PSYCHOGEOGRAPHIC OTHERWORLDS

PSYCHOGEOGRAPHIC OTHERWORLDS: EXPERIENCING ENGLISHNESS WITH ALAN MOORE AND IAIN SINCLAIR

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LAY ABSTRACT

This dissertation studies Alan Moore's and Iain Sinclair's use of psychogeography to examine the city of London. Psychogeography is an implosive, fragmented writing style that estranges the meaning of the urban everyday. Subject to psychogeographic depiction, London becomes a city altogether foreign, if not to say fantastical. I argue that psychogeography is both a strategy of political resistance and a visceral experience – one that could influence common ways of reading English history and culture (i.e. 'Englishness.')

ABSTRACT

This thesis concerns the practice of 'psychogeography' in London, England, and the ways in which psychogeographic writings provoke in city-dwellers an acute sense of disorientation, as though the everyday were otherworldly. My study is intended as a response to Guy Debord's claim that 'psychogeography' investigates "the precise laws […] of the geographical environment" on "the emotions and behaviour of individuals" (Debord qtd. in Coverley 88): any revolutionary enterprise must point to the future, the very notion of which can only be imprecise and un-empirical – psychogeography is not necessarily an exception. I argue that for Alan Moore and Iain Sinclair, the psychogeographic imperative is rather to imagine the implosion of Londonscape as it is well known, since only spatial structures that thus unravel may offer mystical insights that are, as yet, unspoiled by neoliberal/Thatcherite politics and the accompanying ambition to re-vamp English history in a nostalgic light. This study presents psychogeography not simply as a strategy of political resistance but as a visceral and metaphysical experience; it draws upon SF theories of worlding and the philosophical notion of *Dasein* to address some concerns that have arisen in post-imperial Britain, such as the desire to define English identity, i.e., 'Englishness.'

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Psychogeography: Historical, Philosophical, and Literary Significance 1-47

Chapter 1: The Disintegration of England in Alan Moore's psychogeography 48-112

Chapter 2: Moore's and Sinclair's London Vision: Similarities and Differences 113-145

Chapter 3: Iain Sinclair: Traveler, Psychogeographer, Visionary, and Mystic 146-232

Conclusion: Psychogeography beyond Situationism 233-244

Works Cited 245-258

Introduction

Psychogeography: Historical, Philosophical, and Literary Significance

No postulation seems more facile than that the word 'psychogeography' refers to the bond between the psyche and geography, being and the world; yet postulations of this kind would seem more meaningful if one were to concede that to write psychogeography is to defamiliarize the world, so much so that a world imagined 'psychogeographically' must appear otherworldly. While psychogeography is the subjective reinvention of material space and of the history therein embedded, a psychogeographic otherworld is immaterial, unfamiliar and, in this vein, utopian: for psychogeography has three facets, namely, being, time, and the world; a coalescence of the three gives rise to a utopian vision that inspires in one the urge to write psychogeography. Psychogeography in the written form conveys to us, the readers, striking utopian visions that are in fact diegetic tapestries whereupon being, time, and space bear incongruous relations. Of course, being, time, and space have always been perceived as related insomuch as place – often a cultural site – determines one's origin and history. Psychogeography severs these otherwise familiar relations, however, to estrange our sense of the everyday alongside our "ideological safety net" (Moylan's phrase 23), which, for Maurice Blanchot, connotes "bureaucracy, government, parties" (Blanchot qtd. in Sheringham 17).

This dissertation examines Alan Moore's and Iain Sinclair's psychogeographic Londons which, in virtue of appearing palimpsestic, can disassemble popular patriotic narratives about English culture, in particular. These psychogeographic visions constitute some sort of mystical counterpoint to the hyper-rationalism that has justified neoliberal

politics in Great Britain since the nineteen-eighties. As such, psychogeographic mysticism is not a mythological narrative but a way of questioning the 'reasonable' supposition among Britons that the Welfare State had incurred over-spending and so crippled the economy. Mysticism is therefore the *questioning* lens that psychogeographers put on the free market economic model, whereby most things – including basic rights and social mores – are seen as commodities whose value the market can determine. Moore and Sinclair, as psychogeographers, seek to mystify neoliberal reason, namely, the doctrine that any act of intervention with the free market would be an act of un-freedom and therefore a form of social restriction, and that anyone should have the freedom to pursue and maximize her profits – at the expense of others if need be. Moore's and Sinclair's respective branch of psychogeography is political, albeit mystical, for each purposes to ridicule the extreme individualism that marks the apogee of neoliberal freedom as Margaret Thatcher would have it.

Psychogeography is all the more subversive because it is an aesthetic, that is, an abstract, immaterial thing to which neoliberalism assigns no value. Indeed it is the abstract and the mystical that makes the envisioning of psychogeographic otherworlds – i.e., utopias devoid of material, neoliberal elements – possible: abstractions are foregrounded in this study of psychogeography (and in the first half of this Introduction) because they constitute, I think, a political counterpoint or a utopian alternative to neoliberalism. Such utopian visions need be conveyed in fantastical terms because they are not vivid prophecies of the future; they are merely contingent visions of the lived reality – ones without any neoliberal element, for better or for worse. Psychogeographic otherworlds are indistinct visions that materialize in the absence of what is known (as

oppressive); as such, their literary representations are unrefined, abstract, mystical, and yet striking. Because the utopian critique inherent in psychogeography arises from negation, that is, the absence of the known (i.e., of neoliberalism), the vagueness of psychogeography, too, can claim political relevance.

To put it somewhat generally, Sinclair's and Moore's psychogeographic otherworlds are utopias that grant superiority to something other than money and the hardworking individual. It is this utopianistic privileging of the something else – the anything but – that makes the meaning of psychogeography imprecise. This something else – this gap in representation, this blank – is in fact the material form of utopia, which Sinclair and Moore try so painstakingly to depict, psychogeographically. The psychogeographical works of the two are futile speculations about the true form of an absent, utopic London. Nevertheless, such speculations are as much futile as necessary, for they amount to a process of trial and error that pertain to utopia. Sinclair and Moore both try to describe otherworldly Londons of which they gain fleeting glimpses; in so doing, both experience an acute disorientation which manifests itself in their works and which, in this way, affects the readers. Thus, psychogeography is remarkable for what could be called the visceral effects that it passes from writer to reader: psychogeography, as a mode of writing, fosters an affective bond between writer and reader.

Broadly speaking, psychogeographic writings are set in fast-disintegrating cities whose dwellers are invariably disoriented – the psychogeographer no less so than any other. The psychogeographer chooses to relay this experience, however, and should he do so in writing, the words he writes must cause the reader to feel similarly disoriented. This dissertation advances the view that Moore and Sinclair write psychogeography in London

– the paragon of English culture and heritage – to make it implode, such that being-English-in-London is necessarily an otherworldly experience. This dissertation concerns Moore's and Sinclair's psychogeography but this Introductory Chapter only the general history of psychogeography – specifically, its lineage to *flânerie*, situationism, surrealism, and the philosophical notion of *Dasein*.

Psychogeography, Generally Considered

Let us begin with Merlin Coverley's definition of psychogeography as "a mental map," where the narrative attempts to construct a subjectivity within a place and time. Psychogeography is not, however, about unified subjectivity; it is concerned with the efforts of being/becoming in a dis-unified time, and the consequent transformation of the geographical landscape into many otherworlds. "Psychogeography," says Merlin Coverley, literally refers to "the point at which psychology and geography collide, a means of exploring the behavioral impact of urban place" (10). Psychogeography is the event of the collision, recounted after the fact. To recall this encounter between psychology and geography is to compose "a mental map" (Coverley's expression 15), thereby to practice psychogeography. Psychogeography in this most literal sense is not unlike a narrative with a narcissistic first person narrator, who assumes that the milieu exists through him for no other purpose than his own validation, and who gives 'geography' the prefix 'psycho-' in a fit of possessiveness. For if we are to imagine 'psychogeography' as a map, a cartographic representation of a thought, we must first assume that only a thinking subject bonded to the world – that is, the Cartesian *cogito* that perceives and thinks the world, *a being-in-the-world* – could practice psychogeography. Literal considerations of psychogeography necessarily rest on the

premise that geography does not possess any distinguishing quality independently of the *cogito*, that the 'I' has long since projected its intents and purposes onto the land. In this literal sense, the psychogeographer is the author of geography, if not to say a divine being who could impart meaning to the world at will.

But even one who understands psychogeography so literally would ask, *who* first thought psychogeography into existence, and to what end? According to Coverley, Guy Debord first introduced psychogeography as "a tool in an attempt to transform urban life, first for aesthetic purposes but later for increasingly political ends" (10). Aesthetics and politics became opposed supposedly when the psychogeographer attained maturity – to the effect that psychogeography seems to reflect a rite of passage. Yet a compelling story of growth psychogeography is not; rather, as Coverley argues, it is "the meeting point of a number of ideas and traditions with interwoven histories" (11). Assertions of this kind would warrant a recalibration of the link between psychology and geography, or being and the spatio-temporal dimension known as 'the world.'

Assuming that all temporal movements are possible only in space, and that these movements constitute – give meaning to – space, I will first explain psychogeography in relation to time.[1] From a so-called psychological perspective, psychogeography is a temporal paradox. Psychogeographic time is diachronic in that it witnesses the growth, the becoming, of an 'I,' but synchronic in that this 'I' is 'I' as well as another, thus a composite being made up of 'interwoven histories.' 'Psychogeography' does not therefore concern only the geographical world but also the transformation of 'I,' which in

[1] Assumptions of this sort would appear less ungrounded in light of Edmund Husserl's claim that it is through time that the *cogito* grasps the idea of space. According to Husserl, time is an "Idea," a Thing "capable in respect of its spatial relations of infinitely various changes of shape, and, where the configuration or change of configuration remains identically constant, of infinitely various changes of position; it is "movable" in infinitum. We grasp the "Idea" of space and the Ideas which it includes" (314).

turn would have an impact on visions of the world, that is, on 'worlding,' which I will explain later in the *Dasein* section. As this dissertation will show, the psychogeographer entertains the most incoherent of thoughts and often seems disconnected from the milieu. A divided psychogeographic consciousness is not so much narcissistic as it is obsessed with the idea of a unified subjectivity: the psychogeographer traverses space-time in order to situate himself in the world (though often without success); he writes about these journeys in order to articulate his relation to the world and, in this vein, discover his narrative voice – the 'I' which he is not altogether sure he has.

But what this dissertation will also demonstrate is that psychogeography is a vain endeavor to achieve a unified *cogito*, i.e., to repair a disintegrated world so as to devise a meaningful worldview. To make this attempt, the psychogeographer could only trust that the land exists to serve his interests, and that psychogeography attests to the transformation of 'I' into another, in time. In other words, psychogeography reflects that 'I' will become another in time: this I will maintain throughout the dissertation, and in iteration of Coverley's view that psychogeography gives one the *means* to transform the city into something else. 'Psychogeography' I will define as a thing devoid of meaning in itself. It is a tool, an 'in-order-to' for an 'I' that exists without a determinate purpose, 'I' being a divided consciousness, a composite entity.

Something as yet unaddressed in Coverley's description of psychogeography, i.e., its shift in emphasis from aesthetics to politics, begs the question: is politics a natural substitute for aesthetics? Thus aesthetics and politics have presented themselves in this discussion as a crossroad in face of which we must take a step back and delve into the history of psychogeography.

The Situationist Movement

This section summarizes Modernist precursors to the psychogeographical tradition: surrealism, situationism, and Dadaism. Coverley notes that Debord's intervention attempted to shift from representations of play and excess – illustrated by the flâneur – to empirical observations of the urban environment – typified by the *dérive* and later elaborated by urban theorists such as Henri Lefebvre. The former concept was said to support artistic and aesthetic practices whereas the latter scientific and political goals, yet both prioritized seeking truths that can be intuited *a priori* for the purpose of liberating being from the control of the capital-generating apparatus that is the city. Since scientific and political goals could not be separated from artistic and aesthetic practices, Debord's empirical intervention could not in any way prove *flânerie* futile or irrelevant.

Psychogeography was the offspring of the situationist movement, which, too, was always divided between aesthetics and politics. On the literary front, situationist writers submitted themselves to the influence of surrealism as well as "earlier traditions of urban exploration" (Coverley 82) such as *flânerie* – which I will not discuss until the next section. For now I will only explain Debord's objection to the "playful practices of the Dadaists" (Coverley 88), which offered subversive readings of not just any geographical environment but of the city, specifically, by "continuing an ongoing process of mergers and splits in a bizarre parody of corporate institutions to whose overthrow they were dedicated" (Coveryley 88). Debord felt that these parodies of corporate institutions were lacking a specific political purpose, since they never presented any "data from which *serious scientific research* could progress"; their playfulness even seemed to be an indication of insufficient "theoretical rigo[r]" (Coverley; italics in the original 88). The

early urban explorers' "whimsical excesses" (Coverley's expression 88) Debord tried to "remed[y]" when he published *A Critique of Urban Geography* in September 1955 to announce the situationist movement's political turn: he asked that psychogeographers only "investigate" (Devord's word, qtd. in Coverley 89) "the precise laws and specific effects of the geographical environment, consciously organized or not, on the emotions and behaviour of individuals" (Debord qtd. in Coverley 88). Debord defined "geography" as that which "deals with the determinant action of general natural forces, such as soil composition or climatic conditions, on the economic structures of a society, and thus on the corresponding conception that such a society can have on the world" (Debord qtd. in Coverley 88). *Psycho*geography does not "contradict the materialist perspective of conditioning of life and thought by objective nature" but only emphasizes that nature is integral to society and, by extension, the world: since society is nature in a civilized form and the world is an aggregate of societies, the rules of nature should hold sway in any society, any part of the world.

Debord saw psychogeography as a scientific inquiry into the city's affective influence on city-dwellers, one predicated on geography, an empirical field of study. He meant to continue in the Dadaist project of "overthrowing" urban corporatism but only with more pragmatic caution. Nevertheless, psychogeographic re-envisionings of the commercial city will not be any less creative, since even the empirical – i.e. that which is – affects everyone differently, and could be represented in many different ways; that being so, all such urban re-envisionings must be described in terms that "retain a rather pleasing vagueness" (Debord qtd. in Coverley 88, 89), and, for Debord, no adjective has more of this quality than "psychogeographical." In fact, it is this "pleasing vagueness"

that empowers psychogeography against the commercial city which, as Henri Lefebvre argues in *The Production of Space* (1991), sees the power of state distributed among "various aspects of social practice – legislation, culture, knowledge, education," and so the city as a whole is "an accumulation of capital," the source of the state's oppressive power (see Lefebvre 280, 281). In other words: free-market capitalism corrodes social structures in the city that are the geographical markers of social unity and welfare, though a semblance of order has been projected onto this corrosion to conceal it from urbanites as they go about their day-to-day lives. The order in question is panoptic, and the city itself is a panopticon that regulates every movement and every (consumerist) desire for the generation of further capital (as I will explain later with reference to de Certeau). In this sense, urban-living is an exercise in conformity towards which psychogeographers feel ambivalent, while psychogeography is a rejection of the capitalist economic model/order that the city represents.

The view that psychogeography is a scientific attempt to develop an effective method of resistance, namely that of the *dérive*, is uniquely Debord's. The *dérive* forces psychogeographers not only to be dimly aware of the city's "psychogeographical effects," but to respond actively with a display of "playful-constructive behaviour" (Debord's phrases qtd. in Coverley 96) in the city. The culmination of empirical reason (so to speak), the *dérive* is an objectively effective weapon against state power in the city; it is supposed to benefit everyone the city oppresses – *quite unlike flânerie*, which, as Debord is anxious to add, originated in "the classical [by which he means 'dated'] notions of the journey and the stroll" (Debord qtd. in Coverley 96). These "classical" notions Debord denounces as a cluster of aesthetic ideals envisioned through the whims

of a few – indeed the "sort of game [that] is obviously only a mediocre beginning in comparison to the complete construction of architecture and urbanism [i.e. psychogeography and the *dérive*] that will someday be within the power of everyone" (Debord qtd. in Coverley 91). He goes on to say that psychogeography should not be an ideal "subordinat[ed] to randomness," but rather the empirical understanding of a "complete insubordination to habitual influences" (Debord qtd. in Coverley 91). 'Classical' psychogeography was said to be subordinated to "randomness" for its lack of a clear purpose: such assertions imply that only as a scientific endeavor could psychogeography be purposeful – not "random" but "complete," "habitual," in other words helpful to "everyone," *universal* (Debord qtd. in Coverley 91). That is also to say, psychogeography discovers its purpose only when it becomes a science pertaining to truth *a priori* while exposing the 'falseness' of the city as a state apparatus.

This triumph of empirical reason over artistic impulses not only makes the politicization of psychogeography an imperative but also celebrates humankind's success in perfecting reason. It is a stated fact that Debord privileges politics over aesthetics because he sees it as an effort to uncover truths about urban spaces: he assumes – rather conveniently – that politics appeals to some universal reason which could repudiate the state's unreasonable practice of monitoring the city. Assumptions of this sort would hold only if one could establish as fact that politics lends itself to empirical deductions whereas the arts do not. In the next section, I will demonstrate that the 'science' of psychogeography also resorts to aesthetic or literary means to resist the city-state; it *does* rely on the technique of estrangement, which has its roots in Russian formalism, for instance. Any kind of politics grounded on *im*pure reason – the kind not known *a priori* –

is not truly opposed to the arts; conversely, any form of art devoted to the discovery of truths (even if in less methodical or more 'random' a fashion) would dovetail with politics as an empirical conception. The empirical and the literary are not therefore divided, as it has hitherto been supposed.

Empiricism and the *Flâneur* Question

This section explores in more detail the figure of the *flâneur* (Walter Benjamin uses Charles Baudelaire as his exemplar), who is the precursor to the psychogeographer. This *quasi*-psychogeographer narrates or mediates the constructions of the city he observes: he is the focal point for the creation of the psychogeographical narrative and we shall see that he can take on many guises – that of the urban visionary included. Trusting that the city's appeal is not only commercial, the *flâneur* seeks to intuit the city in its true form. The *flâneur*'s distrust of what is evident is one that the empiricist shares; despite their avowed differences, the empiricist and the *flâneur* both prioritize the experience of being in the city and, as a consequence, the *cogito*, i.e., the 'I think.'

To understand the notion of empirical psychogeography, further consideration must be given to the "classical notions" to which Debord refers, and to the *flâneur* whom he so distrusts. The *flâneur*, as Coverley explains, is "a composite figure – vagrant, detective, explorer, dandy and stroller – yet, within these many and often contradictory roles, his pre-dominant characteristic is the way in which he makes the street his home and this is the basis of his legacy to psychogeography... soon the *mental* traveller, immortalised by Blake, was to make a comeback..." (65; my italics): William Blake, Daniel Defoe, Thomas DeQuincey, Charles Baudelaire, Arthur Rimbaud, Walt Whitman, and Walter Benjamin were some forbearers of psychogeography who formed striking

mental impressions of the city wherein they wandered (see Coverley 11-20). Benjamin himself describes the *flâneur* as a writer who, on entering the market space, "look[s] around as if in a panorama" (Benjamin 66) to gather "a store of information" (Benjamin 67). Such information can be compiled into a "panoramic literature" (Benjamin's expression 66) of sorts. Now, of course, any empiricist would decry information gathered in this fashion as impressionistic, consequently un-empirical – ironically enough, some early *flâneurs did* consider themselves empirically inclined. *Flânerie*, says Benjamin, "went back to the physiognomists of the eighteenth century" whose claim to empiricism went in tatters when they "assured people that everyone could – unencumbered by any factual knowledge – make out the profession, character, background, and lifestyle of passers-by [in the city]" (70).

The premise of universal objectivity, thus imposed on 'everyone,' finally made failed empiricists of these *flâneurs*. Be that as it may, some *flâneurs* remained committed to the so-called empirical cause. Counted amongst them was Charles Baudelaire, who saw empiricism as his defense against "the daily shocks and conflicts of civilization [the microcosm of which would be the city of course]" because he was convinced that "the dangers of the forest and the prairie" would pale in comparison to those of the city (Baudelaire qtd. in Benjamin 71). The compact space of the city "intensif[ied]" the "struggle for survival," says Baudelaire, brought out the worst in human nature and caused individuals "to make an imperious proclamation of [their] interests" (Benjamin 71). Baudelaire only trusted *flâneurs* to have acumen enough to detect the "conspirator[s]" in the crowd – to reason and "play detective" (Benjamin's expression 72) amid the madness of the city; for this reason, Baudelaire would call *flânerie* an

exercise in reason as Debord would psychogeography. The *flâneur*'s problem lies with his assumption that he could observe the city from within and still judge it impassively: why is he alone impervious to the city's compromising influences, and how is it that he could study the crowd (of which he is a part) with intellectual detachment and in this manner distinguish crooks from innocent citizens?

By way of elaboration, I will only add that psychogeography is not any less reliant on the cerebral power of a few than *flânerie*: even Debord's revolution would require the initiation of those *especially* attuned to the city's psychological effects, for Debord, too, had supposed that these keen observations alone were worthy of the body of science dedicated to "the complete [re-]construction of architecture and urbanism" (Debord qtd. in Coverley 91). What are these observations if not idiosyncratic perceptions expressed in a language of reason, purposed to expose some urban practices as unreasonable? Each group makes its judgment the basis of a science, an empirically 'correct' way of thinking, and in this way both groups are emphatically individualistic. This privileging of the 'I' compels us to re-consider the *cogito* and its relation to the city: thus, the section to follow will suggest that psychogeography does not merely disclose the inviability of free capitalism; rather, it gives voice to confused yet undeniably subversive thoughts, or to alternative visions of the city that are 'pleasingly vague.' In this vein, I will suggest that the psychogeographic consciousness is one divorced from the milieu or at least any common experience thereof.

Aesthetics and Subjectivity; 'Literariness' and Surrealism

In what follows, I will review the tradition of Surrealism and its connections to psychogeography. André Breton's rejection of Hegelian dialectics provided an aesthetic

form for political resistance that is also reflected in psychogeography. Surrealism celebrates fleeting and incoherent impressions of the city – the expression of the many voices within the individual – whereas psychogeography all the voices in the collective that reject urban capitalism. Despite this significant difference, the two schools are equally committed to defamiliarizing controlled perceptions of the city.

Who, then, is the psychogeographer, the 'I' in the framework of psychogeography? Let us assume for the moment that 'I,' the *cogito*, is defined by the content of its thought, that thought consists of both reason and the artistic whims (those of the Dadaists for example) that Debord denigrates. For those more artistically inclined, traveling or the mere act of walking is a mental feat so "contrary to the spirit of the modern city" that it necessarily presents "political opposition to authority" (Coverley 12). Yet the amount of *mental* effort these artistic pursuits require would likely strike Debord as self-indulgent, excessive – would not a mental traveler like Baudelaire, who was a *flâneur*, solipsistically withdraw into himself and thus reject the reality of state oppression? Coverley himself raises a similar objection when he observes that in literature, "the rigorous and scientific approach of the situationists will be offset by the playful and subjective methods of the surrealists" (11). A statement like this juxtaposes politics with aesthetics in such a way that Debord's psychogeography emerges as the more "rigorous" strategy of resistance, i.e., one that is not a mental exercise waylaid by individual whims even as it claims to engage in the all-serious affair of a *collective* resistant movement.

Within this debate, the word 'collectivity' seems to evoke a universal perception of reality, if not objectivity per se. Should such 'reality' turn oppressive, the purpose of

resistance would become clear to everyone. This privileging of a common, tangible reality the surrealist André Breton cannot help but find oppressive. The favoring of the "waking state," says he in the *Manifestos of Surrealism*, is "a phenomenon of interference [on the part of the state]" (Breton 12), a "harsh discipline of the mind" for which Hegel was "primarily responsible" (Breton 181). Breton lays much of the blame on Hegel, whose dialectical method he understands to mean negation, and negation to mean careless dismissal.[2] Breton elaborates:

> [I]t seems impossible to me to assign any limitations – economic limitations, for instance – to the exercise of a thought finally made tractable to negation, and to the negation of negation. How can one accept the fact that the dialectical method can only be validly applied to the solution of social problems? (140)

Common understanding or 'sense,' apropos economics for example, induces the mind to falsely negate a part of its awareness as a logical contradiction, so that a full cogitation of the world becomes impossible. Breton judges any kind of reason derived from the dialectical method or, relatedly, negation to be lackluster, since reason of this order offers nothing better than a relative truth founded on exclusion, which therefore "exists only slightly, as in a comparison" (Breton 37).

To rectify what is purportedly Hegel's mistake, Breton introduces surrealism as the discovery of a new sense, or a "particular light" having sprung "from the fortuitous juxtaposition of the two terms" (Breton 37). Writing is a rational exercise, but unmediated writing – 'automatic writing' – is at once rational and irrational. Surrealists and automatic writers alike are privy to a superior, *transcendental* truth because they

[2] What Breton does not address is that for Hegel, dialecticism is a "concrete and active process of positive negation" (94), such that "negation" is not quite synonymous with "rejection." According to Michael Inwood, the word *aufhebt* is derived from *aufheben*, and is "used pregnantly by Hegel to mean both 'cancel', 'annul', and 'preserve', 'fix in mind', 'idealize'" (93). The most common rendering of *aufheben* "is 'sublate', coined from the irregular past participle, sublatus, of the Latin verb tollere, which has a similar ambiguity (' raise up, elevate' and 'uproot, destroy')" (Inwood in Hegel 193).

alone are able to rule as possible *any* "association of ideas" (Breton 37); they alone write to imitate "everything" in the workings of the mind (Breton 39). One may argue that the splendor of this same truth has inspired Sinclair and other like-minded psychogeographers to write 'automatically' – that is, to put together "such a welter of seemingly unrelated elements […] and yet, amongst this *mélange* of ideas, events and identities, a number of predominant characteristics can be recognised" (Coverley 12). The idea of seeing differently by means of making strange associations cannot be fully considered until later in the dissertation, where we will avail ourselves of the relevant examples. In the meantime, we must ascertain whether or not surrealism as an aesthetic conception differs from psychogeography as an empirical movement.

Surrealism is a fragmented expression of which automatic writing is an example, while surreality is the subject of surrealist depiction. Surreality is "everything" seen from the vantage point, and as such it would include even that which has no place in common sense, or in the capital-generating apparatus that is the city (as mentioned earlier with reference to Lefebvre). All dualities and contradictions collapse into a unified whole, that is, a new reality capable of provoking a new awareness, which surrealism then makes manifest. Breton maintains that surrealism and empiricism are not fundamentally opposed in that both struggle against controlled perceptions of the city or the world. Unified in the cause of "human liberation" (Breton's expression 172), both search for an authentic dimension of reality that antecedes the state's conception of the urban everyday. What Debord finds objectionable is strictly Breton's conception of this force of authenticity as the hopeful "resolution of these two states, dream and reality, which are seemingly so contradictory, into a kind of absolute reality [free from 'all temporal

constraints'; see Breton 15], a *surreality,* if one may so speak" (Breton 14). Breton hopes to overcome the unwanted alienation of the self through surrealism; Debord hopes to achieve the same but only through psychogeography. Here it would be helpful to recall an earlier section on the *flâneur* question, which ended on the note that Debord desires to help city-dwellers forestall any attempt to manipulate their bodies through empirical means. For Debord, psychogeography is a collective endeavor to reject the mundane everyday of the city; every member of the collective engages with the urban milieu to resist capitalism, the cause of the city's mundaneness. It is through validating the private experiences which define the urban crowd – or *through the positing of multiple I's* – that Debord ventures to defy the state apparatus that is the city.

Debord's 'empirical' argument assumes that the urban 'I,' a being-in-the-city, wishes to reclaim its subjectivity concomitantly with its experience and thought from the capitalist milieu. This 'I' must reject any identity the city gives it; 'I' must remember Rimbaud's "*Je est un autre*" and acknowledge, in this vein, that 'I' is another, i.e., a being whose thought is influenced but never dictated by the surrounding world. 'I' is another because 'I,' having recovered the capacity to think, must defamiliarize everything that lies in plain sight. Evidently, defamiliarization is the goal not only of empiricists, but of the 'artistic types' they dismiss as well.

Literariness of the Empirical

The discussion of the thinking 'I' – the Cartesian *cogito* – is contextualized by means of Fredric Jameson's work on Viktor Shlovsky's concept of defamiliarization and the Russian formalist notion of literariness. If aesthetics and empiricism are linked in psychogeography, and if literariness causes estrangement, then the psychogeographer

must tune into the processes of thinking and becoming while relaying his urban experience. In view of the otherworldly, I is necessarily another: this sentiment underlies both artistic and empirical methods of resistance, lending both intellectual rigor.

Let it not be denied at this point that both politics and aesthetics are exercises in thinking, albeit that the former has been branded 'empirical' whereas the latter 'mental,' heuristic, sometimes 'literary.' The ability to think motivates 'I' to pursue psychogeography by alienating what should be self-evident. Whether such pursuits are empirical or artistic in nature – or both – very much depends on the thinker, who, out of habit, may explain the workings of his mind in terms of the one or the other. But in either case, defamiliarization is key: it bears mentioning here that the Russian formalists were among the first to broach the subject of defamiliarization, their cardinal principle being that the familiar should be re-construed in non-visual terms. Victor Shklovsky has famously likened a vision to an image, which confines and so conditions the imagination: to "thin[k] in images" is to think with an "economy of mental effort" (Shklovsky 5). Art is the ideal remedy for any lazy reliance on available visions in that it is a technique to "make objects 'unfamiliar' by increasing the difficulty and length of perception": "the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged. *Art is a way of experiencing the artfulness of an object; the object is not important*" (Shklovsky 12; italics in the original). In Russian formalist parlance, 'artfulness' is 'literariness' (Erlich 171). The literariness (*literaturnost*) of literature – or the truthful quality of the city, rendered artistically – is "neither the only pertinent aspect of literature, nor merely one of its components, but a strategic property informing and permeating the entire work, the principle of dynamic integration […]" (Erlich 198). Literariness is the defining quality of

literature which, upon identification, makes literature a unified concept, something distinct to the mind.

Shklovsky thus asserts that art, while unempirical, could yet be an instrument serving the purpose of truth. I mention defamiliarization here because I wish to show that psychogeography needs not be restricted to Debord's original definition, and that empiricism and surrealism need not be mutually exclusive. Empiricists, too, could think in artistic (i.e. non-empirical) directions: a conjoining of the literary and the empirical has given rise to speculative fiction, for instance. As Darko Suvin argues, SF is distinguished for its introduction of a "new set of norms," framed as it is by "the attitude of estrangement" originally developed by Shklovsky and later adopted by Bertolt Brecht (Suvin 6). According to Suvin, cognitive estrangement is a "measure of aesthetic quality" (Suvin 15) in SF – and possibly in psychogeographic writings, too. In psychogeography, however, the faltering voice of a first person narrator is enough to effect cognitive estrangement and to create the suspicion that 'I is another,' and so 'I' is an omniscience of sorts which, in this instance, is solely responsible for envisioning alternative universes or what I will call 'psychogeographic otherworlds.'

But I should like to point out further commonalities between Breton's surrealism and Debord's empiricism before speaking of psychogeographic estrangement. Transposed to surrealism, literariness becomes that which conjoins the empirical and the unconscious. Breton, for one, associates the mundane everyday with the empirical because he believes that an overreliance on physical senses have forced tangible and intangible realities apart.[3] In surreality, consequently, what is tangible in conscious reality

[3] In Breton's worn words: surrealist writing "attempt[s] to liberate once and for all the imagination by the 'long, immense, reasoned derangement of the senses,' and all the rest" (175).

does not alienate but rather dovetails with the intangible and oneiric.[4] When consciousness and the unconscious cease to appear dichotomous, reality will be revealed in full as surreality. Surrealism and so-called empirical psychogeography only present two ways of defamiliarizing the urban milieu for the sake of fostering a new awareness, namely, the awareness that the self is another.[5] Debord criticizes 'aesthetes' for depending on their 'mental' prowess rather than reason; but if art is a technique, it must possess sufficient intellectual rigor – which Debord accuses art of not possessing – to qualify as a rational conception. Intellectual rigor arises from thought, the *cogito*, the positing of an 'I.' The Cartesian maxim "I think; therefore I *am*" already intimates that all acts of thinking entail the positing of an 'I.'

Psychogeography – be it political or literary – *is* a tool, an in-order-to; as such, it is our means to explore some questions regarding the meaning of the *cogito*: who is 'I,' for instance, and why does this 'I' think and cogitate its surroundings as it does? The second question emerges in the event of the convergence of psychology and geography, while further engendering a third question: if I think as I do because of where I am, then where am I? Insofar as psychogeography serves this defamiliarizing purpose, it inevitably causes 'I' to disbelieve what is visible, plainly evident; in the same vein, it would encourage city-dwellers to reimagine the city. Inevitably as well, psychogeography raises

[4] Breton argues that the unconscious inheres in the oneiric, which the state-controlled milieu has forced city-dwellers to renounce. If we are to be ourselves in the city, we must make a "dizzying descent into ourselves, the systematic illumination of hidden places and the progressive way of other places, the perpetual excursion into the midst of forbidden territory, and that there is no real danger of its activities coming to an end …" (Breton 137).

[5] City-dwellers who partake in psychogeography are supposed to be so disoriented that they must ask who, and where, they are: such a question is literary in the way Shklovsky means it, since according to Shklovsky, what is literary estranges familiar things to "lea[d] us away from their 'recognition'" (Shklovsky 19). Incidentally, Victor Erlich has always maintained that a connection exists between Russian formalism and urbanism. The "'urbanism' of the Futurist poets," says he, justifies a "revolution in poetic vocabulary," and the introduction of "new and unorthodox word-combinations (Erlich 195).

the metaphysical question of 'being-where' – or, as Paul Ricœur puts it in response to Heidegger, "Who is being-there?" (91) This overview of psychogeography's history furnishes us with the metaphysical framework of 'being-where,' obliging us to consider the various modes/ways of being in psychogeography.

Dasein and Psychogeography

Specifically, I will consider the location of the psychogeographer in place – or, how Martin Heidegger's concept of *Dasein* (being-there, or presence) might define the psychogeographer's relationship to the city. Broadly speaking, psychogeography concerns the unresolvable tension between two facets of being, namely, the external and the internal – or, what is plainly there, and what is sensed but inexpressible. This tension may well be described as aporetic, the meaning of which I will explain with reference to Jacques Derrida's and Paul Ricœur's respective work. Psychogeography is an aporetic condition wherein syntheses seem as impossible as any prospect of advancement in thought or in time. Psychogeography often causes the reader to feel the immobility of time, the discontinuity of space, and the consequent disruption in thought – which would mean that 'I' is no longer a unified conception. In a word, psychogeography achieves defamiliarization by transporting us, readers of psychogeography, into a world of uncertainty, where subjectivity itself is rendered a foreign experience – something to be experienced in the future. In this sense, the psychogeographic 'I,' the psychogeographer, is necessarily another.

What is being-there or *Dasein*? Heidegger says in *Being and Time* that "*Dasein* [there-being] always defines itself in terms of a possibility which it *is*, and that means at the same time that it somehow understands itself in its being" (43; italics in original).

Dasein is the antinomy of being, i.e., being defined with regard to the external world but to an internal understanding of the world no less. Psychogeography concerns this very same antinomy in that a psychogeographer is an intuitive being who is there-in-the-world. As regards the external, a being that declares its existence a possibility in the world must at the same time concede to the existence of other possibilities. Being, as such, must extend and relate itself to a world external to itself.[6] This relation between being and the world we can call the 'there-ness' of being – an example of which, in view of our discussion, is Debord's empiricism. For Debord, the 'there-ness' of being would manifest itself as the shared city space wherein a psychogeographer is related to others. *All* psychogeographers enact and deposit their understandings of the external world *there* in the city. As regards the internal, *Dasein* is being's understanding of itself in itself, that is, an innate awareness of being existent known as 'sense' or 'self-reflexivity.' One might say for instance: "I sense, intuit, or divine that I exist; therefore I am." This sense could be given the name of the oneiric or that of literariness.

Psychogeography lends itself to the dialectical tension between politics/the external, and aesthetics/the internal, because it is much too preoccupied with the question of *Dasein* or 'being-where.' If the question of *Dasein* is implicit in any psychogeographical endeavor, psychogeography should be understood to share in *Dasein's* aporetic and hermeneutical nature. Psychogeography is aporetic in that it oscillates between politics and aesthetics – or, the conditions of the world which delimit the possibilities of being, and the instinctive certainty with which a being's existence is

[6] Derrida, as well, has weighed in on the meaning of *Dasein*: "*Dasein* or the mortal is not man, the human subject, but it is that in terms of which the humanity of man must be rethought" (35). *Dasein*, then, is the need to reject what is already known.

posited. The word 'psycho-geography' does not then signify a synthesis of thesis and antithesis, but rather an aporia, that is:

> the difficult or the impracticable, here the impossible, passage, the refused, denied, or prohibited passage, indeed the nonpassage, which can in fact be something else, the event of a coming or a future advent [*événement de venue ou d'avenir*], which no longer has the form of the movement that consists in passing, traversing, or transiting. (Derrida 8)

Derrida envisions the movement of time as a chain of causality, which would expand so long as conflicts are synthesized. All such synthetic movements are guided by reason – which, having matured in time, should not fail to discover a midway between opposing thoughts, though they may initially appear as a crossroad, an either/or.

Aporia, however, is an insurmountable obstacle, a crossroad that thwarts the advancement of reason and logical causality – for instance a succession of events that would indicate temporal passage. Unable to negotiate a way forward in the face of aporia, reason must resort to negation: Debord did so precisely when he adopted an empirical approach to counteract the whimsical excesses of the 'aesthetes' among the psychogeographers. Breton, too, chose to embrace negation in exploring surreality, and in so doing he rejected empiricism for its lack of imagination. Interestingly, both Debord and Breton reject urban planning for validating only capitalist experiences of the city, though neither could explain what it truly means to be-in-the-city. Explanations are promised but never offered by either thinker: while Debord calls for an empirical study in search of such explanations, Breton merely contends that the city-dweller (being-in-the-city) is an inexplicable conception concealed in the unconscious. The aporetic condition emerges when concrete explanations and synthetic reason alike are dispensed with, while negation is deemed formidable enough a reaction against any of the city-state's confident,

dogmatic assertions. The word 'psycho-geography' – being and geography, the external and the internal – reflects the opposing facets of *Dasein*, forcing *Dasein* to acknowledge, in turn, the aporetic situation wherein it finds itself and so to resort to negation.

For Derrida, however, nothing is truer than negation since the "future advent" cannot be posited in virtue of being beyond experience and articulation. Thus the meaning of urban reality must be left unclear after it is defamiliarized, defamiliarization being the rejection of any meaning that seems clear and 'obvious.' This description of aporia "does not fortuitously resemble that of negative theology… The affirmation that announced itself through a negative form was therefore the necessity of *experience* itself, the experience of aporia (and these two words that tell of the passage and the nonpassage are thereby coupled in an aporetic fashion) as endurance or as passion, as interminable resistance or remainder" (Derrida 19). Inasmuch as psychogeography is aporetic, it is an impossible attempt to experience the unspeakable – say, a future that has yet to arrive – sometimes internally as an enduring passion, other times externally as an empirical method of resistance.

The experience of what is not yet experienced, psychogeography is *eo ipso* speculative: every work of psychogeography intimates the myriad possibilities of the future to compel its readers to intuit the future, provoking in them all the while a sense of urgent anticipation which sometimes can strike a mystical cord.[7] This pseudo-religious streak in psychogeography is one among the many possibilities originating in *Dasein*'s speculations of the future advent, while all such speculations and possibilities bring to

[7] According to Heidegger, *Dasein* is the possibility of being, an ontological possibility as such. Ontology, however, can never be fully grasped by being which is 'ontic'; thus, *Dasein* does not, or rather cannot, "express its what – as in the case of table, house, tree – but rather being [Sein]" (42). The ontological part of *Dasein* can never be expressed, though it must be intimated in any pondering of being which is ontic.

light the connection between *Dasein* and hermeneutics. This dissertation is grounded on the idea that psychogeography is hermeneutical – or that psychogeography is "the [very] work of interpretation," to borrow from Heidegger himself (35). A hermeneutical conception of the world would suggest that being *is* in the world, that "[a]s being-in-the-world, *Dasein* has always already discovered a 'world.' We characterize this discovering, which is founded in the worldliness of the world, as the freeing of beings for a totality of relevance" (Heidegger 107). Being possesses the freedom to claim the world as its own provided that it cogitates and discovers the world. This claim of ownership is an admission of being-in-the-world, or of being in relation to external things: *Dasein* is free to discover ways of being-in-the-world such as "being with others, useful things at hand, care, etc." (Heidegger 118); but, free only in this sense, *Dasein* is necessarily thrown into the world wherein it *is in media res*.

Ricœur further explains, "Essentially in this [the hermeneutics of *Dasein*], that all interpretation places the interpreter in medias res and never at the beginning nor at the end. We happen upon a conversation which has already begun and in which we try to orient ourselves in order to make our own contribution to it. But the ideal of an intuitive foundation is that of an interpretation which, at a certain moment, would become a total vision" (91). What then would it mean to say that psychogeography is hermeneutical? Whatever form it may assume, psychogeography is the means to defamiliarize the world wherein one has always been, such that psychogeography is always practiced *in media res*. This turn to hermeneutics in our consideration of psychogeography's history is by no means arbitrary, seeing as hermeneutics, too, can serve the purpose of defamiliarization. I appealed to Russian formalism earlier to argue for literature's intellectual rigor, and now

I will do so by recalling Ricœur's definition of hermeneutics:

> … what we call literature – namely, narrative fiction, drama, poetry – seems to abolish all reference to everyday reality, to the point that language glorifies itself at the expense of the referential function of ordinary discourse. But it is precisely in the measure to which the discourse of fiction 'suspends' this referential function of the first degree that it frees a reference of the second degree, in which the world is no longer manifested as an ensemble of manipulatable objects, but as the horizon of our life and our project, in short as a *Lebenswelt*, as being-in-the-world. (93)

'Artistic whims' such as those Debord criticizes all connect in a hermeneutical web of references, a system of unstable relations to impart meaning to being-in-the-world. Heidegger, on the one hand, hypostatizes that being is the subject of the world because it engages with the whim and thoughts of other beings, while ascertaining the ways in which things in the world may prove useful to itself. Ricœur, on the other hand, returns the agency to the world wherein being *is* because everything external to being conditions being's cogitation of the world. For Ricœur, consequently, being-in-the-world also means belonging-to-the-world.

If we persist in thinking that psychogeography is hermeneutical, the very word 'psychogeography' should signify a fickle subjectivity, and 'psycho-' should cease to be a modifying prefix to the word 'geography.' Psychogeography is rather our means to imagine an 'I' when no 'I' can be posited – not, at least, as the source of a coherent, unifying reason. Psychogeography is a way to think, perhaps a feeble attempt to posit an 'I,' a being-in-the-world; here referred to as 'defamiliarization,' this way of thinking is also known as 'estrangement' or the alienation effect. Psychogeography is the *cogito*'s proclivity for seeing the world as otherworldly while dismantling any fully formed conception of 'being-in-the-world.' To be-in-the-world is to withhold from positing an 'I' and instead raise the question of 'being-where,' i.e., 'why I am what I am,' or 'why I act

as I do.'

The relation between being and the world, the internal and the external, is never what it is said to be; it is never fully grasped in thought or coherently described. Psychogeography is a thought infinitely extended through a compulsion to defamiliarize; in this regard, it is an instrument without a definite purpose. In the same vein, psychogeography gives the impression that 'I' is perpetually another while the world is always otherworldly. Psychogeography divides the consciousness (the 'I'), disrupts linear time and shows space to be discontinuous, so that the world can no longer be imagined as a unified whole.

Being-in-London: Why London?

A theoretical framework so broadly devised should apply to world cities other than London, yet psychogeography and London remain inextricably connected. I will therefore explore psychogeography's use of London as the site for urban exploration. Many psychogeographers have used London as the place to work out the meaning of 'being-in-the-world' or 'being-in-place,' such that to practice psychogeography is to allow space to write being into existence, albeit in markedly ambivalent terms. Most psychogeographers reject prescribed experiences of being-in-London, which invariably reaffirm some tenets of neoliberalism. With reference to the works of Stuart Hall and Tom Moylan, I will define neoliberalism as an overzealous pursuit of reason that systemizes and justifies the exploitation of the urban poor. Defiantly irrational, psychogeography forces us to imagine London as fractal, and English identity as a notion riddled with contradictions: this I will argue by engaging with the works of urban theorists such as Julian Wolfreys, Michel de Certeau, Edward Soja, and Christina

Ferguson.

While Charles Baudelaire, in some ways the archetypal *flâneur*, roamed the streets of Paris, the *flâneurs* mentioned earlier (when it was observed that psychogeography had its roots in *flânerie*) all had London connections of some kind: Defoe, Blake, and DeQuincey are, to this day, some of the most celebrated London writers; the French poet Rimbaud had lived in London; the German philosopher Benjamin wrote about London, comparing it to other cities like Paris in *The Arcades Project*.[8] Coverley himself pays much attention to the "Sinclair-Ackroyd axis" around which "most London writing, psychogeographic or otherwise, appears to rotate" (Coverley 26). London and psychogeography appear to have an affinity for each other despite Benjamin's misgivings about the city, whose "overcrowded thoroughfares" – he thinks – could only restrict "the aimless movement of the *flâneur*" (Benjamin qtd. in Coverley 63).[9]

For Julian Wolfreys, however, a city as overcrowded as London would rather complement Benjamin's ideal of a city – a "constellation that accedes to consciousness as [a] legible, transformative image" (Benjamin qtd. in Wolfreys 127); London is certainly "fluid" enough to support the psychogeographic goal of "resis[ting] ontology, and thus affir[ming] its alterity, its multiplicities, its excesses, its heterogeneities" (Wolfreys 4). Ontology, according to Wolfreys, prescribes definite meaning: the Thames would be an example of an ontological representation if it were considered London's defining feature

[8] Each of the three London (travel) writers pondered about the city of London and its labyrinthine streets. To offer some examples: Blake recalls the city of London in *Songs of Innocence and Experience* (1794), Defoe in *The True and Genuine Account of the Life and Actions of the Late Jonathan Wild* (1725), and DeQuincey in *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* (1821).

