lime, Anna again reveals that she has more pressing problems—the material circumstances of citizenship—than her love for Lime. She tells Martins that she is Czechoslovakian, and only her forged passport has kept her from being removed from the British zone and into the Russian. When Martins and Anna find Lime's fellow racketeer Pompesco at the Casanova Club, Anna fearfully tells Martins to stop provoking the Russian soldiers there. Even at the end, when Anna refuses to be a part of Martins and Calloway's scheme to capture

Lime, she frames her love for Lime as a loyalty to someone whose actions have their own complicated past and are rooted in particular historical circumstances. She challenges Martins's role as the center for the audience's sympathy when, after they have both learned about Lime's penicillin racket, she remarks, "Stop making him in your image. Harry was real. He wasn't just your friend or my lover. He was Harry."⁷ Here, Anna claims that Martins has created his own version of Lime and can only see him according to his own black-and-white understanding of individuals as either "cowboys" or "sheriffs." Martins's desire to "avenge" Lime and focus on Anna and Lime's romantic relationship, which Anna seems more than happy to forget, reflects his own "American" idealism and romanticism rather than Anna's actual pining for Lime. Although the film, which ends in Martins's shooting of his friend, does not encourage the audience to agree ultimately with Anna's defense of Lime or to side with Lime, it recognizes Anna's more subtle, historically-based understanding of Lime as someone who possibly has good in him, a Lime with a past that extends beyond his appearance in the film.

Although Anna sheds light on the limits of Martins's assumptions about the autonomy of individual action, the film puts her perspective aside and uses the kind of characterization, plot, and popular fiction that Martins stands for to reject the canonization of modernist fascination with interiority and subjectivity. In Greene's story, Martins, who goes by the name Dexter, gets mistaken for a famous high-brow author, but the film emphasizes the assumptions that Crabbin, the organizer of the British Re-Education Program, has about novels and culture when he invites Martins to speak at his cultural program under the recommendation of Payne, an avid fan of westerns. The film ridicules the pomposity of the subject Crabbin wants Martins to address, "the modern novel" and "the crisis of faith." The film immediately presents Crabbin as a ridiculous

figure who mistakes “very popular” (Payne’s words) for modernist and highbrow. Crabbin becomes the butt of Martins’s sarcasm when Martin tells him that his friend and supposed host has died: in response to Martins’s news, Crabbin says primly, “Goodness, that’s awkward,” prompting Martins to remark, “That’s what you say to people after death?” The scene in which Martins supposedly gives his lecture on the “modern novel” deliberately contrasts the frivolity of the Viennese highbrow audience and the British propagandists running the talks with the immediacy of Martins’s investigation of Lime’s “murder.” The talk begins after Martins is seemingly kidnapped by a taxi and sped through the city. The film encourages the audience, along with Martins, to assume that nefarious racketeers have abducted him, but when the car stops, he is whisked into the British Cultural Center where the audience waits to greet him. The film juxtaposes close-ups of his surprise upon arrival with long shots of the audience staring at him. Martins’s anticlimactic arrival at the Cultural Center deliberately draws attention to the snobbery and frivolity of lectures on modernism as “re-education” when kidnapping and racketeering are at hand. Significantly, the film skips Martins’s actual lecture, as if to show that content, “the modern novel” and “the crisis of faith,” is not the point of the scene and instead cuts directly to images of Pompesco as he calls his fellow thugs and the audience members as they question Martins. The audience insistently question him, “Do you believe, Mr. Martins, in the stream of consciousness?”, “What author has chiefly influenced you?”, and when Martins replies, “Grey,” audience members respond shrilly, “Grey?! What Grey?!”, and “Where would you put Mr. James Joyce? In what category?” Close-ups of the audience members’ faces register their shock towards Martins’s professed admiration for westerns and reveal their insistence on linking “culture” with modernism.