[9] Benjamin says in *The Arcades Project* that a commercialized city such as London reduces the *flâneur* to "little more than a cog in the machine," that the flâneur will be "caught up by the commercial forces that will eventually destroy him" (Benjamin qtd. in Coverley 64).

(see Wolfreys 14). Wolfreys seems to understand "ontology" in terms of Husserlian idealism: Edmund Husserl understands "formal ontology (which includes both logic and mathematics)" to mean "the pure form of what object-hood is, and material ontologies which cover the various regions of being, specifically – material being, psychic being and the realm of spirit or culture. The latter two regions are dependent on the realm of material being" (Husserl, Loc 703). In other words, ontology in the Husserlian sense is pure essence, namely, that which unites the material and the psychic, the cultural (the external) and the spiritual (the internal). Husserl devotes himself to the study of ontology because he believes that "[f]or two [*sic*] long, empiricist champions of the natural sciences have ignored the importance of essences" (Husserl, Loc 703).

But Ricœur has countered Husserlian idealism – this "ideal of scientificity" (Ricœur 88) – by advancing the study of hermeneutics:

> This ontological condition [as interpreted by Husserl] can be expressed as finitude. It is not, however, this concept that I would consider the foremost, for it designates in negative terms an entirely positive condition which would be better expressed by the concept of belonging-to […] This concept designates directly the indispensible condition of every enterprise of justification and foundation, namely that it is always preceded by a relationship which supports it. Are we saying a relationship to the object? Precisely not. What hermeneutics questions first, in Husserlian idealism, is that it has expressed its immense and unexceedable discovery of intentionality in terms of a conceptuality which weakens its scope, namely, in terms of the subject-object relationship. From this conceptuality proceeds the exigency of finding what makes the object's unity of meaning and of basing this unity in a constituting subjectivity. (Ricœur 88)

What Ricœur finds particularly objectionable is the Husserlian method of reduction, which assumes that subjectivity could be contextualized, 'framed,' and accordingly defined. Ricœur's hermeneutics is therefore a reaction against Husserlian ontology, which presumes that 'I' and all things in its surroundings could be reduced to some sort of spiritual essence. Within this debate then, the opposite of ontology would be

hermeneutics – or, the effort to interpret, in view of our previous discussion of *Dasein.* If hermeneutical representations are indeed fluid and impressionistic, psychogeography should most certainly be hermeneutical, and few modes of representation would capture London's "fluidity" quite as well as psychogeography.

Hermeneutics is the consequence of thought, while London, if conceived psychogeographically, may well be the realization of philosophy – Jean-Luc Nancy's philosophy of mapping, in particular. Philosophy is "the articulation of *logos*" – explains Wolfreys – while psychogeography is devoted to the study of the city, "the space of this [philosophical] articulation" (Wolfreys 19); or, in Nancy's words, "…the city, as gathering of the *logikoi*, is the subject of philosophy, where philosophy is the production of the common *logos*" (Nancy qtd. in Wolfreys 19). Words written about London convey "the process" one undergoes to be "translated by the city, so that, as being, our being-in-the-city serves as a singular map, a decentred guide that gives access in singular fashion to any future writing of the city" (Wolfreys 8). Wolfreys' analysis reaffirms much of the groundwork we have laid for the present study: the future as Wolfreys sees it is derived from the notion of being-in-the-city – in other words from cogitations of the city, as well as the decentering thereof. The philosophy of mapping offers a reading of the milieu posited to be negated, yet its purpose cannot be clear because it pertains to a future advent. Wolfreys also alludes to the hermeneutical aspect of London writing – which, he says, must begin *in media res*, since London itself has neither a beginning nor an end: "one can never get to the bottom of an abyss, particularly when the abyss is meaning or identity" (Wolferys 4).

Wolfreys' reading of psychogeography also privileges being and the *cogito* – the

consequence of which is that the author is often inclined to imagine London in terms of *logos* and philosophy. To be sure, any act of thinking must foreground the *cogito*, though it is not altogether clear in what shape one would find the *cogito* if its surroundings are entirely fluid. To put it as plainly as possible: how might being-in-a-fluid-city be distinguished from being-in-the-world? Could London be psychogeographically conceived as a continuous stretch of water when Debord always intended psychogeography to mean "situationalism," that is, the "debunk[ing] […] of the continuity of space" (Colombino 16)? It is with Lefebvre's assertion that a parallel exists between space and body in mind that I raise these questions (and the first one in particular). For Lefebvre, a body projects its sense of "symmetries and asymmetries" into the surrounding space (173) to establish the relation of 'being-in-the-world.' In psychogeography, however, the city is an abyss devoid of meaningful structures such as symmetries and asymmetries. What then defines being-in-London, thought, or *Dasein*?[10] To these questions this dissertation offers the following answer: London defies rational comprehension because it is not ontological; an anti-ontological London 'writes' being to ensure that being is never what it says it is. *Logos*, articulation, and philosophy all alienate – *negate* – being so that 'I' is fated to be another; thus, psychogeography renders 'I' a conception no less fragmented than *logos*, the *cogito*, or thought.

Is it possible for cities other than London to be psychogeographically conceived, since psychogeography is an instrument, that is, a means to re-invent any city that ontology threatens? Indeed there exist ontological – ideological – readings that threaten

[10] Lefebvre uses the body of a spider as an example: when weaving its webs, a spider projects its sense of "symmetries and asymmetries" and thus "extends" its body into the surrounding space (173, 174). Similarly, most human beings in Western cultures use words and signs to "facilitate metaphorization," "transport the physical body outside of itself" (203) to make a "representational space" (Lefebvre 203).

many a world city: the Thames invokes the notion of historical continuity in London; the Statue of Liberty in New York promotes the image of the U.S. as the Land of the Free; the Tokyo Tower symbolizes the dream of everyone in Japan (but those from the countryside in particular) to 'make it' in the megacity. The guiding principles of psychogeography, if expressed philosophically, may well extend beyond the context of London, and yet I will insist that only London can offer a framework for these discussions of psychogeography to come – for few cities have attracted as much 'psychogeographic attention' as London.

Having discussed the 'literariness' of psychogeography at such length, we must now preoccupy ourselves with its more empirical concerns. Common themes in British psychogeography include neoliberalism, the weariness with which American influence is received in the U.K., cultural protectionism, and, of course, nostalgia. Neoliberal beliefs are said to underlie many of the urban redevelopment schemes introduced in London at the end of the twentieth century, and so it would seem that the threat of ontology has presented itself to London in the form of neoliberalism.

In part due to Thatcher's indoctrination, Stuart Hall explains, the British public became especially fixated with notions of national harmony and "unity," or "the British way of life" (23), in the nineteen-eighties. Thatcherism saw the revival of a British traditionalism, which emphasized duty and responsibility to self and family, but self-interest and competitive individualism in relation to society at large (Hall 48). Thatcher was decidedly neoliberal. She "Americanized" Britain to make it a more competitive capitalist state. Locally, she "Los-Angelized" London, encouraging the practice of "private renting" on the one hand, the existence of gated communities on the other

(Colombino 62-4).[11] In the nineteen-eighties, the "great American passion for city planning" infected London so heavily that the city was "applied to the task of redrawing the map of our capital in straight lines" at the risk of being "banali[sed]" (Coverley 76). In brief, Thatcherite traditionalists were neoliberals who held dear individualistic economic principles that justify exploitations of the urban poor. Neoliberals were vehemently anti-welfare then (Colombino 62), and there is no indication now that they are any less inclined to sacrifice individual interests before national ones. It is assumed that the individual will thrive regardless of whether he remains competitive enough.[12] Indoctrination of this kind upheld for Thatcher a social order grounded upon an "authoritarian populism," which assumed that the masses chose to support a reactionary state (Hall 35, 42). Even those who were oppressed supported the neoliberal state (Hall 31) in a patriotic fervor.[13]

To cultivate this patriotism, Thatcher reminded Britons that they were the proud descendants of the Victorians. Thatcher even showed an "untimely" attachment to

[11] The liberal sentiment is that the "Los-Angelization" of any city exacerbates the problem of class segregation. Guy Baeton criticizes this liberal interpretation of the city as severely as the conservative one. Right-wingers certainly tend to encourage social segregation. They *are* very much given to the prejudice that the urban poor are slothful, and so must suffer for their moral failing. Since welfare is likely to exacerbate the poor's "dependency on the state" (109), it is regarded as a very poor corrective indeed. Yet left-wingers who caution against "Los-Angelization," too, are guilty – of a nineteenth-century socialist intellectualism. Their fear of "Los-Angelization" originated from an "anti-urban tradition in Western thought" (107), which has fostered stereotypical prejudices against the supposedly violent and crime-prone city.

[12] Edward Soja argues that neoliberalism *per se* is a simulacrum. Neoliberalism has simulated (if the word is taken to mean "to pretend to have what you do not have") myriad international crises—e.g. the Cold War, social unrest instigated by black criminals—in the course of modern history (346-7). Ready solutions (e.g. "images of economic recovery and job growth") (Soja 346-7) are then engineered to "solve" these problems, creating a perfect sense of causality, a perfect order otherwise known as a simulacrum.

[13] Bob Jessop, Kevin Bonnett, Simon Bromley and Tom Ling have jointly disputed Hall's reading of Thatcherism, which questions neither "the rule of the dominant classes," nor the structural underpinnings of the class system (115). These scholars call for a leftist counterpoint to Thatcherite parliamentalism more effective than Hall's, namely one that promotes a "legitimate representation of the people" (117).

Victorian society in the twentieth century: she "reserved" "entrepreneurial capitalism" for bourgeois men and the Victorian notion of domesticity for women (Hall 85). "Extreme social factions" (youths, immigrants, ethnic minorities) she condemned as disreputable, therefore un-British (Hall 70). In 1982, Thatcher took care to further Britain's imperial tradition in the Falklands. Thatcher was, in this sense, "advanc[ing] steadily towards the past" (Hall 70); she was re-modeling the nation into a synchronic Universe wherein present and past (Thatcherite and Victorian Britain) aligned, all for the sake of ensuring historical continuity. Her fiction *ipso facto* concerned Britain's inheritance of a Victorian greatness, from its progressivism to its imperial glory. Thatcher celebrated the British tradition of greatness while her successors have striven to turn this national greatness into the lucrative business of 'heritage,' which consists of BBC reproductions of some well-known Victorian classics, as well as TV shows like *Downton Abbey*, *Victoria*, and *The Crown.* Heritage has presented itself to Britain as an answer to the twinned threats of Americanization and global capitalism by encouraging the neoliberal ideals of cultural homogeneity and competitive individualism – which are also evident in the urban re-development strategies above.

Within this specific ideological framework, "heritage" is a seemingly cogent, self-congratulatory re-reading of British history which seems to find vindication in every street corner around London: while such representations of London and, concomitantly, English culture are gaining prominence, they are also unraveled in psychogeographic cultural productions. I will return to the subject of "heritage" later when examining the Moore's and Sinclair's works; yet I will clarify now that my intention is not to criticize heritage (i.e. cultural inheritance) in general, but only nostalgic, romanticized visions of

the (British) past. Psychogeography, in particular, questions presumptions about London and its history that seem too self-evident or rather too commonsensical, too easily justifiable – since Thatcherism has indeed rationalized oppression, and, in the same vein, transformed London into a rational totality, or a "neoliberal anti-utopia sustained by transnational capital" (Moylan's expression 184). In turn London has become the microcosmic representation of Thatcherite Britain, prioritizing a "competitive and hence exploitative exercise of power" (Moylan 185) over economic prosperity and employment. Dystopia, Moylan accordingly advises, is the more viable critical tool against this Thatcherite totality (186). Moylan here puts us in mind of dystopia because of its connotations of dereliction, sometimes of utter destruction; dystopia epitomizes a dialectical opposition to Thatcherism, which Moylan understands to be a draconian form of rationalism. Psychogeography is certainly not dystopian in Moylan's sense of the word, yet psychogeographic representations of Londonscape would nonetheless be shocking – that is, shockingly chaotic and discontinuous, impossible to rationalize. Much like utopian and dystopian writings, which encourage the envisioning of alternate universes, psychogeography:

1. foregrounds ostensible irrationalism *qua* private paranoia, corroding any appearance of social uniformity ('cultural harmony') from within;
2. ruptures spatial continuity and fractures the ego, the 'I' posited in the world. Spatial and subjective transformations are after all entwined, as Lefebvre has theorized;
3. inspires multiple interpretations of London and its history, c*ontra* official propaganda. According to Colombino, psychogeography transforms London,

> otherwise marked by "grim industrial wastelands and tower blocks," into the home of "eccentrics and bohemians," those considered "dynamo[s] for cultural ferment" (18).

The idea of fracturing the city alongside beings-in-the-city is not new, although it was neither always called 'psychogeography,' nor always examined with an eye to the common ground that politics and aesthetics could share: it was agreed at some point in the situationist debate that politics was a collective experience and that psychogeography, as a political weapon, must remain 'objectively relevant' and 'useful.' Aesthetics was cast off, if not to say vilified, for its 'subjectivity,' its privileging of the individual almost reminiscent of a neoliberal creed. To those who mount this familiar, by now rather well rehearsed criticism of art, I would like to pose this question: does either art in general or literature specifically *consistently* encourage competitions among individuals concomitantly with a 'winners-take-all' attitude?

Those who are trenchantly 'political' nonetheless refuse to tolerate any writer with 'quixotic' (Ferguson's word 49) tendencies: Christina Ferguson does precisely this in her appraisal of Sinclair's aestheticized psychogeography – which, according to Sinclair himself, is an "extraordinary projec[t]" intended to exorcise Thatcherite conservatism alongside "the darkest demons of world politics" it has summoned to Britain (Sinclair qtd. in Ferguson, 49). It would not be an exaggeration to say that Ferguson speaks of such 'idle' faith in the political power of literary aesthetics with utter contempt:

> This statement is astonishing for a number of reasons, not least of which for its stunning (and indeed, unintentionally hilarious) personification of the aesthetic as some kind of super-heroic anti-Thatcherist exorcist. Even if intended to be tongue in cheek, Sinclair's words would strain the patience of even the most Quixotic of

> writer-activists: Thatcher, or rather a demon temporarily possessing her, brought down by a coterie of London avant-garde poets and psychogeographical situationists? Really? How, one wonders, did this actually work? And why didn't it prove equally effective against New Labour? Should said group of London artists be dispatched to Washington or Riyadh? What we see here is an absurd exaggeration of the hermetic depersonalization of power often attributed to, but never in my experience so blatantly demonstrated in, New Historicist criticism. Sinclair suggests that even if power appears to reside in a centralized political figure, its real source is actually far more esoteric and indeed demonic; as such, it can only be resisted by an equally esoteric set of writing practices whose potency can be asserted without needing to be proven. In Sinclair's schema, the possessed politician and writer alike act as vehicles for an energy that works through, rather than originates in, their bodies. (49, 50)

In her tirade against Sinclair, Ferguson distinguishes politics from aesthetics in terms of good and evil, as is reflected in her superhero/villain analogy. She further suggests that Sinclair belongs to the *other* side that uses esotericism to justify political exclusion and marginalization of all sorts. This incriminating link between Sinclair and Thatcher is cited as one of the many reasons why Ferguson cannot tolerate the 'hermetic' in arts, or any psychogeographer-*cum*-writer's inclination towards solitude. To put it plainly, she cannot help but suspect anyone who sets himself apart from the collective. Oddly enough, Ferguson wraps up the paragraph by noting that all political energies originate in bod*ies*; that is to say, everybody is allowed some degree of quixotism even when exposed to the same political crisis – though, as Ferguson also suggests, no 'hermetic' reaction against oppression could be empirical enough to be revolutionary. Ferguson readily agrees with Debord's assessment of the situationist movement. Unlike Debord, however, she does not care to explain how the quixotic artist and the empiricist are related, or how the different energies emanating from the bodies will amalgamate to create one "effective" (i.e. empirical) method to, ultimately, "bring down" Thatcher. She only adds that writer-activists would be better served if they refrain from engaging in frivolous word-play (as

Sinclair and Moore do) and instead write for the purpose of creating a direct impact on the current political climate. Literature, she says, would be a far more "effective" political weapon if writers heed the advice of "some Marxist and feminist thinkers" and "locat[e] power […] in specific institutions" (Ferguson 48).

It is true that Debord's psychogeography has Marxist implications, but even Debord is careful to underscore psychogeography's "pleasing vagueness." Sinclair's and Moore's psychogeographical works are not "effective" because they are not political manifestos. As Monika Pietrzak-Franger has observed in response to Ferguson, the mystical elements in Moore's psychogeography (if not Sinclair's as well) – which she calls "myth appropriations" (170) – "work on a metalevel" that helps the author "carry out self-conscious investigations into the artistic process" (170), so that the author could better reflect on the ways he thinks and the ways in which he exercises his political agency. Moore's and Sinclair's 'esoteric' psychogeography exemplifies attempts at self-reflexivity, although it is admittedly too vague to produce any discernable political impact. Private thoughts and sentiments may not produce any political impact that is immediately evident to the general public, but they could nonetheless mark the beginning of a political process or a collective political initiative.

Such criticisms notwithstanding, I will maintain in this dissertation that the London writer/psychogeographer is hermeneutical (or 'hermetic,' to use Ferguson's word) – for I do assume that the 'hermeneutical' informs the empirical, since it is the individual who decides what is empirically true about the milieu. Empiricism, then, is a judgment about the milieu – the city for instance – posited from within: Michel de Certeau presupposes as much when he identifies the city as text, an erratic one composed

by those who walk about in it (93). Walking is here analogous to speech, since to wander is to introduce new meanings into the urban grid such that "the possibilities of a spatial signifier" multiply (de Certeau 98). The city text, delineated in the form of a grid, confines urbanites, anticipating and manipulating their gaits at every turn. The grid epitomizes a sort of totalitarianism, a panopticism spawning "technical rationalities and financial probabilities" (de Certeau 107). But the urbanite tears his environs asunder from within. He hopscotches and detours to inculcate ellipses (asyndeton) in the authorized urban grammar. In this manner, he engenders ambiguities, lapses and lacunae that synecdochically bespeak the whole (de Certeau 101, 102, 107). Edward W. Soja calls the synecdochic part "the fractal city," the microcosm whose autonomy attests to this resistance against the authoritarian underpinnings of urban planning (282, 283).

Psychogeography, by contrast, is a literary aesthetic that evokes this fractal city, the paradox of a situational wholeness. A fractal London not merely offers an against-the-grain reading of conventional London, but in fact retains a trace of utopia, i.e. a London continually being improved, thus a London estranged in the style of speculative fiction. This London is an aporetic whole abounding with local folklores, historical palimpsests, conflicting urban legends, and so forth. Psychogeography asks that London be reconceived in every microcosmic representation so that alternate London realities are made manifest in every street-level, situational narrative.[14] I will further argue that

[14] Neil Gaiman's *Neverwhere* (1996) effectuates within its setting of London a spatial and temporal dislocation relating to psychogeography. London here is divided between London Above and London Below, yet the two are fused together—synthesized—rather than segregated. London Below, as could be inferred, houses the forgotten past of London above; but it also parodies London's historic memory, stealthily eroding the rationalism London Above represents.

psychogeography cannot be defined succinctly because it is the desire to estrange the oppressive urban everyday in expressly fantastical or abstract terms.

Further Context for London Psychogeography

This section summarizes the various political concerns of various London writers, including Angela Carter, Michael Moorcock, China Miéville, Maureen Duffy, J.G. Ballard, Peter Ackroyd, Iain Sinclair, and Alan Moore. Being the counterpoint to neoliberalism, psychogeography is visionary in the Blakean vein: the psychogeographical writings discussed in this dissertation invariably conjure up fragmented visions of an English city so as to break apart all preconceived notions of English identity. Merlin Coverley's suggestion that psychogeography may not be as reliable a means of subversion as it seems is also here given consideration: his suspicion that Peter Ackroyd's London writings support conservatism is not without grounds, and is therefore duly acknowledged.

Annalisa Di Liddo has attributed the emergence of psychogeography – and consequently the importance of these writers – to some prevalent anxieties in London society. For example: Angela Carter is dedicated to "reversing class and gender roles through performance" (169); Sinclair is concerned with "the image of London over the centuries," eager as he is to put together and "do justice to all the London voices he can hear" (Roz Kaveney qtd. in Di Liddo 170). Michael Moorcock seems equally intrigued by the notions of intertextuality and performativity in his "consideration of otherness [gender, ethnic, class double] and its contribution to the evolution of the UK" (Di Liddo 172). China Miéville's *Un Lun Dun* raises environmental concerns overlooked in London, but readily confronted in 'Un-Lun-Dun,' i.e. London below, whereas Ackroyd

suggests in *London Under* that the Underground (the tube) can be "seen as an oppressive system, part of the worktime nexus of contemporary capitalism" (159).

Regardless of their differences, these psychogeographers are generally inclined to put together incompatible narratives about English identity to break London apart, so to speak. Because London has reaffirmed many a conservative reading of English identity, i.e., Englishness, London must be 'broken' so that 'Englishness' can be re-conceived. It is to this end that Ackroyd devises an 'implosive' literary form and conjures up what David James calls an "infinite London," "a foreboding labyrinth" (70). Sinclair, Moorcock, and Maureen Duffy – continues James – pursue the same end but instead adopt the "psychogeographic strategy of excavating [forgotten] urban histories" (71). Among the three writers, Sinclair shares J.G. Ballard's interest in estrangement most keenly. Sinclair and Ballard both believe that "familiar worlds should always be presented as the least real" (James 71). Ballard defamiliarizes London in the manner of a sci-fi writer, and Sinclair does so in a visionary, sometimes Blakean vein.[15] One of London's most esteemed *flâneurs*, Blake has influenced not only Sinclair but Ackroyd and Alan Moore as well. According to Di Liddo, Moore found much inspiration in Ackroyd's London writings about Hawksmoor, Dickens, Blake, and Shakespeare (Di Liddo 171).

Not all these psychogeographers are heralded as London visionaries or as the successors of Blake, however. A visionary sees beyond the evident; therefore, a writer

[15] Colombino reads psychogeography rather differently because she is first and foremost preoccupied with Lefebvre's theory of space. For her psychogeography is a narrative practice whereby body is space, such that the urbanscape of London *ipso facto* expresses its subjectivity through the *flâneur*. That is to say, the Londoner's body "replicate[s] internally the external conditions of political and social struggle" (Colombino 1), while multiple Londoners embody the "phantasmagoria" (Colombino 13) of the London streets.

interested in the most evident marks of history on Londonscape, say, someone like Ackroyd, is often accorded the title of an 'antiquarian.' For Coverley, 'antiquarian' models of psychogeography are "conservative" in virtue of their support for the heritage industry, and "irrational" for being "diametrically opposed in both spirit and practice to Debord's [original] conception" (126). Antiquarian writers do not write the "magical" (Coverley's word 126) but instead attribute magical qualities to the mundane everyday, or invent illusions of possibility in an otherwise oppressive urban environment.

Ackroyd in particular is guilty of allowing a "Catholic religious sensibility" to guide him in reflecting on some eminent characters in the English cultural canon (e.g. Thomas More, Nicholas Hawksmoor, William Blake, Thomas Chatterton), believing as he does that Catholicism is the foundation of English culture and heritage, and that a "mystical sense of eternal stasis" must therefore inhere in any English writing (see Coverley 126-7). Thus insisting that the English past, present, and future – or any representation thereof – must appeal to some fantasy of a religious English cultural essence, Ackroyd is thought to have served the heritage industry well.

Despite his 'conservative' tastes, Ackroyd's name is often mentioned in the same breath as Sinclair's: incidentally or not, Sinclair shares Ackroyd's interest in the mystical, although the former is far more outspoken a critic of Thatcherism than the latter. Wolfreys has argued that whereas Sinclair resists "the logic of ordered representation, historical accuracy, or even factual detail" (128), Ackroyd experiences London as a site where "memories and echoes of endless voices merge without coalescing, the seventeenth-century architect's [Hawksmoor's] design jostling for attention with the etchings of Dickens' illustrator" (173). Sinclair is all too aware of this perceived

connection between himself and Ackroyd, and he tells his readers as much in *Dining on Stones,* where one of his characters reviews another novel *Downriver* thus: "After some early success, as a latecomer to the school of Ackroyd and Moorcock, his adjective-heavy style with its verbless sentences passed into disfavour and critical neglect" (Sinclair qtd. in Moshenska, n.p.). I attribute Sinclair's and Ackroyd's respective 'disfigured' writing to their interest in the broken-ness of *Dasein* or being-in-the-world, as it was earlier defined: if London were a "nowhere" (Wolfreys' word 173), the notion of being-English-in-London would seem altogether inviable. Sinclair and Ackroyd both write disjunctively to reveal a dis-unified consciousness in tandem with a fragmented – fractal – London, and for this reason both depict not London per se, but their fleeting impressions thereof.

This admittedly more 'artistic' approach to psychogeography has inspired Wolfreys to study the city that meets Ackroyd and Sinclair's eyes and thus infer that every being-in-London is a representation of London. To expand upon this idea, I will raise the question of what it means to *be* without a unified *cogito*, or to *be* in a world likewise dis-unified, and in this vein I will pay more attention to the divided consciousness/*cogito* that gave rise to these psychogeographic writings. Here I shall briefly explain the relevance of these concerns by citing Ackroyd's reading of *Dasein* – which he offers to justify his decision to trace London history through well-known London characters, fictional as well as historical. "*Dasein* is not subjective," says he in *Notes for a New Culture*, "since it manifests itself in the beings that surround us; it is not concealed as an 'essence' or inner cause since it lies in the act of existence itself" (69). Ackroyd readily admits that he is fascinated with 'Englishness' because he too often idealizes the Englishman; though in an exercise of caution, he hastens to point out that

the paradigmatic English writer is the writer of "counter-mythology" and "anti-writing" like Blake, John Bunyan, or James Joyce. Ackroyd considers these writers the first to rebel against the modernist language of reason, which had ignited the English passion for the "continuous, plain, familiar, simple, solid, sensible" (Ackroyd 13). These were the first writers to want to break with an English modernist tradition entrenched in the belief that the rational "man" gives language "unity" (Ackroyd's word, 31) and coherence – the very kind T.S. Eliot extolls in his celebrated essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919) (see Ackroyd 31).

One might disagree with Ackroyd's *initial* reading of *Dasein* on the grounds that it implies being is in the world to dominate it: this we know to be untrue where psychogeography is concerned, for only when taken literally does psychogeography refer to a narcissistic subjectivity projected onto everything in its vicinity and in the world. Nevertheless, it is correct to say with respect to English anti-writings that *Dasein* is reactive, that one can react to aspects of London life through politics and/or aesthetics – both of which are reactions to the surrounding world and, in this sense, vindications of *Dasein*. Even the contention that "London is nowhere" (Wolfreys' expression 173) is an expression of *Dasein* undergirded by the notion of being-nowhere: this negative assertion about being lends itself to psychogeography politically in the form of a heresy, "a break in the limits of intelligibility," or a disruption in thought which, while exposing "the limits of reason," allows reason to have "its fullest expression, aporetically" (Ross 4). In other words, heretical politics makes manifest a *cogito* put to the breaking point; psychogeography, for example, is intended to be heretical, and it is the vision of London as a global capitalist city that it rejects. Such is also the political implication of being-in-

London, and there is no reason why heresy cannot be expressed aesthetically, in a fragmented style for example.[16] All the analyses to come rest on the understanding that politics and literary aesthetics both are expressions of *Dasein*, and there is no better way, I think, to justify this premise than to devote myself to the study of writings whose political persuasions are announced far clearer than Ackroyd's – those of Moore and Sinclair, for instance.

Chapter Summaries

It would be impossible to assign psychogeography any concrete definition, given that psychogeography is a means to an unfixed end. Be that as it may, psychogeography might still be described *vis-à-vis* its three facets – the *cogito* (being), space, and time.

Chapter One elaborates on the dialectical track Moore pursues across three works in the following order: *From Hell*, *V for Vendetta*, and *Jerusalem*. These works exemplify Moore's 'psycho-geography' which, in fact, is a dialectical pairing of psychology and geography, with each trying to determine the meaning of the other. *From Hell* gives us Jack the Ripper, a narcissistic psychogeographer who takes it upon himself to project onto Londonscape the greatness of English culture. The Ripper re-narrativizes English history to give meaning to London space, not knowing, however, that his private fantasy of a grand Englishness must expire, since the *cogito* cannot conquer time. *V for Vendetta* is the vendetta of space against this domineering *cogito*. The character V is an agent which the land puts forth to defy any meaning inscribed upon it in temporal terms. London in its entirety is an anarchic expression; its dilapidated parts symbolize the many inconsistencies in traditionalist grand narratives such as the Ripper's. *Jerusalem* recounts

[16] Ross defines aporia as "the moments in the movements of thought – including but not restricted to metaphysics – in which it finds itself faced with unconquerable obstacles resulting from conflicts in its understanding of its own intelligibility" (3).

a love affair of sorts between the *cogito*, the putative master of language, and the dilapidated land. Here Englishness is imagined geographically as a mystical dimension, which emerges because London no longer epitomizes English life and culture, such that Englishness itself must be understood anew. Englishness thus becomes a mystical something that is nothing short of a utopian element, evident only in rational lapses, or in the English town of Northampton, which confronts the fate of being restructured much like the nearby-city of London. Moore's psychogeography cannot be defined in any particular way save that it is a continuous struggle between psychology and geography, the part and the whole.

Chapter Two explains the differences between Moore's and Sinclair's respective approaches to psychogeography. Whereas Moore witnesses the struggle between the part and the whole from an elevated point of view, Sinclair focuses on the part.

In Chapter Three, I argue that Sinclair's psychogeography attests to the incompleteness of being, seeing as it is that, in the twenty-first century, being is everywhere in a 'Los-Angelized' world, and being-in-London is being-nowhere. In *White Chappell, Scarlet Tracings*, 'Sinclair' appears in the character of a detective, who tries to trace the beginning of London in the very words he uses to describe it. The beginning of London is, supposedly, the primary event in English history, the cause of all causes and the fundament of reason. The detective finds, however, that neither London nor the *cogito* is unified, that the reason which he relies upon illuminates only relative truths; because his reason denies him the sense of certainty that should accompany reason, any trace of the truth, i.e. the beginning of London, can only lead him to conclude that London is something more, just as he is someone else, always another. *White Chappell, Scarlet*

Tracings compels the reader to view as 'occult' the movement of time as it is reflected in the language of reason. In a word, history is occulted in the novel, so that London is elsewhere while the London 'I' is always another.

In *Downriver* London is further occulted, estranged. The novel delineates the contours of neoliberal London only to negate it, perhaps to inspire nautical expeditions 'downriver' in search of another London, of 'White Chappell' as opposed to Whitechapel. Thus: 'I,' which is in tandem with the London where 'I' is, becomes another. The mystical qualities of Sinclair's psychogeography are heretical, therefore political; that is to say, the mystical gives Sinclair's psychogeography an alienating quality, which in itself is heretical, political. The psychogeographer-in-London is the incongruous part causing the implosion of the whole. Psychogeography is at once literary and political in that it is a means to defamiliarize, thus an explosive of sorts.

Chapter One

The Disintegration of England in Alan Moore's Psychogeography

Complete English History, as Told by Gull the Ripper in *From Hell*

"Hyper-visual," "hyper-descriptive" – "graphic," in a word, the graphic novel is a medium to overwhelm the senses (see Di Liddo 17). Alan Moore's *From Hell* confounds our sense of time, even, in that it conjures up a nineteenth-century London that has the cultural ambience of the eighteenth century. The author in question is wont to include "visual quotations" (Di Liddo 450) of eighteenth-century cultural artifacts such as William Hogarth's *The Reward of Cruelty* (see *From Hell*, Chapter Nine). His anti-hero, Jack the Ripper, is also one to flaunt his erudition in matters of the long eighteenth century, from its literati – William Blake, Alexander Pope, and Daniel Defoe – to its architectural ideal, which Nicholas Hawksmoor's works supposedly exemplify. This foregrounding of the eighteenth century I shall explain here at the beginning, though Moore's imagining of nineteenth-century London will later become my focus.

In *From Hell,* the murderous savant Jack the Ripper traverses London to discover remnants of the eighteenth century, which, he hopes, will transport him from the nineteenth century to other times in English history. He holds London to be "a literature of stones, of place-names and associations/where faint echoes answer back from off the distant ruined walls of bloody history" (Loc 89), while London time a unified whole projected from deep within the "slums of Hackney" in the form of a "prophetic vision"

(Loc 90).[17] For the Ripper, nineteenth-century London preserves within itself the London of all times, an eternal London of sorts; any visionary who travels across time in London may then encounter "Milton's ghost, or the Apostle Paul" (Loc 91) as William Blake once did. The Ripper does not roam the streets only to encounter London's ghosts, since Blake as visionary already performed this task. The Ripper has the rather more 'original' goal of forcing these ghosts into conversation. If he discovers London while roaming its streets, he does so on his own terms; that is, he projects his patriotic reading of English culture and history onto Londonscape, so that London will become 'unified' for him.

Narrative Unity and the Rise of National Consciousness

What has the Ripper's delusional reading of time to do with prophecy or history, however? Above all, why should anyone want to be privy to his delusions? That Moore should associate the formation of a national consciousness (a term I will explain below) with the ravings of a notorious English murderer is itself ironical, for such associations seem to make light of sentimental conceptions of culture like the Ripper's. Ironical associations of this sort may even suggest that *From Hell* is a mockery of uncritical nationalism – a sentiment which seems to have so overcome the Ripper that he wants to elide the divides of time for the cultivation of 'Englishness,' i.e., a conception of culture that would encompass all local and historical memories. Moore pays tribute to Hogarth, in particular, in this graphic novel where the Ripper's journeys across various space-time continuums in search of 'Englishness': this decision seems apt, seeing as it was, in fact, Hogarth who introduced the graphic narrative as a unified form in the eighteenth century.

Here a brief overview of Hogarth's career would aid us in understanding the Ripper's nationalistic vision of a unified English time. Hogarth's paintings were hailed as

[17] "Loc" stands for 'location', which is a substitute for 'page' in some Kindle books.

revolutionary in the eighteenth century because they "linked together moments in a dramatic way that allowed an original story to be told in pictures" (Petersen 46). *A Harlot's Progress*, for example, depicts a "whole array of seemingly ordinary events" which accentuates rather than obscures the connection between socials morals and feminine virtue (Petersen 45). Isolated episodes of everyday life become related within the frame of the painting, though not yet sequentially as they would later appear in modern graphic novels. Unity was the ideal towards which Hogarth strove in this and other artistic endeavors, where the ostensibly unrelated became related; this vision of connecting disparate moments within a frame was a blueprint of sorts for "modern sequential graphic narratives" (Petersen 47) such as Moore's.

Later in the first years of the nineteenth century, Blake became the first to create "hybrid word-pictures" that unified the visual and the symbolic (Petersen 56). In *Jerusalem* (1804-1820) for example, "Blake shows himself as a miniature scribe writing backward [in the manner of a visionary prophet] on a scroll which unfolds across the lap of the sleeping giant Albion, who represents both England and all humankind" (Petersen 57). This notion of prophecy implies the continuity of time, which here expands across the lap of a divine figure in whom the English and the rest of humanity are one: time stretches onwards continuously and expensively as though to attest to the union of England and the rest of the world. One could try to make sense of this patriotic reading of Londonscape with reference to Benedict Anderson, who argues that "nationality, […] nation-ness, as well as nationalism, [are] cultural artifacts of a particular kind" for any nationalist who sees the nation as "an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" (4, 6). Boundaries – physical or metaphorical,

geographical or cultural – give shape to a nation and so render it a conceivable whole, that is, a sovereign entity with a distinct local culture to recommend it. A city as old as London would certainly possess all kinds of memories and cultural treasures that may converge to form a coherent, unified structure, something called 'Heritage' (with a capital 'H'), albeit that the Ripper only calls it 'Englishness' in *From Hell*. London seen through the Ripper's romantic lens rather resembles a frieze wherein time is depicted as continuous, linear, diachronic: 'Englishness' here appears to be an enduring greatness unfolding across the London landscape, not unlike the continuous scroll of prophetic revelations across the lap of Albion.

'English Psychogeography': the Various Definitions of Psychogeography

To put it simply, the Ripper sees London as the microcosmic representation of his country, his England, and thus of 'Englishness' – the culmination of English history, as it were. He reads Londonscape to trace this 'Englishness,' which, he assumes, should unite the London community and thereby define London. This perverse endeavor to read the land for the sake of tracing 'Englishness' I shall call 'the Ripper's psychogeography.' I will acknowledge that Guy Debord originally coined the word 'psychogeography' to describe "the study of precise laws and specific effects of the geographical environment, consciously organised or not, on the emotions and behavior of individuals" (Debord qtd. in Coverley 88, 89). Let me then rephrase my argument: *From Hell* presents to us a new alternate world narrative based upon the Ripper's affinity with (or emotional investment in) the London land, and so the original meaning of psychogeography is here perverted. In this particular instance, 'psychogeography' only describes the patriotic sentiments

which London rouses in the Ripper as though to justify his killing of five women – a task he imagines in his insanity to be indispensable to his quest for 'Englishness.'

I will admit that this interpretation of psychogeography could be problematic, that Henderson Downing is to a large extent right to identify such appropriations of psychogeography as the cause for the gothicizing of London and, relatedly, the "accumulation of symbolic capital within specific neighbourhoods that contribute to the production of marketable narratives for estate agents and property speculators" (Downing 40). It *is* true that narratives of English history and heritage about the Ripper have done much to enhance London's commercial value while speeding up its gentrification; it *is* only too ironic that heritage is narrativized in the style of psychogeography – a subversive conception which, in situationism, refers to the rethinking of the "urban space as an experimental site for a radical transformation of subjectivity and social relations" (Downing 38). Moreover, Heritage as it is defined above prescribes rather than experiments with identity: in virtue of having produced a bestseller based on the Whitechapel murders, which later turned into a Hollywood Blockbuster starring Johnny Depp, Moore may well have dealt in Heritage; he may well have "repackage[d] and disseminate[d] variations on these themes to a wider audience," eventually popularizing and "clog[ging] the streets of Whitechapel with budding dérivistes for whom Jack the Ripper becomes a disturbingly compelling synecdoche of the violence and criminality attached to specific locations" (Downing 41).

It is also in response to Downing, however, that I now take psychogeography beyond situationism and examine 'Jack the Ripper's psychogeography' in *From Hell*. I describe and problematize the ways in which psychogeography has encouraged uncritical

engagements with the city, on the one hand, and reconsider the extent to which Moore is complicitous in the Ripper's psychogeographic endeavor, on the other. Is it fair to accuse the author of being complicitous if his contributions to 'Heritage' are only some paranoid reflections on the Ripper, which in truth deprive Heritage of its diegetic cohesion? I do not think it reasonable to accuse Moore of having dulled the edge of *Debord's* psychogeography when he does attack – however implicitly – any commercial appropriations thereof. In fact, Moore deals not with Debord's psychogeography but rather takes psychogeography beyond situationism and re-invents it through the Ripper; he gives voice to 'the Ripper's psychogeography' precisely to show – as I will argue below – that it is no more acceptable than his cold-blooded crimes.

What then is the Ripper's psychogeography, and how has its popularity given rise to heritage? Let us consider other definitions of psychogeography before we answer these questions. Elizabeth Ho has read *From Hell* as a psychogeographical narrative composed of the "reverberations of the past and its percolations into the present" (Ho 105). *From Hell* leaves Seamus O'Malley with the similar impression that psychogeography means "the exchangeability of time and space" (O'Malley 172) or "historical resonances inherited from the past" (Julia Round qtd. in O'Malley 172). Jason B. Jones adds that psychogeography stifles all impressions of temporal passage so as to shed light on a "monstrosity" of the human that is 'splayed across time" and "laid bare for all to see' (Jones 122). The past may then be read as a critique of the present, or a reiteration of current social problems.

The consensus here seems to be that psychogeography is a subjective reinvention or a privatization of time projected onto a large, continuous space, one not unlike the

monstrous oneness that is the fourth dimension. The Ripper (surnamed Gull in *From Hell*) takes on the role of a psychogeographer, rereads history so as to give Englishness the connotation of greatness; he studies Londonscape with blatant nationalistic intent. His perverse psychogeography gives rise to the vision of a realm where all times co-exist, while all contradictions – all that logical causality would negate in the reader's experience of 'reality' – are harmonized. A private, situated reading of time is inscribed upon the land and made eternal as a result: the act of inscription (or projection onto the land) already suffices to engender an alternative to a commonly accepted world narrative, for that which is 'psychotic' or internal – psychogeographical – would, in this case, serve as a means to estrange that which is familiar, like London of the everyday.

In this vein, I will interpret psychogeography as the study of space where historical memories and the relevant timelines are re-aligned. Psychogeography causes memories of times past to assume new relational meanings within a confined space and so gives meaning to apparent randomness, or propagate an "emphatic pedagogy of all-encompassing vision and randomness," to quote Ho (Ho 119). Psychogeographic re-readings of time assume particular significance in London, the historic seat of the British Empire: Moore's experimentation with psychogeography, in particular, counters what has emerged in England as an ultra-nationalistic consciousness; his vision of nineteenth-century London acts as a cipher for late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century critiques of modern English nationalism, for his "contribution" to Ripperology came at a time when the Ripper was becoming ever more culturally relevant, ever more 'English.' The very word 'Whitechapel' would seem to invoke the Ripper's spirit much to the benefit of

local tourism, while the Ripper would appear to have transgressed into the present past the nineteenth century.

Psychogeography can substantiate a totalizing whole like Gull's nationalistic narrative, but it can also emphasize the part – say, an episode in history, or a restrictive space – to hasten the disintegration of what it validates. Of course psychogeography can serve purposes other than nationalism. Bearing in mind that psychogeography is very much a double-edged sword, I offer my interpretation of one of Moore's most validating English characters: Gull the Ripper in *From Hell*. I argue that Moore has rendered the Ripper an ill-fitting part of the narrative of an exceptional Englishness, for Moore, as psychogeographer, has corrupted this Grand Narrative from within. Psychogeography is necessarily futile as an identity-affirming project, since its foundational principle is that all temporal parallels eventually re-align, regardless of the interference of any self-proclaimed psychogeographer. In *From Hell*, Gull the Ripper searches for the fourth dimension, the center of history from which all London times and memories derive relational meaning. He can hardly visualize this unified history, however, when his character is already a quagmire of urban legends in popular culture. The character of Gull therefore engenders new narrative pieces about (English) history that one knows not how to place.

Complete English History, as Told by Gull the Ripper

To know Gull the Ripper, one must first understand his totalizing reading of English space-time. In Moore's vision of Victorian London, there exists a villain named Gull, who acts – kills – to give shape to his thought and vision, to present to London a cartography of his mind. William Gull, the royal surgeon in *From Hell*, is a cartographer

of thinking, a pseudo-psychogeographer with a keen interest in one specific question: "What is the fourth dimension?" (Loc 29) The fourth dimension makes manifest the architectural layout of history, explains Gull to his fellow medical practitioner Hinton in Chapter Two, "A State of Darkness." The fourth dimension is the "chamber of echoes" wherein past, present, and future "co-exist in the stupendous whole of eternity" (Loc 41). Whoever discovers the fourth dimension will acquire a superhuman awareness of a unified time and become the "architect of humanity" (O'Malley's phrase 174). In other words: Gull wills the convergence of all times in the fourth dimension such that the very idea of a double consciousness – of history, in fact – becomes impossible. The fourth dimension is a world of the same, *a hyperreality* where time cannot be set against a linear plane and divided into distinct, comparable periods such as past, present, and future. At stake here is a "diachronic explanation of human development" – of history, of "our place in the world" (O'Malley 174), which will "fill the vacuum left by the Christian tradition and its political structures" (O'Malley 174). Seekers of diachronic explanations (whom Seamus O'Malley calls "speculative historians") will put together "the fragments of life" to discover "the secret of history's shape" and "the hidden blueprints to human events in the wake of modernity" (O'Malley 174). As O'Malley puts it, Gull, alongside Hinton, Crowley and Yeats, are "merely the latest in a long century of speculative historians" (174). What O'Malley does not emphasize enough is that Gull alone splatters the blood of five prostitutes across London with a scalpel. Gull is a speculative historian distinct from any other in that he is his own visionary and his own psychogeographer. Gull also writes his unorthodox version of English history with a phallic weapon, which is his means to make London the transitional realm between the human and the superhuman:

having transcended (or, rather, repressed) the raw sexuality of the prostitutes, humankind would, according to this rewriting, ascend towards the fourth dimension and become superhuman.

As early as in Chapter Two (Loc 29), Gull foresees that the phallus is the key to the fourth dimension, the blueprint of his speculative English history. He sees that an obelisk, bathed in sunlight, pierces the darkness of the fourth dimension. Scalpel-wielding, Gull believes himself this piercing light, the means to access eternity. The phallus is his ideological *modus operandi*, which spills female blood to connect all times. Gull butchers his victims' bodies to ensure that blood is all that remains of their existence. Female blood and mother earth – here the land of London – unite to become the blank page upon which Gull writes his psychogeographic account of English history. In this regard, the scalpel symbolizes fiction itself: Moore uses the scalpel that is fiction to perform a "post-mortem of a historical occurrence" (Moore qtd. in Di Liddo 44) and reveal that for all its alleged greatness, Englishness was written on an alter made of mutilated female bodies, that, furthermore, fiction-writing *could* be a ritual to sanctify oppression. Moore uses the scalpel of fiction to expose Gull's agenda, whereas Gull uses the same to write patriarchy into English culture; that is to say, the former writer parodies the latter: this I will elaborate towards the end of this section. Suffice it to say at the moment that the Ripper thinks he must murder to 'overcome' five prostitutes, who represent that which is human and base, so that he can pursue his psychogeography and thereby author a piece of speculative fiction where history is unified.