While the questioners refer with reverence to James Joyce and Crabbin becomes utterly exasperated, Martins becomes increasingly distracted by Pompesco's threatening presence. The film cuts back and forth between Pompesco standing at the back of the lecture hall and Martins's reaction towards him. In response to Pompesco's question about what his next novel is, Martins replies, "It's called 'The Third Man': it's a murder story, based on fact." Well aware that this "third man" novel self-reflexively refers to Martins's investigation, Pompesco makes a veiled threat that it is "pretty dangerous...mixing fact and fiction" and sends his thugs after Martins when the lecture is over. The immediacy of Pompesco's threat, Martins's desire to continue his search for Lime's "murderer," and the striking images of ruins in Vienna that Martins stumbles over as he escapes affirm the idea that Martins's "third man" novel would be better able to address the actual problems that Martins and the Viennese face than the canonical modernist novels Crabbin's audience reveres. In contrast with the clean, confined space of the lecture hall, the ruins reveal the damage done to the city that extends beyond the frames in the film. Extreme long shots of Martins and Pompesco's henchmen chasing him emphasize the massiveness of the piles of rubble and the wall fragments left standing from bombs. Much of the film is, in fact, shot on location; in such a way, the film is actualizing the realism that Martins claims for his novel. The high-contrast images of tunnels through the rubble, a wrecked car in which Martins hides, and stones and dirt overflowing onto steps up to a church reveal the texture and tangibility of a landscape that cannot be recreated on a sound stage.

Greene's story uses layered narration to allow Calloway to assure historical "accuracy." But the film specifically uses visual cues to convey Calloway's assertion of moral authority as he interprets Martins's experiences in postwar Vienna. In contrast with Martins, who always seems

to be in movement, the film presents Calloway as a stationary figure. In his first appearance, the film emphasizes his role as observer by having Trevor Howard, the actor who plays Calloway, stand apart from Lime's mourners and lean against the gravestones. The film then cuts to close ups of Martins, Anna, and Kurtz to take Calloway's point of view as he watches them. Instead of centering its observation of the scene at the cemetery in Martins's perspective, the camera follows Calloway's gaze and focuses back on Calloway as he follows Martins out of the cemetery. Calloway becomes an active interpreter of events surrounding Lime's death and of the other characters when he questions Martins at the bar and passes judgment on both Lime and Martins. While Martins reminisces on his friendship with Lime, Calloway tells Martins that Lime was "about the worst racketeer that made a dirty living in the city" and that his death was the "best thing that ever happened to him." Through its fast-paced dialogue, the film underscores the way, Calloway, unlike Martins, who thinks of individuals in terms of individual will and preconceived stereotypes, pointedly bases his judgments on observations and facts. When Martins disparages policemen at large, Calloway counters, "Ever seen one?" Calloway himself reaches conclusions about Martins by directly asking questions and observing his behavior. When Calloway states (as he does in Greene's story) that Martins is "only a scribbler with too much drink in him," he seems to state only the obvious, but his words implicitly convey his assessment that Martins—too much of a fool—is not involved in Lime's racket. As in the scene at Lime's funeral, Calloway, a figure of stable perspective and moral clarity, remains stationary, even when Martins tries to punch him, and only stands up to leave after he puts Payne in charge of taking him to Sachers, the British military hotel.

By the end of the film, Calloway emerges as a creator of narratives in his own right and becomes the film's moral authority when he gives Martins's investigation and the plot "utilitarian" value. Although Martins conceives of the "third man" novel, a mixture of "fact" and "fiction," as a product solely of his creation, the interweaving of Martins's investigation and Calloway's insertion of ethical significance into the events Martins experiences becomes the kind of narrative that for Greene replaces modernism. To convince Martins to stop meddling in the Lime investigation, Calloway tells him the whole story about Lime's penicillin racket: "You're going to hear the facts...In Vienna, there hasn't been enough penicillin to go around. So a nice trade started here: stealing penicillin from the military hospitals, diluting it to make it go further, and selling it to patients...These were murders. Men with gangrene legs, women in childbirth, and there were children, too. They used some of this diluted penicillin against meningitis. The lucky children died. The unlucky ones went off their heads. You can see them now in the mental ward. That was the racket Harry Lime organized." Calloway explicitly frames what he tells Martins as "facts," grounds his account of the penicillin racket in terms of the scarcity of resources in postwar Vienna, and describes in detail the victims of Lime's diluted penicillin, "men with gangrene legs, women in childbirth," and children who as a result "went off their heads." Calloway even tells Martins that he can see the victims first hand at the "mental ward." Although throughout the film it is Martins who has been interviewing Lime's friends, Calloway is the one who places them in a specific context by showing how their association with Lime is related to crimes in postwar Vienna. When Calloway reveals the nature of their racket, the film's ethical purpose emerges because Martins is forced to weigh his friendship with Lime against his responsibility towards unknown victims in Vienna.

The film affirms the ultimate power of Calloway's "facts" in shaping both Martins's and, by extension, the audience's perception of Lime. After telling Martins about the purpose of Lime's racket, he shows Martins all the evidence linking Lime to the racket. Instead of having Calloway narrate again, the film emphasizes the visual power of the evidence to speak for itself by cutting to a montage of the fingerprints, bottles, and handwriting samples that Calloway shows Martins. The film uses an extreme close-up of Martins's eye through a magnifying glass and a close-up of his face that registers his expression to show how the evidence alters his perception of Lime. Unlike filmmakers, most prominently Sergei Eisenstein, who theorized that montage produces metaphoric meaning for the viewer beyond what is actually shown, Reed's use of montage underscores the objectivity and the tangibility of the evidence that Calloway holds before Martins. Immediately following the montage, the film cuts to Martins to show the effectiveness of the evidence in convincing him of Lime's guilt: Martins reacts, "How could he have done it?" The quickness of Martins's realization that Calloway is right and the medium close up of his dismayed expression indicate that the audience should also believe that Lime is guilty. Although Martins drives the events forward with his desire to find out what happened to his friend, it is Calloway's evidence that determines the interpretation of these events, revealing Kurtz, Pompesco, and Winkler's complicity in Lime's scam.

After Lime reveals he is alive, Calloway becomes the moral voice of the film when he convinces Martins to help the police capture Lime. Calloway takes Martins to the children's hospital to see for himself the victims of Lime's racket. The scene begins with Calloway narrating to Martins, "This is the biggest children's hospital in Vienna. All the kinds in here are the result of Lime's penicillin racket." Again, Calloway shapes Martins's actions by showing

him the tangible results of Lime's diluted penicillin. The film itself adopts Calloway's condemnation of Lime by cutting to a long shot of rows of hospital cribs containing all the children Lime has injured and to a medium shot of Martins's distressed face as he looks in the cribs. Significantly, the film never shows actual images of the children but focuses on Martins's expression: if Martins reveals the limits of his role as the sympathetic center of the film, spectators are encouraged to reflect on the ways in which they were wrong about Lime and are encouraged to adopt his realization of the gravity of Lime's crimes. The scene ends with a shot of a teddy bear laid face down next to a crib: the bear's symbolism as a corpse and the way the close up captures its texture add a concreteness to the off-screen children while not sensationalizing their condition.

British Film in Postwar Europe

The collaborative narrative that Martins and Calloway end up creating becomes for the film a fantasy about the British role in postwar Europe. The documentary at the beginning of the film describes how Vienna is divided into four zones controlled by the British, French, Americans, and Russians. But the Vienna that the film portrays appears governed solely by the British and the Russians: Martins's investigations take place in the British zone; Lime hides out in the Russian zone; and Anna obtains a counterfeit passport in order to avoid being extradited into the Russian zone. Although the film creates a fantasy of British military might by making the British the most prominent power in Vienna, the British military presence is ultimately subservient to and only a figurative extension of cultural power. Calloway may be a military detective, but his purpose in the film is not so much enforcing law and order in Vienna as

culturally “re-educating” the Austrians. When Calloway sends soldiers to search Anna’s flat, they are there to gather facts about Lime, not to enforce a technicality and send Anna back to the Russian zone. And in the end, when Calloway, Martins, and Calloway’s men storm the sewers in search of Lime, it is to capture someone who has, in essence, “gone native” by adopting the immorality and disregard for human life of the Austrians. Lime’s death and Calloway’s ability to convince Martins to turn against his friend serve as a morality tale that advocates specific values for an “immoral” Vienna.