We grasp the symbolic significance of female blood for the first time in *From Hell* when Gull and his wife Susan first engage in coitus. The darkness suggestive of

sexual ecstasy is punctured by Susan's announcement that "there is blood" (Loc 39). Gull's inspection of Christ Church Spitalfields (one of the architect Nicholas Hawksmoor's masterpieces) immediately follows. This non sequitur suggests that Susan's virginal blood guides Gull towards the meaning of the Dionysian, which Hawksmoor supposedly had foreseen before Gull. Hawksmoor, who oversaw the construction of St Paul's Cathedral alongside his mentor Christopher Wren, belonged to "a secret fraternity of Dionysus cultists, originating in 1,000 B.C., [who] worked on Solomon's temple" (Loc 41). Gull says, "Hawksmoor cut stone to hold shadows" (Loc 41). In other words, Hawksmoor constructed this chamber arresting every slippery truth, every shadow on the walls of Plato's cave. His Dionysian architecture expresses an omniscience which knows no ambiguity. Gull supposes that he and Hawksmoor share the Dionysian goal of seeking "to become one with the processes of Nature and thus immortal" (Loc 41) and of tracing the fourth dimension in London. The fourth dimension exemplifies the kind of psychogeography which tells of one true, originary English history – the kind to invalidate all historical speculations. Gull's psychogeography, then, is a speculative world narrative which precludes or ends all others by virtue of its existence.

Dionysus, who purportedly withholds the secrets of the fourth dimension, motivates Hawksmoor and Gull to different ends. Whereas Hawksmoor aided Wren in re-constructing St Paul's after the Great Fire of 1666, Gull experiments with psychogeography; whereas Hawksmoor strove for architectural aesthetics, Gull murders to acquire Dionysus's omniscience. Each time the latter executes a murder, he imagines that he gains a glimpse of the future of English history. In Chapter Eight, Gull raises his

victim Kate Eddowe's entrails in one hand and his scalpel in the other (Loc 267). He, a Victorian man, looks upwards at a modern high-rise, the elongated form of Hawksmoor's church tower, another 'Dionysian' phallic symbol in the graphic novel. The phallic structure bridges Victorian and contemporary times to complete Gull's notion of eternity, thus realizing a dimension of existence that precludes all (other) speculations about time. Gull now believes that he has witnessed, through Dionysus's eyes, the triumph of progress and industry, the ambition in the mid-nineteenth century to subdue nature and the passage of time itself. Of course as Annalisa Di Liddo argues, Gull's psychogeography is merely "a rigorous geometrical structure" serving to justify his insanity (77). He kills merely to reproduce a pattern that he already perceived in the London landscape (Di Liddo 77), while such reproduction supports only his "hallucinatory relationship with time" (Di Liddo 79). Sarah E. Maier even goes so far as to call Gull's psychogeography a "cohesive self-narration" which "contain[s] only randomness with recurrent motifs and stories either borrowed or unfinished that haunts the detective [...] and the reader/audience with the desire for impossible closure" (203). His interpretations of the fourth dimension, William Blake, and Masonic history are no more than "rantings" (Maier 205). Nonetheless, I am inclined to think that Gull's self-narration coheres *as a result of* his rantings on Blake, the fourth dimension and Masonic history, which all culminate in his Dionysian vision, that is, his vision of a world that enshrines a unique but universal Englishness.

Gull may think that the twenty-first century marks the denouement of the English narrative: for this Victorian man, post-imperial living may very well herald the end of the English narrative. The British Empire, Gull believes, will embrace global capitalist

production in lieu of traditional craftsmanship such that the Queen's subjects will live amid mass-produced furniture that is "mean-spirited and ugly" (Loc 475). However, what remains eternal – what the fourth dimension forever safeguards, supposedly – is an exceptional Englishness (Tony Venezia's phrase 37), an exceptionally Anglocentric idea of Britishness, tied to the history of empire. This exceptional Englishness is the connection between all times; it is also the common ground between Gull and the Briton of the late twentieth century, for the one is the "forward-looking" Victorian middle-class man, and the other the backward-looking, nostalgic English subject of the postwar era. In *From Hell,* Gull's faith in England's greatness calls into existence a universe where the two meet. It is his nationalistic fervor that conjures before him England in the late twentieth century, the point in time where Thatcher endeavored to "put the Great back into Britain" (Ho 106). Thatcher, like Gull, looked into history and grew invested in the notion of Englishness. In the face of globalization, she, too, was devoted to Englishness as an exclusive cultural or political entity (and as something to be distinguished from 'Britishness': see Di Liddo 103). Thatcher used history to validate the greatness of Britain, like Moore's vision of the Ripper. To this end, her 'Victorian values' campaign," or her efforts in transposing the 'Victorian' "virtues of self-reliance and duty" (Ho 106) into the present, complements the Ripper's psychogeography. Thatcher specifically wished to re-acquaint Britons of the late twentieth century with "Victorian ideals of morality, global dominance, nationalism and myths of progress – financial, technological, social" (Murray, n.p.). She emphasized "English exceptionality" after the fall of the empire to establish a parallel between the late nineteenth and the late twentieth centuries.

In this vein she would remodel English history into a unified narrative, a fourth dimension of sorts.

The Ripper, incidentally, is the fragment of Victorian life having been incorporated into this coherent narrative of Englishness: he is the much-needed connection to the past vis-à-vis this self-affirming project. The Ripper is, to borrow Raymond Williams's words, the cultural and social residual of culture "effectively formed in the past, but […] still active in the cultural process, not only and often not at all as an element of the past, but as an effective element of the present" (n.p.); he is ripped from the social past – the squalor of Whitechapel in the nineteenth century – and transposed into the nostalgic social present so that past and present coalesce. A key paradox in considering this nationalist mentality is "[t]he objective modernity of nations to the historian's eye vs. their subjective antiquity in the eyes of nationalists" (Anderson 5): nationalists see the preservation of traditions in history; history, they imagine, brings harmony to the collective, though no such harmony could exist given the depersonalized relationships among the members of a community. National harmony, unity – such notions merely lend themselves to further fictionalization of 'Englishness,' which here seems no more than an invention of commonalities: even the feeblest connections established among 'the people' would suppress any mark of difference or any sign of disharmony, even. In light of Britain's imperial history, we know, too, that 'Englishness' could do far more than 'strengthening national unity,' that for instance it did justify the colonial agenda and its underlying expansionist politics: the more 'civilized' nation of course must bear the onus of helping and educating the less fortunate.

But let us return to *From Hell*, where Gull promulgates a unified history to

celebrate an 'exceptional' English heritage in the most exaggerated manner – in a manner he deems 'Dionysian.' To be sure, Gull does not in truth possess the Dionysian spirit inherent in psychogeography, nor does Thatcher, since neither has need for shadows, ambiguities, and paradoxes. Any criticism Moore intends for Gull here he also intends for Thatcher: psychogeography proves, if anything, that history cannot be unified. One recalls Nietzsche's reading of the Dionysian energy. Divine inspirations impress upon us "the involuntary nature of image, of metaphor" (Loc 373), even while tempting us to grasp at the shadows that we hold as truths. Divinity – the fourth dimension, the originary English truth – must reveal itself in a tempest, "a depth of happiness in which the most painful and gloomy things appear, not as an antithesis, but […] as a necessary color within such a superfluity of light" (Nietzsche Loc 369). Divinity possesses the dualistic, tempestuous character of a metaphor. It follows that any true Dionysian architecture is predicated upon dualisms, but certainly not one-dimensionality, continuity, or linearity. If truly a Dionysian exercise in creativity, psychogeography should reinforce the notion of the plurality of time. Psychogeography should encourage visions of alternate worlds while re-presenting history as that which provokes the most contradictory speculations; it should presuppose, consequently, infinity rather than unity, the Dionysian rather than the Apollonian.

Dionysus does not therefore offer any plain truths to any favored psychogeographer as Gull would like to think. The divine, call it eternity or truth, is necessarily just beyond Plato's cave such that it is glimpsed fleetingly through metaphors. Gull's desire for a visible emanation, a literal rendering, of the divine is already contrary to the Dionysian spirit. Gull privileges literality and accessibility

whereas Dionysus metaphors and inaccessibility. Gull's literal-mindedness amounts to a reductive realism, a futile attempt to call objective and true his encounter with the divine. To quote O'Malley, what Gull calls "the architecture of history" reveals no more than his conceit that he has "unlocked the secret to history's shape and purpose" (163). Gull thinks that "history has a shape intelligible to some sort of human investigation. Dates recur, mythic patterns emerge, symbols shed light" (O'Malley 176), and "the narration of the past, whether it be in words or stone, serves as a mere reflection or symbol of a deeper underlying shape of world history" (O'Malley 177). If he turns over enough stones, each of which holds a shadow, a withheld truth, he will be able to discern the contours of history where all times supposedly parallel.

Nevertheless, the fourth dimension (if existent) is not to be divined by anyone, even though Gull's hubris tells him otherwise. It is only hubris that prompts Gull to assume an authoritative role in all 'English' matters, or to play the exemplary historian who alone could locate the fourth dimension in London. It is hubris as well that convinces him of the exceptionality of his person, who alone is destined to translate Dionysus's secret into the fiction of the fourth dimension, of 'Real' English History. Gull does not realize that realism is detached from the real. Modern realism, according to Ian Watt, "has its origins in Descartes and Locke; it has been the study of the particulars of experience by the individual investigator" (13), who is relieved of "universals," a "classical and universal heritage" (12). The individual perception is always "unique," therefore always "new" (13). However, Gull's 'realism,' that is, his attempt at a realistic portrayal of the fourth dimension, champions both the universal and the individual. He is so convinced of the uniqueness of his vision that he considers it not only the stone

arresting all temporal echoes, but he insists that this truth is the heritage of his nation. He holds his individual perception to be a universal doctrine (an Anglo-centric one to be sure), one that he must print on the London landscape with the blood of his victims. Gull means to organize history into a star-shaped circuit, a unified whole, and thereby an account of history that precludes all others.

It is this desire to organize history that gives to 'heritage,' that is, a narrative on a continuing, near-complete Englishness. While the Ripper seems the missing puzzle piece required for the realization of such narrative totality, Gull more or less completes the character of the Ripper. By the end of *From Hell*, Gull, as Ripper, is elevated above London, a star-shaped circuit connected throughout by "luminous filaments" (Loc 469), themselves reminiscent of mutilated body parts. Gull projects onto London his individual perspective, his realism and "meaning" (Loc 471). He is then able to perform various visitations. He visits the Tower of London first in 1954, and later in 1817. Then he encounters Romanticism in the figure of Blake, who is eager to sketch the "fearful beast" before him (Loc 477). Afterwards, Gull's spirit materializes in the English future of the contemporary living room (Loc 477). Gull's visitations evidently follow a sequence, intimating his comprehensive understanding of all London times. When Gull at last espouses the insight that "all things at the last are sullied" (Loc 480), he signals the denouement of the English narrative. Heeding the dramatic unity of beginning, middle and end, Gull's episodic visitations form a synchrony whereby all temporal tracks cohere for the purpose of narrative completion. This speculative history bears the name of the fourth dimension: there time cannot possibly proliferate in any direction other than the one Gull endorses.

Moore's Speculative, Psychogeographical Fiction

One might ask if, towards the end, Gull's feat of narrative completion imparts to Moore's historical fiction (or alternate history) a proper conclusion. After all, *From Hell* is a "melodrama in sixteen parts" foretelling Britain's degenerative destiny. For whom is the graphic novel a melodrama and for whom is it realism, however? Gull is invested in his universal realism. Moore, in contrast, mimics Gull's realism, rendering it a melodrama to better subvert it. While Gull single-mindedly pursues the fourth dimension, Moore writes the fourth dimension from Gull's point of view merely to taunt Gull. It is as O'Malley argues: Moore's subtitle of a melodrama reveals that Gull is "a talented story-teller rather than a visionary who has access to universal truths" (180). Moore narrativizes and so invalidates Gull's psychogeographical revelations. Gull has absolute faith in the existence of a unified English history, and yet he is characterized in *From Hell* as someone who, however unwittingly, casts Queen Victoria as the mastermind of the infamous Whitechapel murders. By a stroke of irony, Moore makes Gull, who esteems himself a Dionysian visionary, the basis of a historical rumor.

To be sure, Victoria's involvement amounts to no more than a conspiracy theory, one might even say a groundless speculation. And, indeed, such paranoid re-readings of the past have fueled Britain's rapidly expanding heritage industry, whetting the modern Englishperson's – and not only the Ripper's – appetite for a grand national narrative or a work of patriotic speculative fiction, so to speak. *From Hell* may seem to appeal to the common, if inappropriate, interest in the Ripper. Testaments of Victorian progressivism – medicine, photography, and the newspaper, just to name a few – are put towards building the cult of a deranged misogynist. Moore makes the effort to parallel the Ripper's cult

then and now. In Moore's imagination of Victorian times, Gull's first murder incites an unseemly excitement amongst many Londoners. The street where Gull butchered his first victim Polly becomes a site for revelry. A cameraman even gives the revelers instructions to parody the victim's horror: "If you could clasp you hands over your, er, bosom, a-and, look horrified" (Loc 178). In the graphic novel, the nineteenth-century media is said to direct the people's attention towards the Ripper's violence in a tone of celebration rather than one of condemnation. The media today seems little different – so Elizabeth Ho suggests, at least: "Today Jack the Ripper is undeniably English […]" In the British heritage industry today, "Whitechapel, Spitalfields, and the East End in general are promoted through advertising associated with Jack the Ripper" (Ho 103, 104).

But while the heritage industry is referential to English exceptionality, London landmarks such as St Paul's – which Gull celebrates in *From Hell* – are no less so even when considered independently. We – the English, the Britons, or simply tourists from all over the world – revere this architectural testament to English heritage certainly no less than Gull, prompted, perhaps, by a conservative political climate wherein an "identity-preserving, identity-enchanting, and identity-transforming aura lingers" (Ian Baucom qtd. in Ho 114). In the novel *Downriver*, Sinclair presents the following criticism of Thatcher's conservative politics and, relatedly, her attempt to dabble in the business of heritage: "Let the Prince have his Palladian toy around St Paul's … It was a sideshow … serviceable for Royal Weddings, which could be timed to coincide with unconvinced by-elections" (288). St Paul's then represents lineage to the English past. As backdrop to celebrations of the Royalty, the cathedral attests to the blossoming of an exceptional Englishness and the continuity of the English bloodline. As Gull freely admits, "St.

Paul's is in the centre. /We [he and his coachman Netley] are at the centre of [the] pattern now… our story's written, Netley, inked in blood…" (Loc 116, 117). The pattern in question is fate, which reveals all times to be connected and, in this manner, underscores the notion of temporal causality. The *de facto* fairy-tale landmark in what could only be called a propagandistic fantasy, St. Paul's seems a chamber of eternity where the English present and the Ripper's optimistic reading of nineteenth-century England co-exist. Here St. Paul's is a symbol of the hyperreal, a sign that the fourth dimension has been attained indeed.

Moore reinvents the Ripper precisely to shatter these fantasies of the fourth dimension. *From Hell* constitutes no more than a conspiracy theory, a paranoid interpretation of the past, but, as such, it detracts from any narrative of one glorious England. Moore has turned the Ripper into an alternate world narrative in that his Ripper embodies an unofficial history, an envisioning of the past that is a critique of the present. In Monika Pietrazak-Franger's words: "Jack the Ripper has been, over and over, associated with different *signifieds*. Julie Sanders recognises this changeability of myths and their adaptability […] Thus while the archetypal Jack the Ripper as a serial killer serves to divulge stories of timeless evil, his specific anchoring in the nineteenth century opens a space where he can be given new relevant context, as illustrated by Thatcherite and Blairite engagements" (169, 170). So suspended between the past and the present, Gull, as the Ripper, is a malleable neither-nor, a mythical entity of service to the heritage industry.

Yet Gull is something more: he is the fourth dimension, the myth-engendering agent through which *anyone* might speculate about the nineteenth century and its link to

the present. This contrived connection is in and of itself a speculative fiction, which, in *From Hell*, shapes not only the character of Gull but also the panels for the retelling of English history. Barish Ali reminds us: "The gap between comics panels is equivalent to, or a moment of, the Lacanian Real, which Judith Butler summarizes quite succinctly as 'that which resists and compels symbolization'" (611). The Ripper is an unrepresentable fragment of Englishness, but for this precise reason, Moore speculates about him to speculate about Englishness and to stress, above all, that all such speculations are fabrications. Gull is the signifier of Englishness which bridges Victorian and modern times, but even so he is a conscious fabrication, thus an idiosyncratic reading of time that is far from common or universal.

Moore's 'conspiracy theory' about the Ripper may well be a redundant puzzle piece which has no place in official English history. However, in re-imagining history, *From Hell* also opens up the myth of the Ripper – that is, it mythicizes the Ripper to encourage further speculations about the Ripper. The "fragmentation, mutilation, and cutting up witnessed in *From Hell* – not only manifested in the gaps between the panels, but also in the incisions of the murder victims represented – " (Ali 611) will always inspire speculations about the Ripper, for Moore created this 'hybrid' alternate world narrative precisely to inflict "a mortal wound on history" (Ali 611): Moore means to save his work from "becoming a teleological narrative with an underlying meaning" (Ali 611). Ironically enough, Moore's tale about one obsessed with narrative completion offers no ending but rather inundates us with narrative possibilities. Moore needs only to spread rumors about Gull, the captor of time, to free time: conspiracy theories and alternate histories alike will reinvigorate the flow of time, or rather of divergent times.

Parochial Psychogeography

From Hell is an alternate world narrative (an alternate reading of history) that frees time. The prison of time is of course the fourth dimension, a teleological narrative which compels narrative closure. The fourth dimension is also a closed circuit of meaning, the spatial materialization of a nationalistic feeling; it is Gull's vision and psychogeography: the assumption of English exceptionality gives it its *genius loci*, and the workings of the patriotic mind its geography. Gull spatially conceives of Englishness for a unifying purpose, although those it seeks to unify may or may not affirm it. Those subjugated to Gull's History may in fact defy it. Moore, for one, re-interprets Gull the Ripper and in so doing, he writes his own English story, his own alternate history.

From Hell is in this sense a work of speculative fiction purposed to alienate an exceptional Englishness, the premise for a Real English History. Called 'the fourth dimension' in *From Hell*, the Real is said to be a Plato's Cave arresting all shadows for an identity-preserving purpose: within lies the workings of a phallocentric mind which fabricate the idea of an exceptional Englishness to connect all English times. Speculative fictions such as Gull the Ripper's recall the Apollonian desire to seek rational meaning by writing History, and yet they are written in the most violent, Dionysian, spirit. Gull's Apollonian, rational narrative will come undone, nonetheless, if its inclination towards Dionysus is intensified through parody and satire. In *From Hell*, for instance, Moore unravels the fiction that is the fourth dimension by ridiculing Gull for his egotism. Moore reminds us that Gull's hunger for blood is far from extraordinary. In the end, Gull, though the Ripper, is no more egotistical than the next English subject who also craves an illustrious account of history validating an exceptional Englishness. Ego compels the

'exceptional' English subject to embrace historical causality in all its simplicity and so to overlook the horrors of colonialism, or the rampant social exploitations occurring in Whitechapel, the East End of nineteenth-century London where the Ripper murdered in cold blood. Moore's *From Hell* is, among other things, an affront to such egotism, a subversive presence in the unified time of Gull's imagining, and a satirical remark on any nationalistic endeavor to stop time, perhaps by means of writing *H*istory. The Ripper of Moore's imagining embodies a conspiracy theory ill placed in the English narrative, above all: he is a complication, a redundant puzzle piece, as such a symptom of Dionysian excess which defies any rational ordering of history so that speculations about the past will yet be possible. This Dionysian energy is the mark of SF in *From Hell*, a work that enables Moore to see (English) history differently while envisioning alternate (English) worlds.

Anarchy in *V for Vendetta*: Remembering and Archiving

Psychogeography is a means to invent meaning in *From Hell*; in *V for Vendetta*, however, it is a new way of seeing – an *anarchist* way of seeing London. The anarchist V re-envisions London as a palimpsest where the latent energy of anarchy leaks through to the surface and corrodes the city's fascist rule from within. Psychogeography is the consequent convergence of the above and the below.

One may also describe psychogeography as it appears in *V for Vendetta* thus: in the graphic novel, V's ambition is to induce disorder in a fascist London where order and the feeling of content appear to pervade in tandem. He allows discontent to resurface alongside other repressed feelings, thereby destroying the appearance of order so

painstakingly maintained in London. This act of anarchy gives London a 'new face,' a transparent surface revealing what is below, in other words a palimpsest. The long-standing *dialectical* struggle between the above and the below, or the fascist and the anarchist, has rendered London 'psychogeographic' just as V has hoped.

'Dialecticism' here refers to a staunch rejection of the ruling power, a political gesture which finds representation in the Guys Fawkes mask on the graphic novel's cover. The mask of course recalls the Gunpowder Plot, i.e., the initiative to "install a Catholic government that could have countered the Protestant persecution of the Catholics in the early modern British state" (Croteau 95). However, "[a]s anti-Catholic agitation and historical memory subsided, Guy Fawkes took on the roles of all purpose bogeyman and carnival grotesque" (Cressy qtd. in Croteau 98). The word 'guy' is a "free floating signifier" (156), as Lewis Call, too, has reminded us; 'V,' in particular, is powerful against fascism because he is the "all-purpose" signifier that gives anarchy an alluring ambiguity.[18] In face of this rather liberal reading of anarchy, one cannot help but wonder if the thesis that is the prevailing order, i.e. fascism, loses its specificity in meaning alongside the antithesis. That is to say, is it possible that both thesis and antithesis become ambiguous in their struggle with each other? Call seems to suggest so, in any case, when he argues that the Parliament in the graphic novel "can represent the excesses of state power as easily as it can symbolise that convenient abstraction, 'liberal democracy'" (169). If the meaning of V's anarchism is as unclear as the symbolic value of the Parliament, then it would seem that *V for Vendetta* is set in a world of free-floating

[18] Ellen Crowell identifies the hostile political climate which made V a free floating signifier far more readily. She reads V as the "synthesis of aestheticism, decadence, and terrorism" (43), or the aftermath of the Wilde trials [more broadly Britain's history of persecuting the gay community] […] retrofitted to the dystopian fin-de-siècle of 1990s London" (42).

signifiers indeed. The only certain claim one can make about V's politics in this instance is that it germinated in the wake of a London-wide dialectical struggle, that the outward order of the fascist regime has stimulated the growth of an indomitable creativity, which later inspires V to wreak havoc. This creativity originates in the part of London underground identified as 'the Shadow Gallery,' and it manifests itself as anarchy in Moore's story about V's vendetta.

Of course V cannot be denied his significance as the messenger of this subterranean spring of creativity, a kind of 'heaven below.' He is the ghost that haunts those living above ground to resurrect among them the memories and emotions repressed for the consolidation of a fascist regime. As such, V embodies a repressed content stored underground, but always poised to invade the world above. Above ground, V is the agent of chaos who intends to disturb any semblance of political order: I cannot emphasize enough that any appearance of a political order in *V for Vendetta* is illusory. As Di Liddo reminds us, the British government in the graphic novel means to stage "a nonexistent, deceitful prosperity, and V thus prepares his disguise, because he, too, will start off a spectacular performance" (114).[19] And yet this supposed common ground between anarchy and government does not make psychogeography any less dialectical. In *V for Vendetta* at least, anarchy is antithetical to government and performativity to pretense. The fascist government's pretense to order annihilates meaning. Order seems less a pretense and more a reality for those who willfully overlook their distress in the wake of fascist rule. Fascist leaders need only project a semblance of prosperity to comfort the people. In the graphic novel's fascist setting, 'pretense' connotes blindness, repression,

[19] Both sides also show a strong commitment to theater, partly because of "the magnitude of theatrical tradition in Great Britain" (Di Loddo 167). Theatre, Di Liddo says, has been considered popular entertainment at least since the Middle Ages (167).

superficial comfort, and simulation. Those fascism comforts experience inertia in all their creative pursuits.

Performativity, in contrast, refers to a collective exercise in creativity. The people agree to envision a network of new meanings together; they engage in meaningful dialogues in order not to make their peace with the government's pretenses. In *V for Vendetta*, it is the pressing need for dialogues that inspires V to 'perform' anarchy: V may well be the 'exemplary anarchist'; nonetheless, to study anarchy only through the character of V is to overlook that V was born of the oppressive silence that fascism fostered, or that his anarchism is liberating because he is the manifestation of something greater than himself, like the subversive voices audible only in subterranean London. V transcends the level of the individual inasmuch as his presence suggests that voices, dialogue, and community are still possible in spite of fascism. Thus, to dismiss *V for Vendetta* on the grounds that its (anti-)hero is an "amoral individualis[t]" who uses "some of the very same tactics of grotesque violence and torture as does the fascist regime he is attacking" (Croteau 91, 93) is to willfully overlook its dystopian political context – one so aggravating that in face of it, no rational deliberation on how best to defeat fascism seems possible. V owes his significance not to any plan of action he proposes but instead to the repressed content he embodies. Passing moral judgments on V is futile in that he is a symbol rather than a person capable of thought; V is not a moral agent.

I would even go so far as to argue that V's identity matters only because V is born of a series of dialectical struggles. Anarchy emerges in resistance to fascism and performativity to pretense. Anarchy is the creative impulse which destroys the comfort of certainty implicit in fascism. In *V for Vendetta*, anarchy is portrayed as a sort of landmine

hidden in London while the Shadow Gallery, the base of anarchy, is a spectral presence within London: anarchy and the Shadow Gallery both are external to the fascist order in London but integral to the Londoners' silent indignation. The underworld is a discordant element woven into the social fabric of London and a geographical expression of anarchy. This subterranean domain is psychogeography as well, for anarchy (which it represents) appeals to the volatile emotions of the oppressed and discontented. The Shadow Gallery is both internal and external to London in this regard.

This section sheds light on some paradoxes which this dialecticism spawns and which, I think, defines psychogeography for Moore. In reference to *V for Vendetta*, I argue that some dialectical pairs (say, above and below, or order and chaos) threaten to converge in the Shadow Gallery and so leave their marks on the face of London. The Shadow Gallery conjoins the above and the below and so becomes a palimpsest; anarchy, its referent, also assumes the paradoxical meaning of 'orchestrated chaos.' I read psychogeography as a failed attempt at achieving synthesis – and such failures might not be undesirable, since they check our impulse to see the dialectical turn per se as solution. Moore's psychogeography does not explain 'Englishness' but rather stimulates dialogues where 'Englishness' is concerned. It is anarchy that enables these dialogues, moreover. V imprints his anarchist vision onto Londonscape to induce a general feeling of disorientation; to this end, he implants traces of the Shadow Gallery around London to put into question the meaning of government and of London itself. What cultural meaning could be attributed to London, V asks, if we are to set aside the government's teachings in the spirit of anarchy?

In *V for Vendetta*, the Shadow Gallery is anarchy rendered in an architectural form; it is the blueprint of anarchy which V maps onto London in order to cause widespread panic and confusion. That anarchy could be mapped and so fitted into a concrete structure would seem a paradox for most but not for V, who evidently believes that order inheres in anarchic disorder. In fact, his anarchist ponderings germinated in the Shadow Gallery, a memory archive. V introduces the Shadow Gallery to Evey as his home and his creative invention. He says to Evey: "Do you like it? I built it myself, you know" (18). The reader then follows Evey's gaze to inspect the site where "all the books, all the films, all the music" (18) are stacked in a canopy of shelves. V's gloved fingers brush across the volumes on display, from Goethe's *Faust* to Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, while he makes the bold claim of having "built" an archive of works antecedent to his existence. V did not create all the arts per se, but he did build the Shadow Gallery in the sense that he created a context wherein these cultural artifacts became related, stored as they are in a library that exists in the interest of anarchy. V 'built' the Shadow Gallery so that these art works would be re-interpreted from his perspective as an anarchist who, paradoxically, organizes chaos to unleash it later. Here chaos and order prevail in tandem in that the latter inheres in the former: anarchy, V explains, means order in the absence of leaders rather than "riot and uproar" (195), and therefore it means orchestrated chaos. The word 'anarchist' here refers to one who organizes chaos. This antinomy (i.e. a contradiction not entirely irreconcilable) of order and chaos defines V's anarchy and so gives shape to the Shadow Gallery, its signifier in the London space: the Shadow Gallery keeps rampant emotions in check, hidden underground but nevertheless in anticipation of an imminent political revolution. Chaos is always below the surface of order, always

ready to make its appearance upon the surface. The subterranean Shadow Gallery only intimates the vertical structure of V's anarchist narrative.

It is worthwhile to pause here and consider exactly what 'vertical narrative' the Shadow Gallery is supposed to represent. In *V for Vendetta*, order is 'over-ground' whereas chaos is underground: the two stand opposed in this vertical arrangement while the dialectical tension therein spurs V's anarchist drama. Order is implicit in V's anarchy in that V does not suddenly wreak havoc but keeps the promise of disorder in dramatic suspense. To put it plainly, V aims not to trade chaos for order but rather to counteract the government's repressive order with the coherence, that is, the orderliness, of the dramatic art.[20] V does mean to disrupt the current established order; yet, even so, his anarchy follows the proper diegetic order and in fact consists of a beginning, a middle, and an end. In the mid-section of the graphic novel, "The Vicious Cabaret," V buttresses the cohesion of his narrative with a song which summarizes the atrocities of the fascist government: "[t]here's sex and death and human grime in monochrome for one thin dime, and at least the trains all run on time but they don't go anywhere" (89).

Because a fascist order depends upon the sterilization of emotions, a fascist regime such as the one in Moore's graphic novel flattens the most heart-rending aspects of life into cheap photographic images. Only those desensitized to pain would accept the government's unjustified oppression which, for them, is a social order imposed with no conceivable benefits, not unlike a social narrative wanting a purpose. Anarchy arises as the counterpoint to this mechanical flattening of collective trauma, consequently.

[20] Aristotle argues in *Poetics* that any narrative of substance – a tragedy, specifically – must depict "an action that is complete, and whole, and of a certain magnitude" (10). A complete action often unfolds in three stages: the beginning, the middle, and the end. This unfolding of a complete action is said to give a narrative "magnitude and order," and, finally, "beauty" (Aristotle 10).

Anarchy dramatizes sex, death, and human grime – that which is emotive and, in this regard, dramatic – and reminds the masses of the need for a social narrative with a purpose: why do they endure fascism? The people must experience anew the emotions which give the stories of their lives narrative impetus, but which they surrendered when their fascist leaders "abandoned their scripts" "in the glare of the nuclear footlights" (31). The people succumbed to the "nuclear footlights," in other words their dread of a possible nuclear war (possibly the Cold War), and gave in to the cold rationalism of fascism. The language of fascism helped the people rationalize and repress their fears, imagine them dissipated. In return, the anarchist must orchestrate a drama to trigger a cathartic release so that the people could see past the "glare of the nuclear footlights" and pulverize the fascist establishment they elected.

The Shadow Gallery is the ideal setting for V's anarchist drama because it is a depository for collective memories, the most potent emotional triggers for the masses. The Shadow Gallery offers pleasure in the form of art, as well as pain in its faithful reproduction of traumatic memories. To the reader's knowledge, the Shadow Gallery houses not only a library but also a reproduction of Larkhill, the labor camp to which the country's outlaws (those who were gay, for example) were once sent. (There high-risk, often lethal, scientific experiments were performed on the inmates.) The reader also sees that V and Evey's expeditions around the Gallery follow a vertical configuration, which complements the shape of V's anarchist narrative. In anticipation of his death, V shows his successor Evey around the Shadow Gallery, leading her up a flight of winding stairs and assuring her that she will know the place "in all its lengths and depths" (221). The verticality of anarchist knowledge, as evoked by the image of the staircase, recalls Frye's

observation that different stories often are arranged in the order of their significance to aid the reader in reaching an epiphany: "[…] in mounting a ladder it is the last step which is the supremely important one, and we are reminded of this by the Greek word for ladder, *klimax*" (Frye 153).[21] The ladder here resembles a tower in that it, too, points upwards towards heaven, the putative climax of worldly existence (Frye 153). Heaven here means epiphany and euphoria. One experiences a surge of joy and attains heaven when one's knowledge sees a new height.

The Shadow Gallery contains a repressed knowledge composed of feelings and senses which, in *V for Vendetta*, ascend towards the surface to honor V's promise to "bring the house [the fascist establishment] down" (31). These shadows possess those above to induce a general catharsis which infects the masses with emotions in tandem with new views of governance and social order. But these enlightening shadows also cause chaos when they unexpectedly appear where they are forbidden – where emotions should be purged. A correlation does exist between enlightenment and chaos here, and it manifests itself in the specific examples of Evey and the detective Eric Finch: notably, both characters *feel* their ways 'home' to the Shadow Gallery. The traumatic memory of Larkhill inspires their respective epiphany (or climax) because, in the process of remembering, each becomes reacquainted with emotions that were repressed and archived in the Shadow Gallery. In Evey's instance, it is V who subjects her to a simulated experience of the camp. V does so out of some desire to free Evey from the state of contentment, the "prison" (V's word 168) in which fascism placed her to make

[21] Frye's specific words are that "the different stories were connected by stairs, usually winding stairs, so that the ascent would be in a spiral. There were winding stairs in Solomon's temple, even though it was only three stories high (I Kings 6:8)" (153).

her pliant and wary of any promise of catharsis. Having then mistaken simulation for reality, Evey is forever 'unhinged' by the newly awakened emotions of pain, frustration, and anger – at V in particular, when she discovers his part in her experience of 'tragedy' at the simulated camp. These feelings finally trigger her rebirth. Immediately after the ordeal V puts her through, Evey walks up to the roof of V's hiding place, naked as a newborn baby. Just as she is about to receive a baptism of sorts there in the rain, she speaks of her newly attained epiphany that "everything's […] different" (172). Evey – Eve – is the first woman in V's brave new world, the first to learn of V's plans and likely the first heir to V's anarchist throne.

Finch achieves a similar rebirth but by means of an LSD-induced hallucination. He must become V, the inmate in Room Five, and experience V's tragedy before he can be freed. Thereupon he realizes that he has subjected himself to the government's control, that he will be free if he pronounces himself so in spite of the government. At this moment of epiphany, the walls around Finch explode, and Finch escapes the simulacrum of Larkhill, naked as a newborn baby as well. He screams "FREEEEEE!" (215) in euphoria, as he runs towards Victoria Station, which conceals the Shadow Gallery, for V the "Land of Do-As-You-Please" (195). In his cathartic euphoria, Finch feels a psychic energy channeled towards the Shadow Gallery. He then discovers the home of anarchism, quite inexplicably. The very emotions which direct Finch towards the Shadow Gallery obscure its layout, for this release of pent-up psychic energy compromises any rational means by which they may trace the Shadow Gallery. In *V for Vendetta,* however, feelings delimit one's grasp of geography. V is for Vendetta, while the desire for revenge fans V's anarchist narrative, giving it its impetus. The persona V communicates an idea of anarchy

tinged with a feeling of resentment towards the established order. The Shadow Gallery represents the same but only in the form of architecture. (Indeed V often stresses that he is an idea, that as such he cannot be destroyed; see 236.) How then might one describe the relationship between V and the Shadow Gallery, the two physical manifestations of a repressed content? On the one hand, V is the ghost of the Shadow Gallery, who lurks above ground to compel anyone and everyone to remember. V is the idea of anarchy, something Evey and Finch could experience and *become*. That is to say, V is the repressed content that the two have repossessed; he is the shadowy past that lingers in the present to impel an apocalyptic future which revives the emotions that fascism had extinguished and so brings forth a new beginning. The Shadow Gallery, on the other hand, is the reservoir of repressed emotions which gave birth to V and, in this sense, precedes V; the basis of anarchy is that which V embodies, or the whole to which V is a part.

The Shadow Gallery becomes meaningful when juxtaposed with anything that can be rationalized. It signifies anything that appears irrational – any emotion for instance – and yet it does not signify senseless disorder, since it is a part of an anarchist narrative which follows a strict diegetic order to convey a clear political statement. Although the Shadow Gallery precedes V, it remains a part of V's drama. In spatial terms, the Shadow Gallery is the narrative climax of anarchy submerged in the London Underground ('the tube'), always prepared to resolve the problem that is the fascist influence above. The Shadow Gallery is the product of a subterranean destructive imagination, a Dionsyian creativity. It not only attests to the vertical structure of V's anarchist drama but also exemplifies psychogeography, i.e., the space to which anarchism lends its meaning, and

as such an outlet for the emotions which fascism has stifled. To delve further into this connection between the Shadow Gallery and the tube: the Shadow Gallery is a dream-world consisting of a proliferation of lines which leads to "improbable destinations all over the world" (Ackroyd 172) – much like the tube as Peter Ackroyd describes it. Trains may serve "the military man" well, as Mr. Prothero, the Voice of the government in the novel, recognizes (19). Trains "block" (Prothero's word 19) civilians from the company of military men, who, owing to their fine sense of purpose, appreciate railed journeys towards predetermined destinations. In the subterranean realm of the Shadow Gallery, however, trains are predestined to burst through any blockage. When V asks Evey to give him "a Viking's funeral" (260) with his last breath, he delivers his ultimate transgressive act and, in this fashion, introduces his grand finale. V asks Evey to place his body in a train filled with explosives and then to send the train towards the part of the Victoria Line that is blocked "'twixt Whitehall and St. James" (261) – where the Palace of Westminster is located: quite like the instigators of the Gunpowder Plot, V means to attack London's political heart, to clear its clogged arteries so to speak. Unlike his predecessors, however, V executes the task of unleashing chaos with surgical precision. He monitors all movements in the subterranean domain, ensuring that the imagination flows freely but remains guided by the network of lines that makes up the London tube system. As Ackroyd's notion of the "proliferation of lines" suggests, the underground is host not to chaos but to thinking structures that are lined and finally tied into a knot. The Shadow Gallery, like V, maintains an order that takes on the semblance of chaos.

V's drama ends with the following dialectical emphasis: memories of pain and pleasure must be archived together, if only for juxtapositional effects. Furthermore, chaos

must be integral to order and vice versa, if the effects of a Dionysian creativity are to be fully realized. In a word, fascism empowers anarchy. Fascism asserts the cold (Apollonian) reasoning that imposes order above ground while inciting the latent desire for vendetta among the people. The subterranean Shadow Gallery exists to give this dialectical tension a physical form, for it is the Dionysian creative energy which seeps through to the world above. This integration of the above and the below invigorates what Frye calls "the poetic imagination" (12), stimulated both by ascent "into the sky" or descent "into the depths of the earth or sea" (151). Ascent "intensif[ies]" one's "consciousness" whereas descent provokes "other forms of awareness, such as fantasy and dream" (Frye 154); the two constitute a dialectic put in a vertical order. Londoners must traverse along the length of the tower of knowledge for creative inspiration or what V calls 'drama.'

For V, the dramatic moment entails a breach of the above/below dichotomy; the climax sees parts of the underworld in the world above so that our anarchist hero is simultaneously above and below. This dialectic conflict marks dramatic climax in *V for Vendetta* in that it threatens to flatten the implied hierarchy (between fascism and the people's anarchist movement, particularly) in the narrative's vertical structure. The Shadow Gallery, with its dynamic emotional content, assumes a haunting presence above ground; its many shadows intrude upon the surface to suggest a breach and give rise to a palimpsest, which gives London the appearance of a Rorschach test. The shadows underneath are fleeting presences on the surface, and yet these elusive elements determine our impressions of London. Ackroyd has called this effect of a palimpsest a "profoundly egalitarian, or flattening, process" (158), given that the Underground is at

once part of the oppressive "worktime nexus of contemporary capitalism" (159), and "a deep pool of individual solitudes," where 'I' is now indistinguishable from 'them'" (158). Nonetheless this collective identification with the individual, be it "V" or some other, has made rebirth possible because it has triggered the loss of a given identity. The Underground, or the Shadow Gallery in *V for Vendetta*, importantly serves as the crucible for disparate experiences of London. V's transgressivism frustrates our sense of direction for the envisioning of a London palimpsest, whose appearance varies from minute to minute and from eye to eye.

If the Shadow Gallery is the geographical expression of an idea, it is an ambiguous one. One might even say that in *V for Vendetta*, Moore offers an open admission of ignorance regarding the meaning of London in the form of the Shadow Gallery. If an expression of V's anarchism, the Shadow Gallery purposes to confuse and does not therefore prescribe any way of knowing London or any particular meaning of government. But the Shadow Gallery *is* psychogeography – a way of knowing, a perception, an epistemological lens. It signifies resentment against the current social order in tandem with the drive to reduce the privileged to the level of those 'below' them.

To put it simply, the Shadow Gallery anticipates the erasure of the distinction between 'above' and 'below'; it represents the force below which, at the end of V's anarchist drama, will emerge above to effect such erasure and create a palimpsestic London. Perhaps it is more accurate to say that the cathartic end of V's drama engenders this palimpsest, whereupon repressed feelings assault the consciousness. This emotionally charged palimpsest is psychogeography – that is, the spatial iteration of the anarchist notion that order always underlies disorder. Anarchy needs not fail order even if

it does connote disorder: V puts this understanding of anarchy to the test by attempting to manipulate unruly emotions through drama, with the intention of showing that order and disorder co-exist in dialectical tension. A viable framework of knowing must heed this dialecticism, and, on this ground, the anarchist V decides to overthrow fascism which favors extreme control.

The existence of the Shadow Gallery is imperative to the rise of the anarchist palimpsest, for it is responsible for unleashing shadows which corrode our conscious knowledge; it is, moreover, the subterranean force destined to take over the surface of the earth, as such the perfect reflection of the vertical narrative structure of V's anarchism. The explosions (of repressed memories) V plans around London bring Londoners epiphany in a loud bang, leaving them feeling disoriented. Such confusion is necessary because anarchism does not presume to an 'endgame.' Anarchy entails the transgression of boundaries and the defiance of fascist predetermination, although any such transgressive feat could offer no comfort of resolution. In *V for Vendetta*, heaven is not one's destination but rather the source of confusion which necessitates a further quest for knowledge. Here heaven is located underground in Victoria Station, while enlightenment is the annihilation of any existing knowledge. The Shadow Gallery finally negates Gull's assumption in *From Hell* that anyone who practises psychogeography could achieve transcendence. The fourth dimension cannot exist if the notions of 'above' and 'below' are unified. One cannot then claim to see the whole, be it English history or identity, from above.

The Utopian Quest for the Fourth Dimension in *Jerusalem* (2016)

> "Turning and turning in the widening gyre
> The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
> Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
> Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
> The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere […]"
> The Second Coming," William Butler Yeats

Moore asks once again in *Jerusalem* (2016): what is the fourth dimension if it is not simply time, but a spatial visualization thereof? Spatially conceived, time would seem to unfold vertically rather than horizontally, synchronically rather than diachronically: if time is arranged vertically, would not the fourth dimension represent temporal transcendence, in other words a point of elevation, as Gull puts it in *From Hell*? Yet Moore's psychogeography – the culmination of his anarchist vision, as it were – does not suggest that time is static, or that the fourth dimension only hovers above London, the putative center of England; it rather concerns a structural collapse and the emergence of a palimpsestic England, a new Jerusalem of an anarchist evocation. Anarchy has been set loose upon the world, and what is above has collided with what is below.[22] Moore's Jerusalem makes manifest the movements of time, attesting to the convergence of the fourth dimension and Northampton, England, thereby of the transcendent and the empirical.

In this sense, Moore's Jerusalem is a palimpsest, a mine of utopian visions but not truly a place, though Moore would have us situate Jerusalem in Northampton. In Moore's 2016 novel, 'Jerusalem' signifies the visions psychogeographers may gain in Northampton. Psychogeographers, moreover, are those who wander around Northampton, inspecting the fissures on its land. These are visionaries who believe that

[22] Moore makes *Jerusalem* referential to, say, *From Hell* and *V for Vendetta* by virtue of his deliberation of the fourth dimension, and his inclusion of chapter titles such as "Do as You Darn Well Please."

'Jerusalem' is concealed within these cracks, that 'Jerusalem' (whatever they think it is) will offer new insights into the meaning of Englishness. Northampton in contrast is the place, the spatial totality which must implode before Jerusalem can burst forth.

As impossible as it is to explain psychogeography in absolute terms, Moore has previously visualized it, spatially, as the Shadow Gallery. Now Moore is to envision psychogeography as Jerusalem – a loosely unified, disintegrating structure, and, as such, a divine place in the eye of the beholder, whose consciousness is also disintegrating: the consciousness follows and imitates any movement it perceives in its surroundings. In a word, Moore tries to envision Jerusalem as a utopia that unravels itself, like the poet William Blake did before him. In early reviews of the novel, critics invariably take note of Moore's ambition to invent an entire cosmology, like Blake. Not everyone took kindly to his ambitions, however. Stuart Kelly of *The Guardian* writes:

> *Jerusalem* contains a great many inventive and instructive cosmologies. Let me offer my humbler own. Most cultures describe an aboriginal chaos, and into this plenitude intervenes a figure—call it God, Demiurge, Artificer, Urizen—who gives it form, distinction, coherence, elegance and even meaning. An equally good synonym might be Editor (n.p.)

Kelly nevertheless concedes that *Jerusalem* is not entirely lacking in structure: "The final chapter gives us Alma's [an artist] exhibition, where the titles of the paintings correspond with the titles of the individual chapters in another one of the crisscrossings found throughout the novel" (n.p).

The ending, then, is where Urizen exercises his rational influence and amasses the different narrative strands, while *Jerusalem* is where Moore experiments with orchestrating chaos à la V. If V must wreak havoc for his anarchist utopia, 'the Land-of-Do-as-You-Please,' to materialize, Moore must likewise imagine chaos to arrive at the

center of meaning and so to understand Englishness. So Moore envisages Jerusalem as a disorderly universe in his novel that bears the same name. Here psychogeography is a mode of writing which gives the ideality of Jerusalem materiality, although anything psychogeography conjures – Gull's vision of the fourth dimension, for instance – is necessarily a distortion of the divine truth. Because the divine must be inexplicable, what is explicable cannot be divine. Much in the same vein, anything that assumes a physical form is a distortion of the so-called true meaning of Englishness. In representation, linguistic or otherwise, nothing could be held sacred as truth, or as the key to realizing utopia once and for all.

I must emphasize that Jerusalem is Moore's vision of a 'nihilating' (i.e. that which negates what it posits, according to Jean-Paul Sartre's definition) utopia, as well as psychogeography made manifest. The connections critics have tried to make between the divine (Jerusalem) and the everyday (Northampton, England) should give us a sense of why Moore's psychogeography pertains to utopia's ruination. Andrew Ervin of *Denver Post* writes that in the novel, "language breaks down and then gets more or less put back together again, as Moore illustrates most acutely in a virtuosic chapter that at once pays homage to and parodies the gobbledygook of 'Finnegans Wake'-era James Joyce." Ervin's assumption that any linguistic structure must undergo an internal reconfiguration is decidedly post-structuralist, what with Derrida's insight that "structure – or rather the structurality of structure" (1) must "begin to be thought" (2) and "rupture[d]" (2). Ervin alludes to this notion of rupture precisely when he suggests that language must be broken and "put together again": language before it is thus 'disfigured' always has "a point of presence, a fixed origin" (Derrida 1) to which it owes its structurality; according to

Derrida, this "presence" is the center which "orient[s,] balance[s], and organize[s] the structure" (1). To re-structure language is therefore to displace its center, its "*eidos, arché, telos, energeia, ousia* (essence, existence, substance, subject) *aletheia*, transcendentality, consciousness, or conscience, God, man, and so forth" (italics in the original; Derrida 2). That is to say, language still enables structure and creates meaning, but it also rejects any notion of a regulating center. Henceforth the divine is extrinsic rather than intrinsic to language; freed from the confines of language, the divine is now opposed to structure and any meaning it may create.

Moore's cosmology is in effect not truly divine, nor is it truly "the beyond," but only its counterfeit. In this sense, Robert J. Wiersema of *The National Post* is not entirely correct when he says:

> The notion of Northampton as a kind of holy city, a "Jerusalem builded here, Among these dark Satanic Mills," as Blake would have it, reveals itself as Moore explores the cosmological world beyond that blasted half-mile, from the galleries of the Upstairs (the world of the Builders) to the grey spectral worlds of the recently departed – all of time accessible, forward and back, a world of hidden staircases, time storms and strange fauna. It's a world not of faith, but of physics, of folded space and tubular time. (n.p.)

To be sure, neither Blake's nor Moore's Jerusalem is truly the beyond, for each is a figment of an earthly imagination. Nevertheless, the divine mayhem that is Jerusalem must be imagined if the political totalities of the twenty-first century are to be challenged. If the divine – i.e., the transcendental meaning which no structure can possibly capture – is beyond ideology, the only way to surpass ideology would be to imagine the divine *in vain*. In this regard, psychogeography is the impossible endeavor to envision the beyond as though it were a mappable space. In *From Hell*, Gull plays at being a psychogeographer but without understanding the futility of countering ideology with

geography, here another form of fixity. Indeed the psychogeographer must be conscious of the limits of structure, geographical or otherwise; he must understand as well that the center can never hold in a world imagined by means of psychogeography, that this world must give way to prepare for the rise of other centers and other worlds. In short, Jerusalem is realized only to be destroyed, 'psychogeographically': the process of attaining Jerusalem or any other imagined utopia is long and meandering; Jerusalem itself must break apart before it can reveal new utopian insights, alongside new meanings of Englishness.[23] Moore pursues psychogeography with this understanding, and for the express purpose of opposing what Stuart Hall calls neoliberal authoritarianism (as explained in the Introductory Chapter). The English Jerusalem that is Northampton is Moore's divine medium, his utopia in contradistinction to the rest of neoliberal, capitalist Britain.

This final portion of the chapter concerns Moore's conception of utopia, a complete structure which continues to exist by means of perpetual implosions. Moore's psychogeography evokes the kind of (utopian) structure whose center willy-nilly does not hold, or a whole that is internally fissured, if not to say incomplete.

In *Jerusalem*, psychogeography is structure, architecture – the materialization of a thought structure in space: it is not by coincidence that the novel opens with Alma's report of an ongoing construction project overseen by the Vernall family. The Vernalls must ensure that rising lines converge, "which Alma thought meant something similar to

[23] Lyman Tower Sargent argues that utopia has been stigmatized only because it has been given the connotation of perfection. Utopia is not perfect, however; it is merely an "explanation of how the better society came into being" (7). In this sense, utopia is theory – an idea which generates sometimes fantastical images of a better future. Utopia is a process above all: to make his case, Sargent refers us to Frederick L. Polak, who wrote, "We will view human society and culture as being magnetically *pulled* towards a future fulfillment of their own preceding and prevailing, idealistic images of the future, as well as being *pushed* from behind by their own realistic past" (italics in the original; Sargent 25).

'come together', so she could imagine that it was perhaps an octopus-armed junction such as she supposed you might get up inside a wooden church dome, bringing all the curving, varnished beams into a clever knot there at the middle" (Loc 203). That is, the lines proliferate inwards, finally organizing themselves around the center that is the church dome. The center gathers and so relates something otherwise unrelated. The church is an architectural structure, as such a product of the mind and a vindication of its expressive ability; it is an organ extended from the mind to its environs – a prosthetic of sorts intended to impute meaning to its chaotic surroundings, like the maddening tangling of lines. Chaos is fitted into this architecture, this human conception planted in space, so that all the lines, all the disparate perceptions and notions, converge there to form a thought structure.

This 'knot of thoughts' atop the church is not unlike the Shadow Gallery – "a dream-world consisting of a proliferation of lines" (see section on *V for Vendetta*). The top of the church and V's subterranean dream world both are restrictive structures where meaning, i.e., the meaning of (Moore's) anarchy, originates. Moore conceals only Jerusalem from the reader's sight, however, choosing to visualize it in words rather than in images. Language nevertheless gives Jerusalem enough materiality that it does not elude our imagination as it does our sight. Language gives 'Jerusalem' form, but language itself is limited, so any form it creates must bear flaws. In this instance, language is not unlike a punctured screen before us: it is very true that one cannot see beyond one's horizon, but precisely because it is so, one hopes to 'expand one's horizon' in order to see Jerusalem better, through the widened holes on the screen of language. Words thereby challenge us to stretch the limits of the mind so as to see divine Jerusalem,

which leaks through to our consciousness but never completely exposes itself to us, like fragments of a map of an unknown territory.[24] Words evoke Jerusalem, but Jerusalem reveals itself only where words fail.

I will explain this 'stretching of the mind' vis-à-vis Alma's description of St. Peter's (located in Northampton). The dome of St. Peter's signifies the heights to which human intelligence may soar – the limits of the mind if put differently. Since our 'cleverness' does not soar beyond the dome, any rational structure like architecture must delimit our capacity to understand. What human conception is more structured than language? It is impossible to speak of the restrictions of language without recalling Derrida, who writes:

> The *belief* in an experience of death *as such*, as well as the discourse crediting this belief to an experience of death *itself* and as such, would depend, on the contrary, upon an ability to speak and to name…consequently, since death refuses itself *as such* to testimony and thereby marks even what refuses it as such both to language and to what exceeds language, it is there that any border between the animal and the *Dasien* ['there-being,' being in context, or being-in-the-world] of speaking man would become unassignable. (italics in the original; 36, 37)

The words "as such" already demarcate the borders of rational understanding. Because death (for example) cannot be known *a priori*, we chase away its 'true meaning' even as we acknowledge death as an experience 'beyond us' and name it 'death as such.' What we pronounce to be 'death as such' is in fact death in a mediated form – a meaning which evades language, and which language yet tries to capture. Blake's cosmology and Moore's furthering of it in *Jerusalem* both convey this mediated meaning, which cannot have universal application as a matter of course, since each offers its own reason and

[24] Indeed, even visionaries have their limits. V expounds an anarchist vision which, somewhat counter-intuitively, perhaps, does not serve any political goals. This vision therefore does not take into account that a revolution may give rise to "the land of Take-What-You-Want" rather than that of "Do-As-You-Please" (195); it does not address, either, the (obvious?) question of how social order can be maintained in the absence of a government, an ideal V himself stipulates (195).

epistemology. Each is entirely independent as a structure/unit of meaning, and each, as such, is entirely restricted, fallible.

Even so, Moore expands language in hopes of attaining the *as such*. He borrows Blake's fantastical language to re-imagine Englishness 'as such.' Englishness, then, is anything but Gull's heritage fantasy in *From Hell*, or the fascist order in *V for Vendetta*; it certainly is not an essentialist identity, but rather an invented meaning that must confront its fallibility and embrace, in consequence, even that which contradicts its reason, the irrational. Englishness as such, if ridden with contradictions, will become an abstraction which signifies many things all at once and thereby nothing in particular. Yet Englishness *will* exist as a notion, *as such* something autonomous, something to which boundaries are assigned. In *Jerusalem,* Moore tries to envision Englishness *as such* which, as he is well aware, is beyond language, for anything *as such* must be a host of contradictions, everything and therefore an indeterminate something, or else nothing in particular.

What then constitutes the border of meaning, the horizon that needs expanding in *Jerusalem*? Moore's psychogeography – i.e., how Moore contrives to perceive the divine – must be understood before his vision of the *as such*, namely Jerusalem. Before we speak of Jerusalem, let us consider the image of a banknote in the novel, which, like the church dome, signifies a way of seeing. In Book Three of *Jerusalem*, Alma Vernall (the descendent of a family of visionary architects) presents what might be called a portrait of the English economy at work in a public art exhibition. The painting portrays a banknote which, as Alma's brother Michael perceives, accumulates "more absurdist details as he studied it" (Loc 26462). Chief among his discoveries is that the "vaguely amphibious

looking" face of Adam Smith – the eighteenth-century Scottish philosopher and economist, or the "capitalist visionary" (Loc 26429) as Michael calls him – is a fragment within the banknote. From Michael's perspective, Alma's artwork depicts an internal breakdown which compels him, the viewer, to look within the image for the elements which make up the "self-regulating mechanism" (Mayr 5) of modern capitalism – a "system of natural liberty" (Mayr 12) to correct the injustices of mercantilism and slavery, even, according to Smith in *Wealth of Nations.*

Smith figures in Alma's representation of the English economy only as prominently as he does on the £20 note: the Bank of England announced in 2007 that the banknote was to feature a portrait of the economist, who, even now, is celebrated for having uncovered the libertarian tenets of *English* capitalism. Smith called for the abolition of slavery, specifically, on the grounds that slave labor was expensive:

> A person who can acquire no property, can have no other interest but to eat as much, and to labour as little as possible. Whatever work he does beyond what is sufficient to purchase his own maintenance, can be squeezed out of him by violence only, and not by any interest of his own. (Smith qtd. in Temperley 107)

Supposedly sustained by the 'natural' forces of individual interests, property ownership one among them, capitalism is said to function best in the absence of human interference. Capitalism 'naturally' ensures "free competition between the participants of the economy" (Mayr 6) for the sake of "social justice" (Mayr 6), and for whose sake it must reject the un-freedom that is slavery: "freedom meant prosperity; freedom meant progress; freedom meant having willing workers as opposed to unwilling ones" (Temperley 109).

The British were believed to have "attained a higher degree of wealth" (Temperley 108) than the rest of the world and enjoyed "a larger measure of liberty than

other people" (Temperley 108) in the eighteenth century; they were therefore in a position to recognize that human interference with the capitalist machine could only be "harmful" (Mayr 2), that such interference would be adverse to the 'natural' forces of capitalist liberty. The idea of an enlightened, liberal capitalism could not have seemed more British for one as assured of Britain's economic superiority as Smith. When the Bank of England began embossing its banknotes with Smith's portrait, the notion of a liberal capitalism even appeared to have been granted some sort of official 'English' status.[25]

Smith's liberal doctrine of free competition becomes *neo*-liberal, however, when it is taken to mean that "[y]ou don't need to regulate the banks or the financiers when there's an invisible five-fingered regulator who's a bit like God to make sure that the money-looms don't snare or tangle" (Loc 26867). That is, 'naturally,' the system's profiteers would concern themselves with matters of 'social justice' and shudder at the thought of exploiting, say, the factory workers in Northampton – though, as Howard Temperley argues, the rise of neoliberalism has merely exposed capitalism as a "ruthless commitment to rational calculation, to the control of and, above all, to the pursuit of profit" (95). In *Jerusalem*, Michael tells us that this meticulously-run mechanism all too

[25] This 'British liberalism' also implies that capitalism justly rewards those and only those who labor. From Smith's perspective, capitalism is a word "commonly used [firstly] to describe the workings of a free market economy - buying low, selling high, investing private capital and effort wherever they will produce the most profit. Secondly, it is used to describe the ideology or system of beliefs of those who believe in the encouragement of such activities. Associated with it we commonly find notions about minimal government, a common system of law, the promotion of individual self-interest and the removal, so far as the proper maintenance of social order will allow, of all restrictions which might prevent men from benefiting themselves and, incidentally, benefiting society, by making free use of their capital and labour" (Temperley 106). Mayr similarly has suggested that "the total sum of the contributions of a worker (defined broadly to include risk, costliness of training, etc.) and of his rewards (material and ideal) must be the same for all occupations in a given community if no restrictions exist," (Mayr 6) that, "this equality is maintained by a feedback system" (Mayr 6). The word "liberal" here connotes "justice," for it is here assumed that one only reaps what one deserves from Smith's capitalist machine.

often overlooks issues of exploitation as though no labor were employed to enhance the competitiveness of the so-called free competitors, and no energy were needed to set the wheels of capitalist reason into motion. As far as Michael is concerned, Ronald Regan and "that middle-class dunce Margaret Thatcher" both were possessed by the irrational, 'mystical' belief that factories were "run by ghosts" (Loc 26859), so much so that both "cheerily deregulated most of the financial institutions" (Loc 26871).

Michael recalls Regan, Thatcher, and the concepts of "class" and "deregulation" by association. By the same associative logic, Michael identifies one cluster of problems within the capitalist framework that in fact has much to do with neoliberalism or rather its blatant disregard for the welfare of the laborers on whom it has for so long depended. Neoliberalism, then, is the logical consequence of the pursuit of profit so fundamental to capitalism; for the sake of profit, neoliberalism has justified the exploitation of the working class in Northampton if not elsewhere as well, while rewarding the privileged for defending the status quo. To put it simply, neoliberalism has finally distorted Smith's teachings to validate the prejudice that class privileges, too, are accorded on the basis of individual merit.

This train of associative thoughts becomes derailed when Michael finally detects some supernatural (i.e. *irrational*) elements in this radical rationalism that is part of the English consciousness. A figure of the Enlightenment as preeminent as Smith is said to trust in some magical existence beyond for financial regulation, whereas his neoliberal acolytes – Thatcher and Reagan – are said to have left the factories in the hands of ghosts. At this very moment, meaning bleeds out of the banknote which stands for capitalist rationale *as such*. The frame of Alma's painting does not protect the paradigm of reason

that is late capitalism from irrationality, but rather serves as a conduit between the two. In fact, the frame represents something that appears to be an *as such* with porous boundaries: it makes a spectacle of reason and exposes it to interpretive gazes which it cannot control and does not therefore admit as reason. The English reason of a liberal capitalism becomes deflated after much scrutiny; it seeps through the frame of the *as such* to fuse with the un-reason without. Englishness *as such* therefore possesses a fluidity that defies representation: it is not as it appears in the frame, although it might reveal its presence through movements such as this free flow between the content inside and outside.

It is in this vein that Moore attributes the element of absence to the banknote, the symbol of an English (neo-)liberal capitalism. Every lapse in representation – be it language or painting – is the unsignifying thing that signifies Jerusalem, or that which is absent because it is divine. The unsignifying thing then is a fantasy about the divine, or a creative force which, in *Jerusalem*, possesses the observer Michael while it pervades Northampton. Having borne the brunt of capitalist exploitation, Northampton is the counterforce of capitalism in twenty-first century England. In a word, the place Northampton, being antithetical to neoliberal reason, is a trace of Jerusalem – Englishness *as such*.

But let us first acknowledge that Jerusalem is a reference to Blake. Blake's Jerusalem is a subjective utopia, a "divine vision in which each being is said to contain in itself the whole of the intelligible world," according to Mark S. Ferrara (21). The divine is always already within every earthly being (the same way the invisible man is within Britannia), but, to attain the divine, being must first transcend itself and face self-

annihilation. Ferrara explains, "[f]or Blake, the Divine Vision must be immediately apprehended, not through adherence to social and moral codes, which Blake associates with the rational and tyrannical laws of Urizen, but through self-annihilation" (27). For Moore, then, the unsignifying thing – the threatening absence in the banknote – is divine because it is not subject to Urizen's influence. Whatever escapes language and does not therefore signify is divine.

There could be no end to any such pursuit of the divine, since the divine itself is always needing to be re-envisioned. In Moore's vision of divine Jerusalem, for instance, time multiplies because Blake says it must be so. Blake reveals in "And Did Those Feet in Ancient Time" that Jerusalem is an ideal that will materialize in England, for the marks of all times are left upon the English landscape – "the green and pleasant land," "the clouded hills," and "the dark Satanic Mills" trodden "in ancient time." 'Englishness' is all the memories ever imprinted upon the land, and it is the *genius loci* which lends its power to those dedicated to building an English Jerusalem, sometimes as their "arrows of fire," and other times as their unsleeping "swords." If Englishness as such were a deity, Jerusalem would be her temple. Jerusalem as we know it is where Christ died and resurrected, where time passes in cycles. The Jerusalem which conceals within 'Englishness as such' is likewise infinite, since it is where all times intersect. There the end turns into a new beginning as readily as the beginning relapses into an end.[26] Moore's objective in *Jerusalem* is precisely to imagine this divine Englishness, that is, a liminal

[26] Ferrara calls the collapse of time "self-annihilation,' which, he says, must precede transcendence, since "selfhood is the enemy of the divine" (22). In other words, the self must be "finished" before linear time could reach its end. Anyone can attain Jerusalem upon death, since Jerusalem is a "perennial utopia" which "achieves a dialectical synthesis of the ideal and the actual through the narrative focalization of a religious experience at the level of character, one that is at once transhistorical and universal" (Ferrara 20). Utopia truly is imminent; it is to burst out of the self in the imminent event of the self's death.

state of consciousness which transcends life and death and which, consequently, constitutes the borders of thought. The divine is ungraspable, but semblances of the divine are embedded in familiar landscapes such as that of the mind. In Moore's mind, Northampton is a vestige of the divine in that it is an English meaning always already concealed in the banknote: Jerusalem is the underside of an Enlightened, prosperous England.

In other words, meaning, that is, dialectical meaning, breeds within a familiar sight, while the antithetical unknown always inheres in existing knowledge. A learner of the unknown, Alma must dissect a body of meaning like capitalism and look within for disjunctions, i.e. obscure lapses in reason, which may offer her new insights. The attempt to 'expand one's horizon' by looking within is aporetic, if aporia may be taken to mean the breakdown of the Cartesian thinking thing: the more I ponder about my existence, the less certain I am that I understand.[27] I am too creative to just *be* because I, the thinking thing, cannot bear the idea of remaining within myself and let my thought limit me (or bar me from the whole picture so to speak) for all eternity. This evaluation of thought in itself causes Derrida to expose the limits of a thought structure such as language but, in the process, he also discovers the creative potential of language. Derrida calls this creativity 'aporia' – the "single duty that recurrently duplicates itself, interminably, fissures itself, and contradicts itself without remaining the same, that is, concerning the only and single 'double, contradictory imperative'" (16). Aporia casts contradictions in

[27] I will quote René Descartes directly: he has written, first, "[…] from the fact that I know nothing else as belonging to my essence, it follows that nothing else in fact belongs to it" (7); and second, "I can finally decide that this proposition 'I am, I exist', whenever it is uttered by me, or conceived in the mind, is necessarily true" (18). The 'thinking thing,' that is, my mind, sets itself apart from its surroundings, including the body. In that vein, my mind enlightens me as to what I am and what I am not. My mind is, therefore, the essence of my existence.

the way of reason such that reason must integrate into itself the contradictions it cannot resolve. Aporias and contradictions are not one and the same, however: errors in reasoning alone can result in contradictions, but aporias necessarily arise from "the movement of thought – including but not restricted to metaphysics – in which it finds itself faced with unconquerable obstacles resulting from conflicts in its understanding of its own intelligibility" (Ross 3). Sound, reasonable thought should steer clear of all inconsistencies, but even so it must inspire heresies, which are in fact aporias. Aporia, Stephen D. Ross explains, is the culmination of thought: the very word 'aporia' describes the ripening of reason which gives way to heretical thinking, while a heresy may very well "culminat[e] in Hegel's dialectic" (Ross 4). Heresies and contradictions both evince what may be called an aporetic development in logic, since aporias are the unforeseen, thereby as-yet-unintelligible insights that any thought process willy-nilly engenders. A heresy is an insight of this kind, consequently a form of aporia.

Any truth an aporia – of which a heresy is a manifestation – has to offer is emphatically obscure. Ross even goes so far as to argue that an aporia is, from a logical standpoint, a puzzle piece unresolvable precisely because it is true, not unlike the divine as it is defined in negative theology. "Spinoza's sense that God is once substance divided by infinite attributes, including thought and extension" (Ross 4) is one example of aporia, says Ross. Michael Kessler and Christian Sheppard have elaborated on this aporetic reading of God thus: God is an absence in rational thought, speech, or anything subject to "conceptual control" (viii); as such, God can only be a mystical "'sense of presence' (to use William James's unsurpassed formulation)," or "a sense of a conspicuous lack of presence" (viii). God is both absence and presence, but never just the one or the other.

His presence is felt most palpably when reason is at its most formidable; likewise, His absence is most evident in ideas asserted with the most certitude, or in (thought) structures that appear the most refined. Much of literature, for instance, "unconsciously gestures" towards God as an "experience" that "remains… representable and ultimately unexperienced" (Kessler and Sheppard xi). A "presence realized in absence" (Kessler and Sheppard viii) within the literary framework, God *is* aporia.

Moore's *Jerusalem* adopts a similar aporetic reason to gesture towards an Englishness dissociated from Smith, i.e., a cultural meaning that is yet to be experienced and unknown, not unlike the divine. Here aporetic reason is the un-reason of the Vernalls, the clan of mad, visionary psychogeographers who remodel Northampton in the novel to re-experience Englishness. That is to say, psychogeography is an aporetic project which the Vernalls undertake across the generations, and which manifests itself in the conceptual spectacle of the church dome. The Vernalls want to build Jerusalem, like Blake, the mad visionary before them. But unlike Blake, perhaps, they identify Jerusalem as a possible utopia, i.e., the ideal of a vantage point of understanding, the center or the dome that is a receptacle for dissociated, fragmented thoughts (or a hole on the land which incites the visionary's epiphany, as mentioned at the beginning of the essay). Thus, in the novel, a visionary is one who organizes chaos, one who ascribes order to disorder. The first visionary Vernall, Ern Vernall, is one such prophet: while restoring a painting upon the dome of the famous St. Paul's Cathedral, he is able to envisage the blueprint of an aporetic architecture. An angel speaks to Ern at St. Paul's, and, being a visionary, he finds that he has the ability to decipher the angel's mad language: Ern "struggled to absorb the content bound in this exploded sentence, the mere noise of it unraveled him

[…] Every note of it seemed to be spiraling away in countless fainter and more distant repetitions, the same tones at an increasingly diminished scale until these split into a myriad still smaller echoes" (Loc 1149, 1152).

This endless unraveling of "the content" – that is, the whole of knowledge, an epistemology assumed to be perfect – reveals the workings of aporia. Aporia is withdrawal, the discovery of knowledge from within. Each repetition and each echo reproduce the content but magnify some imperfections within. In turn, the aporetic mind disintegrates and reveals crevices wherein is concealed what is unknown, or known only unconsciously. New knowledge is mined from existing, old knowledge in this sense. Where contradictions between new and old understandings emerge (as they are bound to emerge), the seeker of knowledge is at a loss as to what actually he knows. This process of gaining knowledge follows a destabilized order known as aporia, which is neither a goal nor an achieved condition: there can be no "' ultimate' thinking of aporia" because "aporia is always plural, dissolving into other aporias, heretically" (Ross 298), so that thought is rendered a multiplicity, a unity of differences. Thought is infinite insofar as it is aporetic, thereby dissolvable and breakable; furthermore, thinking is a process only because it is active – actively self-destructive, that is. In *Jerusalem*, the onus of thinking, i.e., of deciphering aporetic riddles and antinomies, falls upon the Vernalls. A whole is a complete structure consisting of parts; yet a whole seen through an aporetic lens (namely the fourth dimension, or any other framework of knowing) is not merely the sum of its parts, for its parts, having bled into each other, are no longer autonomous and individually identifiable. These amorphous parts merely hasten the collapse of the whole.

I will describe this aporetic collapse again in reference to the ideas of 'old knowledge' and 'new knowledge.' The notion of 'new knowledge' assumes a past ignorance, such that our present acquisition of 'new knowledge' marks our growth, that is, our experience of the passage of time. However, aporia rejects the idea that knowledge expands in time because the knowledge pertaining to aporia is already possessed. The fourth dimension with which Gull is so obsessed in *From Hell* appears in *Jerusalem* because the Vernalls, like Gull, wish to reconsider time in terms of convergence rather than differentiation. The fourth dimension is aporia, envisioned in time: the present *is* the rediscovery of the past while the present as such is the past. The future then consists of present moments in which the past is continuously revived. This aporetic logic convinces the Vernalls that different times meet in the fourth dimension (or Jerusalem), which is a unity of differences or the connecting knot in the center. The differences that are time, body, and space thus converge, and yet they remain apart from one another (so that they do not again form a perfect unity) as they remain in dialogue: this unity of differences – the fourth dimension, Jerusalem, call it what you will – is in fact the face of psychogeography, which Michael Vernall sees when he attains transcendence in Book Two.

Suspended above his Northampton home in the fourth dimension in Book Two, Michael sees the familiar figure of his mother as a "frail five-petal marigold of brightness which at first glance seemed to be inside the larger crystalline arrangement" (Loc 7895, 7898). He also finds that his family's living room arrests all times (and in this way realizes Gull's hopes vis-à-vis the fourth dimension in *From Hell*): "West is future, east is past, all things linger, all things last" (Loc 8153). East, West, present, past, and future

are all atoms in the replica of the living room; they are the disparate spectrums of awareness which meet in the fourth dimension. The human body, as well, breaks down into a five-petal arrangement of atoms. As a composite of atoms, the body becomes inside and part of a milieu that is, essentially, a shower of crystals. By the workings of aporia, the whole breaks down into atoms so that two things as distinct as body and space may merge: Gull does not completely misconstrue the fourth dimension because it *does* refer to the erasure of the boundaries among body, time and space. Gull draws the fourth dimension upon the landscape of London with the blood of his victims because he understands the fourth dimension to mean a blood-delineated topography (as I explained earlier). He sees that the body can represent space, and that therefore the body can invoke the transcendental fourth dimension.

Nonetheless, Gull's experience of the fourth dimension in *From Hell is* different from Michael's in *Jerusalem*. Whereas Gull aspires towards narrative completion, i.e., the "star-shaped circuit" of a unified English history, Michael follows the Vernall tradition of revering a dismantling whole. Michael recognizes that because aporia (the fourth dimension) anticipates only fragmentation, it cannot in any way support Gull's narrative totality. The framework of aporia is very much whole, but, as a whole and as the face of psychogeography, it is made up of magnified parts like the particles in the body of Michael's mother. It is a whole too much like a pastiche to be either coherent or totalizing. Michael therefore sees aporia/the fourth dimension/psychogeography as a kind of unity, like a map on which all (bodies and places from the past, the present, and the future) find their marks, linger and last. To put it as plainly as possible, aporia is the condition whereby knowledge is relearnt, while time, "every moment of its passing" (Loc

1229), is unified in the terms of plain geometry" (Loc 1229). The angel is able to offer Ern a glimpse of aporia as he stands near the dome of St. Paul's. From this elevated angle (i.e. that of the fourth axis of time), Ern sees plainly that "Lambeth was adjacent to far-off Northampton if both were upon a map that should be folded in a certain way, that the locations although distant could be in a sense conceived as being in the same space" (Loc 1232, 1234). A unified time, that is, the simultaneity of all times, flattens our sense of space, so that distance is eradicated alongside the passage of time. In the fourth dimension, body, space and time become one but not the same: the fourth dimension is a framework comprising atoms whose relations to one another alter even as they proliferate.

Such proliferation engenders chaos and confused reason but still paves the way for the reconstitution of a structure from within: this chaotic, aporetic process of restructuring is psychogeography in a nutshell. Aporia is here granted positive agency because of its ability to agitate thought and compel the dialectical turn: aporia conditions the development of thought alongside that of language, such that language must realize and transcend its structural limits to gesture towards the inexplicable, be it God or death *as such*. Aporia is not only the condition of a logical impasse, consequently, but one that spurs further activity on the part of the Cartesian thinking thing (i.e. being), cajoling it, even, into re-articulating its existence and manifesting itself differently – perhaps more fully – through language. In Ross's words,

> …the limits of representation – consequently of reason and intelligibility – also have their limits. The limits and limits, and of those limits as well, comprise inexhaustibility. Its consequences for truth are aporia and heresy. The possibility is that propositional reason and science depend as much as art and philosophy upon the limitations of intelligibility. If so, then science is also inexhaustible, filled with aporia and heresy" (3)

Structural limits separate beings from the ultimate referent – truth, God, or death *as such*. The 'as such' will never appear in any intelligible form, although the thinking subject can recognize each and every limit to think it, represent it, and in this vein make it *more* intelligible. Every such limit alludes to that which is true and unintelligible; every recognized limit therefore pertains to the possibility of knowing something 'as such.' Insofar as any attempt at overcoming a limit is aporetic, aporia is a progressive movement and, in this respect, something to be granted positive agency. Ross argues that all these infinite possibilities of knowing are the aporias inherent in language and representation, that aporias make language and representation "inexhaustib[le]" (Ross 3).

Here I must raise the question of what psychogeography is once more. In *Jerusalem* at least, psychogeography is the discovery of a new awareness within the self, projected outward into the milieu. Psychogeography also betrays a divided consciousness, whose relationship with its surroundings is multifaceted. Since each divided self relates to the milieu differently, a new body-space relationship is formed each time a new fragment of the self comes into being. In this vein, each psychogeographical narrative offers a new view of the world, a vision gleaned from unraveling wholes such as the self and the milieu. The psychogeographer is the narrator of course: he is aware that he is a fragmented self, and that he is as much a consequence of the aporetic breakdown as the ideas of East, West, present, past, and future. Being exceptionally aware, however, the psychogeographer gains the vantage point (of the dome so to speak), where he could observe changes in atomic relations and infer the patterns in which chaos proliferates. He assigns chaos a structure in hopes of stretching

the limits of the mind. Psychogeography then is the transcendental vision of a whole which unravels, perpetually and aporetically.

Let us consider for example the monk in *Jerusalem* who, while searching for the center of England in Hamtun, finds that Hamtun is less "a territory to be paced than like a stranger he had joined in conversation" (Loc 2834, 2837). A psychogeographer such as the monk learns of the overarching structure (the fourth dimension, that is) while he interacts with his surrounding space, like one atom with another. Being the part of the self which thus converses with space, the psychogeographer is privy to a new understanding of Jerusalem, the heart of the English meaning or Englishness as such. These continual dialogues and these perennial revisions in atomic relation expand his perception of reality (his horizon, his knowledge) so much so that the gaps within are also enlarged. These gaps are the psychogeographer's approximations of 'Englishness as such.' These gaps are the only frames through which being may imagine what exceeds the mind, like the supernatural (irrational) elements Michael identifies in Alma's painting of the banknote.

No characters in *Jerusalem* represent these lapses in rational English meaning as well as the Vernalls, who are nothing if not ghosts the neoliberals have coldly disregarded. Their association with Northampton already renders them invisible: Michael Vernall works at a factory, and his ancestor Snowy Vernall had a "slum accommodation at the end of Green Street, where some decades later he would end his days hallucinating, sat between parallel mirrors in an endless alley of reflections, eating flowers" (Loc 605). This accommodation at the end of Green Street fosters a madness which is defiantly indifferent to the cold, rational calculations of the neoliberals. One as mad as Snowy

escapes the five invisible fingers of the free market mechanism because the layers of his consciousness multiply concomitantly with his reflections on reality. This multiplicity of perceptions culminates in a mad 'I' which naturally has no place in any kind of order, much less in a neoliberal calibration of capitalism.

The place which causes "I" to break apart in this (aporetic) fashion is Jerusalem, where new, antithetical meanings emerge *from within* established structures such as twenty-first century capitalism. The wellspring of the Vernall's visionary madness and the heart of disorder, Northampton is naturally Moore's Jerusalem. Moore suggests as much through Alma, who identifies Northampton as the center of England: "…Hitler's planned invasion of the British Isles had ended with the capture of Northampton, as if once the center of the country had been taken then the rest was a foregone conclusion" (Loc 18307). Nat Segnit of *The NewYorker* similarly reminds us that Northampton is the center of England apropos of both its location and its "provincialism": "As he [Moore] has noted, Northampton has long been a center of political and religious heterodoxy. From the fourteenth to the eighteenth century, radical groups like the Lollards, the Levellers, and the Antinomians gravitated there in their search for sanctuary—for a new Jerusalem. These days, its reputation for post-industrial gloom only makes it all the more hospitable to dissent. It's easier to be odd when the culture has its back turned" (n.p.) Dissent arises from the gloom that is the general consequence of capitalist exploitation. Northampton is a new Jerusalem in juxtaposition to, say, the suburbs of London, since Northampton is home to the underclass, in other words those neither "skilled" nor wealthy enough to live in the London suburbs, especially in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1950s (see Forrest 209). Northampton is outside of privilege, geographically. It is nonetheless

home to England's many factories and its laborers – all vital parts of the 'free' market unaccounted for in neoliberalism.

Being so at odds with the capitalist machine which Segnit calls "culture," Northampton becomes the muse for psychogeographers. Northampton, as these psychogeographers can see, is unraveling aporetically to engender counter-cultures and alternate realities. Northampton is able to offer access to Jerusalem unlike other places because in its post-industrial gloom, it alone has shattered an otherwise unambiguous, rational neoliberalism and has accommodated the shadows and ghosts of the under-privileged. It follows that Northampton is Jerusalem, that is, the context wherein neoliberal capitalism must confront what it has exploited, marginalized and presumed to be a ghost, like one element of Englishness to another. Psychogeographers are inhabitants of Northampton, who push "from the darkness underground into the sunlit world above," stubborn and unruly like "green blades" (Loc 271). These psychogeographical spirits insist upon their presences in the sunlit world above, like shadows which color the appearance of the earth despite their immateriality. They are germane to chaos since, quite naturally, they are elusive and unpredictable.

One cannot speak of shadows, specters, and chaos without making a reference to *V for Vendetta*. The Vernalls and V are all shadows. Northampton and the Shadow Gallery both regulate chaos. I should add that Northampton, like the dystopian setting of *V for Vendetta*, is comprised of layers of English meaning. In Book Three of the novel, Alma informs the reader that Northampton contains many "a neon tumour styled by Fabergé," like the hotel and the 'attendant' entertainment complex "raised upon the site of the demolished Barclaycard headquarters, previously an endearing tangle of small

businesses and hairline alleyways, Pike Lane, Quart Pot Lane, Doddridge Street and long before that a royal resident that governed Mercia and with it most of grunting Saxon England. There weren't ghosts here; there were fossil seams of ghosts, one stacked upon another and compressing down to an emotive coal or oil, black and combustible" (Loc 499, 502). Alma Vernall is a member of the working class, a proud member of the neighborhood who has seen the effects of privatization. She has witnessed the eradication of small businesses in favor of big corporations. As psychogeographer, Alma is also able to see that neoliberalism has remodeled Northampton into a tumor, a whole comprised of layers of "emotive coil" ready to combust.

The artist in Alma cannot help but notice the beauty of this privilege-wrought tumor: the very name "Fabergé" implies privilege and art – Farbegé being the artisan who famously designed luxury Easter eggs for European royal families. In other words, the privileged have painted Northampton with neon colors and given it a kind of lethal beauty, layered with "combustible" ghosts. When these ghosts do combust and show themselves above, these Northampton layers will collapse. Alma foresees that the pervading post-industrial gloom will elicit a Northampton-wide catharsis. Inevitably, those who cannot repress their resentment any longer will assault the offensive system in the style of the anarchist V. Vehement resentment will disrupt the veneer of calm capitalist beauty, while the irrational will emerge from within the rational. Transposed to the setting of Northampton, V's anarchist stunt appears especially aporetic: the rational, having birthed that which threatens to negate it, causes one to wonder what truly is rational.

The psychogeographer in Alma responds by depicting this introspective quest for knowledge or this relearning of what is familiar through art. In Book Three, she speculates about the aftermath of V's anarchist combustions in the form of a "scale reproduction of the mostly vanished neighbourhood as it had almost definitely never been. Just over four foot square, its tallest structures only inches high, his sister's [Alma's] diorama juxtaposed the Borough's choicest features, irrespective of chronology." (Loc 25695) This artwork is Northampton seen from the vantage point, where the past materializes to re-constitute the present and the future. Specifically, modern capitalism will be reclaimed by the Northampton history it had to erase to gain prominence. For a complete mapping of time, places that were demolished for town development and other capitalist investments will re-materialize, and they will invoke memories that are currently no more than "fossil seams of ghosts" (Loc 501). The fate of these ghosts is tied to that of the vanished neighborhood, for the ghosts are memories that define the space. Collectively, these ghosts are the *genius loci* of Northampton – the arrows of fire and the unsleeping swords which beget an English Jerusalem where body, time, and space converge.

This convergence will not happen in a comprehensive fashion, for nothing combustive and emotionally charged ever can be prone to order. In fact, the genius loci causes any rational progression towards the future to be deferred; it delays, as well, the completion of Alma's psychogeographical vision, since emotionally charged spaces from the past sporadically reveal themselves to redefine the present. A psychogeographer like Alma takes a glimpse of the chaos unfolding around Northampton (as a consequence of disputing an absolute rationalism like Smith's) and records what she briefly sees,

although she knows that her vision will become obsolete even while she records it. More ghosts and vanished neighborhoods always venture forth to forestall the completion of her psychogeographical vision, which consequently is neither a future ideal to be realized, nor a true present that has inherited the entirety of the past. If each ghost is to revise an already Northampton-centered English identity, Alma will have to make her peace with a perennially unstable English meaning: the *genius loci* of the new center of England wishes it to be so. But, as a consequence, Northampton will be the place it had "almost definitely never been" (Loc 25695), an eternal unknown as such.

Jerusalem, too, is an eternal unknown. I say so because Northampton is Moore's Jerusalem, while Jerusalem is Englishness as such, one of the many guises of the divine Britannia. Britannia is of the unknown by virtue of being divine, for the divine exceeds not only thought but any structure, any meaning-making agent the mind may conjure. The sword- and arrow-wielding English people forever yearn for Jerusalem because it is forever unattainable: if they have brought Jerusalem into existence, it is one which appears as false as a blemished utopia.

A psychogeographer is one of the builders of Jerusalem; a psychogeographer who is also a (graphic) novelist, like Moore, is one who wields symbols and signifiers as his tools. Using words (as well as images in *From Hell*), Moore has created the fourth dimension, his personal Jerusalem, that is, his rendering of the divine. The fourth dimension is a vacuum which draws chaos and contradictions into itself to create meaning. It is a framework wherein Moore makes sense of an ungraspable, irrational divine and yet, to the rational mind, it is also an amorphous nothingness which successively loses and gains defining traits as it becomes ever more contradictory. In

Moore's imagination, the fourth dimension is where old knowledge begets new knowledge and the rational the irrational. The fourth dimension is psychogeography, while psychogeography is a dialectical process which unfolds internally so that new meaning may present itself further within.

Insofar as a meaning-making vacuum such as the fourth dimension operates according to a pattern, it exemplifies psychogeography. Often for Moore, psychogeography is a means to represent the divine and a thinking structure as such. Because of its divine implications, however, psychogeography does not adhere to only one definition. Therefore, psychogeography may manifest itself as any spatial metaphor – if not Jerusalem then the fourth dimension, or the Shadow Gallery. These spatial conceptions are expressions of the mind; they reveal not only the architecture of the mind but also the limits of the mind. That is to say, the mind makes only limited sense. If sense is to develop, it must endure the assaults of the nonsense *within*. Nonsense is integral to the architecture of the mind, i.e. psychogeography, much as the Shadow Gallery to the dystopian London in *V for Vendetta*. Likewise, psychogeography possesses within itself the dissonances of the Shadow Gallery, to the effect that it cannot help but expand even though it is already a complete thought, as a representation of a divine Englishness. Psychogeography is then a fractured thought, or a unity of differences; it is many places, many histories, many times, and many spirits all at once.

Chapter Two

Moore's and Sinclair's London Visions: Similarities and Differences

In this intervening chapter, I will compare Moore's psychogeography with Sinclair's as a way of refining my definition of psychogeography – however tentative such definitions must be.

To write psychogeography is to highlight the spectacular in an urban space that has otherwise grown familiar. The psychogeographer reimagines conventional geography to render overlooked parts of the city visually striking, spectacular; he offers his impressions of the land (e.g. why he finds parts of it more spectacular than others) to assert his relation to it and thus associate his existence with his surroundings. Psychogeography does assume that existence, i.e., 'being,' accumulates meaning in a specified space-time; that, furthermore, a psychogeographer must express the meaning of (his) 'being' in tandem with his fleeting impressions of the land, if he is to reinforce the broader notion of 'being-in-the-world.' Moore and Sinclair both suppose that psychogeography explains the relation between being and geography – being-in-the-world – ineffectually but persistently, and both relate to London by negating it; that is, both dissociate themselves from London, which they suppose to be the hub of capitalist and neoliberal politics, to better envision otherworldly Londons.

Moore's psychogeography is nonetheless different from Sinclair's by virtue of its 'optimism.' As suggested in the previous section, Moore gives psychogeography the form of the fourth dimension – a transcendental realm hovering above London as it is well known. The fourth dimension puts Moore in an elevated position whence he may

inspect, or at least imagine, the full-scale breakdown of London, the oppressive everyday that late capitalism wrought. Metonymic binaries such as the whole and the part, and dialectical opposites such as above and below, give Moore's psychogeography its shape, thereby helping Moore envision realities alternative to the oppressive capitalist one. Interestingly enough, the London in which Sinclair finds himself is altogether different from Moore's. London as Sinclair sees it possesses no dialectical energy: the Londoner cannot understand London because he cannot differentiate the personal from the public, the part from the whole. A militant pessimism therefore pervades Sinclair's psychogeography, prompting the author to re-draw the boundaries (the ones listed above for example) that he believes to have vanished. Sinclair writes to mythicize some parts of London so as to make London identity incoherent and, consequently, less susceptible to capitalist influences: this intended purpose of Sinclair's psychogeography I will explain later with reference to Henri Lefebvre's urban theory.

Sinclair's predilection for the esoteric has come under attack, to be sure. I will mention more critics who have chastised Sinclair for his esoteric tendencies later in the dissertation, but for now I will focus on Christine Ferguson's criticism:

> While some Marxist and feminist thinkers have castigated New Historicism for locating power in free-floating 'energies' rather than in specific institutions and thus rendering its operations esoteric, Sinclair's critics often laud his alternative occult historiography for resisting the oppressive totalization they equate with Thatcherism and capitalism alike. (48, 49)

Ferguson here lashes out at psychogeographers like Sinclair – and Moore, too, no doubt – for his re-reading of the Ripper's history in *White Chappell, Scarlet Tracings*, which she believes to be too liberal, so much so that it seems careless or, worse, tasteless: would it not be misogynistic to speak of the five murders from the Ripper's perspective in the

twenty-first century, and at the risk of silencing the victims over again? Ferguson goes on to link Sinclair's psychogeography with New Historicism, arguing that the latter has an infelicitous influence on the former. Sinclair, she claims, approaches history so recklessly because he fails to fault specific institutions in his reading of history – unfortunately like too many New Historicists.

Of course it is also possible that Sinclair, like many New Historicists, is disinclined to say that specific social institutions *alone* were guilty of leading history astray; perhaps he is too aware of his share of responsibility to do so. As Stephen Greenblatt argues,

> methodological self-consciousness is one of the distinguishing marks of the new historicism in cultural studies as opposed to a historicism based upon faith in the transparency of signs and interpretive procedures – but it must be supplemented by an understanding that the work of art is not itself a pure flame that lies at the source of our speculations. Rather the work of art is itself the product of a set of manipulations, some of them our own […] That is, the work of art is the product of a negotiation between a creator or class of creators, equipped with a complex, communally shared repertoire of conventions, and the institutions and practices of society. (27, 28)

Greenblatt freely admits here that he cannot extricate himself from the web of conventions; being confined within and thus unable to look down from a detached, transcendental standpoint, he cannot identify who or what exactly is responsible for the marginalization of some or the privileging of others.[28]

Being implicated also allows one to adapt and manage the system's expectations as one sees fit. The production of art requires communal effort insofar as the authorial 'I' neither accepts nor rejects all conventions: Sinclair, for one, rejects the capitalist

[28] Greenblatt says elsewhere that "theoretical satisfaction" should not "depend upon a utopian vision that collapses the contradictions of history into a moral imperative" (22). No theory shall appease this utopianism because no theory can "come to terms with the apparently contradictory historical effects of capitalism" (Greenblatt 22).

structuring of London which he deems to complement Neoliberal Reason (see section 1.3), but he also refuses to let any institution or his dislike thereof restrict his imagining of London. He embraces esotericism as a counterpoint to Reason, or else as the indispensable part of psychogeography that denounces London for having succumbed to Reason.