Newspapers and magazines that review *The Third Man* emphasize the film’s documentary role in exposing “Vienna” and reflect the way the British were thinking about their relation to continental Europe in the postwar. In the *S. Chronicle* (April 9, 1949), journalist Paul Dehn writes, “How fearfully, throughout the picture, he [Reed] has caught contemporary Vienna’s air of a gaiety not faded but dead and already putrescent. How masterfully has he conjured from the rubble that mixed unspeakable stench of damp and dry rot.”⁸ Although Dehn describes the film as “conjuring” a spectacle with a particular atmosphere, he assumes that the film merely throws into relief the reality of Vienna’s “putrescence” and “damp and dry rot.” Dehn imagines director Reed as the “masterful” magician who can turn the rubble of Vienna into art that is both entertaining and informative for British audiences. Newspapers, in fact, fascinated by the shooting abroad, followed the production of the film. The *Yorkshire Evening News*, for example, covered the London Film Studio crews’ encounter with the Russians, who attempted to prevent film shooting in their zone. For journalists, the production of the film on location became important encounters with contemporary political events. In an extensive *Illustrated* article (April 15, 1950), Will Fischauer takes the assumptions Dehn has about the

film's relation to reality even further by reading *The Third Man* as a documentary that "exposes" the "real" criminals living in the Viennese sewers: "There is evil beneath the streets of the city. Hiding in sewers, hunted men live in a world without night or day... The sewers are the playground of criminals exactly of the type played by Orson Welles, the Harry Lime of *The Third Man*." For Fischauer, the film has a direct correspondence to reality in Vienna, and his article illustrates the "real-life" melodrama against "evil" with photos of police chases in the sewers, close ups of informers, and policemen wading in "swift-running, slimy water"—images that mirror scenes in *The Third Man*. Moreover, Fischauer's exposé resonates with the film's attitude about the British presence in Vienna: "However brave and efficient the admirable Vienna sewer police may be, the cruel racket of the sewer criminals cannot be checked until the Powers above make peace, and politics are again conducted in the light of the day." Fischauer's words implicitly compare Vienna as a whole to the underworld in the sewers and argue that it is up to the Allied Powers to bring "light" to Vienna and help it rid itself of criminality. No matter how "brave and efficient" and "admirable" the Austrian police may be, they yet need the enlightenment of the Allies.

Although the film deals with postwar problems in Vienna and imagines a British re-education of the city, it is ultimately aimed at Anglo-American audiences. The film leaves the dialogue of Austrians, such as Anna's crazed landlady, untranslated in order to highlight the foreignness and confusion of the city from the perspective of Martins; its close ups of Austrians lurking in the shadows distance them from the viewer; and Reed's voice-over narration in the opening "documentary" explains Vienna to British and American audiences unfamiliar with what is happening on the continent. Thus, in spite of rave reviews in British and American

newspapers, some Austrian papers deplored the film's representation of their city.⁹ In the *Continental Daily Mail* article "Vienna Doesn't Rave over the 'Harry Lime Theme,'" Hubert Harrison sums up the film's mixed reception. He points out that while the film rightly disproves the idea that Vienna is a romantic city "remote from reality and free from sordidness of the present day," it "is equally true that the 'Third Man' shows only one side of Vienna even in 1945 and, by its unbroken sordidness, does tend somewhat to injure the pride of quite a large section of the people of Vienna—who are justly proud of the way in which the ruins of war have been cleared up and the cesspool of iniquity produced by the Occupation and war drained and cleaned up." Harrison's words reveal that the Austrians were very much aware of the image of themselves that the film would export and worried about the film's effect on the city's public image and tourism industry. In the communist paper *Der Abend*, editor Bruno Frei describes the city as one "in which more than a million workers earn their living in hard but honest toil" and attacks Greene as "notorious for his utter trash and who, in collaboration with Carol Reed, went wild at the expense of this defenceless city." Although in a sensationalist way, Frei presents Greene and Reed as villains who maliciously libel the Viennese, his words shed light on the complexity of the Austrians' position both as collaborators in the horrors of World War II and as citizens trying to survive in its aftermath. Not surprisingly, the Viennese found objectionable the images of the city that depict crime as the status quo. Instead of allowing the audience to sympathize with the Viennese and imagine how they might transform their own city and come to terms with their criminality, the film's distancing of the Austrians serve to assert authority over the occupied city by defining its citizens wholesale.