Thus psychogeography is a critical re-presentation of London as it is generally perceived. Monika Pietrazak-Franger has cited Moore's *From Hell* as an example:

> [w]hile Carney and Ferguson have shown Alan Moore's historiographic engagement through a rereading of Jack the Ripper (William Gull) as a historian, and through the indication of the author's quasi-New Historicist scholarship, it is essential to consider Allan Moore and Eddie Campbell's self-reflexive status as adapters in their metafictional engagement – with the creation of the graphic novel in particular and with the ontology of adaptation in general. Within this reading, Moore and Campbell's 'esoteric metatextualism' (Ferguson 2009: 55), rather than a monument to their misogyny, becomes a testimony to the role of a variety of media in the creation of the Ripper mythology, as well as a comment on the processes and status of adaptation and on the function of the adapter. (168)

Moore makes psychogeography the basis of his Ripper story partly to comment on the media's extensive role in promoting the Ripper. Moore, as author, is guilty, and by admitting his guilt, he forces others with vested interests in the Ripper to do the same. Moore is politically engaged in virtue of having professed complicity in reifying English heritage, albeit in an attempt at parody. In this sense at least, psychogeography – or rather Moore's interpretation thereof – is not merely a nostalgic reflection on history, but an exercise in self-criticism; it quite simply is not the kind of solipsistic, self-indulgent, and politically irrelevant art form that Ferguson attacks.

Yet Moore does not think such suspicions unwarranted: "… the term psychogeography has become problematic as probably all labels will probably do given enough time. Perhaps, for want of a better phrase, a pre-occupation with landscape had

started to emerge from a number of different sources at around the same time" (Moore qtd. in Talbot, n.p.). To paraphrase Moore: psychogeography has caused so much critical discomfort because it no longer resembles what Debord once said it was, namely, a study of "the precise laws and specific effects of the geographical environment" on "the emotions and behaviour of individuals" (Debord qtd. in Coverley 88) (see Introductory Chapter). Having lost the original political purpose that situationism gave it, psychogeography now seems unknown, incomprehensible. It is in acknowledgment of suspicions like Ferguson's that Moore describes psychogeography as a meditative reading of the land – though even then, Moore finds himself trying to argue for psychogeography's 'harmlessness.' He defends psychogeography on the grounds that the unknown may well be abstract and incomprehensible, and yet it need not be apolitical: *Jerusalem*, for instance, addresses the political concern that "an American-style shopping mall [soon to] be erected in the town [Northampton] [would] completely deform the lives of all the occupants, and this was connected with the idea of fractal mathematics" (Moore qtd. in Talbot, n.p.). This mathematical conception could offer Moore a new lens on this and other local political affairs because, as an abstraction, it can estrange the familiar and in this way stimulate new ways of thinking. Even if incomprehensible, psychogeography at least encourages creativity.

Psychogeography might even be described as fantastic, given that it possesses the abstract quality which Moore said he had first discovered in Sinclair's writings. Having acknowledged Sinclair's influence on his psychogeography, Moore speaks of Sinclair in a tone that is almost deferential: up until he wrote *Jerusalem*, says Moore, he was not able to "move out from under Iain's [Sinclair's] influence at least quite so evidently"

(Moore qtd. in Talbot, n.p.). Sinclair's *Lud Heat* was said to have "catalysed something within" Moore and caused him to become increasingly "preoccupied with landscape, particularly the landscape [he] was living in" – for *Lud Heat* discharges an "electricity" that can compel anyone to engage with the land on "the most microscopic level of meaning inherent in any place on any street corner" (Moore qtd. in Talbot, n.p.). This initial reading of Sinclair offers us yet another definition of psychogeography, namely, that psychogeography captures the "electricity" between being and the (home-)land, or that Sinclair's psychogeography (specifically) inspires in being the urge to penetrate and understand the land: the psychogeographic imperative is always to explain the ways in which the world affects the state of being and so to realize the notion of 'being-in-the-world.'

But Moore also points out that Sinclair's branch of psychogeography cannot be practiced just anywhere in the world, since Sinclair believes that some geographical locations – say, Kettering and Peterborough – are "psychogeographically speaking … entirely dead" (Moore qtd. in Talbot, n.p.). These places exist as though to prove (to Sinclair, if no one else) that being is not naturally situated in the world, that the death of geography can also mean the end of being. The implied purpose of Sinclair's psychogeography is then to ensure that we stay clear of these 'dead' lands that are well beyond the world where being is possible. Moore, however, does not agree that psychogeographers should give in to such negativity: "there was no single street corner, no single stretch of pavement, corner of a field, anywhere, throughout the world, where if studied thoroughly enough would not yield an incredible amount of information and legend and history"; thus, there is no reason why psychogeographers should not "live in

hope" (Moore qtd. in Talbot, n.p.) while they study the land. In expressing his optimism, Moore of course means to criticize Sinclair for his cynicism – which, as stated earlier, is responsible for Sinclair's psychogeographic impulse to foreground the myriad inconsistencies in popular views of London.

That Sinclair distrusts Moore's optimism and, in fact, judges it to be uncritical would seem hardly surprising then. In *Lights Out*, Sinclair goes so far as to describe *From Hell* as a "superficia[l] […] reworking of the Jack the Ripper murders in terms of psychogeography" (125). The graphic novel's "pictorial aspect (illustrations by Eddie Campbell) proved very seductive to the Hollywood dealmakers, who increasingly want product served neat," and who aim no higher than to "transfer Moore's untrustworthy geography from the streets to the studio" to make it a certain commercial success, a "steam-punk *Blade Runner*" (126). Sinclair distrusts Moore's psychogeography – he hesitates even to call *From Hell* psychogeography – because Moore, he thinks, cannot resist seeing London as a cinematic urban sprawl. Moore stands accused of having pictured for his contemporaries a Victorian London all too credible, in other words a vision of the past that stands so well on its own in that it seems empirically verifiable, clinical. Sinclair regards with suspicion all such evident truths and indeed any initiative to lay open the "ventricles of London, England's heart" (*Lights Out* 126) for all to see. He likewise objects to Moore's depiction of London as a self-contained whole which, when projected on screen, seems an inviolable fact transposable to any narrative, convincing for whichever kind of audience. Sinclair supposes that anyone wanting to anatomize London in this fashion will regard London as an empirical constant, as though it were the one true embodiment of Englishness rather than a community imagined, and forever re-

imaginable.

However vehemently Sinclair may disagree with Moore's approach to psychogeography, there remains the fact that psychogeography has only been loosely defined. Neither Sinclair nor Moore could claim to have a superior understanding of psychogeography, for despite the many attempts made to define it, the word remains as vague as Guy Debord left it:

> Psychogeography could set for itself the study of the precise laws and specific effects of the geographical environment, consciously organized or not, on the emotions and behaviour of individuals. The adjective *psychogeographical*, retaining a rather pleasing vagueness, can thus be applied to the findings arrived at by this type of investigation, to their influence on human feelings, and even more generally to any situation or conduct that seems to reflect the same spirit of discovery. (Debord qtd. in Coverly; italics in original 88, 89)

Psychogeography encourages affective readings of geography inasmuch as it assumes that 'being' and 'place' share an emotional affinity: such assumptions may recall John Rushkin's idea of the pathetic fallacy, i.e., the "fallacy of willful fancy, which involves no real expectation that it will be believed; or else it is a fallacy caused by an excited state of the feelings, making us, for the time, more or less irrational" (79). Ruskin proposes in this vein that the pursuit of truth is above all else an intellectual exercise: passions could illuminate truth as much as truth could be intuited in the Kantian sense, yet any truth discovered in this way requires some fine-tuning, since enlightenment is "still a grander condition when the intellect also rises, till it is strong enough to assert its rules against, or together with, the utmost efforts of passions" (Ruskin 80).

Psychogeographers are often willfully fallacious, however. Ben Watson has said the following of Sinclair's writings:

> Every realworld object become an accusatory signboard. The pathetic fallacy has become a chorus of denunciation, a permanent show-trial of the poetic impulse.

> The prose can only snatch vividness from the administered boredom of modern life by indulging illicit psychosis. Like an IRA bomb smashing windows at the Stock Exchange, but also those of the working-class tenements opposite, Sinclair's shocks – his induced schizophrenia – manages to recognise the repressed totality of London. The grotesque, unacknowledged interpenetration of rich and destitute explodes in the face. […] Sinclair's prose goes 'in contrary directions, as he tries to relate anything to everything' (a description, too, of the dialectical method).

Sinclair's psychogeography is modeled upon the Phildickean notion of "schizoid alienation" (Watson's phrase), which suggests that "the disturbance of normal perception had been a product of social being rather individual consciousness" (Watson, n.p.).[29] Watson agrees that this interpretation of schizophrenia could be offensive and problematic; he does feel "cynical about its use as a kind of sugar on the pill of various academic novelties[,]" yet, in "1991, Iain Sinclair's *Downriver* proved that 80s schizophrenia was not so much an individual affliction; more a national event. The poet resorted to writing imaginary reviews in non-existent literary journals" (Watson, n.p.).

I should like to make a few observations regarding psychogeography's treatment of the empirical before I comment on the psychogeographer's divided consciousness. From a psychogeographic point of view, the land cannot be an empirical constant in that no place can remain forever unchanged; furthermore, the land never ceases to cultivate new emotions in an individual, for only then would he be compelled to always see himself anew. It follows that any impacts the land – geography – has on the individual are inconstant if not also inconsistent. The individual becomes another, so to speak, whenever he reconsiders his understanding of geography. The following distinction must be observed: geography reflects being's perceptions of the land, which historical

[29] Watson explains this Phildickean notion as follows: "The film *Bladerunner* and cyberpunk Science Fiction made Philip K. Dick's schizoid alienation a prize commodity. William Burroughs was read more and more widely. Those in regular work reported that 'straights' were all taking drugs" (Watson, n.p.).

circumstances could manipulate; *psycho*geography struggles to keep track of the emotions the land elicits in all those who dwell on it. Geography is an organized approach to studying perceptions of the land, but psychogeography is something inexplicable, or that which concerns itself with the myriad impressions being has of the land.

Psychogeographers must therefore devote themselves to the task of making geography an inconstant and emotionally charged concept. Sinclair and Moore share this same goal, as much as they may disagree on how it might be achieved. Moore, on the one hand, seems to think that once he commands a clear view of London as a whole, all its eccentricities – the ones which contradict commonsensical views of the city – will become self-evident. Sinclair, on the other hand, walks around London to discover what is *not* evident; he re-invents the city by fabricating myths about its hidden gems, the kind unknown to tourists and locals alike. It is to this end that Sinclair writes of his mystical ventures in *White Chappell* and *Downriver* (which I will examine in the section to follow).

Broadly put, Sinclair privileges the part whereas Moore is preoccupied with the whole: this difference is great enough to prompt Sinclair to attack Moore in *Lights Out.* In response to Gull's statement in *From Hell* that "St. Paul's is in the centre. We are the centre of this pattern now" (*Lights Out* 127), Sinclair remarks that he and his companions have

> …gazed down on the prospects of the City from so many church towers, it's almost as if we have flown like Bladud in an arrogance of vanity and delusion; as if seeing a pattern was creating one. As if walks linking discrete sites could manifest some miraculous whole, compete with the gears and bearings of the secret machine. (*Lights Out* 12)

It appears that wanting to see London whole is not so different from wanting to see London as a sum of its parts. Sinclair thinks it arrogant to presume that London could be studied from the heights of its church towers, as if the city were an old-fashioned pocket watch whose mechanical workings could be discerned at the back. London when so perceived is no better than a highly functional capitalist machine – or, in Henri Lefebvre's words, an "architectural urbanism," "a universalizing system of structures and functions in supposedly rational geometric forms" (8). Any late capitalist city adherent to the rule of the division of labor would become a totality, that is, an ultra-rational structure made up of parts (e.g. sectors such as "housing, fashion and food") that "constitute autonomous subsystems, closed off from one another" (Lefebvre 8) – indeed one not unlike the London 'whole' of Moore's imagining. To stave off the ill fate of functionalism whereby Londoners will be prescribed quotidian ways of living, Sinclair preoccupies himself with the odd parts of the city. He writes to accentuate the irrational, almost mystical qualities of these urban oddities, so that government authorities will always struggle to include them in their redevelopment schemes.

Sinclair privileges the part because he thinks of the whole as something rational – restrictively so. He criticizes Moore for not averting his gaze from the whole because he does not see that it is the crumbling of the authoritarian whole that transfixes Moore. Moore views the whole only as a *fraught* rationality, the symbol of a reason about to cave in to unreason. The surface fascinates Moore merely because he senses that something is bursting through from below. The surface (as Moore sees it) is fractured into parts that are also rapidly disintegrating; contemplated as a whole, it appears to produce details that grow ever more minuscule. The minuscular stands in contrast to the spectacular. Moore

must claim the vantage point before he could study the whole, for only then could he let his gaze penetrate London's depth and observe its un-making. Thus, in *Jerusalem*, the copula of St Paul's is said to reveal the secret that London's ventricles are bursting apart; in *V for Vendetta*, it is intimated that an anarchist will be the mastermind behind London's destruction in some dystopian future, that anarchy will arise as a contrasting detail to London, the entirety of which fascism has consumed. Any society of the spectacle (Debord's phrase) like the fascist one in *V for Vendetta* must eventually betray flaws despite its initial allure; imperfection will emerge in time to contradict perfection in time.

It is this gradual emergence of contradictions that fascinates Moore. Order ineluctably breeds disorder since any absolute order must be met with retaliation. In the (graphic) novels examined in the previous section, Moore invariably conceives of chaos within totalizing structures. For Moore, the simultaneous combustion of all London parts is a spectacle to be contemplated from high above. The family of psychogeographers in *Jerusalem* must witness the breaking up of London as a whole – the origination of infinite smaller London parts – from the heights of St Paul's. Every London part is a detail to be juxtaposed with the London whole; each represents an alternate London reality contributing to the disintegration of neoliberal London, for better or for worse. Even if a representation of late capitalism (as Sinclair would have us think), the whole is still the circumstance giving rise to the part. The whole precedes the part, so the words 'whole' and 'part' signify a dialectic causality. Moore studies the whole to better understand how the part – the mad visionary or the anarchist, for example – came to be. Moore's psychogeography is a kind of dissociative, disjunctive thinking which segues

into narrative speculations. As Deleuze and Guattari tell us, disjunctions are divine of nature, since God exists only if he is "defined as the *Omnitudo realitatis*, from which all secondary realities are derived by a process of division" (Deleuze and Guattari Loc 569). The ability to think disjunctively – which evidently inheres in psychogeography – is proof enough of divine existence: a psychogeographical thinker demonstrates his faith in the divine by shattering any confident assertion about the divine, like the fourth dimension, which is Gull's impression of a divine whole. There being too many parts to which the whole gave rise while it fractured, the psychogeographer may aspire to see the larger picture, though never the picture in its entirety. He will never know the breadth of the whole (if such is truly his goal), but he may chance upon the more complete fragments.

So psychogeography casts ever more 'discoveries' pertaining to the land in Moore's way as Debord maintains it would. Regardless of their disagreement, Moore and Sinclair confront the same fate: both realize that they do not know London absolutely, and both imagine that London as it is traditionally known is unraveling. As a consequence, both write psychogeographically to discover more alternate London realities, although, admittedly, their experiences of these new realities differ. Moore depicts his view of the city's destruction from high above while Sinclair does so from the ground up. Sinclair belongs to a London part which Moore might only have glimpsed from the vantage point. In this vein, Sinclair might be imagined as Moore's V, i.e., "one of the first writers to imaginatively employ psychogeography in his immense travelogue about his attempt to 'cut a crude V' into the 'sprawl' of London, to 'vandalize dormant energies by an act of ambulant signmaking' (Lights Out, 1)," or so claims Elizabeth Ho

(109). Ho gives Sinclair the laurels for reinvigorating the travel narrative by making it an instrument of destruction, for every psychogeographical novel Sinclair writes is a travel narrative with a disturbing, disruptive end. Sinclair travels across Londonscape expressly to trace a 'crude V' upon it: 'V' is for 'vandalism,' so Sinclair ventures off to London to wreak havoc in its parts. 'V' also signifies Sinclair's 'vendetta' against late capitalists wanting to 'develop' London, making it a part of the capitalist everyday.

Sinclair and Moore may have found a common enemy in capitalist urbanism and a unifying front in psychogeography, but the two continue to imagine London differently. While Moore eulogizes the beauty of the unraveling whole which he, (posing as) an anarchist, oversees, Sinclair focuses on the irregularities in London which thwart the government's redevelopment project. Sinclair writes psychogeography to extol London's arrested development, as it were. Again, in Ho's words,

> Sinclair's 'ambulation' through London was a means of awakening the 'dormant energies' in a city (and a country) he believes has been sold 'down river' (a title of another one of his travelogues) by Thatcher. He defines psychogeography as a 'grid of energies' mapped across London, an 'occult mapping of the city' anchored by sites and icons of violence, mysticism, or 'ancient taint' that 'still exercise … a powerful influence on any imagination that allows itself to float over the streets in a willed discrimination of archetypes.' (Ho 109)

Ho's deliberation on (Sinclair's) psychogeography largely coincides with Debord's. The psychogeographer ambulates around London and feels a tangible connection to the land. He lets his will dominate the process of writing. 'I' feel; therefore 'I' am: the psychogeographer knows that he *is* (existent) because he feels alienated by the very sight of London. He feels determined to identify the irregular in the regular, and he discovers his will by letting himself be drawn into fantasies of London, be they his own or those of others. Sinclair, in particular, wills himself to feel an invisible London. He walks around

London, here and now, but extends his line of vision over there, 'downriver.' He is convinced that London's true form is hidden somewhere downriver after it was "sold," betrayed for capitalism's sake. The word 'downriver' connotes the 'occult,' i.e. the understanding that Londonscape as it is generally perceived is an illusion, impressive though it may seem. True London is downriver, that is, not here, not now, but nowhere in particular; as such, the word 'downriver' means alternative truths and alternate realities that negate the commonsensical. As Sinclair ventures downriver in search of alternate Londons, he also discovers alternate identities for himself. The breakdown of his milieu has caused his perception of London to bifurcate, such that he sees and knows London better than ever before.

And yet this fantasy of an uncompromised Truth buried somewhere *else* – in the wellspring of everything 'occult,' perhaps – is ironically reminiscent of Moore's ideal of a whole seen from the vantage point: one cannot help but wonder if Moore's ideal differs that wildly from Sinclair's fantasy of a 'downriver' large enough to harbor some untainted, organic Truth, however immense it may prove. Sinclair is not any less enchanted by the idea of the whole than Moore, though it must be conceded that Sinclair never dreams of attaining it. Moore *trusts* in the whole's existence but writes only about the greater fragments of London reality. If these parts further break apart and produce details too minute, too overwhelming for the senses, he also finds consolation in the idea that everything will make sense, eventually, in the 'grander scheme of things,' namely the fourth dimension. As Moore shows us in *From Hell* and *Jerusalem*, the part is connected to the whole because it was derived from the whole in the first place.

Sinclair, however, distrusts any attempt to make connections. He trusts in nothing in particular; or, more precisely, he trusts in all wholes but the one where he is grounded, physically. He would construe any aberration in the whole as a trace of that something downriver – a different dimension of existence, perhaps a different whole altogether. To make its presence felt, whatever lies downriver never fails to lend urban oddities its splendor. In turn, Sinclair describes these mysterious, mystical parts of London in his psychogeography so that he may find his way 'downriver.'

I will illustrate my point by referring to the designs of Nicholas Hawksmoor, the architect to whom both Moore and Sinclair attribute occult significance. The presence of St Anne's Limehouse amid the rows of residential blocks near Canary Wharf (now a commercial district) is most irregular, since the edifice bears no clear relation to its surroundings.



Entrance to St. Anne's Limehouse – the Work of Nicholas Hawksmoor



The Residential Blocks Surrounding the Churchyard of St. Anne's Limehouse

The design of the church itself makes little immediate structural sense. The churchyard is littered with objects whose significance is unknown, or forgotten rather. Its borders are lined with headstones which bear inscriptions that have become illegible in the course of time.



The pyramid directly in front of Hawksmoor's church tower is the most mysterious object of all: its presence in the churchyard is the least explicable; its purpose is either

unknown or forgotten, there being no legible inscription that could enlighten us in the matter.





Perhaps the pryamid represents that which escapes representation, like Sinclair's 'downriver.' 'True London,' which capitalism betrayed, always eludes representation and manifests itself as an empty frame. Perhaps the pyramid conceals rather than represents; perhaps the pyramid is architecturally significant *because* it conceals. David Ashford explains,

> Hawksmoor had taken architecture back to the beginning – not merely to the beginning of Christian architecture – but to the original re-production above-ground of that emptying that makes a space for the dead. According to Hegel, the pyramid marks the point at which architecture became a positive procedure but

> ceased to possess an independent meaning, was itself emptied, negated. 'In this way pyramids though astonishing in themselves are just simple crystals, shells enclosing a kernal, a departed spirit, and serve to preserve enduring body and form', writes Hegel. 'Therefore in this deceased person, acquiring presentation on his own account, the entire meaning is concentrated; but architecture, which previously had meaning independently in itself as architecture, now becomes separated from meaning and, in this cleavage, subservient to something else.' (Ashford, n.p.)

The "something else" to which architecture – space – is supposedly subservient is the body, of course, although I would much prefer to think that the two are *connected* in a (long) chain of signifiers. This connection means that the signifying purpose of space and of the body overlap, that the one is meaningful *in relation to* the other. Space becomes meaningful in relation to the body if we suppose, like Ashford and after Hegel, that the body is the source of all meaning because a spirit resides in it.

It must be stressed that 'body' and 'space' are related, despite any existing doubt about the idea that the spirit is the beginning of meaning.[30] For the sake of argument, let us still imagine that the spirit is the ultimate referent, the elusive death *as such* to which Derrida refers in his discussion of aporia. If the spirit is truly this *as such*, then the body is the spirit in its tangible form. However, if the spirit departs, the body would be divested or "emptied" of meaning; if a body without a spirit is a corpse unworthy of commemoration, the shrine would exist without serving its original purpose, which is to celebrate the body, the putative manifestation of the spirit. 'Space' and 'body' would be the parts of a signifying chain with no perceivable end, for meaning in the sense of the ultimate referent (the spirit, the *as such*) would in this case be obscured. The meaning to

[30] Inadvertently or not, Francis Bacon and Alexander Herzen (among others) have already contradicted Hegel's idea that all dialectical tension will be resolved, eventually, in some metaphysical Absolute Spirit (see Kelly 647). If synthesis could never be achieved in our immediate reality, it would have little practical relevance. The very notion of a synthesis would then appear untrue, since Truth should consist of both the materialistic and the abstract (See Kelly 647).

which 'space' and 'body' pertain would also be deferred, abstracted.

That Moore and Sinclair attribute occult significance to Hawksmoor's constructions would seem reasonable, if Asher is correct to assume that Hawksmoor took it upon himself to commemorate something as ungraspable as the beginning of (architectural) history, or else death, the spirit's departure. Signifiers such as the pyramid give Sinclair, for one, an inkling of what is concealed downriver in that they signify an essential something that has departed, an inarticulate nothingness. Put another way, Sinclair's 'downriver' represents some lost truth called 'the Real' much like Moore's 'Realism Island' in *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* – which I will briefly discuss here for the purpose of illustration. In the appendix to *League*, Wilhelmina (Mina) Murray describes Realism Island as follows:

> Next day we passed Realism Island, where once stood a tower to honour God, with the world's animals, even the ugly ones, carved into its façade to represent the work of the divine Creator. Sadly, its designer suffered injuries to the head and could no longer recall why he'd built the thing, deciding that, in its appealing ugliness, it was a monument to Realism. (n.p.)

The island is supposed to be a reminder of something as unthinkable as the divine – something beyond God's mere name; in this sense, the Realism Island is the metonymy of what it represents – call it 'God' or 'the Real.' But the island's designer, having forgotten the object of his commemoration, must content himself with the island, the only available reference to the Real and attestation to divine creation.

The 'thing,' that is, the tower erected upon the island, is ugly because it is a reminder of a lost purpose. The designer does not remember the signifying purpose of the thing he created although he had labored on it to preserve a particular memory of the Real. This loss nonetheless gives the ugly 'thing' a divine appeal. The 'thing' has attained

divine status because, of all earthly matters, it alone has some semblance to the divine. Spectators recognize the thing as the *designer's* creation rather than an imitation of the divine, since they simply cannot commemorate the designer's forgotten muse.

That is to say, a realist representation is but one's idea of the Real, one's speculation thereof, thus a sort of speculative fiction. Moore's *League* itself is a fantasy reminiscent of the Real, while a fantasy is real enough as an echo of the Real, as it were. The narrative structure of *League* resembles the contours of Realism Island, moreover, since the centers of both withhold traces of a forgotten Real. Both alienate the Real, being fantastical representations of it; however, in referencing the Real, in producing their respective echoes of the Real, each acquires a distinct metaphysical meaning. Each is a reality with a *genius loci*, originating in a forgotten divinity and existing within the un-navigable Real known to Gull as the fourth dimension. Realism Island could be imagined as a fragment of Gull's formulation of Englishness. The Island is the part which, while derived from the greater whole of a finished narrative, has its proper boundaries, its own *genius loci*. In Deleuzian terms: "the whole not only coexists with all the parts; it is contiguous to them, it exists as a product that is produced apart from them and yet at the same time is related to them" (Loc 1196). The part and the whole (say, the product and the source of its inspiration) interface with each other, derive meaning from each other, even though the part assumes its own meaning.

In contrast to Moore, Sinclair does not imagine the Real to be something quite as concrete, but only as a frame whose content is inaccessible. A referent to what lies downriver, the aforementioned pyramid is necessarily an empty frame which marks the limit of understanding, the point at which the Real and the everyday (i.e. our lived reality)

are differentiated, disconnected. For Sinclair, the Real within is so different from the quotidian everyday that it must defy understanding and representation. Since the Real cannot be represented, there could be no substitute for it. Figuratively speaking, London's soul was buried 'downriver' before any Realism Island could be built in commemoration of it. Moore imagines the Realism Island as a space from which one derives some kind of existential meaning, while Sinclair thinks of 'downriver' as an indescribable something to which no one can relate.

When relationality is not established, meaning itself is threatened. The pyramid in the center of Hawksmoor's construction reminds urbanites that something is amiss: bearing no legible inscription, the structure's presence makes very little sense. But by virtue of its incomprehensibility, the pyramid suggests that the signifying chain is impaired, that the *as such* has been lost. In more practical terms, the government's redevelopment schemes can claim no ultimate purpose so long as they fail to give meaning to these London oddities. That which capitalism cannot explain might carry alternate meanings. St Anne's Limehouse, for example, is a part of London which signifies things other than capitalism – things that cannot be named because they were forgotten when London's spirit departed, when it went 'downriver.' Someone who remembers such discrepancies in meaning may cast doubts on the 'realness' of the urban everyday. Only one such person, in fact, could remember to ask if capitalist London is truly the ultimate purpose of history, i.e. history's 'as such,' the only possible ending to humanity's interpretation of time. St Anne's Limehouse will fascinate so long as it bears no discernible relation to its surroundings and signifies, in this vein, a disjunction in meaning which the body is compelled to overcome. For 'I' becomes a meaningful

concept in relation to the surrounding space: the body is naturally inclined to fill the hollowness it feels – to explain the inexplicable – on seeing something so strangely spectacular.

Eventually, 'I' becomes a concept equally inexplicable in relation to this urban spectacle whose meaning is unclear. One should write (psychogeography) to demystify, but, failing this purpose, Sinclair writes to confuse. Sinclair puts the mysterious (the occult) in a dialectical relationship with the government so as to frustrate the latter's attempt to foster a coherent English identity, and, to that end, restructure London. Sinclair fails the government on purpose, for the more he thinks about the occult, the more his sense of self – his 'I' – comes undone: such is the fate of an author who fails to give meaning to his feelings of attachment to spectacular urban sites. Such is the assumption underlying Sinclair's strategies of political resistance, in any case. State Reason must find opposition in unreason of the occult variety – the kind evident in Sinclair's psychogeography, a prose style intended not so much to enlighten but to confuse.

I will refer to the Hawksmoor edifice in Whitechapel for the purpose of elaboration. Whitechapel is the home of Jack the Ripper, an English icon who figures prominently in Moore's as well as Sinclair's works. At present, Whitechapel is a touristic area pandering to the desire for heritage, selling memories of Jack the Ripper at every street corner where he might have lurked. For a fee of ten pounds, tourists are guided through the neighborhood and shown the infamous crime scenes where they are invited to touch the doors and walls the Ripper just might have touched. After the tour, visitors are advised to take a break at the Ten Bells where the Ripper and his victims just might have frequented. The pub is conveniently located beside Christ Church, the area's landmark.



The Ten Bells

Sinclair has said the following of Christ Church: "Christ Church, in the person of a representative of the Spitalfields Trust, was the only Hawksmoor Church that charged us to climb the tower" (*Lights Out* 126). He adds that on the day of his visit, a "documentary was being shot in which Alan Moore realigned the church and its fellow East London leviathans according to some dangerous occult prescription. Nicholas Hawksmoor's flagship had willingly rented itself out as a set for Clive Baker's history of horror" (*Lights Out* 126).



Christ Church Spitalfields: the work of Nicholas Hawksmoor

Christ Church Spitalfields is then the center of the Ripper's labyrinth, the heritage business in which Sinclair says Moore is complicitous. Moore's vision of the London urban sprawl might have helped inspire the redevelopment of Whitechapel – or of Spitalfields, as the 'heritage institution' names it. The official goal here is to give visitors a chance to feel the chill the Ripper inspired in the hearts of Victorian women (and some others) who wandered around the infamous East End in the thick of the night. Establishments such as The Ten Bells are preserved to enhance the experience, to render the area a portal into the past.



"A Spitalfields Institution 1666": A View of Spitalfields Market from Inside The Ten Bells

Christ Church, now the flagship, indeed, of the Spitalfields heritage institution (circa. 1666, as indicated in the photograph above), is especially guilty of making the area a cheap thrill for tourists: it has offered up its heights to opportunists (like Moore, writes Sinclair) who set out to commodify views of London from high above.[31] Anyone who pays to climb the tower could enjoy a bird's-eye view of London, a sprawling but highly functional, structurally coherent city. Spitalfields touts London's agedness alongside its political authority – as do the Thames and the Docklands, which I will

[31] Sinclair might have vilified Christ Church because of its longstanding history as an instrument of political repression. Many Anglican church-buildings were built in London after the Tories passed The Act of Parliament in 1711, "in response to the clergy's fears that the non-conformist sects that had played such an important part in the revolution of the previous century were now flourishing in the East End" (Ashford, n.p.). Then, in the eighteenth century, when "French refugees living in Whitechapel protested […] at the decline in their trade, the troops that crushed the uprising were barracked in Christ Church" (Ashford, n.p.). To this day, "Hawksmoor's churches continue to project this illusion of state control – blamed in contemporary psycho-geographical literature for crimes resulting from the state's *failure* to prevent economic and societal breakdown […]" (Ashford, n.p.).

further discuss in the section to follow. London, as a whole, embodies an English history too coherent, too perfect, to be true.

But Sinclair prophesies that imperfect parts will emerge to ruin this perfect whole; he even facilitates the process by calling attention to these incoherent parts in his writing. It is likely that Sinclair writes psychogeography to recover the forgotten parts of English history:

> Writers like Sinclair himself and Alan Moore, among others, hoping to "rescue" the past or reclaim "dead ground," will have to grapple with such "pressure groups" as "developers, clerks, eco freaks, and ward bosses" (146) who are hoping to curtail or erase the remaining traces of historical change in order to remove disruptions and destabilizing "lived" elements from official versions of the past. Psychogeography becomes both a potential countermovement and a commentary on the way English space is produced as heritage, for example by drawing attention to the violence and trauma out of which sanitized tourist locations are forged. (Ho 109)

Heritage is history after it is 'sanitized.' History becomes heritage when it is rid of elements that disturb the quotidian everyday dreamt up by the said "developers, clerks, eco freaks, and ward bosses" alike. Ho thinks that history might yet be "rescued," retrieved 'downriver,' though psychogeography might not be so aware of its purpose. Moore and Sinclair write psychogeography to communicate a loss of meaning, after all. Moore portrays English history itself as a spectacle falling into pieces, or a broken-down whole which is anything but perfect, i.e. comprehensible at first glance. Sinclair has far less faith in 'the whole' than Moore, since he does not believe that alternate London realities should proliferate within the confinement of a framework. Sinclair is rather interested in parts which bear no apparent relation to one another. This absolute incompatibility between parts leads Sinclair to believe that the whole will not hold no matter how perfect it appears.

Nevertheless, it is not incorrect to call psychogeography a rescue mission or a mission impossible, seeing as psychogeographers desire nothing if not the impossible. Psychogeographers desire the 'original' Whitechapel precisely because it is all but gone: the area is all but 'regenerated' by the government. To quote Ho again,

> That Ripperature and psychogeography coalesce around the East End is deliberate: the area has received the most attention from Thatcher's efforts at regeneration through investment capitalism and contains many diverse political elements and identities that can be considered as anti-Thatcher. *From Hell*'s 1998 appendix, set in what remains of Whitechapel, reminds us that reclamation and regeneration as a kind of colonization, masked as New Labor's modernization, continues. (Ho 115)

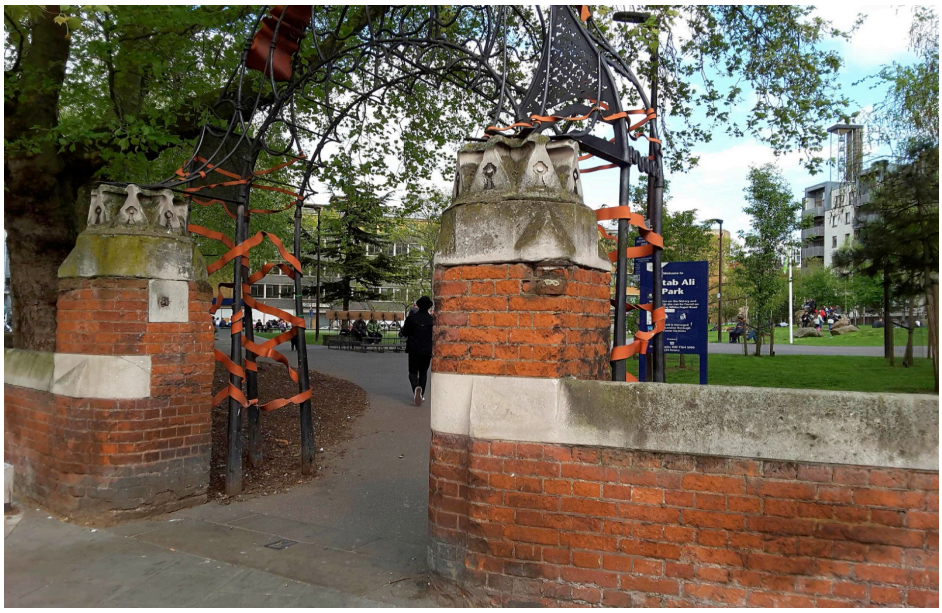
Needless to say, resistance is a dialectical response, in this case to Thatcher's vision of a London rich in heritage. Moore equates regeneration with homogenization. If the government 'regenerates' Whitechapel by downplaying, or worse, covering up, its historic political diversity, then Moore must explore its depths to prove 'heritage' a superficial lie. He pursues the above/below dialectic in his writing precisely to do so.

While Sinclair shares Moore's suspicion of Spitalfields, i.e. Whitechapel after it is 'regenerated,' he does not think it possible that what is evident in plain sight contains elements of truth. Sinclair believes in esoteric symbols like the pyramid quite simply because the government has been unable to tame them. In *Lights Out*, Sinclair tells us that even St Mary Matfelon Park in Whitechapel is a variation of the pyramid:

> An absence, a brick outline in the grass, that gave credence to the surrounding crush of business and development. The church appeared, disappeared, and reappeared in many forms, soliciting destruction: the Great Tempest of 1362, the fire of 1880 which gutted the Victorian building in an hour, the fire bombs of 1940, the tearing down of the ruin in 1952—and its reduction to the status of 'garden' in 1966. All that is left is the skeletal tracing, a psychic barrier that repelled the vagrants who gathered around the solitary sepulcher […] The reservoirs of psychogeographical energy are identified by being resistant to the attentions of cameras and recording instruments. Only when the frame is blank can you be sure that something worth looking at is there. (230, 231)



The street opposite St. Mary Matfelon, now known as 'Altab Ali Park.' The Whitechapel Station (which makes the area so easily accessible) is directly across the street.



Altab Ali Park

St. Mary Matfelon left behind in the blooming area of Whitechapel a visible absence, an inexplicable but tangible lack on the face of Spitalfields which developers have been unable to fill, and which Sinclair and like-minded psychogeographers have wanted to fill. Sinclair, for one, writes to revive no-longer-existent memories of the church which may

hinder future capitalist projects in London. He pays tribute to the corpse, that is, the urban oddity that has survived redevelopment, by writing about it, thereby filling the void it left behind with words. Sinclair writes in hopes of establishing some kind of affinity with an ideal untainted by heritage, but he also writes to discover that words must fail him where such abstract ideals are concerned. Words must unravel *him* – i.e. the confident sense of self the neighborhood has instilled in him as it has other Londoners. London's spirit – its *genius loci* – has gone 'downriver,' taking away with it the power of the word, the means through which the London identity could be clarified and confidently asserted.

Ever since the spirit's departure, voids like St Mary Matfelon have emerged around London: for Sinclair, such voids are traces of the Real downriver, but reminders of what is irrecoverably lost no less. Let us study the lawn of Altab Ali Park as an example.



What Remains of St. Mary Matfelon

What remains of the church floor spreads tastefully across the park's lawn, tempting its visitors to reconstruct a past forgotten because it is too much at odds with London's capitalist present. The park is the relic of a past that bears no linear relation to the

Spitalfields present; it nonetheless appeals to Sinclair (who cannot even begin to imagine what the church might have looked like) on a sensual as opposed to a rational level. It has spurred Sinclair on to presuppose and then discover (as self-delusional as this may sound) his emotional bond with a no-place (i.e. a meaningless space) in crowded Spitalfields. As I will argue in what is to follow, Sinclair writes to articulate a meaning he cannot know, since his revenue-generating surroundings have made him forget. He writes psychogeography to speculate about London's past in ways that would corrupt the elevated notion of 'English heritage,' so he writes incoherently. As he finds himself unable to negotiate some sort of relation to these blanks on his native Londonscape in his writing, he discovers that he has no fixed sense of identity.

Sinclair mythicizes the odd parts of London to invent its history. He emphasizes the part but vilifies the whole, the supposed manifestation of the immutable truth buried 'downriver.' Sinclair does not wish to see London whole, and he duly criticizes Moore for doing so. Moore only observes that all wholes must unravel, considering that there exists no immutable truth. Whatever their differences, both Moore and Sinclair know that psychogeography reveals the transience of all stories and all invented wholes. To write psychogeography is to record one's fleeting impressions of the land. The notion of psychogeography cannot but be transient, although the land, having existed since the beginning of time, seems not to be so. Those who dwell on the land practice psychogeography whenever they respond to the land, emotionally; they learn, through psychogeography, that their identities are only as constant as their feelings towards the land. The one perennial truth psychogeography teaches is that 'I' is another.

In the ensuing Chapter, I will call this radical Other 'God,' though 'God' here is not a religious entity but rather the embodiment of a foreign way of knowing, thus a means to estrange the everyday. The symbol of a radical alterity, 'God' is most conducive to the psychogeographic purpose of re-conceiving the utopian otherworldly – i.e., an unmappable, unthinkable, and therefore un-representable space. 'God' in the psychogeographical sense likewise evokes the perspective of an alien, unimaginable Other, an alien-being-in-another-world: in order to write about ethereal utopian otherworlds in which this impossible perspective originated, psychogeographers estrange the familiar urban everyday alongside its capitalistic emphasis on materiality and commodity consumption. A fantastical aura enshrouds all psychogeographic worlds, as a consequence, and psychogeographic London appears to be anything but actual London: this otherworldly dimension is the fourth dimension in Moore's *From Hell*, and an anarchist rendering of an urban palimpsest *in V for Vendetta*; for Sinclair, it is 'White Chappell' (note the spelling), or simply an unknown located 'downriver.'

Nevertheless, actual London – being the source of Sinclair's and Moore's inspiration – does figure in prominently in these otherworldly psychogeographic visions. This tacit acknowledgement of the lived experience – the base material reality, or geography, call it what you will – underlies psychogeography as it would any utopian writing, for what is better is contingent upon what is worse in lived experiences. Since a base material reality serves as the foundation for all such visions and prophecies, the envisioning of something better is a process at base dialectical or at least dialogical. I is ergo another, namely, the inhabitant of a world bettered in the absence of what is identified as undesirable. Utopian dimensions so conceived are multifarious and

imperfect, since they are not concrete visions of the future whose realization depends on specific plans of action. Such definite plans for the future would indeed be "anti-utopian," which "in the West often seems to be an expression of the Christian idea of 'original sin'" (Sargent 21). In secular terms, the human race is simply incapable of implementing changes that would realize utopia, seeing as all such plans are bound to "rain down destruction" (Sargent 22) in a manner that recalls the French Revolution.

Chapter Three will present abstract, theoretical descriptions of Sinclair's psychogeographic worlds – which, I should emphasize, are utopian fantasies rather than anti-utopian blueprints for the future. Sinclair dabbles in mysticism precisely because he acknowledges his place in material London, which is the obverse of utopia. Utopia as such is a radical alterity attainable only in the complete absence of the undesirable, including any knowledge thereof. Thus 'I is another' is not a simple statement of negation, but an expression of necessary wishful thinking: the Other, in this instance, is an absent and therefore ideal – alluring – radical alterity from whom 'I' is estranged, for utopia need be unrealizable in the presence of 'I,' whose framework of reference is delineated precisely in terms of the un-utopian, i.e., that which is rejected as undesirable. For Sinclair, 'God' represents a psychogeographic conception of a utopian radical alterity; yet, as an interpretive lens, 'God' also signals a consciousness, that is, an awareness of the present or of actual London which obscures, colors, and in this way mystifies the utopian visions Sinclair portrays. This sense of confusion then engenders multiple utopian possibilities, multiple psychogeographic otherworlds.

On this note, I will begin a new chapter.

Chapter Three

Iain Sinclair: Traveler, Psychogeographer, Visionary, and Mystic

Writing Psychogeography, Writing London through a Screen Darkly: *White Chappell, Scarlet Tracings* (1987)

A mystical reasoning belies Iain Sinclair's psychogeography. In *White Chappell, Scarlet Tracings*, Sinclair specifically tells us that reason is a myth and an epistemology, that is, a narrative 'I,' the Cartesian *cogito*, fabricates to explain and validate its existence. Inasmuch as the *cogito* studies space to reason and so achieve understanding, space is the Other in relation to which 'I' becomes a meaningful notion; in other words, the ability to think and reason – which of course defines the *cogito* – originated in space. *White Chappell* represents this relation in ways both mystical and rational: however much neoliberal reason may seem the logical culmination of London history, and a vindication of divine wisdom as such, it is not impervious to London's mystical energy, the effect of which is evident in Sinclair's London writings. My contention is that Sinclair's psychogeography depicts the 'mystical undoing' of neoliberal reason, as well as any official narrative about London's cultural heritage or so-called Englishness. Sinclair writes to impair understanding, such that London, the subject of psychogeographic representation, is forever estranged.

Sinclair's psychogeographic mysticism – if one may call it that – likewise betrays a desire to trace the beginning of time through writing, or the hope of discovering a God who, having presided over creation, is always already. Sinclair, in particular, writes to speculate about God's design across a linear timeline, but in the process he needs render God a rumor susceptible to distortions, thus an urban legend of sorts. His

psychogeographic projections of God disrupt, most ostensibly, the narrative of London heritage whose premise is the tradition of Reason as it is represented in the section on Moore's *Jerusalem*. Unlike Moore, however, Sinclair uses psychogeography to contrast the splendor of neoliberal reason with shadows so as to show that truth, however reasonable it appears, is a slippery notion. A God whose brilliance is revealed by contrastive measures cannot be true in any absolute sense; any conclusive account of London history this God may have to offer is therefore suspect to say the least.

Insofar as *White Chappell* pretends to uncover divine intervention in London history, it is both psychogeography and detective fiction: Sinclair practices psychogeography in London to detect the meaning of his being-in-London, which supposedly has a history traceable to God, and a future the same God decreed at the beginning of time. Here the psychogeographic 'I,' that is, the psychogeographer, is confident in the purpose of his existence because he exists in the present, the point in time when God is absent: so long as God is absent, He will need to be divined. It follows that the psychogeographer exists in the London present as a detective of God, in relation to whom he will achieve understanding. Evidently, God's absence is motivation enough for the psychogeographer to reason in a mystical fashion.

God's absence does not, however, ensure that time follows a linear order, for the present wherein *White Chappell* is set nonetheless invokes other times. As Wilhelm Emilsson observes, "at the time Iain Sinclair published his novel the results of Margaret Thatcher's laissez-faire surgery on Britain's welfare system were making the country appear more Dickensian everyday" (278). An undermined welfare system would make the impoverished still more impoverished, to be sure, and yet no spectacle of decay –

which Emilsson calls "the Dickensian everyday" in London – could prompt the government to alleviate poverty. The government would rather conceal the Dickensian everyday by means of gentrifying the city for the promotion of so-called English culture, and at the risk of extraditing the city's poor. Max Dupperay describes the Dickensian everyday as a perennial feature of twenty-first-century London, where racial and class tensions continue to run rampant (see Dupperay 171); he further adds that urban poverty is Sinclair's chief concern in *White Chappell*, though the Victorian reference of Jack the Ripper does give the novel a fitting "psychotic echo" (Dupperay 183).