In its turn to culturally “re-educating” the Austrians, the film specifically chooses to turn to the novel in response to larger debates on the fate of British cinema in the 1940s. Journalists, producers, and directors in postwar Britain anxiously debated the problems surrounding the British film industry. In an article in the *Illustrated London* (Nov. 19, 1949), Paul Holt writes, “Three years ago British films were sturdily earning, foot for foot, more than the best Hollywood could bring to British screens. There was a boom on. The heady quality of their success swung high the hearts of the men who make our films and the men who make money from our films. What went wrong?” Holt points out that two thirds of directors in Britain were out of a job, studios were idle, and the BBC was buying up these abandoned studios for television. He argues that because the film industry had stopped being innovative, the British public went back to wanting the same formulaic entertainment that the Americans never stopped providing and were always better at producing. Other journalists go beyond diagnosing these problems and propose solutions for the stagnancy of the film industry: C. A. Le Jeune, London correspondent for the *New York Times*, claims that the problem is the “persistent belief that it was possible for us to make films for a world market, particularly for an American market.” Le Jeune argues that instead of spending large sums of money, which, unlike Hollywood, British production companies cannot afford, British cinema should develop its own unique filmmaking system. As the journalist writes in the *Daily Express*, it needs to “express the British point of view.” In contrast with Le Jeune’s assessment, however, the British *Palestine Post* published an article that argued that the problem with postwar films was that they were too national, with “little appeal to cinema-goers either in America or in Europe. Their spirit, in short, has been parochial. This, more than financial extravagance or artistic mediocrity explains their failure.” This journalist, of

course, writing from British Palestine and an imperial perspective, had a stake in arguing that British media ought to appeal to a broad audience and praises Reed for making a film with “European significance.”¹⁰

Part of the debate on what British cinema should look like is the question of what material and medium it should draw from. A *Birmingham Post* article published Dec. 20, 1948 cites Reed and Greene’s *The Fallen Idol* as an example of success that shows that British cinema “thrives best on British material.” The journalist argues that producers are finally “discovering that our own rough island story is worth the telling and that such films as ‘The Ideal Husband,’ with its Wildean wit and Victorian opulence, and ‘Holiday Camp,’ with its homely humour and accent on the commonplace, may contribute an acceptable recreative quota to the six million people who pass weekly through British cinemas.” Although Wildean adaptations hardly qualify as “rough island” stories, the article makes an important point that tales of “homely humour” and the “commonplace” are more authentic to British culture than attempts to imitate Hollywood. The *Birmingham Post* article alludes to the quota quickies, poor quality films made simply to fill the quota as established by the 1927 Cinematograph Films Act, and implicitly claims that making inexpensive adaptations or films about everyday life is a better way to stimulate the British film industry than having studios make cheap films simply to fill a quota. Reed himself participated in this debate on British film: in an interview with the *Kinematograph Weekly* (March 17, 1949), he discusses how the story and thematic material are more important to him than “technique.” It is not surprising, then, that *The Third Man* starts from Greene’s story and makes the novel an important subject matter. By redefining the British novel, *The Third Man* is simultaneously defining what material should be used as inspiration or for adaptation in film.

The Third Man's turn to a new kind of realist novel as source on which to model itself reflects a desire to make the cinema part of a new inclusive idea of "culture." Hollywood since the 1920s had established its dominance in the film industry with its "narrative conventions, identifiable *genres*, the standards of production and design and...the levels of technical reproduction necessary to capture and hold on to a large popular audience" (Davies 110). But, in the 1930s, John Grierson and the GPO Documentary Unit created a documentary tradition that made British cinema known for its realism. Michael Balcom of the Ealing Studios in 1944 explicitly contrasted British realism with American "tinsel" (112). Implicit in his defense of British cinema is the idea that British cinema could authentically treat the everyday lives of actual citizens while Hollywood promoted escapism. *The Third Man*'s incorporation of both realism and the thriller plot reflects a recognition of realism as part of the British filmic tradition. But its layering of Martins's brash investigation with Calloway's factuality and interpretation of events proclaims that British film can be both entertaining and educational. The film rejects the "tinsel" in Holly Martins, whose name even calls to mind Hollywood, but embraces the popular appeal that he stands for. The thriller narrative (in contrast with modernism and "high culture") allows for the kind of suspense and action that would appeal to a broad audience. At the same time, the film claims that entertainment must serve a purpose. *The Third Man*'s rootedness in the actual conditions of postwar Vienna and prescriptive ending are a claim that "low culture" forms can—in contrast with American escapism—create awareness of social conditions and treat serious, ethical questions.

Greene's collaboration with filmmakers on *The Third Man* reflects the way in which writers of the 1930s and 1940s often turned to other media as public modes of political

engagement. The film ambitiously looks to popular forms and the nation's realist tradition to carve a space for British culture in the postwar. *The Third Man's* turn to fiction and its self-reflexive interest in film as a medium also raise questions about what the dominant medium of the second half of the twentieth century would be. While Greene's story uses the combination of Calloway's and Martins's narratives to affirm the importance of realism as an educative form, the film itself goes further by appropriating fiction in order to revitalize British cinema. *The Third Man's* incorporation and revision of fictional forms seem to propose that film replace fiction as the dominant medium of British culture. The way the film is very much about the cinema itself raises questions about what a film-centered British culture of the postwar would look like: Can British documentary realism, in fact, appeal to a wide, international audience? Can it even appeal to and speak for the different regions of Britain? And can the values that the British cinema promotes be translated to a universal audience?

¹ In other texts, however, Greene expresses a frustration with the collaborative nature of working in film. In "The Novelist and the Cinema," he protests that "irony can be turned into sentiment by some romantic boob of an actor. No, it is better to sell it outright and not connive any further than you have to at a massacre... a writer should not be employed by anyone but himself. If you are using words in one craft, it is impossible not to corrupt them in another medium under direction... This is the side of my association with films that I most regret and would most like to avoid in future if taxation allows me to" (Falk 5). For Greene, the most important aspect of cinema is its representation of actuality rather than its collaborative model of work.

² In his book, Drazin also looks extensively at the role of American producer David O. Selznick, with whom Korda and Reed frequently corresponded. In fact, it was Selznick who “felt that it was a great pity that at the end of the story Rollo and the girl Anna should finish together; we should go from the cemetery scene to Anna going away by herself” (Drazin 23). Despite Selznick’s contributions, Korda, Reed, and Greene saw him as “much of a nuisance” (Drazin 24). Greene remarked later in an interview, “We didn’t accept any of his ideas. The trouble was that in the terms of his contract with Korda he was to supply Alida Valli and Joseph Cotten and he had the right of discussion within six weeks before shooting” (qtd. in Drazin 24). The British Film Institute’s London Film Productions archives actually contains a letter by Morris Helprin, Korda’s American representation, who recalls “what a bastard” Selznick was and claims that he was so afraid that Selznick would attempt to make a sequel for *The Third Man* on his own that he “registered at the Title Registration Bureau of the Motion Picture Association the titles in the name of London Films: The First Man, The Second Man, The Fourth Man, The Fifth Man, and so on to the Tenth Man.”

³ The idea of setting a film in a European city in the postwar began with Alexander Korda. Korda originally wanted a comedy and asked Reed and Greene over for dinner to brainstorm ideas. Greene gave Korda the seed of an idea he had written on an envelope: “I had paid my last farewell to Harry a week ago, when his coffin was lowered into the frozen February ground, so that it was with incredulity that I saw him pass by, without a sign of recognition, among a host of strangers in the Strand.” Greene went to Vienna to research the occupation system, the night clubs, and the Josefstadt Theatre. Greene wrote his initial “Third Man” story in Italy and three months later, returned to Vienna with Reed, with whom had already worked with for the film *The Fallen Idol*, to survey the city for the screenplay. Anticipating the complaints the Viennese newspapers would have about the film’s representation of the city, Greene and Reed witnessed that during that time, the city was already rebuilding itself and much of the ruins Greene first saw were gone (Falk 74-5).

⁴ Greene describes the novelist, “he watches, he overhears, he seeks motives and analyses character, and in his attempt to serve literature, he is unscrupulous.”