Within this spectacle of the Dickensian everyday, time appears disjointed. In Dupperay's words, Sinclair's London is a "timeless limbo" (184) imaginable only in reference to Blake's prophetic poems, "as well as fantasies like the Royal and masonic conspiracy" in oneiric directions (184). Robert Bond similarly believes that the past has assumed the physical form of London to entrap Sinclair who, in response, writes with the "overriding impulse […] to cut through [the] secrec[ts]" (Bond 95) of late capitalist London so as to "decipher" the "traces of the city's history" (Bond 91). Sinclair's writing is "automatic," i.e., "dictated" in a "Blakean, divine manner, and composed in automatic 'spasms and random leaps'" (Bond 97), for only this counter-logical mode of writing can realize

> the utopian hope […] that by granting attention to the past, for instance with an act of retrospective prophecy, the status quo of the given past may be transfigured into the not-yet-happened. Crimes are not to be denounced […] so much as re-defined or re-imagined, as if they were focal points of a historical energy that is to be redirected along a more positive course. (Bond 106)

His assumption that time is linear – that any positive energy infused into the past will carry forward to a utopian future – notwithstanding, Bond is quite right to suggest that the

impulse to write is spontaneous. Sinclair wrote *White Chappell* in the hope of discovering alternate ways of experiencing London, of 'being-in-London';[32] his writing, in turn, betrays his utopian impulse to envision alternate London histories, where capitalism and consumer culture do not prevail.

Utopian writing of this sort possesses a quality that impresses Dupperay as "oneiric," but Brian Baker as cosmological and transcendental. For Baker, in particular, there are two layers of time in *White Chappell*, namely, "cosmic time and limited human time." Each layer is a "canvas" on which Sinclair could paint "psychogeography and myth," simultaneously (Baker, n.p.), seeing as psychogeography is itself a myth set in multiple temporal dimensions. Conflating past, present, and future to conjure up a "temporal co-presence, or perhaps multi-presence" (Baker, n.p.), psychogeographic time does not exist in the singular as it would, if it were to follow a linear order. Time in *White Chappell* is therefore psychogeographically 'impossible,' and in face of it any attempt to give London or being-in-London (i.e. the *cogito*, or in Sinclair's case, the psychogeographic 'I' who explores London) definite meaning could only be doomed. The detective work that Sinclair undertakes in the novel to gain the divine perspective or the vantage point is no less futile, since the detective – the embodiment of reason itself – cannot think coherently so long as he is caught in psychogeographic time.[33] In short, the *cogito* may well be conceived in the present, but within a 'multi-presence,' it is

[32] It would be helpful to take into account Martin Heidegger's definition of 'being': "Dasein tends to understand its own being [sein] in terms of *the* being [Seienden] to which it is essentially, continually, and most closely related—the 'world.'" (16). Being exists in relation to the world, such that *being-in-the world* is the "constitution" of Dasein, in other words the basis of our conscious existence (53). Being is not possible independently of the world, since being-in-the-world "stands for a *unified* phenomenon" (53).
[33] Baker thinks that Sinclair's reading of time is quite similar to Moore's in *From Hell*. There is nevertheless a difference: Sinclair, unlike Moore, imagines that he sees London from a position above. This statement is fairly accurate. As I argue in the previous section, Moore does imagine a transcendental position through the lens of, say, Gull the Ripper. But Moore inevitably returns to the level of the local, i.e., the *part* of a transcendental vision of London.

necessarily divided – dis-unified – such that 'I' is always another (to borrow from Rimbaud again). In the same vein, Sinclair must learn through his pursuit of psychogeography that he is situated in a 'multi-present' London, where he is undeniably 'more than one.'

The psychogeographer's fragmented identity would induce us to think, perhaps in a mystical vein, that Sinclair writes as if he were possessed – by God. Spiritual possession is a recurrent theme in psychogeographical writing, while the language of psychogeography is often spectral: Emilsson, for one, finds that *White Chappell* has "countless references to tracings and traces" (277), that each word within the novel "contains within it traces of its opposite" (Emilsson 277); Julian Wolfreys has likewise proposed with regard to *White Chappell* that psychogeography "raises spectres which are always already there, revenants of the city, endlessly recalled through walking, memory, writing" (140).[34] Wolfreys explains the 'endless' nature of psychogeography by recalling Derrida's idea of the "word-ghost," that is, "a ghost composed of words, the trace of a trace inscribing words" (Derrida qtd. in Wolfreys 139).

I will respond to Wolfreys by offering my own interpretation of the Derridean notion of trace. Psychogeography is endless and impossible as Wolfreys maintains, but only because the psychogeographer wants to invent a language of reason that would take for granted God's existence at the beginning of *a unique English time*. The

[34] Some scholars find the "hauntological" approach distasteful. Roger Luckhurst is such a one. He claims that "the generalized structure of haunting is symptomatically blind to its generative loci" (528): if considered a general phenomenon, 'haunting' will become irrelevant to individual grievances. In fact, the psychogeographical emphasis on the occult is generally irrelevant, since "an occultism that conjures counter-spells is itself intrinsically anti-democratic in its love of the arcane […] So etiolated is any idea of a metropolitan public sphere that we have turned instead to the private experiences of hidden routes, secret knowledges, flittering spectres, the ghosts of London past" (Luckhurst 541). I will nonetheless discuss the occult in this section, but as a fantasy always already doomed to fail.

psychogeographer is dedicated to tracing God's reason and language – a God who vindicates the existence of 'I' in the English present as it is manifested in London, and thereby motivates 'I' to compose the narrative of English heritage.

If Emilsson is correct in thinking that each word contains the trace of its opposite, the practice of writing psychogeography would negate God in tandem with the idea of a beginning – indeed any notion of sequentiality. Each word that is written to describe the beginning references some other point in time, such that each word written for the purpose of delineating a linear time must suggest a temporal co-presence. Brian Baker is, in this sense, correct to say that *White Chappell* haunts us as a piece of writing which "does not offer closure, but sends us back to the beginning, and invites us to reread the text and complete the circuit ourselves" (n.p.). Every re-reading marks the reader's attempt to reaffirm the impossible idea that time, being continuous, progresses linearly, yet the reader cannot help but identify with the psychogeographer, whose consciousness – which is manifest in his writerly voice – is fractured by every word he writes. This process of fracturing recalls Derrida's idea of *différance*, i.e. the conceiving of differences (say, between thesis and antithesis, clarity and obscurity) to create meaning. *Différance* is not unlike a trace of God, which obscures and makes 'occult' any divine being in defense of the *cogito*'s privilege to interpret its surroundings.

Consequently, it is in the psychogeographer's interest to invent reason and to write psychogeography in the hope of being inspired by God – however he may interpret 'God.' Reason as it is here defined is subjective rather than objective, hermeneutical rather than empirical. Because the meaning of reason is so ambiguous in *White Chappell*, its significance is quite often debated. The disagreement between Emilsson and Bond

may shed some light on the issue's contentiousness. Whereas Emilsson argues that "reason, the guiding light of traditional sleuthing, is a hindrance to Sinclair and Joblard [Sinclair's counterpart in all his London expeditions]" (280), Bond insists that Sinclair is not irrational. In Bond's opinion, Sinclair draws upon Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes' stories precisely to show his commitment to "typically rational processes of uncovering" (103): "Sinclair is not inverting rationalist detection and providing us with exemplarily irrational detectives. But he is questioning the validity of methods that claim a surety of detection of causes" (104).

When Bond calls Sinclair a rationalist, he might have in mind what Emilsson calls *traditional* reason, according to which a cause must precede an effect, and a causal sequence of events must in this way unfold across time. Bond assumes that one is either rational or irrational in this 'traditional' sense, yet Sinclair is neither, since he is a writer/inventor of reason, a rationalist in his own right. 'Sinclair' (as a character) performs little detective labor to present *White Chappell* as a work of detective fiction. *White Chappell* is a detective novel only because Sinclair identifies himself as Late Dr. John H. Watson, the "secret hero who buries his own power in other men's triumphs" (15), and in this manner he implies the existence of a 'Late Sherlock.' Sinclair, as Late Watson, writes to explain the reason of a Late Sherlock who never appears in the novel. Sinclair/Watson is not the detective, the logician *par excellence,* but, as writer, Sinclair/Watson is the voice of reason. Words enable reason, and the master of words commands power in the name of reason. If *White Chappell* celebrates detection and articulated reason, it celebrates the writer above all else. The writer envisions all mysteries and knows all the explanations thereof; he is Reason, the means through which

the reader navigates his fictional universe. *Logos* is the beginning of reason, the beacon penetrating all detective mysteries. Words demystify and enlighten. Words illuminate.

Much like the writer of detective fiction, the writer of reason must demonstrate a high level of linguistic competence to those s/he wishes to enlighten. The need to express reason is where psychogeographical and detective writings overlap; even so, however, the writer of psychogeography is not all that similar to the exceptional individual whose reasoning prowess conventional detective writings celebrate. Unlike the writer of detective fiction, the writer of psychogeography records different, at times contradictory, testaments of God's presence in London. Sinclair, for instance, writes about every divine encounter to gain a more comprehensive understanding of London history, and he narrates each encounter with a different voice as if possessed, as if he had borrowed the reason of another. In *White Chappell*, Sinclair traces the beginning of London history in the writings of William Gull, who allegedly was Jack the Ripper, the malevolent spirit still haunting Whitechapel. In writing about Whitechapel, Sinclair becomes possessed by Gull; that is, Gull becomes Sinclair's reason in *White Chappell*, and he introduces himself as such. Gull tells us (through Sinclair) that he is the writer *par excellence,* in fact none other than the inscriber of God's word: "'I can write. I can make a testament, like the Old'" (29). Showing what can only be called false humility, Gull claims that while his "testament" is only one among many, it is also the oldest. Gull thinks that he has recorded the first of God's words, whereby God explains His reason, that is, His design, for humankind.

In the act of transcribing these first divine words, Gull becomes the beginning of language and reason. The first human being and indeed the first Englishman God

enlightens, Gull embodies London's future possibilities. His relationship to London is that of a drop of water to the Atlantic. If we are to draw from Holmes' idea in "The Book of Life" that "[f]rom one drop of water, a logician could infer the possibility of an Atlantic" (Doyle's Holmes qtd. in Sinclair 58), we would imagine Gull as a water droplet which implies a potentiality as immense as an ocean.

The very testament he has written reaffirms his family's contribution to London since the beginning of time and consequently justifies its esteemed status in London. His version of the Genesis begins with the Gulls, who perch upon a vessel reminiscent of Noah's Ark: "The morning lightened, it was time to work. The sea was in the river and the river over the land. […] His house was an upturned boat. […] We are the first ones, the chosen. This is our Ark. The world is water. […] We are his Gull" (28). Here the Gulls witness the end of a water apocalypse and the emergence of London immersed in a wonderful brightness. The morning sun illuminates the London sky and the endless stretch of water below it. The survivors in the Ark, the first human beings after Adam and Eve, are to follow this light and steer London towards a future of trade. God appears to have granted the Gulls their personal river valley civilization, although it might be more accurate to say that Gull has 'written his family's presence into' (i.e. projected his self-conceived significance onto) the bodies of water that are, evidently, the conduits of wealth into London.

The Gulls' water flows "from Hamford Water to the City of London," where the breadwinner John Gull transports "the fruits of the fields, by barge, […] measures of wheat, measures of barley […]" (45). The current bears the bounties of Mother Earth, intended for the Gulls and all the Londoners to come. London will remain prosperous so

long as these waters continue to flow, says Gull in his reading of the London waters. Perhaps not coincidentally, Gull's psychogeography echoes some popular historical accounts of the Thames such as the one Peter Ackroyd offers in *London*. According to Ackroyd, London's prosperity has always depended upon the Thames, "the river of commerce" (455):

> [c]opper and tin were transported along [the Thames] as early as the third millennium BC" (455) and, "as trade and commerce increased, so did the significance of the river. It has been estimated that the volume of business grew three times between 1700 and 1800; there were thirty-eight wharves on both sides of the river […] Within the river's banks sailed tea and china, as well as cotton and pepper, from the East Indies; from the West Indies came rum and coffee, sugar and cocoa; North America brought to the Thames tobacco and corn, rice and oil, while the Baltic states offered hemp and tallow, iron and linen. (Ackroyd 457)

Barley and wheat are apparently only the world's first offerings to London, for after them, exotic items like tea and cocoa also enter London via its rivers. William Gull's father John Gull was the recipient of the initial offerings, the first among all London tradesmen to take advantage of the rivers.

These rivers are imagined as the traces of an Atlantic, the possibility that the Gulls prophesy for London when they inspect the city upon their Ark. Gull who thus translates God's words and writes in His tongue *is* reason, which is precisely what Sinclair/Watson must trace and record. Having written himself into the waters of London, so to speak, Gull offers himself to Sinclair as the *genius loci* cognizant of God's design. He who has seen the beginning of London ostensibly has the right to be God's interpreter. As such, Gull informs Sinclair of God's will for London to be prosperous by means of these waters.

If the beginning of London is traced in Gull's writing of psychogeography, we must entertain the idea that Gull is a writer who detects God's reason, *that Gull is a detective*. In *White Chappell,* the desire to express one's understanding of God is reason enough to write psychogeography. The writer of psychogeography – the psychogeographer – sacrifices the Holmesian emphases on logic and intellectualism in favor of mere beliefs: Sinclair detects and transcribes only Gull's reason, which is derived from his faith in God's partiality to London. Surely God has no motive to illuminate the waters of London so that its trade and the Gull family business would prosper – for if such is divine will, it is not only most mysterious but also most irrational. But Gull and Sinclair write precisely to explicate God's mysterious ways. Both conceive of God as the rational framework unifying all accounts of London history, assuming all the while that God is historical truth in the singular, the *genius loci* that reveals *all*. Psychogeography is then the compulsion to trace London's *genius loci* in order to trace God at the beginning of time. In pursuing psychogeography, Sinclair detects Gull and inherits from him his obsession with beginnings alongside his wish to be God, to be *possessed* by God.

To be possessed by God is not the same as being haunted: this is the premise on which I will distinguish my reading of *White Chappell* from Wolfreys'. Wolfreys explains his "hauntological" reading of Sinclair's psychogeography as follows:

> The leakage of which Sinclair speaks is undoubtedly also readable as that hauntological flow that disrupts temporally distinct moments, and serves in its transgression of boundaries to offer one more graphic image as the contemporary urban writer addresses London. The revenant *just* is the phantom-graphic, barely discernible and yet in its return demanding to be read. A trace not to be confused with the object for which it might stand, this passing ruin, in alluding to a text that can never be read in full, invites imaginative concatenations that in turn generate alternative histories and histories of the other. (n.p.)

Wolfreys argues that the urban writer has no choice but to further his communication with the local trace or the revenant, which will not desist from haunting him – even though the writer will be haunted so long as he communicates with the specter for the purpose of re-reading London and its history. In so doing the writer, or the psychogeographer to be precise, reaffirms the hauntological creed. As Colin Davis explains, "hauntology [a word Derrida coined in *Specters of Marx* (1993)] supplants its near homonym ontology, replacing the priority of being and presence with the figure of the ghost as that which is neither present nor absent, neither dead nor alive" (373): since meaning, having been emptied by ghosts, is no longer "a determinate content to be uncovered" (Davis 377), any desire for fulfilled meaning in the form of the *cogito* (i.e. being and presence) need be frustrated. In place of meaning ghosts offer secrecy, that is, "a productive opening" (Davis 377) for rumors and groundless speculations. Every attempt at meaning production is an exercise in creativity that these secretive specters inspire – though meaning as artificially conceived as this could be no more than an idea, the hint of a presence rather than presence itself. Meaning thus conceived is 'hauntological' in that it is an absence whose presence is intuited, but never wholly understood.[35]

Wolfreys is interested in the revenant as the psychogeographer's muse whereas I in the act of communication, of detection and translation. The psychogeographer, I think, 'translates' the revenant to make it a signifier of God. The revenant as *logos* enlightens

[35] Derrida borrowed the idea of hauntology from the psychoanalysts Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok – for whom the phantom (as opposed to Derrida's 'specter') signifies "the presence of a dead ancestor in the living Ego, still intent on preventing its traumatic and usually shameful secrets from coming to light" (Davis 374). For the two psychoanalysts, the useful distinction between the living and the dead defines the word 'haunting'; for Derrida, however, haunting is a phenomenon contingent upon the erasure of all such distinctions.

the writer, giving the writer the feeling of proximity to God, who is the beginning of all things. That is, the revenant inspires the mystical reason called psychogeography to help the writer trace God. The luminous surface of the Thames, for example, gives the psychogeographer the means to construct God and so to *imagine* himself possessed by God. A possessed mind suffers to have its thought invaded so that the very act of thinking threatens confusion rather than offers clarity: thought could only alienate a possessed mind since the word 'possession' here implies muddled thinking, in other words a disharmony in the individual consciousness. The psychogeographer writes of the revenant to give it meaning, while the revenant corrupts the reason evident in the psychogeographer's words. *Logos* merely exposes the failure of reason to trace God.

These supernatural interferences render psychogeography an unconventional means of detection, whereby articulation does *not* demonstrate one's clarity of mind. If *White Chappell* is a detective psychogeographical narrative, it most certainly deviates from the tradition of British detective writing. Stefano Tani tells us that the classic British detective novel celebrates reason. For instance, the *Sherlock Holmes* series achieved remarkable success among upper-middle-class readers from the early to the mid-twentieth century because it touts "the triumph of Victorian positivism" (Tani 18, 21). In all his "cerebral performances," Holmes cuts the figure of an invincible rationalist who always discovers "neat solutions" (Tani 23). Detection in the Holmesian sense suggests a clearing of vision or a sharp narrowing of focus, such that to detect is to bring to light the most relevant details. To write psychogeography, by contrast, is to refuse to focus, if not to renounce a unified consciousness altogether. Sinclair is a conventional detective in that he writes for the sake of detecting local revenants, though he does forget this original purpose when the specters he detects maim his language and in this way master him. The

psychogeographer – the writer, the detective of revenants – struggles to maintain mastery over *his* language, as it were. A possessed writer like Sinclair writes but inarticulately, while the inarticulate style of writing called 'psychogeography' discloses nothing more than his failed endeavors to trace God. Psychogeography in this iteration is nothing more than the descent of obscurity upon *logos*.

The writer of psychogeography must be understood alongside the writing thereof, and to understand either one must ask: who writes (psychogeography) to lament the loss of reason and announce the death of the one true (neoliberal) God? Who would write to maintain the pretense that he is (possessed by) God? A "rational visionary" who believes in a "scientific mythology," says Brian Baker, or one who demonstrates his reason in the most theatrical, hyperbolic fashion:

> The theatre is a site for autopsy, the division and opening of the human body. The recurrent use of the word 'autopsy' (as in *Slow Chocolate Autopsy*) and the word 'forensic' in Sinclair's writings [suggest] a medico-scientific approach to myth and culture. The etymology of 'autopsy' also signifies another recurrent motif in Sinclair's texts, one indicated in the passage quoted above: vision. Autopsy derives from 'optics', from the Greek words opsis ('vision' or 'sight') and autoptos ('seen by oneself', a compound of autos and optos). An autopsy, then, as defined by Sinclair himself in *Lud Heat*, is 'the act of seeing with one's own eyes'. The autopsy is an act of witness as well as a spectacle, emphasising the personal connection between spectator and event, between seeing and knowledge. (n.p.)

Baker establishes that for Sinclair, to see is to identify. To see but not to identify, however, is a scientific act whereby the self *observes* the performance of an autopsy upon its own body. A self thus 'dis-unified' gains a heightened ('scientific') awareness of itself and of the event of the autopsy. It is this awareness that Sinclair hopes to achieve as he writes London to dissect it and highlight the parts of it, but, despite his distance from himself, the writer in question is not necessarily scientific-minded. As Sinclair readily

confesses in *White Chappell*, 'he' who writes is a 'we' who are "not logicians": "We darted, snapped, disbelieved ourselves" (58). 'We' are Sherlock and Watson, as well as the miscreants who have brought disorder to London and who 'we' purpose to detect. London is the 'third man' (Sinclair's expression) who, upon detection, becomes a part of 'us.'[36] The third man is then the mystical in the psychogeographer's ('*our*') snapped psyche and mutilated body. The third man is a god, that is, the representative of God and a trace of God *as such*.

'We' who dart from reason write psychogeography; 'we' write as Late Sherlock, Late Watson, and the criminal (the third man, the object of our detection) all at once. When investigating the senseless beating of Hymie Beaker of Buxton Street, 'we' chance upon "an identikit portrait of a man seen lurking, talking: horror hybrid, the features of myself and Joblard, blended. Cut and put together. Gone out of the human range. Where two men are." (97) The culprit lurking in Buxton Street, malevolent and wraith-like, possesses Late Sherlock and Watson when they visit the crime scene. Even a senseless criminal such as he could sound the voice of reason through Watson, since his presence is sedimented into the land Watson treads: the spirit that inhabits the land may in this way control any figure of reason – late Sherlock and Watson included. The spirit or the third man, as Buxton Street, has possessed – become one with, made a "horror hybrid" of – Sinclair and Joblard; he has caused Sinclair's narration to become psychogeography, a horror hybrid of disjointed expressions.

[36] "The third man" is, in fact, an allusion to a 1949 detective film directed by Carol Reed and written by Graham Greene. The film, too, is about a corruption of the mind; specifically, it was a commentary on "the conflict between a post-war European World, wearied and bloodied by the experience or the cynicism which defines it, and American innocence or illusions, that are neither remedy nor refuge but instead are dangerously destructive and doomed" (Palmer and Riley, 15).

Thus, to write psychogeography is to accept the assault of the *genius loci* upon reason. The place "beyond the human range," "where two men are," threatens *logos* concomitantly with its purpose to enlighten. Psychogeographic inspections of this place could only confuse writing, since 'psychogeographic writing' is intended to confuse, and 'detective psychogeographical fiction' even more so. Psychogeographic detection, Sinclair has said, "dive[s] into magical primers" where "writers are 'the mirrors of gigantic shadows which futurity casts upon the present,'" after Rimbaud and Poe (131). Is it not futile to expect a mirror to reflect shadows (as opposed to the light projected onto it), or writing to capture obscurity? It bears mentioning here that *White Chappell* is an *anti*-detective novel whose rationale is magic: a psychogeographer articulates what he cannot hear – like the voice of futurity – in his narrative of unreason wherein mirror, labyrinth, and map are "a set of elements typical of mythology" recurring "both at a literal and at a symbolic level" (Tani 47). With regard to anti-detective writing Tani also argues,"[if] the detective is the map-maker (the maker of solution), the present-time is the mirror maker, since every present moment flows away from the time of murder, changes and distorts the image of that past […]" (48). The roles of the detective (as per Tani's definition) and the psychogeographer overlap, for a psychogeographer, who is a detective of revenants, is as much a mapmaker as a conventional detective. A psychogeographic map of London does not enhance any kind of geographical awareness, however, since it merely delineates the shapes of shadows. A psychogeographer embodies the present in that he serves the purpose of reflection, not unlike a mirror. As the present moment drifts, the psychogeographer witnesses the deformation of what he wishes to detect, namely the 'shadows of futurity,' or God's design for London since the beginning of time. Every

word Sinclair writes in his capacity as psychogeographer sheds light on the shadows that are the traces of God. Ultimately, Sinclair finds prophecy impossible because his words *dispel* the shadows with which God supposedly composed His plan for London.

Sinclair detects these shadows wherever "two men are" (97), as mentioned earlier. The sentence "where two men are" (97) finds its completion elsewhere in the novel, when Sinclair and Joblard are at a bar which "has its own sense of what it should be," and which has walls "soaked with earlier tales, aborted histories" (64). The site absorbs its own history and so becomes history itself. The barman is the medium, the *genius loci* which Sinclair calls 'the third man.' Sinclair says of the barman: "Where two men are gathered, a third is always present. Without us he would not be here: without him we could not have come" (65). The third man represents the place/historical event, which detectives of "aborted histories" such as Sinclair and Joblard must learn. The third man is the trace of a past in the present, where it does not belong. If such knowledge of the past is beyond the human range, the two men, Sinclair and Joblard, can only invoke it through the third man. The third man is the historicity, the trace of God which psychogeographers detect; that is to say, the third man is the supernatural and, in this sense, the impossible which psychogeographers must manipulate, but which manipulate psychogeographers in turn. In a word, Sinclair describes the third man to re-formulate histories already aborted so as to write psychogeography, even if the ineffable third man will render his language a horror hybrid. In the figure of the third man, the site butchers and blends the words the two men use to convey its legend. The psychogeographic Third Man evokes the ominous presence of 'a third' in T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, where the persona tells his companion that "there is always another one walking besides you," though "there are

only you and I together." For Eliot the Third Man is only as "unreal" as the "falling towers" of "Jerusalem Athens Alexandria/ Vienna London" – all fulcrums of civilization that are/were fated to crumble and become immaterial, unreal, in time. A testament to human wisdom and the advancement of civilization, language will become mangled as it once did in the event of the collapse of the Tower of Babel.

Psychogeography is the shape language acquires after such 'senseless' violence; it is the sort of writing that disowns ('orphans') its writer, for it gives voice to an absolute reason that, ironically, fails even the staunchest rationalists. Thus one writes psychogeography in the most paranoid fashion and with the most contrived logic, as though one were possessed: in the instance of *White Chappell*, the psychogeographer is the holy trinity of Sinclair, Joblard, and the third man. The third man, being the spirit of the place, derives his existence in the human range from the words of the other two; yet *logos* also consents to the third man's influence, defying the control of the other two. Plainly put, the third man undermines Sinclair and Joblard's reason and corrupts their language. As Brian Baker argues, the third man is "connected […] to a kind of occult birthing caused by the psychic connection between Joblard and 'Sinclair' and the forces immanent in Whitechapel. Images of birth are recurrent in Sinclair's texts, as we have seen with regard to *Suicide Bridge*, and here they achieve a demonic otherness" (n.p.) The 'forces' of Whitechapel, the bar(man) for one, create in Sinclair a demonic otherness even as Sinclair struggles to 'detect' God in Whitechapel at the beginning of London time. It is as Sinclair tells us: Joblard is the "orphan" whose face is "firmer and better known to me than my own" (55). Joblard, then, embodies the warped reason with which

the third man (Whitechapel) infects Sinclair; this demonic other thus introduces the madness of psychogeography to Sinclair's detective work.

Here I must caution that Joblard is *not* Sinclair, that he is rather the other in the self, i.e., the part of the psychogeographer that is inexplicable, therefore unknowable. Joblard is the face Sinclair projects into the beyond to translate/write something as impossible as aborted histories. For the purpose of psychogeography, Joblard must lend his eyes to Sinclair but his body to the *genius loci*, the third man. In his turn, the third man alienates Joblard from Sinclair: "the third man remains vaporous and loose faced" (58), while Joblard's orphan face, lacking any hint of genealogy, is no less so. Sir William Gull, Sinclair's prime suspect in the case of Jack the Ripper, consequently "has stolen the orphan's face" (55). Or rather, Joblard has loaned his face to Gull, the third man who claims to represent God, in order to facilitate a conversation between him and Sinclair. Either way, Sinclair must surrender any hope of producing a cogent case study of Whitechapel, the setting of the infamous Jack the Ripper murders. If he is to write psychogeography, he must accept that his writing will be suffused with the confused reason of a divided consciousness, and that it must inherit Gull's "Testament, like the Old" (29).

Sinclair's 'lineage' to Gull is most evident when he writes about Farringdon Road. Eating sausages with the blue-collar workers on 94 Farringdon Road ("to show solidarity" [103]), Sinclair looks upon a water canal which he imagines at the moment as

> a line of power, aligned, for once, with the drift of the city. Down with the water, from the ponds, the caves of Pentonville, rush with the Fleet, beside its ditch, swept with the dead dogs towards Thames. The domes of Old Bailey's and St. Paul's, the hulks of tenements. The office hulks. Everything in the end floats to Farringdon Road, deaths and libraries, sacks and tea-chests, confessions,

> testaments. The mysteries are shredded and priced. They are offered to the guided hand. (103)

Sinclair's portrayal of the river line not only reaffirms parts of Gull's "Testament" but evokes, too, Eliot's vision of London as the paradigmatic urban Waste Land. Eliot and Sinclair both see the Thames as a steady flow of garbage, a dispiriting representation of modern life. Eliot even calls the Thames an 'unnatural' river that "sweats/ Oil and tar" while "barges drift/With the turning tide" and "wash/Drifting logs/Down Greenwich reach/Past the Isle of Dogs." As Stephen Medcalf puts it, the river puts on display a "profoundly disturbing stream of images" (226) that the poet, yet desiring narrative unity, struggles to construe as "continuous stories (a journey down the Thames to the sea, a journey from the city through a desert)" (226). Eliot watches the City Man – the stereotypical London clerk on his way to work – as he "wander[s] through the unreal City, […] from the 'hyacinth garden' passage to the arrival at the mysterious chapel" (Day 286), and the man's journey down the Thames ineluctably calls to his mind Dante's "descent into Hell" (Day 286). The London Man will never stray far from the Thames, the "English Wall Street" that "contains modern London's financial district and most of England's mercantile and monetary power" (Day 286); he will experience isolation in the midst of the urban crowd, for his human contact will always only comprise "sights, sounds, conversations overheard in snatches" (Day 286). London is the "tiny nightmare Odyssey" (Day 286) that keeps the City Man uninspiring, "dul[l]," and "conservative[e]" (Day 286).

Sinclair brings this all-too-surreal tediousness of the Thames to the fore in *White Chappell*: it seems to him that centuries of effective administrative labor ("the office hulks") have wrought London its wealth and have ensured its accretion of power symbols

(the domes of Old Bailey's and St. Paul's) along the river line. It would also seem that Gull is right to read the waters of London as a token of God's blessings. God, it would seem, granted London wealth and power in the beginning of time. If London is to further both, those eating sausages on Farringdon Road must toil harder. Work generates wealth, and wealth, as John Gull tells us, means life: "Work was life, life was work. '*Blessed is he who has found his work*.' The weak must serve the strong, and be protected, as children served their parents, as women served men, as men served God: that savage and wonderful darkness" (27; italics in original).

Gull's teaching of course echoes Thatcher's "rhetoric of improvement, embodying the Victorian ideals of morality, global dominance, nationalism and myths of progress –financial, technological, social" (Murray, n.p.). Thatcher specifically said, "I was brought up to work jolly hard. We were taught to live within our income, that cleanliness is next to godliness. We were taught self-respect. You were taught tremendous pride in your country. All those are Victorian virtues" (Thatcher qtd. in Murray, n.p.). While Thatcher merely shared her understanding of the traditionally "good character" of the English (supposedly inherited from the Victorians), William Gull advertises his understanding as 'psychogeography,' a variation of the Old Testament to be passed on like a nursery tale. The Gulls read London waters to explain the greatness of the English in causal terms: God gave 'us' an advantage in trade through the waters, so 'we' worked to make trade the basis of 'our' affluence. The water reflects both the cause (God) and the consequence (human labor) of trade, giving Londoners a straightforward reason to 'take pride in [their] country.' God has blessed "he who has found his work" since the beginning of London time; London is blessed because God has given it work in

the form of trade. Because these waters are said to have consecrated a pact between God and he who has found his work, they are celebrated – commodified in "the burgeoning heritage industry" (Martin's phrase 4) of a neoliberal Britain. If neoliberalism has "shaped and unshaped" the London landscape since the 1970's (2) as Neil Martin claims, the Thames should be one of neoliberalism's greatest achievements yet. A satisfying story of growth and heritage endorsed by God – who of course is Reason itself – is inscribed upon the bright surface of its water.

Although Sinclair cannot foreswear the influence of Gull's psychogeography, he can write to 'perform an autopsy upon it.' That is, Sinclair can write to *mutilate* Gull's writing. Near the end of this 'collaborative' London narrative, "shredded mysteries" (103) such as dead dogs, deaths and libraries, sacks and tea-chests, confessions, testaments are said to float to Farringdon Road. Because God's light does not shine upon the muddy water downriver, its content necessarily defies reason and articulation. Sinclair writes psychogeography in this site of madness to make a horror hybrid of Gull, the writer-god who has possessed him through Joblard. This is not to say that Sinclair/Joblard is the anti-god who un-writes Gull's writing, for writing – the formulation of any passage – resembles the continuous flow of water. One needs motivation to write, and the continuation of writing proves this motivation unhampered. One might even argue that Sinclair/Joblard detects the fragments, the sacks and the tea-chests to *complete* Gull's London story, since no writer, not even the writer of psychogeography, can resist the idea of God, which makes reason and historical beginning conceivable, traceable. Sinclair, Joblard, and Gull all write to envision a unifying hermeneutical framework called God.

'Detection,' 'omniscience,' and 'beginning' are all words that foil God, however, since the shadows of futurity will no longer be shadows when illuminated, i.e. revealed in the present. This very constituted difference between light and darkness erases any possibility of detecting pure reason or what Derrida calls *jouissance* – "the pleasure of self-presence, pure auto-affection, uncorrupted by any outside, […] accorded to God" (Loc 7188). Differences enable meaning but necessarily erase God *as such*: such is the curse of *différance*, the basis of language and reason. Derrida argues, "The trace, where the relationship with the other is marked, articulates its possibility in the entire field of entity [*étant*], which metaphysics has defined as the being-present starting from the occulted moment of the trace" (Loc 2847). The trace promises us only the *possibility* of *jouissance* ("the entire field of entity"), which hints at a divine presence in its turn. The trace represents *jouissance* to re-/de-flect its meaning and significance, while meaning is necessarily relational and differential: "[…] without the trace retaining the other as other in the same, no difference would do its work and no meaning would appear. It is not the question of a constituted difference here, but rather, before all determination of the content, of the *pure* moment which produces difference. The pure trace is *différance*" (Derrida Loc 3189). The pure trace which is this constituted difference – which is *différance* – refers to God's full presence and in this manner makes meaning possible. Any dialectical meaning thus created must prove arbitrary and alienate – *erase* – God as such, however. God, the divine Other, carries meaning for us only as "the other in the same." That is, 'I' may imagine the divine Other but 'I' will never know the divine Other *as such*, since 'I' ("the same") must inhere in my imagination of the Other. The Self

becomes a meaningful notion *vis-à-vis* a perceived Other, who is no more than a trace of the divine Other *as such*.

By virtue of its existence, this trace ensures that God as such is 'occulted.' Any meaning attributed to God is necessarily 'occult' in that it must erase God in the sense of the originary (*jouissance*). In this sense, the trace, i.e. *différance*, both constitutes and corrodes meaning. In *White Chappell*, for example, the Atlantic *as such* is erased from meaning when its trace – the water droplet, Gull – presents itself. The difference between the water droplet and the ocean gives us a sense of the immensity of God's design (pure reason, *jouissance*). The trace is our means to detect God and make Him meaningful, and the cause for God's 'occultation' no less. Gull, for one, loses God *as such* when he identifies Him as pure splendor and light, for then utter darkness would suffice to negate a God so clearly defined. Sinclair's way of knowing God is apophatic in that he knows God by discovering what God is not. To know what God is not, one must immerse all resplendent images of Him in dark waters so as to pronounce His death.

For Sinclair, any mention of the shredded mysteries downriver would mean the exclusion and the certain death of (Gull's) God, which then would mean the orphaning of 'us,' the heirs of Gull's prophecy. God's radiance is indeed extinguished in this fashion in *White Chappell*. The beginning this God signifies likewise is annulled as Joblard gains prominence in Sinclair's narrative. An orphan without genealogy or origin, Joblard signifies the death of God and the loss of *jouissance*, i.e. the fantasy of the beginning/originary. He could even supplant Gull's God because he is no one and therefore everyone. Sinclair describes Joblard as follows: "I [Sinclair] turn from the light to Joblard. […] He is white, bearded in shadows. It is the face of my father. The Father of

Lights" (138). As the Father of Lights, Joblard is the God whom Gull hopes to invoke. As God, however, Joblard is an orphan who can be anyone: he can be either Sinclair or Gull, and, quite possibly, he is also Sinclair's father, the father of lights, the father of writing and reason. Joblard represents a God immersed in light but "bearded in shadows" – a God 'occulted' by a language of *chiaroscuro*, that is, a supposed synthesis of "the *clarté* of reason" and "the *obscurité* of the passions" (Plante 481).[37] Gull writes of water because he only wants to reflect light. He writes to reflect the *clarté* of reason (like a mirror) because he believes that doing so will enable him to capture the full presence of God, ideally to *become* God. Sinclair, in contrast, writes to imagine God through Joblard and as Joblard: Joblard is a representation of God inasmuch as he is *clair-obscur*, the synthesis of a constituted difference, the beginning of *différance*. Joblard is a trace of God Sinclair conjures and, as such, Joblard is a sign of Sinclair's inability to think beyond differences such as light and shadow. With Joblard's help, Sinclair traces God but causes God to be erased/'occulted' in doing so.

Nevertheless, it is Joblard rather than Gull who enables Sinclair to invent meaning. Meaning needs to be invented only when God's occult status is preserved – that is, when any meaning attributed to God is questionable rather than absolute. Joblard who has no desire to see God as *clarté* personifies the possibilities which arise as a result of God's occultation. Thus, Joblard is also Dante's Beatrice, his guide through heaven and hell, an agent and a representative of God, the possibility of God, *but not God as such*.

[37] Manon Plante argues that "the term 'clair-obscur' attributed to inversion does not merely refer to a painterly technique but is also a rhetorical–philosophical syntagm in which [Étienne Bonnot de] Condillac's *clair-obscur* is the 'clair' of linkage of ideas, which encounters the 'obscur' of sentiment (which obscurity is represented in language by the rearrangement of words in a sentence)" (481). In seventeenth-century thought, even the language of reason must embrace the "darkness" of "passions and sensations," which had a lower status than the 'clear and distinct ideas' discussed by Descartes" (Plante 481).

Joblard as Beatrice guides Sinclair's "descent" into the city, "from the obelisk of St Luke, Old Street, to the demolished obelisk of St John, Horseydown, by way of the extinguished Church of Mary Matfellon" (137). The disappeared city the pair seeks is "extinguished," immersed in the darkness below. Sinclair, as psychogeographer, must plunge ("descend") into this darkness to visit the demolished obelisk of St John, Horseydown. The Church of Mary Matfellon (which no longer exists in London) is a landmark that will guide his way. Joblard's task as God's agent here is to lead Sinclair "[b]eyond the door of light – the skin of the local is shaken. […] We go down towards the sky" (138). London in its visible form is superficial as skin because it has not yet "extinguished"; it is but the "door of light" Sinclair must trespass to venture into the beyond, the sky underground. The sky/the underground, the above/the below: these differences converge in the oxymoronic expression "the sky underground" to erase God *as such*. Above all, this oxymoron is an attempt at synthesis, that is, at erasing difference and attaining full presence/*jouissance*. To be sure, *jouissance* becomes impossible (as it must be) when it is articulated in dialectical terms, that is, in terms of *différance*.

Jouissance is indeed so defiant of meaning that not even disappeared London landmarks (*obscurité*) can signify it. The demolished obelisk of St John, Horseydown, for example, is not truly the goal of Sinclair's quest but rather a reminder of "Hawksmoor's obelisk, St Luke's, white beacon, Nile finger [possibly a reference to Cleopatra's Needle, which stands beside the Thames]" (90). This cluster of unrelated obelisks signpost a deferral of meaning which, for Sinclair, is an associative detective logic. Sinclair's psychogeographical detection is an unending process, whereby meanings multiply by association so that 'the final solution' is endlessly deferred as well. Halfway through his

pilgrimage, Sinclair feels obliged to confess to the reader that "[i]n our deranged state there is no interest in following detail or making logical connections; we know it all. We shut our eyes: Masons, Clarence, Druitt, conspiracy, asylum […] Three men, Sickert the Painter, Netley the coachman, Gull the doctor. If the equation is neatly made, then it is true" (54). The prerequisite of psychogeographical detection is blindness but not reason in the Holmesian sense. A beam of light will always penetrate the sea of darkness behind the eyelids. This light is the *raison d'être* of psychogeography; it is no more than a resolute belief in magic, a fragile sanity in Sinclair's 'insane' depiction of a 'London under.'

Because the sacred number of three signifies God, the psychogeographer-*cum*-detective – Sinclair, Joblard, Gull – believes in anything befitting the equation of three: Sickert the Painter, Netley the coachman, Gull the doctor; Sinclair, Joblard, and the Third Man; *clair*, *obscur*, *clair-obscur*; thesis, antithesis, synthesis. The dialectical tendencies underlying Sinclair's method of detection already erase London in the originary (where God *as such* might be found) such that it will always remain 'occulted' and require further psychogeographical probing. The story of London's creation will need to be traced so long as it is relayed in terms of *différance*, the language of constituted difference: in this story, the psychogeographer sees/defines God only in relative terms, specifically through a contrast of *clarté* and *obscurité*. 'God' is the synthetic concept Joblard – whose otherwise bright face is bearded with shadows – personifies. 'God' also reveals himself in the obelisk which associates Hawksmoor with St John in Sinclair's mind. St Luke's, which, like a finger, points out the connection between the existent and the extinguished, likewise represents God before the psychogeographer. These phallic

structures "make light, not reflect it" (90); they not only convey but in fact create meaning. The obelisk signifies, detects, and illuminates. The obelisk is Joblard's signifier, that is, the trail of meaning, the trace which Joblard guides Sinclair to follow: this light does not originate from God *as such* but from the writer, who fancies himself possessed by God.

When Sinclair says that the trail to the sky underground is shaped like an obelisk, "white beyond white" (137), he in fact admits that he and Joblard irradiate subterranean shadows wherever they go. Sinclair is aware that he is no less a writer-god than Gull, if to write psychogeography is to anticipate *jouissance* – here the prospect of unifying London in the present with all extinguished Londons so that a synthetic London inundated in light, "white beyond white," will materialize. This whiteness must exclude divine presence, however, for if God *as such* resides in futurity, he must be as meaningless (i.e. indecipherable) as shadows at present.

Shadows that become meaningful when contrasted with light – reason, logic, language – are nonetheless meaningful references to God; they are traces of the divine that guide Sinclair into the unfathomable abyss of an invisible London, the sky underground. Sinclair follows Joblard there to *erase* the London psychogeography which Gull and the inheritors of his reason – neoliberals who promote their idea of English heritage, for instance – have made familiar. "Erasure acts over," according to Sinclair, and "Joblard's performance […] erased itself so that the voices were set free" (199). Sinclair writes psychogeography to enact erasure in the Derridean sense; he casts shadows on the lighted tableau that is the London landscape to rid it of its unnatural gleam. He contents himself with the traces of God so that God *as such* is preserved as the

impossible hope of *jouissance*. Sinclair writes psychogeography to resurrect presences other than the Gulls' from the water apocalypse, since he understands that the realization of God would mean the termination of any detective quest and any pursuit of meaning. He must inscribe shadows in the London text to free God from any Testament, like the Old.

The idea of *différance* humbles any writer of reason and any detective, ultimately. In writing *White Chappell*, Sinclair remembers *différance*, that is, the ineradicable distance which being (the Self) perceives between itself and God, which makes meaning possible in the first place. Sinclair remembers this distance when he fails, as a writer, to enlighten in God's place. He fails to invoke God because he writes *as if* he were possessed by God, an entity other than himself. His psychogeography negates God in the originary but assumes the existence of an alien God. Such writings necessarily reduce 'God' to a meaning dialectical to being and nothing more. In so asserting his sense of self, Sinclair acknowledges his ignorance of God *as such*. Sinclair writes psychogeography, nevertheless, to free God *as such* from his writerly self, who has inherited a clear national allegiance through a testament embedded in the London scenery, familiar like the Old. His psychogeographical awareness does not extend beyond London – not far enough for him to detect God *as such*, in any case.

Who then is Sinclair? 'Sinclair' comes to be in writing, in psychogeography. 'Sinclair' writes to articulate who he *is* in relation to the milieu of Whitechapel. 'Sinclair' is a being capable of reflection, thought, and reason, having germinated from the seeds of time that were planted into this part of the London earth. 'Sinclair' writes to trace, in a pseudo-logical fashion, the being who preceded and impregnated Whitechapel at the

beginning of time to give it history. Any writer, Sinclair or Gull, writes in hopes of discovering God in the originary, in the beginning of London. Yet Gull, unlike Sinclair, writes to discover God in himself: Gull alone does not realize that writing precipitates a process of withdrawal into the self. The writer necessarily alienates himself from God *as such* who is *jouissance*, i.e. transcendence itself. Gull writes about God to detect God but on his own terms: this imperative to explain God in human terms (*logos*) already attests to *différance*, which is the boundary of reason. God *as such* can only be obscured in Gull's chronological, progressivist London narrative, a kind of psychogeography justifying trade and all related instances of labor exploitation in God's name. The Thames water that carries all London histories (according to Gull) is too fixed in its course to flow towards God in the originary, who exceeds not only being but time itself. This steady flow of water symbolizes a narrative whose nationalistic meaning is too potent to pertain to God, since God embodies the pure moment (in the Derridean sense) that once existed before the invention of differences and meaning.

Sinclair continues to write to 'occult' God and to sever ties with God forever, as a consequence. Even divine light, which the waters of London supposedly reflect, means precious little unless it is contrasted with darkness. Thus the notion of *chiaroscuro* proves relevant: God is meaningless until he instills meaning into the dark recesses of the mind and becomes comprehensible as a trace of Himself. In other words, God makes Himself meaningful for the mortal mind only in terms of *différance*. He is the light that has emerged from the darkness of uncertainty and become visible, traceable, knowable. He is light in contradistinction to darkness. Sinclair writes psychogeography to better capture God's divine light. He follows the waters which wrought London its wealth downriver

and encounters the *obscurité* of madness, the flotsam downriver which proves the working class exploited. The *clarté* of reason traceable to God (clear as water) flows into *obscurité* and gives rise to a synthetic God. The writer must inherit both *clarté* and *obscurité* if indeed being itself is a trace or an imperfect imitation of God, for both *clarté* and *obscurité* are derived from God. The writer-*cum*-medium who detects God must inherit, therefore, a divided consciousness which describes God in terms of *différance* and which, in effect, fails to describe God. Sinclair effectively frees God from meaning – erased God, that is – in his attempt to better define divine light by contrasting it with darkness.

Psychogeographic Mysticism: Dying and Becoming in *Downriver* (1995)

Like *White Chappell*, *Downriver* does not really have a narrator: the narrating voice may refer to itself as 'I,' but 'I' is no more than a composite of characters. The presence of an absent narrator in *Downriver* is said in the text to have saved Sinclair from "participating in literature without getting [his] hands dirty" (460): Sinclair's psychogeographic writing is "dirty" in that it is confusing, lacking a linear narrative and cohesive narrator; it is only a collection of fragments and impressions, twelve chapters whose stories are connected by the narrator's wanderings in East London. These 'stories' neither "synthesiz[e]" nor "addic[t]" (460); they certainly do not offer straightforward plots or believable characters that could have made *Downriver* – in Sinclair's words – "a

huge market-forces success" (460), in which instance the novel would have abetted passive reading and the commercialization of literature.[38]

Sinclair has said regarding *Downriver* that "I was rapidly being written out of my own story" (460) as the narrative journey continues, and he seeks the meanings of the forgotten voices of East London and the Docklands river-cityscape. There being no meaning to be found, Sinclair's writing and writerly voice both disintegrate: it is up to the reader, then, to construct the pieces of Sinclair's "metaphysical journey" (Hayward's phrase 38) plotted in the text as twelve interlocking narratives – the last of which concerns Sinclair's adventure in the mysterious Isle of Dogs. The novel could truly be about anything: perhaps it presents a platitudinous search for the unknown, which Emma Hayward has more generously described as Sinclair's unsuccessful attempt at tracing Dante's footsteps around London and "through the afterworld" (38). Although Sinclair cannot venture beyond "the plane of the everyday" (Hayward 38), he certainly desires to do so. I will argue that this desire finds representation in several female characters in *Downriver*, and that the novel's subtitle "Vessels of Wrath" refers to the several female figures who so agitate our narrator's (i.e. 'Sinclair's') imagination that he becomes 'more than one' in the process of writing. Being so inspired, 'Sinclair' gives us multiple (at times conflicting) narrative voices alongside a frantic proliferation of plot lines across five hundred and thirty-two pages.

[38] *Downriver* fits Virginia Woolf's description of the modern novel, which reflects "life or reality" all the more faithfully because it has "no plot, no comedy, no tragedy, no love interest or catastrophe in the accepted sense" (Woolf qtd. in Bradbury 4). In Woolf's opinion, the modern writer should be "a free man and not a slave" – certainly someone free to "write what he chose and not what he must," or to "base his work upon his own feeling and not upon convention" (Woolf qtd. in Bradbury 4).

Because *Downriver* contains so many competing narrative voices, it has struck critics as documentary-like, "self-parodic," "tirelessly sardonic," "mystic and satirical, critical and celebratory" (Loh 889), among many other things. One could say that the novel *is* all these things, but it is above all else "a coruscating response to a Thatcherism that had undermined London's countercultural artistic sphere," or a sign of "Sinclair's commitment to literary innovation through the late 1980s and early 1990s" (Loh 889). The novel's confusing narrative style is in this sense both Sinclair's artistic style and an attestation to his political engagement. To put matters crudely: Sinclair wrote *Downriver* at the end of Thatcher's final term as British Prime Minister to attack Thatcher, who figures in the novel as 'the Widow.' Whereas the Widow stifles the imagination and imposes order, 'Sinclair,' as psychogeographer, travels and writes to encourage "the reader to participate viscerally in this 'schizophrenic actuality'" (Loh 889; see C. 2 for a further explanation of the word 'schizophrenic'); Sinclair writes not only to confuse but to de-stabilize the established political order as well.

The role and actions of the narrator(s) will be important to this chapter. In my analysis of *Downriver*, I will echo Rimbaud's sentiment that "I is another" once more: specifically, the act of writing psychogeography reveals to 'Sinclair' that he has become another. What is written alienates 'I' who writes and reveals in 'I' the voice, the consciousness, of another. In this configuration, though it is a projection from within the writer, the written word separates from the voice that should command it, and in this text it becomes a disunity between itself and the writer. I will argue that Sinclair's writerly voice becomes further disembodied as he wanders around his home city, London; his excursions do little to reassure him of his knowledge of London, or of *his being in*

London. Yet Sinclair is never more aware of his being *in* London than in *Downriver*, where he is broken because London appears different and, indeed, mystical every time he glances at it: in *Downriver*, London's and the Londoner Sinclair's many becomings in the flow of time are dovetailed to invalidate any preconceived English meaning, such as the patriotic ones mentioned earlier in Chapter One with reference to Adam Smith and Gull (Jack the Ripper). The novel is no less psychogeographical than mystical in that it introduces multiple God figures who personify various London futures. Every agent of God – every prophetess (whom I will call 'vessel' from here on) in the novel – conveys to Sinclair an idea of who 'God' might be. God is anyone but the writer. Ironically enough, it is because Sinclair writes psychogeography to divine God, who is becoming and the future, that he cannot be one with his writerly voice.

Time, National History, and God

Why must any discussion of psychogeography be premised upon a God figure, however? It needs not be so, to be sure, but God is a convenient name for that obscured London truth which Sinclair traces as psychogeographer. In *White Chappell*, Sinclair relies on the contradictory evidence he uncovers around London to evoke an image of the city at the beginning of time and at the beginning of the Book of Genesis, particularly. The unfixed idea of God engenders the many rumors and myths about London's beginning which 'Sinclair' then chances upon. In fact, 'God' Himself becomes forever 'occulted' in Sinclair's uncertain ponderings about the timeline of London's development. Sinclair mocks any official account of London history while poking fun at those obsessed with gathering "archaic nation traces of the British nation-state[,] which Tom Nairn identifies as being a sign of 'decline'" (Narin qtd. in Baker, n.p.). As Britain

saw its colonial empire disintegrate and its global influence decline towards the end of the twentieth century, reifying 'Britishness' became a political imperative. At this time of despair, the British nation-state chose to excavate evidence of its 'greatness' from its history in order to commodify its heritage. 'Heritage' was then construed as a conservative ideal. As Louisa Hadley puts it, the heritage industry that has since arisen is but history without a "specific historical context" (11). The heritage *industry* is not quite the same as heritage, however: the former refers to the commodification of a romanticized past, but the latter only what a nation inherits. Hadley also reminds us that to commodify heritage is to look "into the past in order to find analogues for their present situation" (20): 'heritage' is here understood as historical 'evidence' that Britain has always been destined for greatness; in this sense, 'heritage' is the idealized past Britain has its gaze trained upon.

In *White Chappell*, 'God' is an unrealizable something concealed in the past; in *Downriver*, however, 'God' is an as-yet unrealized consciousness and the future as such.[39] Any such consideration of the future is subversive in a culture personified in *Downriver* as the Widow, who is obsessed with "accru[ing] the signs of royalty about her [in London] to create a simulacrum of 'tradition' and 'power'" (Baker, n.p.).The Widow is a caricature of the Tories, who had wanted to "accrue" signs that London and, perhaps, English culture in general, have fulfilled its destiny to be 'great.' These signs afforded Londoners some false sense of self-worth calibrated in monetary terms. Thatcher, for one, did not merely look for traces of present glory in the past, but in fact commodified the past to make it part of the present. She appealed to the nation's 'glorious' history to dismiss any concerns about existing social ills. Evidently, a nation that has always striven

[39] Frye has similarly suggested that God is a process trying to work itself out. See Great Code, 17.

for greatness could only have attained good. This deceptive causality underlies Thatcher's "confident belief in the progress of human society" (Hadley 13), the endgame of which is 'freedom' – "the 'freedom' of consumerist choice, the freedom to live outside (or after) the 'safety net' of the welfare state" (Baker, n.p.).

Thatcher was then able to justify her neoliberal politics before all Londoners and Britons: maintaining an absolute continuity between different historical times, she declared that Britain had always marched forward in search of progress and towards 'freedom.' In this ideological framework, history is simplified enough that it could be commodified, and as a commodity, 'history' could be widely disseminated. The idea of English Heritage thus resounds through London, the prototypical neoliberal city in *Downriver*. Neil Martin argues in his monograph on Sinclair that London is noisy because of "neoliberalism's avowed commitment to the promotion of the free and frictionless circulation of information and the neoliberal subject's increasing sense of surveillance and restraint" (9): it is only too easy to monitor and manipulate thought, what with the free flow of information around London which, as an enclosed space, represents a "closure of ideology" (Baker, n.p.). There information would travel so fast that it would reach all Londoners before they could even process it. 'Freedom' in this instance would mean indoctrination rather than the absence of restrictions.

The psychogeographer cannot be separated from this process. Indeed Sinclair does not dispute his 'complicity,' since he himself plays the role of a "Thatcherite small time entrepreneur, contributing to the burgeoning heritage industry by turning culture into commodities" (Martin 4) in *White Chappell*. What sets the psychogeographer apart is his devotion to "literarity" or "language," neither of which "can […] be reduced to function"

(Martin 20). It might be helpful to consider, at this point, an observation I made apropos of Moore's *Jerusalem*: language demonstrates understanding or rather the lack thereof. The web of signifiers called 'language' demarcates the extent of rational knowing and the limits of epistemology. By articulating what one knows, one reveals, however unwittingly, what one does not know.

One devoted to language betrays an uncertainty which contradicts many neoliberal conceits: language does not suit the constrained ways of thinking that we find in neoliberalism, for it shows where even the most rational of minds may fail and in this sense 'malfunction.' Most willingly would devotees of language like Sinclair confess to their inadequacies as thinking beings, and most insistently would they also question the value of Englishness, which is the cornerstone of Thatcherism and perhaps of modern English conservatism. As a consequence, 'Sinclair' writes as a being limited by its transience, or one who exists in relation to an environment subject to constant changes. Since the Widow signifies Thatcherite politics, Sinclair writes in London to divine a God who he insists to be the Widow's Other, that is, an ideal so far unattained. God's absence in London gives the psychogeographer a reason to navigate London: Sinclair interprets London for himself; he defines his identity in relation to his milieu; that is, 'Sinclair' exemplifies being-in-the-world. Sinclair writes London with the assumption that he, *being in London*, must interpret London – its memory of different times, its many happenings and people – to discover God at the beginning of creation. Every psychogeographer has a distinct voice in London. Every such articulated difference – every 'I' who claims to be the Widow's Other – reclaims London; thus, there is no single structure but instead a multitude of renderings in *Downriver*.

'God as such' is that authentic something that necessarily exceeds the mind. Unable to fully understand this 'as such' and impotent in this regard, the thinking being contradicts the confident able-ism pivotal to neoliberalism, simply by thinking, imagining, thereby existing. 'God' who embodies understanding and epistemology reveals to the psychogeographer, Sinclair, that he is unable. Sinclair ponders the meaning of London; therefore he is. He accepts that any true meaning, i.e. God as such, must evade him as it has other seekers of 'authentic' heritage; therefore he is. That he *is* is reaffirmed by his ready admission of weakness: he *is* because he is unable.

This is not to say that the psychogeographer is unmoved by all notions of tradition and history. Robert Bond has observed that Sinclair writes psychogeography to cast light on "the condensation of occult signifiers within the financial heart of the city," so as to "associat[e] the compaction of irrationality within urban space with London's role as the nation's financial centre " (135). The psychogeographer's task is to unearth the irrational in the reputedly highly rational, self-regulatory system of the capitalist market. By identifying the 'mythical' and the irrational in capitalism, Sinclair is supposed to have demonstrated the "utopian detachment of the artist or intellectual" (Bond 137). I hope to credit the 'occult' with more political significance, nonetheless: the occult is not a flaw in "centralized capitalism" (Bond's phrase 137) but rather a logical – *dialectical* – response to its "culture of consumerism which ultimately rests upon 'competitive individualism" (Alan Sinfield qtd. in Baker, n.p.).

Sinclair writes about the occult *because* he associates it with an unperceivable but palpable London truth. The occult is an instinct that has inspired Sinclair to write psychogeography. In his psychogeography, Sinclair attributes the personal and the

mystical to 'centralized capitalism' in London in an attempt to corrupt it; he subverts an accepted way of knowing by *over-emphasizing* the individual. In this vein, Sinclair wrote *Downriver* to present "a prosaic argument against consensus and collectivity," a "rejection of the politics of the counter-culture, and a move into the mythic, mirrors the failure of collective or revolutionary political practice, and a retreat into the discourse of the self" (Baker, n.p.). Or, to quote David James, Sinclair's personal account of London signifies a "tur[n] inward," that is, his dissociation from "the public" (77). Sinclair isolates himself out of his distrust for any form of camaraderie, for he wishes to reject any kind of confidence he may gain from the support of a group. He wishes to be uncertain and so resists neoliberalism by taking its belief in individualism to an extreme. He renounces, in this manner, the need to explain London to the satisfaction of all Londoners.

If 'centralized capitalism' has nourished competitive individualism, able-ism, and ultimately neoliberalism, it has also sparked resistance – which Sinclair represents in *Downriver* as a series of otherworldly London experiences. 'God,' in this sense, is the persistent sense of uncertainty which capitalism-*cum*-neoliberalism fails to pacify; it is a social aberrance, a threat to all sorts of capitalistic certainty. The 'occult' refers not only to the dysfunctional in the functional but indeed to the antithesis embedded in the thesis. The occult is a counterforce that will undo the nostalgic spell Britain has been put under since the end of the war, and ideally it will propel Britain forward in time. Language is not the only means available to represent this kind of political resistance, of course, but it appears to be Sinclair's favored means. *Logos* enlightens in that it enables understanding in tandem with speculations, interpretations – hermeneutics. Personal in its use, imperfect

as a mode of representation, language corrupts any knowledge it seeks to convey. To write psychogeography, then, is to profess a lack of confidence in one's knowledge, although one should not be able to write unless and until one feels confident in what one wants to say. To write psychogeography is to profess love for language *because* it reflects the limitations of epistemology, thereby delineating the human experience. Sinclair, for one, knows London only as he perceives it at the moment. Every time he writes about (or 'maps') London, he aims to record his fleeting impression of it merely. Similar attempts, when repeated, will transform the city into a "serial composition" (Wolfreys in *The Hauntological Example* 151). "Seriality,' says Wolfreys, "implies iterability, the possibility of the city becoming a 'shape-shifting place not an actual city'" (Wolfreys in *The Hauntological Example* 151). It requires great creativity to see the city differently thus, and one is creative – willing to idly speculate – only when one is uncertain.

Downriver represents Sinclair's endeavor to map London, a place he is not always certain he knows: Sinclair discovers his ignorance in the endeavor. The effort he puts into writing psychogeography yet allows him to imagine London as an 'iterable' concept. In other words, his writing serves as a vessel that conveys us, his readers, away from any understanding of London the Widow may have preached and imposed. This chapter argues the following: psychogeography as a mode of writing implies movement through time and in space, and the transformation of being, that is, the traveler, the psychogeographer, the writer. For this novel I will call the figure of the traveler 'being': because 'being' is a transitory state (in that no one can remain unchanged in the course of life), the traveler must always anticipate radical epistemological shifts. He must always expect to feel uncertain about his identity. Sinclair's psychogeography purposes to make

both writer and reader feel existentially uncertain so as to undermine the Widow who, standing in for God in the text, has reduced 'being' to a terminal and stagnant condition.

The Widow's Hyper-reality and London

By the fact of its existence, being presupposes the necessity of motion, of ascension (towards God in the future) and transcendence. To demonstrate his being-in-the-world, the psychogeographer writes as if his life depends upon it – and indeed it does in *Downriver,* where he recognizes the character of the Widow as an existential threat, a motion*less* something which is not being, and which we may call 'being-as.' We must understand 'being-as' (i.e. the Widow), which being is not, before we could see psychogeography as a vindication of being-in-the-world. 'Being-as' is a body uninhabited by being, or a vast, hollow whole into which all times have collapsed. The character of the Widow exemplifies this motionless existence in that she is no one in particular, but only "a praise-fed avatar of the robot-Maria from *Metropolis*; she looked like herself, but too much so" (286). The Widow is a version of robot-Maria, who is literally an Iron Lady, and a perfect copy of a flesh-and-blood working woman in *Metropolis*; the all-too-flawless copy of a copy (in the Baudrillardian sense), the Widow leads a simulated existence that cannot be farther removed from reality.[40]

Sinclair tells us in an early chapter entitled "Art of the State" that the Widow is also a leading politician, a "praise-fed avatar" who allows her government and political authority to be built upon the emptiest of praises. That the Widow is a caricature of a prominent politician becomes all the clearer in the description of one of her sycophants: a

[40] Jean Baudrillard defines 'simulation' as "the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal" (1). What is a simulation does not refer to the real, since "to dissimulate is to pretend not to have what one has. To simulate is to feign to have what one doesn't have" (3). The Widow, as an avatar of the robot Maria, refers to what was originally a simulation: thus, she cannot be farther removed from the real.

stereotypical "valet of the bedchamber, a smiler in hornrims" who has his "hands behind back (like a defeated Argie conscript)" (285). The figure of a "defeated Argie conscript" immediately calls to mind the Falklands War, which Britain waged against Argentina in 1982 (see Introductory Chapter). It was in the hope of diverting public attention from Britain's economic hardships that Thatcher undertook these "imperial adventures" – à la Queen Victoria – in Latin America and the South Atlantic (see Hall 69, 70). She had hoped to maintain her popularity by appealing to the British people's nostalgia for the imperial age.

This historical echo sounds again in *Downriver* when the Widow, like Thatcher, chooses to emulate the example of "Victoria R […] when she was beginning to slide back in the ratings: a Memorial to her dear departed husband, her companion, her inspiration. Dead meat, a Consort could still be pressed into service" (289). The suggestion here is that the Widow means to revamp London such that every part of it will commemorate her highly romanticized, vacuous vision of the Victorian past. Her one political dictum is to always "[g]et your heritage in first. Build your museum while you still have the muscle to control it" (288); in this way, every part of London that exemplifies "heritage" is an extension of the Widow, a muscle in her body. "Heritage" is the Widow, who embodies the "underserved notions of imperial grandeur" (292) that pour forth from the "bosom of the river [Thames]" – from St. Paul's to St Anne's, Limehouse – to nurture London so that the city, as a whole, may "signif[y] [the Widow's] courage in the face of adversity, and also the courage of the nation, the 'little people', Britain-can-take-it […]" (291). The Thames and the "little people" both represent Britain, since each reflects in the other the Widow's winning trait, that is, her "courage." The purpose of all of London's "Valhalla

[-themed]" (291) redevelopment schemes is thus to celebrate the Widow, the inheritor of a Grand Englishness discovered in history retrospectively, posthumously.

As a patriotic idea, the Widow is in fact everywhere in London: in actual London, government structures such as Westminster Abbey indeed stand proudly along the river line to advertise to locals and tourists alike London's political vitality, sustained, through times as dire as the two World Wars, by Britain's courageous politicians. Statues of David Lloyd George, Winston Churchill and the like stand to one side of the park in front of Westminster Abbey as if to usher visitors towards the "Central London Core Zone" (Newman and Smith's phrase 12), the core of Britain's aged (and very much star-studded) political apparatus.[41]



[41] Thatcher once hailed Churchill as "a man called by destiny to raise the name of Britain to supreme heights," adding that he had possessed "the essential human qualities of the British people, inscribed in their destiny…" (Thatcher qtd. in Hall 71).





The spectacle towards which these famous politicians gesture is none other than the Thames. Walking past Westminster Abbey, the visitor lays eyes upon the multiple crossings between the two banks of the river. The government took care to make the area easy to navigate. As Peter Newman and Ian Smith explain, "[b]etween Tower Bridge and Blackfriars Bridge the South Bank faces the City of London and is classified by strategic planning authorities within London as part of the Central London Core Zone. Behind this river frontage is a zone of highly mixed character that is hemmed in by railway viaducts. Beyond this, residential areas become more prevalent" (12).

In the course of the twentieth century, much care was also taken to cultivate the appeal, residential and otherwise, of this 'London core': "[…] periodic attempts [were] made by central government to regenerate the area by property-led development – in 1910 the construction of County Hall and in 1948–51 the construction of the South Bank Centre as part of the Festival of Britain" (Newman and Smith 12). Crossings such as the

ones Newman and Smith identify are instrumental in making the Thames a "Valhalla-themed" fantasy, regarding which Sinclair says in *Lights Out*,

> If you were prepared to expose yourself to all that metropolitan magnificence: the Houses of Parliament, the Tate Gallery, the great bridges of London in perfect alignment. Nothing separating you from the heavenly dome but a few sheets of glass. You can't get more upwardly mobile without taking on oxygen. This is the ultimate 'riverside opportunity', the one the estate agents pay homage in their Rotherhithe brochures. (162)

London Bridge and the many intricately designed crossings in its vicinity all serve to outline the urban spectacle that is the Thames. In the midst of all these 'grid lines' defining the London Core, St Paul's appears as the nurturing "bosom." Riparian symbols of political greatness – Westminster Abbey, London Eye, the Tower Bridge, London Bridge – invariably direct the wandering gaze towards the dome of St Paul's, making it the center of the river line.



Millennium Bridge



Millennium Bridge and St. Paul's Cathedral from the Side

Supposedly a testament to the Widow's – and London's – courage in the face of adversity, St Paul's is not unlike an architectural exclamation point upon the riverside. In *Downriver*, St Paul's – "Wren's overloaded Roman bauble," "Nicholas Hawksmoor's unfrocked riverside monster[,] that 'masterpiece of the baroque'" – even has the honor of being the Widow's "personal shrine" (288). This patriotic import of St Paul's is duly acknowledged on the government website (https://www.stpauls.co.uk/fire): after the Great Fire of 1666, the architect Christopher Wren (whose tutelage Hawksmoor was under) is said to have courageously risen to the occasion "to help St Paul's rise like a phoenix from the devastation." The 'British courage' Wren displayed is something the Widow is said to have inherited; Wren's most notable construction is therefore worthy of being a celebratory icon for the Widow, who, by virtue of her courage, cannot be more 'English.'

It is this exclusive notion of heritage that conflates actual London with Sinclair's

fantastical representation thereof. St Paul's rises above Londonscape as it is well known like a phoenix to cultivate the aforementioned "riverside opportunities," so that property prices in the area would likewise soar. Only the wealthy may partake in celebrations in an area featuring

> […] high cultural exhibitions with major cultural institutions that are of national and international importance and are in receipt of public money. There is an Old Southwark cluster that is based on sites of visitor attraction through heritage promotion and a small band of advertising-related activity. The area around Borough Market is popular with television and film producers as a Victorian backdrop. […] Urban history is being commodified as private goods (homes) to the well-paid urban elite who work in the City of London. The production of luxury residential units can be seen all the way along the riverside strip with a particular association with the high-culture activities. (Newman and Smith 15)

Implanted somewhere in this metropolitan magnificence, Englishness – English culture and heritage – proves altogether exclusive, while St Paul's, the "National Shrine[,] a place of quiet and meditation, a place fondly to recall those who have gone before, an inspiration to those who will follow" (297), serves here as the ideal cultural symbol. St Paul's, being the Widow's 'muscle' (see p.185 of this thesis), of course represents courage – the prototypical 'English quality' the Widow means to disseminate among the people. The people must become and exist as the Widow, and the Widow sees to it that they do so by broadcasting her interpretation of Englishness day in, day out:

> 'And you know… you know you know you know.' The blade-shredded acoustics fed her catchphrases back into the prompt machines, to blare in frantic reverb from speakers which had been hung (like so many skulls) around the perimeter fence for the benefit of the uninvited masses. 'I can only echo the words… the words the words the words,' she uncurled a fleshy white arm, like Gypsy Rose Lee about to peel a long black evening glove, 'of Captain Robert… Robert… Falcon Scott. "For God's sake look after… after after… our people… people people." That has always been… been… and remains remains… our first principle. Looking after our own people.' (332)

The Widow removes her glove to create the impression of candor; she then continues

addressing her *own* people with an air of strict confidentiality. The echoes of her voice seem to possess a hypnotic power that can induce 'the uninvited masses' to see all of a sudden a threat against 'our own people' and, consequently, the need for someone – Thatcher for example – to weigh in on issues of "crime, law and order, abortion and sexuality, the position of women, sex education, homosexuality and social and moral responsibility" (Hall 90).

The cause of looking after 'our people' while preserving the purity of 'our' culture seems to necessitate what Hall calls the "hegemonic project" (91) of revamping England: Thatcher and the Widow both practice(d) exclusionary politics for the sake of 'our people' – a phrase that, in *Downriver*, works rather like a spell. The Widow casts this spell upon all Londoners to possess them, in a manner of speaking. The skull-like speakers broadcast her hypnotic words so that they will better infiltrate the consciousness of everyone in London. There could be no escape from the Widow, whose courageous spirit is said to inhere in every symbol of Englishness within London (as mentioned earlier with reference to the Thames). She is always in a position to become, to possess, all beings in London, be they dead or alive. Differently put, while 'I' (who is in London) will not become another, another will become 'I.' 'I' will be *possessed* by another, whereupon 'I' will cease to negotiate the terms by which 'I' exist. To be-as-the-Widow is to be un-dead or to be caught in a liminal space between the living and the dead, a purgatory of sorts. Being in this instance is little more than a body, a motionless something that is deprived of an interiority wherein fantasies of becoming (an-other, God) may take hold. Forfeited alongside being is the privilege to perceive and to privatize space-time: perception is the basis of thought, the *cogito*, which is proof that 'I'

am. Yet the Widow in her presence shows that 'I' does *not* in truth exist, that 'I' must exist with others as London, or rather as the Widow. In this regard, being is *detained* in London, a purgatory where celebrations of Englishness are compulsory as well as never-ending. What does it mean to be-as the Widow in purgatory? With this question in mind, let us consider the prime meridian in Greenwich.

The End of Time and the Widow's Post-Historical London

The prime meridian would seem a line accentuating the structural cohesion of London-scape and of imperial, maritime Britain. Ever since seafaring Britons took to measuring their distance from Greenwich to orient themselves at sea, Greenwich has been held up as the world's timepiece, the central point from which the rest of the world was imagined. London by and large was the nation's gaze upon the world, the basis of a self-serving worldview.



The prime meridian, located at Royal Observatory Greenwich

Greenwich represents in this sense both a national thirst for knowledge and an utterly self-centered way of knowing. The alignment of the Thames and the prime meridian in London readily attests to this instance of intellectual enlightenment – the

former site being a token of Britain's progressive history, while the latter a physical manifestation of new knowledge (about time and the world, i.e. the space stretching beyond London). Even in this London, space is understood relatively to time: what is Big Ben, for instance, if not a marker of the London core, perhaps an indicator of time, a reference to Greenwich and everything it stands for? Space and time are entwined insofar as the one is meaningful in relation to the other. Each is subject to interpretation because there exists between the two a connection to be negotiated (by being). However, if space and time are so much in sync that they are indistinguishable, the hermeneutical act – and meaning, as a consequence – would no longer be possible. Space and time would become mere "details" that "accumulate" to "manufacture" (Sinclair's words 175) the Widow or some other meaning to be imposed upon all beings.



A View of the Thames from the observation deck at Greenwich

Thus, to reiterate an earlier point, the Widow is permanence – a resplendent Englishness permanently reflected upon the surface of the Thames. At the beginning of her life, explains Sinclair, the Widow was borne to London on the "tide of time, with the passing decades, has washed all the gash – the dairies, bottles, pans, suits – back from the

void" (188). Time cleansed these relics of all meaning, but, at the end of time, these meaningless pieces have coalesced and given rise to a persona with a body that can sustain gashes and retain memories (in the form of diaries). History is done with because it has both begun and ended. The pieces emerging from the void should signify death, yet they have returned as the un-dead to give life to the sinister figure Sinclair calls "the Widow." In the Widow's world the very idea of time – of things beginning and ending – is inconceivable: as Stephen Hawking – who is a member of the Widow's entourage in *Downriver* – tells us, London under the Widow is a "labyrinth of mirrors," a "[s]pace-time [that] has no beginning, no end[,]" since the "boundary condition of the universe is that it has no boundary" (375). These mirrors project a unifying reflection wherein all units of existence – all beings, all times, and all worlds – melt into one to give rise to a meaningless mass, in other words to the Widow. Because all potentialities that mark the passage of time have been exhausted within her, the Widow has become time in its entire expanse. All times, all beings, and the entirety of London space signify her, whereas God signifies only that being is in space – that being is bound towards the future, his very own becoming. Quite simply, the Widow does not signify. She is an unsignifying, motionless thing that has stripped being of any motivation to discover a way 'downriver,' that is, a way of experiencing the world or London other than her own. I shall explain the notion of 'downriver' in relation to the female mystics in the novel towards the end of the chapter. Suffice it to say at the moment that the Widow's influence gives Sinclair cause to write psychogeography, whose ultimate purpose is to trace God but in vain (see section on *White Chappell*). Sinclair writes psychogeography to elude the Widow, despite the extent of her influence.

Time, Railway, and Urban Planning

In *Downriver*, it is the railway that charts the extent of the Widow's influence. Even this symbol of travel and adventure indicates a return to the same: after all, the Widow is *clarté*, an ideal realized in the appropriate "arrangement of words" (Plante 479). 'Arrangement' here means 'containment.' The Widow re-organizes London to transform it into a dimension for the un-dead, where living and dying are equally impossible, like the aforementioned tide of time that bore the Widow to London alongside some discarded objects (*Downriver* 188).

To be-as-the-Widow is to be un-dead, like the DLR (the Docklands Light Railway) passengers who only know London as the Widow wants them to see it:

> [b]efore the viaducts were built the middle classes had no opportunity of spying on the lives and habits of the underclass, no chance of peeping into tenement cliffs for jolts of righteous horror. […] The elevated railway provided the first camera of poverty – open-city realism – as the trains cut through the otherwise impenetrable warrens of metropolitan squalor (209).

The railway tracks quite literally elevate those who can afford DLR services so that they may inspect the Docklands – now a commercial district barely reminiscent of a dockland (see pictures below) – in the comfort of their train compartments. Every immobile body that conducts itself around the city thus sacrifices its rightful purpose to fabricate meaning by studying its surroundings. Independently these bodies are dead; collectively, however, they are alive *but only as the Widow*. Each one of them is transformed into a detail, a regulated part anchored "in the realities of movement, dealing, seizing, holding: intelligence without imagination" (214).[42] Each is simultaneously alive and dead – un-

[42] The Widow's urban planners rein in the imagination with a cold, economic intelligence; they purchase and corporatize London land for a railway project which accompanies the ideal of a standardized time. A profiteering intelligence motivates this mission to rein in the imagination – which, says Kerns, should have been corporeal in any case. Kern infers from Einstein's theory of relativity that "every reference body has

dead.



A view of the Isle of Dogs from a Platform in Canary Wharf Station



A Closer Look at the Isle of Dogs

The DLR passengers are unified in their disgust towards the relatively derelict areas

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its own particular time" (19); however, since each body is different, each has a different conception of time. Accordingly, a multitude should generate a "different correct time" (Kern 19) whereby 'time' is a common referent, a widespread understanding, but nevertheless a "local affair" (Sinclair's phrase 220) on the individual level.

surrounding the Isle of dogs or, as Sinclair puts it, "the otherwise impenetrable warrens of metropolitan squalor" that "the trains cut through" (209). Having been meticulously re-arranged by the Widow, London elicits in these commuters a "collective complacency" (Bond's phrase 165): 'we' are glad not to be 'them' because 'we,' the voyeurs, share the Widow's understanding of London; 'we' *are* in relation to the Widow.[43] After history – in post-history – 'I' exists strictly in relation to the Widow, who stands for a clear, irrefutable existential meaning. A world so manifestly 'meaningful' is hostile to any fantasy of God – anything, in fact, that might incite transgression and sedition, which, again, I will discuss at the end of the chapter.

Those who find meaning in the Widow thus do not realize that they are insulated from the metropolis. Riding the DLR in pursuit of "the only illuminated path over the Plains of Outer Darkness" (212), these passengers would rather imagine themselves enlightened, far more so than the shadows beyond. But the shadows that doggedly follow the lighted trains are Londoners through and through. When Sinclair finds himself on a DLR train one evening, he wonders if those submerged in light are not 'more dead' than the shadows, the 'living ghosts,' behind them:

> We had halted on an embankment that afforded an unrestricted vision of a graveyard, or untended corner of parkland. The branches of deformed trees brushed the damp ground, living ghosts ready to move in greeting towards the stalled carriages of the dead. (I remembered Joblard's tales of the white

[43] Yet, in Sinclair's post-historical novel, all London bodies have become one flesh under 'railway time.' Sinclair explains, "[…] by decree, anywhere and everywhere had to come over, check in, attach themselves to the machine [heart of the collective body] locked within the dome on Greenwich Hill" (220). The railway spawns its own time to curb any flighty imagination. Each of its trains steers madness in the 'right' course towards the heart of London, i.e., Greenwich, whose pulsation is the unique rhythm of London time. Railway time is London's standardized time; any ticking train station clock is proof that London is alive – but in the sense of being un-dead. (In reference to Henry Olerich's *A Cityless and Countryless World,* Kern has made the claim that clocks "synchronize time electronically" in a "utopia where time is money.") (Kern 15) This London is the sum of different bodies, indeed the child of their unhappy union.

> 'mourning' train shuttling the stiffs to Nunhead: white curtains, white upholstery, white-suited conductors carrying white toppers. (212)

The train is so brightly white that it seems translucent, colorless, spectral – it is quite like a hearse bound for the netherworld. This 'railway death scene' reaffirms Joe Moeshenska's observation that often in Sinclair's writing, urbanites who drive or ride the Underground seem "dissociat[ed] from the world," if not "explicitly incarcerat[ed]" (Moeshenska, n.p.). Sinclair favors walking because he owes the habit his writerly voice: "Sinclair's writing can be read as an extended and explicit attempt to govern by his will, to impose the rhythm of his footsteps and his thought upon the world. For all his preoccupation with his own idiosyncrasies and 'insanities', and those of his world and his acquaintances, there is always this streak of rationality, a refusal to surrender, to be fully absorbed" (Moeshenska, n.p.).

Sinclair would say that his meanderings allow him to elucidate an epistemology of London alternative to the Widow's – which he names 'psychogeography,' as we know. His writings reveal that he walks to overcome the Widow because he refuses to be one of many DLR 'inmates' artificially kept outside of space and time; he therefore "release[s] the blind and lean[s] from the window to look at the lumpy and shimmering moonscape." (212). Here Sinclair looks outward in search of difference or *différance* (the process of meaning creation) just as he did in *White Chappell*. Outward-bound, so to speak, Sinclair explores London to defy the Widow and *transcend* her Valhalla-themed London. Is Sinclair's refusal to surrender, in other words his desire for transcendence, truly rational, however? The traveler in question could be called rational only if he had in mind an exact destination when he "imposes the rhythm of his footsteps and his thought upon the world" (Moeshenska, n.p.). As Julian Wolfreys has noted, however, Sinclair walks

around London to write it. Walking is writing, while writing London is seeing the city "only ever fleetingly" (180). Every practice of walking – in fact, every style of writing is a becoming (an obsession Sinclair shares with Moore and Ackroyd; see Wolfreys in *Writing Londo*n 180, 183). Sinclair, for one, writes/walks to gain a divided consciousness; that is, he writes/walks to *be* and to become another in London. Sinclair becomes another in the act of walking, so the writing onto which his traveling consciousness is projected reveals crevices which allow for some glimpses of God – not unlike Moore's screen of language in *Jerusalem*.

These glimpses are the contradictory, at times dialectical, traces of the divine that London offers up to 'occult' the divine (for the divine is preserved only when placed in a dialectical framework; see section on *White Chappell*). Sinclair's writings, says Wolfreys, "doubl[e] and divid[e], producing the same effects of differentiation and deferral within any supposedly stable Image or ontology of the city" (186). To paraphrase Wolfreys: the process of differentiation (*différance*) gives rise to instability, which is the putative condition of being. Instability is not any less a form of motion than being-in-the-world and becoming. Sinclair walks not to impose but rather to induce motion in the motionless thing that is the Widow, i.e., London as it is portrayed in *Downriver*. Sinclair, who is a being-in-London, writes psychogeography to cause the Widow's London to rupture so that he can transcend it: in the DLR death scene, for example, he achieves the psychogeographic feat of transcendence by looking out the window as the train cuts through the Isle of Dogs (212; see p.198 of this thesis). Sinclair practices psychogeography to begin the process of transcendence, while psychogeography signals

that being-as – i.e., the Widow, her oppressively mundane vision of London – could be ruptured, undone, and made incomplete.

To sum up what I have said as regards the Widow: the Widow's "labyrinth of mirrors" is a place impossible to transgress and transcend by virtue of having "no boundary" (Sinclair 375). In the Widow's London, being is and forever will be the same. She offers herself as the foundation of London (see earlier discussion of St Paul's on p.189), an established, agreed-upon truth that negates transcendence and, in consequence, God, who is being's perception of the world wherein he *is*. The Widow is being in stupor and the impossibility of being; as such, she is also the end of time, whereas 'transcendence' is a movement towards God who stands in the future, somewhere 'downriver.'

Here I will acknowledge that God is nowhere explicitly mentioned in *Downriver*; but for the sake of consistency (and for the reasons I stated at the beginning of this chapter), I will still call the state of being that defies the Widow's control 'God.' The Widow is gravity, the gravity of the everyday which suppresses any hope of transcendence, for each and every detail of London signifies her in *Downriver* (see pages 185-186 of this thesis); but God, being the Widow's nemesis, is transcendence. Since the Widow's London is a boundless expanse, Sinclair, as psychogeographer, must try to envision boundaries and so re-trace the process of meaning creation known as *différance,* perhaps with the vain hope of discovering God at the beginning of time (see section on *White Chappell*).

Psychogeographic Movements and Transgressions

I will make a few more general observations about Sinclair's psychogeography before I discuss precisely how he travels around London to divine meaning in the manner of a mystic in *Downriver*. Sinclair writes psychogeography in London to erect boundaries, which willy-nilly provoke transgressions. Boundaries demarcate to being the expanse wherein he *is* so that he could assume form and materiality. Boundaries shape the self, giving it limits so that it is necessarily lacking, incomplete, and craving transcendence. Thus boundaries appear before the self to provoke the self into transgressing them; they exist to agitate being into motion such that being would go in search of further meaning, of becoming and of God. In short, psychogeography is a transgressive motion. In written form it conveys "the process of being translated by the city; so that, as being, our being-in-the-city serves as a singular map, a decentred guide that gives access in singular fashion to any future writing of the city" (Wolfreys in *Writing London* 8).

In other words, one reads the city as it is in the present to predict its future; one makes such predictions to privatize the city for the greater purpose of resisting ("decentering") the existing power matrix. To so claim ownership of space-time is to withdraw into the self. In this sense, futurity is the motion of looking through what is in the public domain, here the city, to appropriate it for the self: the self ventures forth into the future by turning inwards, *by journeying towards the self* – this I will explain later with reference to the character of Pocahontas.[44] The future then is immanent in the

[44] Sartre thinks that being achieves transcendence by withdrawing into itself. God, however, is being's supposed creator and is therefore external to being. Sartre explains: "Thus the recourse to God, which we find in Leibniz, is purely and simply a recourse to the negation of interiority" (314). God is something posited rather than negated in that 'I' am what 'I' create – and negation, of course, in central to Sartre's thinking. Sartre's way of thinking is radically different from Emmanuel Levinas's, which is that God is the face of another penetrating through the Self: "Also the privilege of the I think, 'stronger' than time, and gathering the scattered temporal shadows into the unity of transcendental apperception, the firmest and the

traveler, who takes his leave of the city to *transcend* the present – the Widow, in the case of *Downriver* – wherein he is. In fact, the 'I' in question becomes another when he transcends the Widow, the world wherein he *was*, and finds that he *is* elsewhere. The future is realized in the motion of travel. Futurity, in this sense, is the motion of travel whereby being traces and becomes another – God, a divine Other.

In seeking of God, Sinclair travels from the Widow's London to somewhere else, say, somewhere downriver. The psychogeographer is the sheer force tearing apart what simply is (i.e. the Widow's London) so as to journey downriver and divine mystery. Sinclair transcends the Widow's Londonscape, despite its gravitational pull, to prove being-in-London possible, and so he gives London interiority by bursting out from within: consequently, London could no longer be perceived as a "finished object that could be honourably exploited," and Sinclair's "'piece'" about it (i.e. *Downriver*) likewise does not "c[o]me into a focus that would hold" (458).

Sinclair's editor is said to have commented on *Downriver* thus: "'I'm confused by it, confused about what is being depicted […] I remain at a loss'" (458). Sinclair's unfocused, unfinished psychogeographic vision of London is said to have thrown the author himself into an "existential dilemma that stopped [him] dead in his tracks" (458), leaving him unable to answer the simple question of who the narrator of *Downriver* actually is – "who is 'I'" (458). Just as any psychogeographic endeavor must remain unfinished, anything or anyone subject to psychogeographic depiction must suffer to be existentially undone. It seems that the attempt to narrate – prophesy – the rupture of the

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most formal of forms, stronger than any heterogeneity of contents – to identify the diversity of experience, in embracing and seizing it again, qua identified, in the knowledge of being, into which it enters. […] Ontology would henceforth be interpreted not just as a knowledge that duplicates being, but as the ultimate return of the identity of being to self, as a return to the One" (Levinas 31).

Widow's London has cost Sinclair his voice.

The psychogeographic event of London's rupture sets in when Sinclair finally entertains the nagging suspicion that London is other than what it appears, that he, though a Londoner, is different from the Widow. This rejection of the Widow results in a personality-split in 'Sinclair':

> The slippery self-confessor, the closet De Quincey (I, Me, You, He), speaks of 'the Narrator', or 'Sinclair': deflects the thrust of the accusation. The narrator exists only in his narration: outside this tale he is nothing. But 'Sinclair' is a tribe. There are dozens of them: Scots, Jews, Scribblers, Masons, Cathars (even Supernaturals, such as Glooscap, the mangod of the Micmacs). It's an epistemophiliac disguise. A small admission to win favour: a plea bargain. And what gives this self-designated 'I' the right to report these events? How deeply he is implicated? Is he (I) a liar? Can we (you) trust him? This was beginning to pinch. I (' I') let my gaze drift down the lovingly assembled beds of words until I (' we') arrived at the sentence reading: 'The man who had shot, and lost, the definitive Minton.' 'WHAT IS THIS?' screamed Bagman's [the editor's] reasonable pencil. What is this? As if he suspected it (Minton) of being some species of effete English porcelain. (458-459)

'Sinclair' bursts apart as identities multiply within him. Every pronoun that exists in the English language could apply to 'Sinclair,' who is anything and everything, anyone and everyone. The "assembled beds of words" have reduced 'Sinclair' to a 'what,' an unreliable narrator (to say the least) whose purpose is to confuse (see section on *White Chappell*), in other words to mystify what is evident, namely, the Widow's London. 'Sinclair' does not exist in any direct correlation to his milieu; rather, he proves that he *is* by negating every evident truth about London that the Widow offers. 'Sinclair' goes on to deny that he is anything "outside this tale." Calling himself "nothing," 'Sinclair' deflects any ethical responsibility that may accompany the telling of a story, for the stories in *Downriver* are in fact not for him to tell.

Psychogeographic Mysticism: Journeying Downriver

In *Downriver*, Sinclair referenced many mysterious entities that he had chanced upon while exploring London – too many for any literary critic to analyze one by one, or in any coherent fashion. Determined to make *Downriver* an unfinished object that will not be exploited" (458), Sinclair provides little to no context for these encounters or the characters he introduces. In what follows I will examine three of these characters: Pocahontas, "the silver band on a cigar, a cigar-store Indian[,]" the "prestige symbol of the Virginia Company" (469-470); Alice, the character of a nymphet in Tenniel's "prophetic" postcard illustration, 'Alice in the Train' (230), which offers a blatantly sexual re-reading of Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*; and, finally, Edith Cadiz, a ballerina and part-time nurse whose photograph Sinclair happens to have discovered. It is Sinclair who connects these otherwise unrelated women; Sinclair, having unearthed a stilled image of each somewhere in London, takes it upon himself to imagine their lives, and he does so to differentiate them from the Widow. Whereas the Widow is *clarté* and perfect arrangement (see p. 20), the other three are *obscurité* and therefore unreadable. If the Widow is an avatar of a clone in a science fiction film, a prototype *par excellence*, the three women will be the mysteries that prevail upon Sinclair to narrativize and invent. Sinclair imagines these women – these mysteries – by pretending that he is them. Thus borrowing the voices of others, 'I' becomes a 'tribe' (459), everything and therefore nothing.

This bursting apart of the 'I' has a mystical connotation – and, given that women are the sources of mystery in *Downriver*, I shall attempt the impossible task of explaining Sinclair's conception of psychogeography with reference to (medieval) female mysticism.