⁵ Kennet Allot and Miriam Farris’s 1951 study argues that Greene’s entertainments were distinct because of their static characters, sensational use of setting, and use of coincidence for melodramatic effect (Diemert 7). Other studies have contrasted the action-driven plot of “entertainments” with the “novels” treatment of ethical dilemmas and religion (Diemert 8).

⁶ In *Graham Greene: A Literary Life*, Sinyard also argues, “As important as Conrad to Greene was Henry James...Jame’s fascination with and insights into lost innocence and European corruption undoubtedly found an echo in Greene: one can find his imaginative variations on the theme of the American ‘innocent’ abroad in works like *The Third Man* and *The Quiet American*” (26). And although Greene ultimately rejected modernism, he was in awe of T. S. Eliot and used his work as epigraphs for the novel *The Name of Action* and his introduction to Tom Laughton’s *Pavilions by the Sea* (Sinyard 27).

⁷ Because Anna's ambiguity about her feelings for Lime and the unhappy ending, where Anna walks away without a glance at Martins, many of the reviews on the film attempted to make sense of the unsettling love triangle. In a humorous way, the *News Review* (Sept. 8, 1949) discusses *The Third Man*'s unconventional ending and the complexity of the film's representation of romantic relationships in terms of British film at large: "The love interest, as happens far too often in commercial movies turned out in Britain, is halting and distant, like a difficult flirtation at a vicarage tea party. Generally speaking, British films seem to have only two approaches to screen love. One is brash and brassy, the other is diffident and even reluctant, with everything nicely frustrated. The ending of this one [*The Third Man*] is a choice example of the second school." In the communist *Daily Worker* (Sept. 3, 1949), Honor Arundel reads serious social implications into Anna's love for Lime and the audience's possible sympathy towards her: "But even more dangerous, to my mind, are the ideas implicit in the story: the idea that love and friendship are more important than social morals."

⁸ The *Bolton Evening News* (Sept. 10, 1949) also equates the film's representation of Vienna and its citizens with reality: "The greatest impression the film leaves is of the bitterness and callousness of the people in the occupied city." The article claims that because so many of the actors are Austrian, "this gives the film a reality which is not often found when one country makes a film about another." The reviewer of the *West London Observer* (Nov. 26, 1948) writes, too, "I am glad to hear that Carol Reed's current production, 'The Third Man,' at present being made on location in Vienna, is about life as it is lived to-day in this uncertain post-war world." These reviewers' words reflect the way in which they saw the film as a documentary with a direct correspondence to reality. For them, the film enlightened audiences about the postwar situation abroad.

⁹ British reviews for *The Third Man* were for the most part enthusiastic, and newspapers devoted pages to the film's zither music. Anton Karas's zither theme for the film, in fact, became a hit in Britain, and audiences were fascinated by the fact that Reed had by chance found him at a garden party in Austria. Reviewers who disliked *The Third Man* tend to deride Reed's "technicality" and the "trickiness" of the camerawork, in particular his use of canting. The *Weekly Scotsman* describes Reed as a "craftsman" rather than an artist: "I do not see how he can advance farther along the road taken by 'The Third Man.' He must realize that a certain sterility attaches to the repetition of technical brilliance. He has all the power of craftsmanship necessary to make such a film as 'Intolerance' or 'The Grapes of Wrath'... With a film of real size and significance, he might launch a revival which would bring back pride and prosperity to the British cinema."

¹⁰ Journalists not only praised *The Third Man* for its appeal to continental Europe and America but they also saw it as "the only *shining* example of Anglo-American co-operation" (*Express* Sept. 2, 1949). This *Express* article praises the film as an international effort because of its American and English producers and actors, but interestingly enough, it concludes that "it is essentially a director's film; and Mr. Reed does us proud." Other reviews looked at the internationalism of *The Third Man* in terms of its use of genres. The *Surrey Court* (Oct. 8, 1949) calls the film "cosmopolitanism incarnate" because of its combination of "the feeling for the common man so typical of the French cinema, the fast action of an American thriller, the realism and humour of the British semi-documentary feature and the urgency of an Italian film."

AFTERWORD

My study aims to map the different cross-media explorations of what England meant in the 1930s and 1940s. Rather than attempting to trace a narrative of change from Virginia Woolf's late modernism to Graham Greene's postwar work, I see their writing as shedding light on a particular moment in British history. *The Years*, *The Heat of the Day*, *The Third Man*, and *Night Mail* form an important node in a period when writers were searching for new ways of expressing their political engagement. Woolf, Bowen, Greene, and Auden looked to visual and aural media to shed light on what Englishness meant and to imagine what the nation would look like in a post-imperial future.

The texts I examine raise questions about the relationship between the nation and communalism. Woolf's *The Years* imagines the nation as formed by individuals connected to each other by their sensory contributions to the whole. Rather than being interested in the state as an entity defined by borders or laws, Woolf imagines England as a nation formed by the proximity of individuals with shared sensory experiences. Implicit in her description of Colonel Pargiter's interactions with his daughters, Woolf rejects hierarchal relationships and patriarchal power—for Woolf, always tied to political atrocities, such as imperialism and fascism—and instead advocates egalitarian relationships where individuals participate in creating what the nation looks like. However, *The Years* raises questions about how in actuality the senses can lead to community. Rather than seeing participation as a course of action, Woolf uses the novel as a space to imagine the effects of media and the bodily sensorium.

Bowen's *The Heat of the Day*, while published after World War II, deals explicitly with the war. Although it provides a vivid account of the hardships of civilian experience during the Blitz and is set during the war, it is also strikingly forward-looking and expresses anxieties about what Britain would become. My dissertation includes Bowen's novel because while experimental in its own right, it occupies a space outside both modernism and postwar realist writing. Moreover, it addresses the question of the nation in terms of the state's power over citizens. In *The Heat of the Day*, Bowen is suspicious of both the state and collective emotionality. In the novel, the state appropriates private lives in service of the public. For Bowen, seemingly private acts become acts of espionage, and group thinking simply replicates the dictates of the state. The novel rejects this version of the nation and reveals the need for a different kind of relationship between the state and its citizens. Evident in its portrayal of Roderick's attitude towards Mount Morris, the property he has inherited, the novel presents the younger generation's need to participate in the making of England's future without being controlled by the authority of the state or weighed down by the burdens of the older generation.

The film *Night Mail*, like Woolf's *The Years*, thinks of Britain in terms of communal wholeness. In his verse voice-over, Auden, like Woolf, imagines a reverberation between individuals to create community. But for Auden, speech is what ties individuals to each other and assimilates the machine into the communal whole. Although *Night Mail* was produced as an advertisement for the Post Office, it does not simply imagine the nation as a conglomeration of state institutions. Instead, it looks at the nation in terms of its citizens. And, unlike Woolf, who focuses on the effect of the senses, Auden makes labor the source of communal feeling. In its representation of postal workers loading the mail and sorting it on the train, *Night Mail* privileges

the toil of the working class and the solidarity that laborers form through their communication with each other. But, in its portrayal of those receiving the mail, the film also suggests that through work, individuals in all regions and classes of Britain can also become part of this communal ethos. *Night Mail* expands the notion of labor: instead of being a class identity, labor becomes a source of agency for individuals in order to form communal feeling.

Greene's story and the film *The Third Man* stand in contrast with Bowen's suspicion of the state: they see the state as playing a positive, educative role. Greene conceptualizes England in terms of its relationships with other nations and claims that England's cultural authority lies in its incorporation of "low culture" and an educative, documentary realism. Unlike Hollywood, which can only entertain, British culture as defined by Greene can both appeal to the masses and stimulate intellectual thought. The film's attitude towards the state is revelatory of the goals of the postwar welfare state, in which institutions made culture a right of all citizens. But instead of reinforcing the literary canon and modernism in particular as "good" culture, Greene sought to redefine and revitalize the novel through popular genres, and the film itself points to the cinema as the dominant, educative medium of the postwar.

The texts I examine respond in different ways to the threat of war and England's post-imperial status. This cross section of writers of different aesthetic tendencies is intended to provide a spectrum of a variety of responses to the question of the nation in the 1930s and 1940s. Their imaginative versions of England pose a central question for writers in the second half of the century: what versions of the nation are viable for a postwar welfare state as Britain continues to redefine its relationship to both its citizens and other nations?

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