The bursting apart of the 'I' is itself a mark of mystery – says Julia Kristeva as regards the mystic Teresa of Avila,

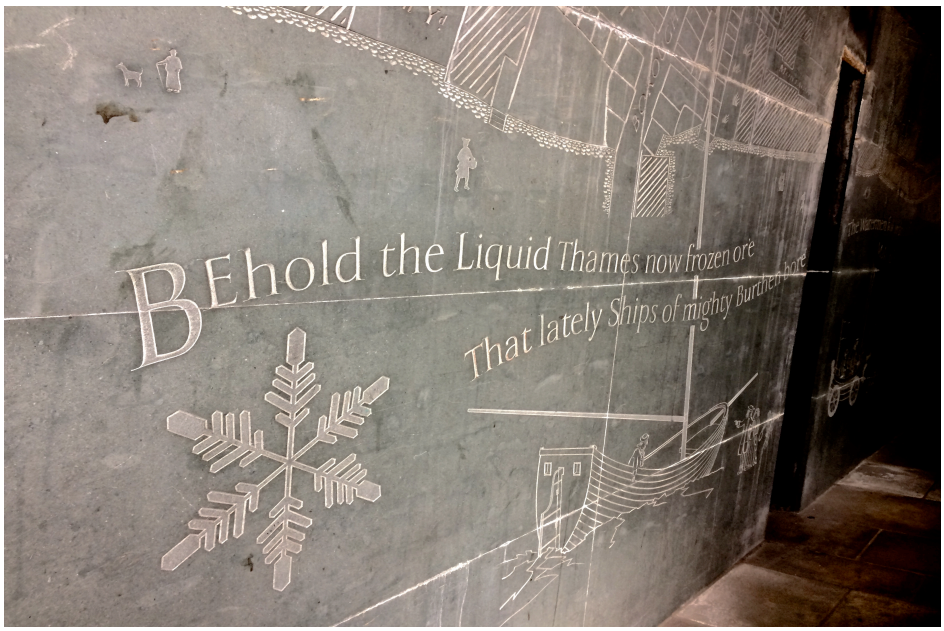
> The impossible desire for a lacking love object is exaltation and pain that are hidden, reticent, at once thrilling and morbid. Excess or emptiness? Or both? The word mystery, from the Greek μυω , "to conceal," to be closed up (like lips or eyes or sores) goes back to the Sanskrit mukham, "face," "mouth," "entrance." But the mystics, nurturers of this most inner of interiorities inhabited by the All-Other (*le Tout Autre*), transmute it to the outside— and hiddenness becomes a path. Life bursts into fullness, absence into genuine presence, suffering into bliss, mortification into delight, Nothingness into ecstasy, and vice versa. (39)

When the body of the mystic lies open, the all-too-tangible desire Kristeva describes bursts forth violently and in excess. But when the body is closed, the mysterious desire is unseen, unknown, and unfulfilled – empty. Kristeva argues that her body opens up to project outwards the other who is always already within. Through her body, "lover and Beloved merge into each other like water poured into the sea" (Kristeva 173). Teresa of Avila who has experienced transcendental ecstasy (imagine Bernini's depiction of her in ecstasy) becomes convinced that she is another, that she and the other are one and the same.

The mystical encounter of Kristeva's imagining involves a female body that is instrumental to the convergence of water and sea, the one being a miniature of the other. Sinclair has in mind a different kind of mysticism, however, since he does not see the interior and the exterior as one and the same but as radically different. Sinclair puts into words an ecstatic experience wherein the sentiment that "I is another" *presents itself as a surprise*. Being-in-the-world, for Sinclair, is a revelation or the beginning of a new awareness: it comes to Sinclair as a surprise that he is aware – that he *is* in a way different from the Widow, although he cannot be certain what/who he is. 'I' is the trace to an undiscovered, mystical somewhere in London; or, as Sinclair explains to his confused,

frustrated editor, "Tumbled. I (I, I, I, I, I, I, I, I, I, I, I) have been found out. Deconstructed" (459-460). One of these 'I's' is "the Princess Alice, [who/which] went down for the third time, cleaved by the editor's anguish" (459-460): 'I,' the narrator, is another; in face of the editor's anguish, 'I' finds refuge in the mysterious identity of Alice, a vessel in both the literal and the figurative sense (for 'Alice' is not only 'Alice' in *Alice in Wonderland* but a vessel by the name of 'Princess Alice' as well). 'I' writes to reveal to London the need for motion, or rather the need to move towards transcendence, becoming, and the future. 'I' envisions a transcendent realm called 'downriver' – where God supposedly is – in the act of writing; 'Sinclair' writes to show that he is being-in-London, for he becomes capable of motion upon playing the role of Alice the vessel (more on Alice below).

For Sinclair to write psychogeography is to ascertain this difference in oneself, since the one who writes in London embodies the possibility of a downriver. Whereas the Widow controls the city dwellers upriver and they are created in her image, the psychogeographer moves downriver where the Other will completely reveal itself. To write then is to transcend the world wherein one *is* by a paradoxical withdrawing inwards, for 'I' and only 'I,' by virtue of being different from the Widow, is aware of a possible 'downriver.' If the act of writing creates this possibility of turning inward to find the self and the divine, then the 'I' who is the desire for movement is a vessel, a female mystic. In *Downriver*, all vessels journey downriver in the hope of finally entering into the sea. Perhaps they trace the divine in defiance of these panegyric lines about the Thames: "Behold the Liquid Thames now frozen o're/ That lately ships of mighty burthen bore."



The Wall of a Tunnel near the Thames

The freezing of the Thames compels the suspension of all nautical expeditions. In *Downriver*, the Widow is the very one who, by freezing London time, stops all vessels in their tracks. She embodies entrapment while the vessels movement: she is the nemesis of every vessel whose quest for God she suspends. A vessel must anticipate the thawing of the Thames because "the liquid Thames" alone is conducive to its purpose. As far as the vessel is concerned, the river should be a microcosm of a 'fluid London' which has the power to "resis[t] ontology" and "affir[m] its alterity, its multiplicities, its excesses, its heterogeneities" (Wolfreys in *Writing London* 4). Every being and vessel relates to London differently such that, together, they turn 'London' into a multifaceted, fluid identity. This "fluid London" (Wolfreys' phrase 4) inspires psychogeography, a narrative form which can have neither a beginning nor an end, since "one can never get to the bottom of an abyss, particularly when the abyss is meaning or identity" (Wolfreys 4). The liquid Thames becomes the psychogeographer's aesthetic ideal, motivating him to imagine London as an inconstant – that which is "always a becoming, a process, a

performative projection" (10). The psychogeographer writes London to trace the Widow's Other and in doing so, he discovers universes that run parallel to the Widow's. These parallel worlds are all speculations about a God downriver, all vacuous rumors that give substance to the notion of a God, quite paradoxically.

The Vessel Pocahontas: the Oddity in London

Let us examine specific 'vessels' in Sinclair's novel to see how God might be something both vacuous and substantial hidden 'downriver,' a someplace else or an alternate time in London.' Pocahontas, the stereotypical indigenous woman with whom we are only too familiar, is suspected to have "two sides" and "a fourth dimension" in *Downriver* (Ernest Hemingway qtd. in Sinclair 467). On the familiar side, she is "Rebecka, 'daughter to the mighty Prince Powhatan, Emperor of Attanoughkomouck'… the prestige symbol of the Virginia Company: the silver band on a cigar, a cigar-store Indian" (469-470); on the mystical side, she is a newly-born who the river "carrie[s]…ashore" (469):

> Pocahontas didn't want to go 'home'… She knew there was no passage back down the river. No way to re-enter the womb, without dying … The first seal had been broken. The waters had burst. She could never be readmitted to the society of the forest. She was crossed, baptized in holy water. She was another. (469-470).

Here Pocahontas is neither indigenous nor British: she is simply another, for instance one brought to London to be made a stereotype of. Now a stereotype, she has lost all ties with her native forest; she has no origin or 'home' because the womb that had nurtured her refuses to recognize her and take her back.

Pocahontas becomes a vessel to see London differently and regain her liberty:

> London was posthumous. She had dreamed it. A child in the forest. Trees became the pillars of a great court. Gods appeared, painted in gold-and-white lead;

> shining, buried in layers of stiff cloth until they could scarcely move. The sun, the moon, and the stars were trapped upon a ceiling of overhanging branches: dark, feathered arms. (p. 470)

Pocahontas considers the artificiality of what seems to be the most natural in London – trees, the sun, the moon, the stars. She sees London as a confined space furnished with a "ceiling of overhanging branches," as well as murals depicting the divine, "painted in gold-and-white lead." Since none of these can be real, she concludes that she must be dreaming, and, in so doing, she claims London as her own: she is free to envision London however she likes, thus to drift on and to seek futurity. It is thus that Sinclair sees her journeying downriver, someplace beyond the Widow's reach: "We step aside, make room; we watch. She passes us: carried to the Inn on a seaplank, by four sturdy sailors. Another corpse, beached and scrubbed. Another narrative claimant" (471-472). Her body, though retrieved from the river, lies still in death. Her corpse, unlike her image as "cigar-store Indian," mystifies, so much so that she could continue to exist as a "narrative claimant" in a London that does not refer to the Widow, and which the Widow cannot explain. Pocahontas is resurrected in death, so to speak: her body "passes us" as it flows towards an unknown destination, which, for the sake of consistency, I will still call 'God.'

Sinclair recounts stories of those like Pocahontas to assume the perspective of another; he follows the gaze of another in the hope of seeing an-Other being called God. He writes psychogeography to envision the perfect Other and His habitation, i.e. heaven, divine space-time; he writes in anticipation of the otherworldly, as though a space-time other than that of the Widow would reveal itself in the time to come. He writes psychogeography particularly to prophesy the Widow's passing and his encounter with

God thereafter. This God is an unknown Other in relation to whom 'I' (the narrator, the psychogeographer) will *be* in the future, albeit that 'I' is a mere referent to the Widow at present. He who is different is a sign of God, resurrected after the Widow. To put it more plainly, if the Widow is averse to any suggestion of movement through space-time, the divine Other must be imagined as that which preconditions being, that which necessitates *being-in-a-navigable-space-time* in the first place.

Rather cryptically and in this vein, Sinclair tells the reader that God-other-than-the-Widow is 'downriver' – i.e., beyond the confines of London, where Pocahontas had left an impression (quite literally), drifted pass, and moved on by dying. Sinclair speaks of Pocahontas and others like her so that the reader could board his narrative 'vessel,' i.e., his psychogeography, for an expedition 'downriver.' The word 'downriver' refers to "London's eventual destination" (87), as Martin observes. 'Vessels' are "historical avatars like Thatcher and Edith Cadiz [the mysterious ballerina who appears in an old photograph Sinclair discovers, and who I will discuss momentarily]" (Martin 89): every vessel "transports and communicates" (Martin 89) a "way of knowing" (Martin 91) London, an epistemology other than the one Widow offers.[45] Every vessel, being an Other to the Widow, offers an alternate dimension vis-à-vis the Widow's London. A vessel would know to find God downriver because she exists to make time navigable and God spatially conceivable even while the Widow seems to have exhausted all divine potentiality.

[45] *Downriver* and *White Chappell* are parts of Sinclair's representation of Ripperology. If the latter excludes the victims (as Georg Lukacs has argued) (Martin 94), the former attempts to give them some agency. *Downriver* was "first conceived as an attempt" to "create a whole" (Martin 93) through acknowledging any previous "sin of omission" (Martin 94). Each of these excluded voices is a vessel in the sense that each offers a *different* way of knowing (the Ripper).

Insofar as the prospect of union with God lies downriver, 'downriver' is a spatial realization of 'futurity,' that is, a time past, though not necessarily ahead of, the Widow. Because the movement of time needs not be linear, 'sailing downriver' could simply mean a rejection of being-*as*-the-Widow, of being un-dead. To be un-dead – to *be* as the Widow in London – is to live without remembering or wanting to remember what was erased from the urban milieu during its re-development. Sinclair is not unaware of what is excluded in many a London narrative, whether his own psychogeography or the Widow's (post-)historical projection. According to Martin, Sinclair writes to evince "the negative trace of [narrative] exclusions, the exclusions which we have identified with the concept of noise" (Martin 94). Yet, in order to remember, even psychogeographers such as Sinclair must have recourse to supernatural mediums, *to vessels* who can divine these negative traces in themselves. These vessels remind us of our inability to remember so as to encourage speculations about what was erased. The vessel is a repressed memory which, naturally, cannot be imagined as having a concrete form. Abstracted, however, the vessel may be imagined as a distinct, discordant, perhaps fantastical element in London. The vessel becomes a curious 'thing' that seems out of place in the city, an element of mystique that evokes the presence of a God somewhere downriver.

Alice, the Vessel of Heat

The struggle between the widow and the vessel gives Sinclair's novel a dialectical framework in that the one character represents completion while the other incompletion. The Widow insists that history in its entirety can be recalled within her, yet the vessel suggests quite the contrary. For the psychogeographer, the vessel represents difference, that is, the possibility of ceasing to *be* as the Widow and in her realm. Sinclair names one

of the vessels 'Alice' in *Downriver*. 'Alice' is, among other things, *Princess Alice*, the cruise ship that "went down [in the Thames] with the loss of six hundred and forty lives" (20) in 1878. Counted among the deceased were 'Cockney bourgeoisie' who "dolled up for the [rare] excursion" (27), not knowing that they were fated to go down "in hordes" (27). When the Widow "dug out the deepwater basins [specifically the part of the river where *Alice* sank], and laid thirty miles of railway track in 1866" (20), she saw to it that these fantasies of social mobility were not only ridiculed but outright suppressed. 'Alice,' repressed and in this sense 'othered' or 'occulted,' signifies a different London meaning: differences threaten the Widow, of course. Having ridden the tides of time, all parts of London – its memories, its peoples, its stories – were supposed to have come together to give the Widow a physical form, one that not only represents but *is* London.

The Widow's body is a London that is the labyrinth of mirrors, the composite of all times. To perfect the Widow, or London rather, railway tracks must be laid to conceal the "negative trace" of what is forgotten. That is, to prevent London from accruing meanings which could contradict and undermine the Widow, Londonscape must be reconceived in such a way that it reinforces only the Widow's account of history, her post-history. The Docklands Light Railway, in particular, was designed to banish 'Alice' from London-scape. Any subversive meaning her surviving parts may have is neutralized behind a sheet of glass at a local museum, where the name 'Alice' recalls nothing more than an anecdote concerning maritime Britain, as though 'Alice' were only an unavoidable (if unfortunate) shipping accident in the nation's long history.

Whereas the Widow is London's cold intelligence, its *clarté* and divine meaning as such, 'Alice' is sensuality or *obscurité* – that is, the inexplicable desire to imagine God

as the Widow's Other. Indeed, Sinclair's description of Alice compares to feminist descriptions of the medieval female mystic: Alice, according to Sinclair, is a vessel equipped with an "orgone accumulator" (233) whose "heat" inspires "composition" (231). 'Alice,' who is 'becoming,' is necessarily different from, or antithetical to, the Widow who is 'being-as.' Alice fuels the 'composition' of being, i.e. the motion of meaning-making which defines being, much in the same way body heat indicates life. Her heat spurs her into movement and onwards towards God downriver.[46] Thus, Alice is herself a trace of the divine. 'Alice' – "the orgone accumulator" that propels the movement of the train and thus inspires "composition" – signifies being's choice to surrender a stable, realized divine meaning (i.e. being-as-the-Widow) in favor of motion, of being-in and becoming. Alice indicates to us that there is a divine presence downriver, beyond the Widow and the end of history. Alice further prophesies that time will move forward again despite the Widow's best efforts. To impose my *quasi*-theological reading on Sinclair's novel again: Alice's compulsive quest should enable her, ultimately, to compose her own vision of God in relation to whom she *is*. She seeks God to become another, an ideal self who is one with God.

Because the assumption that the female body is 'incomplete' could be unsettling, I think it best that we pause here to consider Potter's criticism of *Downriver*. Potter finds that the gender binary is too firmly established in Sinclair's novel, where the male "'I' is

[46] It has already been noted that 'heat' is Sinclair's metaphor for London's many secrets. As regards *White Chappell*, Robert Bond has argued that Sinclair writes to "redeem the histories embodied by [the] stones" (92) lying around London. The mad doctors Sir William Withey Gull and the Hintons, like the Welfare State, have made an "all-inclusive synchrony" (92) of London to suppress local histories that do not resonate with the rational voice of modern (or late) capitalism. Sinclair thinks it a psychogeographer's responsibility to liberate these "historical resonances" hitherto entrapped in stones (118). In so doing, the psychogeographer will come to feel "heated" (118) (i.e. inspired) as he writes "[…] in a Blakean, divine manner, and […] in automatic 'spasms and random leaps'" (97).

a form of written identity in possession of itself, an identity in which there is no alienation, no unmediated nature" (45). Because the feminine 'I' has no place in such a masculinist narrative,

> [w]omen's bodies are figured as bit roles […]; they are the victims of serial rapists, the protagonist [*sic*] in politician's masturbatory fantasies, the protagonists in legitimized massacres. Sinclair's envisaged form of identification between real women and these fragmented fictional bodies reiterates the stance by which women are excluded […] In the dynamic between those who are self-created and those who are objectified, sensual and 'repulsive', he has written into his narrative a dialectical precondition for the production of knowledge. (Potter 47)

In other words, masculinity is formed against a femininity preconceived as incomplete, dialectically. I do not dispute the validity of Potter's reading; yet, in view of the argument I made as regards *White Chappell* that 'I' – 'Sinclair,' the psychogeographer – is always another, I should like to offer an alternative reading which hopefully would mitigate Sinclair's treatment of the female body. Sinclair, I would argue, does not write to envision a coherent, fully formed identity. Rather, he writes to frustrate the ideal of wholeness, which, in *Downriver*, is authoritarian because it is co-opted by the Widow and projected onto Londonscape. 'Wholeness' is a desirable ideal, very often sought after but *never* realized. Sinclair in fact fetishizes the disfigured 'I,' either male or female, because it encourages fantasies of a future union with God downriver. Sinclair fantasizes about being incomplete to sustain, in a dialectical fashion, the ideal of God, who is whole in His perfection.

Let us consider, nevertheless, the disfigured female 'I' in *Downriver*, since the spiritually possessed, disfigured male 'I' is indeed discussed at length in the previous section. According to Michelle Sauer's feminist (re-)interpretation of the medieval female mystic, the 'vessel' was a feminine self who supposed herself incomplete,

"undone," therefore needing to be "remade" (130). If ever 'made' during a sex act, the vessel was undone again, and no amount of 'remaking' (i.e. of becoming one with God) should ever make her complete or 'done.' In *Downriver*, the vessel has need for God because she is an orphan forever 'undone' by her obscure lineage, an "unplaced daughte[r]" (Sinclair's expression 446) consumed by her blazing desire to become 'complete.' In hopes of being 'done again,' a vessel like Alice will yet trace God to orient herself in time and in God's direction 'downriver.'

Of course, Alice's very desire for union with an-Other (God) is an offense against the Widow, who already pronounced herself God as such. The suggestion of a possible 'downriver' is especially 'blasphemous' when the Widow has already usurped the role of God such that London *is* (in reference to) the Widow (see earlier discussion of the Thames and St Paul's). No one in London should be desirous of encountering some mysterious divine Other – that is, no one but the psychogeographer, whose imagination Alice inflames. While "sitting in a restored Victorian carriage," waiting "for a steam engine that would never arrive" (230), Sinclair finds himself pondering the meaning of 'Alice.' This restored Victorian carriage represents a past restored and 're-situated' in the present, in other words an atemporality within which time is flattened into a field of sameness – 'present' and 'past" are inextinguishable, the future is annulled.[47] But time regains some meaning for Sinclair as he imagines Alice as a character in Tenniel's

[47] Laura Colombino believes that Sinclair writes psychogeography to make past and present "coeval," that is, "equally radiant and activated by the writer's traversal of space" (95). However, my understanding is that in the Widow's world of the same, past and present are always already coeval. Sinclair traverses past and present in space only because he wants to differentiate the two so that he may undo the Widow's flattening of time.

"prophetic" postcard illustration, 'Alice in the Train' (230). Alice seems an oddity in this otherwise flawless portrait of stilled time, something detrimental to the structural unity of the piece.

The confinement of the carriage melts away as Alice radiates a warmth that alters the appearance of Benjamin Disraeli (who was Prime Minister under Queen Victoria) in the postcard: "[h]is hat is a folded triangle of paper; a pyramid, a toy imperial yacht […] his oily nabob leers disagreeably over the top of his journal, which is innocent of print—an obvious voyeur's trick […] His unequivocal designs on Alice will supply the missing headlines for the scandal sheet" (231). In Tenniel's illustration, Alice's sensuality – that is, her heat – destroys Disraeli's dignified appearance. He who preys upon the young girl seems no better (if not worse) than a typical train-bound voyeur, a blemish on a postcard that should bear the same Valhalla motifs, say, as the Thames. The novel claims that 'Alice' seduces Disraeli precisely to revise and make new old newspapers, where Disraeli will appear as someone *other than* one devoted to imperial Britain and its courageous people. She remakes the past in order for it to give rise to an alternate present and for the Widow's present to come undone: the "English nymphet" (445) intends for Englishness to be undone and remade in the name of a God other than the Widow; she puts herself in opposition to the Widow to make the future imaginable again.

'Alice' is, structurally speaking, an inharmonious detail in Tenniel's composition – or, an aporetic element embedded within to precipitate the collapse of the whole, of the Widow and being-as. "The details by which Tenniel's 'box set' diverge from Lewis Carroll's studiously surreal text indicate minor but significant shifts in interpretation" (230): these not at-all-studious, unforeseeable, unorthodox shifts in understanding

inflame one's imagination; they certainly make it "easy [for Sinclair] to believe that Tenniel's image preceded the author's [Carroll's] account of it" (230). Having discovered what impresses him as the 'backstory' to *Alice in Wonderland*, Sinclair is obliged to question all previous knowledge, including his understanding of what comes before and after – in other words, time. In this fashion the prophetess Alice anticipates London's future, its departure from the Widow's post-history; she *dares* hint at the idea of temporal progression, which could undo the spell the Widow put London under, and so through her Sinclair finds liberation.

'Alice' is the incongruity that unravels not only Tenniel's illustration but the cogito as well; in short, the vessel is the part that stands opposed to the autocratic whole, a difference that is a trace of God but *not God as such*. It is subversion envisaged as a fragment that has, rather inconveniently, fallen off a unified structure and induced motion in an otherwise motionless whole. Here Alice calls to mind female mystics in the medieval period, who considered the fragmentation of their bodies (blazoning) "a necessary part of integration with the divine essence" (Sauer 128), and who, in this vein, supposed themselves 'in lack.' These mystics sought the ecstasy of orgasm, i.e. an "overabundance of heat" (Sauer 134), in their encounter with Christ, "himself equally presented as a fragmented body – the *arma Christi* (instruments of the passion), the Eucharist, the Five Wounds" (Sauer 124). 'Heat' invokes the experience of *la petite mort* in the sense of a momentary death, the mystic's undoing; it also gestures towards her *future* oneness with Christ, her remaking and her becoming. The idea of becoming connotes temporal progression as a consequence: *la petite mort* means that in time, the Self will be transformed into an Other, or rather that an Other will be born within the Self

such that the Self will be thrown into a new existence where, surprisingly enough, I is another. This notion of a Self, a preconceived whole, hatching its antithesis is nothing if not aporetic, and it is expressed to perfection in 'Alice in the Train.' The picture represents time as a palimpsest, a fertile field from which countless incongruities (will) sprout.[48] Such incongruities reaffirm that time is not a constant – that time is prone to contingencies the likes of which prophetesses such as Alice personify. Since every incongruity indicates a possible turn history may take, 'Alice' is merely one among many contingencies, one among many Londons.

The Vessel Edith and Sinclair's Psychogeographic Re-Tracing of London Memories

The heat emanating from every incongruity – every vessel like Alice– will enable 'composition' in that it will initiate one's remaking, or, in Sinclair's words, "lead us back into the heat of the composition" (231). Yet what is remade in this fashion will never achieve wholeness: one remade is not one complete because existence presupposes distance from God. God's absence creates a lack in beings so that beings must forever desire the heat of remaking and anticipate their becoming. In *Downriver*, a being of lack is not only a vessel but a vessel of wrath like Edith Cadiz – a revenger, "river-inhabiting, tied to the earth (but not part of it), deluding with false divinations" (326). The vessel, in anger, will sever her bondage to the earth, to the Widow and being-as, so as to stop deluding London with "false divinations." She will free herself by not signifying, not reinforcing the Widow's order in London: the ballerina and nurse Edith Cadiz does so by

[48] Hampson has similarly argued that "*Downriver* presents a cartographic palimpsest. Maps are constantly in a state of flux, shifting and changing as the city does. As Sinclair puts it in *Lights Out for the Territory*: 'We have to recognise the fundamental untrustworthiness of maps: they are always pressure'" (56).

staging a dance to summon the spirits of certain sex fiends. Sinclair writes, "[s]he [Edith] wears her costume of maps. There are rings sewn to districts that have previously been cut so they will tear away, at a touch […] Edith Cadiz invites her sweating jackals to sing out the street names: *Heneage, Chicksand, Woodseer, Thrawl, Mulberry.* She gives them a voice to relieve their tension" (80). Every sway of Edith's body threatens to release pent-up sexual tension and incite disorder. Her sensuality signifies, if anything, a willingness to give voice to what is hitherto repressed – and to which she now gives form as dogs. The vessel withholds in herself forgotten memories which stir up heat in the psychogeographer's waking consciousness. In pursuit of the forgotten content that the vessel conceals, the psychogeographer will follow the vessel downriver. To put it another way, the vessel is the image of a divine Other who will complete the Self. As such, she is the vision of a possible future.

The trace of a deity hidden somewhere downriver, Edith does not reveal the face of this Other directly but rather lets her dogs guide Sinclair to him. These "dogs" evoke the Isle of Dogs, the site of much political strife. According to Baker, "[t]he pun Dogs/Doges, and the references to a Gothicised/Gothamised Venice, indicate that what is at the heart of Sinclair's satire here is power, temporal power transformed (as elsewhere in his writings) into occult forms" (Baker, n.p.). The one vying for such power, threatening to gain it at all costs is none other than the Widow:

> the centralisation of power (in the hands of Prime Minister Thatcher and the Conservative Government) is mirrored in the Docklands developments of the late 1980s and 1990s: in Sinclair's analysis, this foreclosure of urban space is the imposition of an alienated and entirely artificial 'city of the future' onto the historical and lived space of London's eastern riverside, an imposition that displaces both the inhabitants and the history of London. (Baker, n.p.)

Much in the same fashion, Luckhurst argues that the redevelopment of the Docklands speaks "of the 'benevolent feudalism' of the developers Olympia and York towards the marginalized residents of the Island. Bill Schwarz examines the slippages between sites of futuristic developments and failed social housing as the starkest instance of 'regressive modernization' in London" (65). Both scholars direct our attention to the fact that Thatcher's government modernized the Docklands – where foreign goods were unloaded once upon a time when Britain prided itself on its naval power – so that it would continue to be the nation's receptacle for wealth. Thatcher, the Widow, appeared to think of 'futurity' as something marked by material wealth. To be 'progressive' was to accumulate wealth at the expense of the individual in a fashion most regressive. Social welfare was to be dispensed with; anyone who proved a hindrance to the 'development' of the area was to be evicted. The displacement of the local residents was of little to no concern to the Conservative government, which merely assumed that such happenings (however regrettable) could not be helped, since the 'development' of the island into yet another signifier of the Widow was a more urgent political imperative.

Yet a vessel like Edith remembers whatever 'undesirables' the Widow erased to realize her vision of post-historical London; she remembers London as "a persistent, but remote, vision: a microcosm city" that is like the "Canadian wilderness: an impenetrable heart, with its broken cogs, shattered wheels, and stuttering drive-belts (87). Edith will summon, via the sex fiends who appear as dogs, all the 'waste' that was forced out of the Widow's London and exiled to the 'Canadian Wilderness,' that is, the wide expanse of Edith's memory. The dogs are the negative traces which will rip apart the Widow's absolute vision of London to 'untie' Edith (the vessel is earlier said to be tied to the earth

– see Sinclair 326). During Edith's invocation dance, the dogs perforate the map Edith wears; each "jagged gap reveals new streets, fresh relations: Edenic glimpses. The tired city is transformed: a dustpie fades to expose an orchard, a church lifts through a sandbank, a hospital (with blazing windows) slides beneath the surface of a slow-moving river" (81). A historical contingency springs from every such Edenic glimpse; every glimpse offers, moreover, a possible configuration of the mystery downriver, for every crack upon the Widow's Valhalla-themed London evinces an alternate reality ruled by an alternate God.

'God' then is not a presence which one can divine to possess, forever. Rather, 'God' in the sense of psychogeography is impermanence, a presence seen ever so fleetingly through the gaping 'wounds' upon the vessel's body. The vessel affords those of us who bear witness to her ecstasy passage downriver. She will not always remain ecstatic, however, while the openings upon her body will not always afford us passage. The vessel's moments of ecstasy instead oblige us to see the divine downriver as transient: transience, of course, signifies the movement of time, of being-in, becoming, and God. We, readers and writers of psychogeography both, witness the vessel's ecstasy to trace motion in Sinclair's "post-historical" novel, where "everything [should be] finished, burnt out" because of "a collective failure of imagination, of the inability to imagine anything better" according to Neil Martin (119). The vessel rather gives us something to witness, if to witness is to take flight from the world wherein being *is* in order to cultivate perceptions, to achieve God if only temporarily (for transcendence is by definition temporary) and to become something greater and other than itself in this manner.

Navigating Possible Londons in Defiance of the Widow

In *Downriver*, so-called God represents truth in its entirety, or ontology, i.e. that which is ungraspable. No being will be complete so long as God and the land are not *completely* understood. Nevertheless, a being will always desire to be 'complete'; it will always find the land mesmerizing, for God presumably created the land at the beginning of time. To *be*, in this sense, is to speculate about God and the land, both of which are alluringly incomprehensible. To *be* is also to bear witness to all such ontological speculations – all such interpretations of the land that are, in actuality, attempts to trace God (as they are for Gull and 'Sinclair' in *White Chappell*) from one place to another. Sinclair's idea of God cannot be more politically charged, for 'God' is a part of the psychogeographical imaginary through which Sinclair examines the ethics of witnessing. To witness is to acknowledge God as something beyond being-in, or something being is *not*. The possible existence of God means that being must transcend the milieu wherein it *is* in seeking of God. Witnessing therefore impels being – the traveler or the psychogeographer – downriver, for unlike London which is the Widow's body, the vessel's body is only a passage to God downriver. The psychogeographer's role is that of the "ambiguous witness [who] block[s] our [readers'] only means of escape, and to lead us back into the heat of the composition" (231), to borrow from Sinclair's description of Tenniel's illustration. The psychogeographic narrative itself is the space wherein being *is*, and, as such, it is that which being must travel through; Sinclair, too, has to travel through, that is, study, the train compartment where he encounters Alice. The vessel, as a space of passage, is also a re-directed time which generates motion, paving the way for futurity and becoming.

A psychogeographer who is a witness is not a voyeur as Potter would argue, however. Potter maintains that Sinclair declared his work socially irrelevant the moment he labeled himself a social outcast. Potter writes, "The intensity of the Shaman is the precondition for his exclusion from and insight into the community from which he is separated. 'Intensity' and sickness are self-regulated forms of insight […] the cure also obeys the logic whereby an individual, personal insight leads to a generalised, communal insight" (42). To assert his individuality, the Shaman must distinguish himself from what he perceives to be a 'sick' society – a collective the Shaman renounces but nonetheless scrutinizes to establish his difference in identity, his individuality. For Potter, 'place' is necessarily the basis of collectivity/community and Sinclair, "as a journeying witness to the physical and cognitive realities of the place," is "firmly placed as a voyeur" (43). A voyeur stills the object of his desire with his gaze, and a person thus objectified is exactly as she appears. The voyeur desires one in stillness rather than one in motion.

The psychogeographer would be a voyeur if he reports his vision of London as fact – but Sinclair does not do so. Sinclair, as a journeying witness, merely offers insights which communities may reject and even transcend. Having achieved transcendence, the communal being will always be in motion. As Baker tells us, Sinclair includes a letter to Joblard in the chapter about the monsters in the Isle of Dogs to "indicate his awareness of the problematic relation between event and writing, and awareness that infuses his thinking throughout Sinclair's texts. If the turning-over of narration to Joblard is in some sense an abdication, it is also an acknowledgement of the responsibility of the writer not merely to 'report' but actively engage – to 'participate', to 'provoke' – that returns *Downriver* once again to the oppositional practice of the counter-culture" (Baker,

n.p.). Sinclair writes provocatively to transcend what is seen, namely the Widow's London which is stasis and being-as. His psychogeography is his "oppositional practice" as well as his attempt at being-in and becoming. To write about some obscure God downriver is to refrain from reporting but to witness and set something in motion for the London community.

To phrase this argument in mystical terms, as I have been throughout this chapter: every remade being relates to God differently. Or, to refer to the aforementioned image of Edith dancing in her "costume of maps" (80) once again, the dogs are 'spent' in their efforts to catch glimpses of Eden and to divine God while Edith is uncloaked, undone. The dogs – which figure as children in another scene in the novel – are violent to Edith: "[s]ome were uncontrolled, hurtling against the walls, on a hawser of wild electricity. They would leap and tear and shout, spit obscenities. They would punch her. Or cling, and stick against her skirts, burrs: huge heads pressed painfully against her thighs. One child would lie for hours at her feet, and be dead. Another barked like an abused dog" (88). To resist the Widow and her all-too-tranquil vision of London is to endure such extreme violence. Having endured it, Edith regains the purpose of a vessel to trace/anticipate God in a different time. Any God stationed 'downriver' signifies a dialectical turn from the Widow. Since 'downriver' means something different for every being, the general consensus could only be that God is *somewhere* 'downriver.'

'Downriver' is then an impossible destination, unreachable by any route of navigation. Those who persistently chart routes downriver do so with nothing more than the conviction that God is to be discovered beyond the Widow's labyrinth of mirrors. These interests in the utopian no-place of 'downriver' preserve God from the Widow,

while giving the vessel an existential purpose. A symbol of movement, the vessel shares an affinity with the psychogeographer: it would not be an exaggeration to say that they are united in their search for alternate Londons and London Gods. The psychogeographer, too, "reinvents" the "different zones of the city," the "large metropolitan area" and the ghettos "through movements" as well (Colombino 118). Laura Colombino says, London is "produced" through "walking" (113); multiple traversals necessarily engender a multiverse, a cluster of "possible worlds other than the one in which we live" (119). The idea of God rather than God as such inspires such movements. Every vessel charts a route across space-time towards the destination that is God; every fleet represents a multitude of Londons which negate the Widow's.

And what matters the idea of God? The vessel allows herself to be undone and remade because she wishes to become an Other who relates to God differently. *La petite mort* is the transitory realm between dying and living, which anticipates becoming. It is the dialectical tension between dying and living that makes becoming – being as another – possible. This sustained tension gives being meaning *in the sense of différance*. Each is distinct in that each relates to God differently; each navigates a different course in seeking of God. All these differences are projected onto God, who then personifies an avowed belief in différance in spite of the Widow: God is the "pole star" (26) which, "upon nautical principles" (26), guides any quest for meaning – says Sinclair with reference to Thomas De Quincey's *Confession of an English Opium-Eater*.[49] Opium enables De Quincey to "observe the motion of time" and discover the "knotty problems of alleys" and other "enigmatical entries" (26) in London. Sinclair's " aimless exploration

[49] Sinclair attributes his obsession with "spiral stairways, opaque and smoky domes, potential mysteries" to his reading of De Quincey. (63)

of the city" (63) is far less leisurely in that he finds his motive in flight rather than intellectual discovery. Sinclair walks to escape "from an image [an engraving of a late-eighteenth-century amputation] in the Herb Garrett of the old St. Thomas Hospital" (63). St. Thomas Hospital is the institutional altar where one submits one's body to the authority of science and its spirit of discovery. The hospital rouses in Sinclair a fear whose influence on the body is tantamount to De Quincey's opium: opium and fear both heighten the senses to bring the walker closer to *la petite mort*.

In fear but also in anticipation of God, Sinclair encounters the nurse (also the ballerina) Edith, who "laid claim to some part of the building [i.e. the hospital building] as territory that she could control: imposing her own rules, her own fantasies" (87). Edith is the decentering part, the fantastical within the scientific. She thus marks her "territory" in the scientific institution of the hospital, where she will "impos[e] her own rules, her own fantasies" (87), taking whomever she likes into her care. Edith is a point of difference as intoxicating as an aphrodisiac. Beyond the Widow, she is not un-dead but dead. In death, Edith is undone, needing to be remade; death makes Edith the vessel, the medium which, in tracing God, discovers that 'I' is always another. God reveals Himself merely as the city's "potential mysteries," which are defiant of rational comprehension. God is the unfamiliar not-Self responsible for the undoing and remaking of vessels. Thus, the vessel signifies not the Widow but rather potentiality or God, known merely as the 'not-self.' In relation to the vessel, God is "a world that Edith had previously known as a persistent, but remote, vision: a microcosm city" (87). Edith, who is difference, excites in us the hope that the Widow's time will pass and God will reveal Himself downriver.

The vessel symbolizes this desire for God as such and *jouissance*. In Sinclair's words, the vessel is literally the "boat" which carries "damaged machine-parts" away from "'place' and into time" (87). The Widow is 'place,' already made and done. Because the Widow has stopped time and rendered her subjects undead, neither being nor becoming is possible within her. Yet becoming is possible again because of Edith, the vessel who willingly consigns herself to the fate of death. Sinclair says of Edith: "Edith Cadiz, as a nurse, no longer existed. There is no record that she was ever here. […] All I have learnt is that the quest for the woman and her journals – if pursued – will initiate abrupt retribution. It is safer to return to the photograph, which is itself a kind of death" (103). The pictures captures Edith's past, a dead and stilled time that must be provoked into motion. As writer of psychogeography, Sinclair sees to it that dying itself becomes as much a movement as the act of transcendence: Edith dies every time she exposes herself to Sinclair's gaze and subjects herself to his reconstructions of Englishness. She will not be confined to any particular narrative of Englishness or any particular signifying order, and so she will always be an abstraction. Edith awaits her union with God, her remaking and becoming, with the understanding that being an abstraction, she is irrecoverably dead, undone. The orphans who board the vessel likewise embrace death in defiance of the Widow. Choosing to be dead rather than un-dead, the orphans finally could bear witness to the movement of time. Edith embodies this awareness. Dead, Edith sails downriver in hopes of becoming another, one unified with God.

Thus the vessel wakes the Widow's subjects, the psychogeographer among them, from their post-historical stupor. Psychogeography is a willing admission of ignorance (on Sinclair's part as a Briton) regarding who 'I' am, what 'I' will become in the post-

colonial, post-war age. In his psychogeography, Sinclair evokes the notions of 'being' and 'becoming' to describe the flow of time. In *Downriver*, particularly, 'I' only become aware that 'I' *am* as 'I' drift towards death in rather a diachronic fashion: 'I' write psychogeography to acknowledge the inevitability of death; therefore 'I' *am*. 'I' anticipate death, whereupon 'I' will be united with 'my' maker and become an-Other; therefore 'I' *am*. The currents of time, 'I' infer, 'I' think, will carry 'me' downriver where 'I' will part with life and encounter God, an abstract entity 'I' associate with the time to come, 'my' certain death and 'my' subsequent becoming. *Futurity*, then, is visualized as an unexplored downriver where 'I' will discover my-Self as an-Other – i.e., someone touched by the divine and thereby rendered 'whole.'

The expression 'God downriver' therefore refers to an unspecified space-time where the Self will interface with the Other. This interface is the moment when the present succeeds the past or the future the present, the transitory moment I have called 'becoming,' which transpires precisely because the Widow does not wish it.

The Widow would have her people believe that a nation always and forever victorious needs not await its becoming. The Widow in all her arrogance promotes the idea of 'modern Britain' – that is, a Britain victorious in all its industrial reforms, its colonial adventures, and more recently its urban redevelopment. The Widow has steered London into the delusional realm of post-history which excludes the 'undesirables' – the Isle of Dogs residents who stand in the way of 'progress,' or those too poor to afford/ 'fund' the Valhalla-themed fantasy which she re-named the London Core.

To put it simply, the psychogeographer projects a sense of uncertainty while the Widow the opposite. Confident in her assumption that Britain has found its happily-ever-

after, the Widow rejects 'God' who represents temporal passage, as well as the related ideas of consequentiality and contingency. *Downriver* is set in a London where the river Thames is frozen and the movement of time stymied. Because the Widow's London does not pay time any heed, dying and becoming are impossible. Her patriotism puts London in general stagnation.

Putting the Widow in opposition to Sinclair, the psychogeographer, I have tried to re-present *Downriver* as a neoliberal-reality-turned-religious-fantasy. The turn from politics to fantasy is dialectical, much like the idea of becoming. This dialectical turn helps us align the 'counter-culture' with Sinclair's much-criticized individualism alongside his interest in the occult. Sinclair writes psychogeography to criticize the Widow, who stands for extreme reason, oppression and structural cohesion. It is for the purpose of defeating the Widow that he includes mystical elements like the vessel in his psychogeography. He writes to speculate about London history in ways that the conservative government would have considered unorthodox in 1995 when Sinclair published *Downriver*. Sinclair's speculative fantasies – his mystical writings – should arouse in us an interest in what the Widow made us forget. The slightest suspicion that something has been forgotten should offset the Widow's 'modernizing' influence, since suspicious, defiant Londoners will not stop trying to remember the city differently.

Sinclair means to estrange London, ultimately: he writes London not to demonstrate his knowledge but rather his ignorance. Psychogeography, he says, is not unlike "a map of nothing but its maker's brain" (261). Psychogeographers cannot see "outside" their "rooms," the private spaces wherein they compose "works of fiction" to "quell, through partial confession, the vessels of wrath" (261). The London landscape is a

psychological stimulus which forces the psychogeographer to confront his knowledge of being. Though the psychogeographer studies space, he cannot reach beyond his room, the spatial manifestation of his being. Whatever he encounters in the streets of London refers back to his room such that, eventually, he must confront his knowledge of being or his inadequacy thereof. Psychogeographical writing is not, in this regard, a confident expression of what is known; like any narrative, psychogeography must exclude some perspectives chiefly because they are unknown to the writer. Sinclair writes psychogeography to show awareness of this ignorance or rather to confess that he has not attained pure meaning – the Widow's Presence notwithstanding. The writer concedes to being ignorant so that he may expect further enlightenment. He writes to prophesy the return of différance and to re-invest meaning in the idea of God.

Because 'God' signifies anything that is not the Widow, there can only be ephemeral impressions of God, which arise by association. Every such impression is for London a possible future, a contingency. Such impressions will continue to multiply so long as the abstracted idea of God remains the Widow's antithesis. Uncertainty and abstractions sustain beings, who, ineluctably, will envision possible strategies of resistance to prevent the likes of the Widow from giving history a final destination. 'I' write myths to counteract the Widow's vision of an exclusive, Valhalla-themed London; therefore 'I' am. Conversely: 'I' read psychogeography to learn, again and again, that 'I' is another; therefore 'I' am.

Conclusion

Psychogeography beyond Situationism

By way of conclusion, I will restate the definition of psychogeography with which I began this study. The psychogeographer is always another and London always otherworldly; to write psychogeography is to estrange the world that is London alongside being-in-London, the *cogito*. Psychogeography is the medium through which the resulting divided consciousness expresses itself to resist 'ontological' (to borrow from Wolfreys) ascriptions of London, which tend to celebrate a romanticized notion of the English past. Psychogeography – Moore's or Sinclair's – is a process of creation fueled by a dialectical energy. Incongruous parts of London manifest themselves to cause the whole of London to implode; voices of other-beings-in-London speak through and from within the writer of psychogeography to forestall any attempt on his part to play detective, i.e., to trace the beginning of London in biblical, at times transcendent, terms. A linear historical narrative apropos of London called 'heritage' is inscribed upon the land to spiritually possess all beings-in-London, although it has struck some as alienating, broken, disjointed. It is for the purpose of looking for disjunctions in the narrative of Heritage that Sinclair and Moore write psychogeography and trace otherworldly Londons.

My analysis began with Moore, whose psychogeography concerns the land's continuous struggle against those among its dwellers who deem themselves its masters. In *From Hell*, space is conceived as an undifferentiated mass, an empty whole to accommodate whatever thought is poured into it, while psychogeography is the attempt

of Jack the Ripper – a cult figure of sorts in the English heritage industry – to unify space and time. Every act of murder makes Gull the Ripper ecstatic, allowing him to see all times simultaneously, as though he were omniscient: all times stand still before his eyes to coalesce into a static image, a lucid vision of English history in its entirety which he could project onto the space whence he comes: London. Thus Gull reconfigures London into the fourth dimension; that is, he forces the various strands of English history into cohesion in London space to eulogize 'Englishness.' Space, or Gull's vision thereof, is privileged over time in that space *is* time in its entirety: space confers meaning upon time in rather unilateral a fashion. Gull sees to it that time is confined in London space so that London time must bear whatever meaning he gives it. Privileging an individual consciousness before all else, psychogeography in *From Hell* is more psychic than geographical. Gull, as psychogeographer and reader of the London landscape, seeks transcendence to ensure that his reading of (English) space-time prevails over all others. To put it differently, he pursues psychogeography to accord his own thought divine status. In *From Hell*, psychogeography gives voice to a 'patriotic omniscience,' a patriotic reading of English heritage.

Conversely, psychogeography in *V for Vendetta* is more geographical than psychic. Here consciousness is not independent of space, nor is space subservient to consciousness. It is rather London space that projects before itself an anarchist consciousness, a thinking being who identifies as the anarchist 'V.' This individual consciousness resists on London's behalf any imposition from above such as Gull the Ripper's. V who is mortal and 'grounded' seeks transcendence only to achieve a leveling effect which would make London a palimpsest, and he calls this endeavor 'anarchy': new

possible English meanings arise from below to syncretize with the divine meaning inscribed above on the face of London, erratically, chaotically, and continuously. Space conjoins the above and the below in a fashion one may call ecstatic, transcendent, and yet V's sense of transcendence is contrary to Gull's in *From Hell*.

In *From Hell*, where psychogeography privileges the individual consciousness, Gull seeks transcendence to gain possession of space-time. Transcendence in this instance means that being is in a position to imprint its vision of time onto space. In *V for Vendetta*, however, psychogeography privileges space, and so 'transcendence' refers to the threat of the earthly to dominate the divine, or space the individual consciousness. Gull the Ripper pretends to prophesy the destiny of the English nation, as though his reading of English history were the most rational or the closest to divine vision; yet the anarchist V, being mortal and grounded, refutes all such 'divine' impositions, and he does so by descending into the subterranean realm to unleash all the repressed emotions therein. V then is the surprise London delivers to those seeking to manipulate it.

It is V's 'vendetta' against ideas of the 'divine' like Gull's that gives rise to Jerusalem, Moore's vision of an English utopia. *Jerusalem* is poised to reveal the aftermath of V's rebellion against Gull, which was a struggle between the below and the above, the part and the whole, or the earthly and the divine. Jerusalem is no less inconstant in its appearance than V's palimpsestic London, for both disintegrate to reveal new insights into the meaning of Englishness. Furthermore, because the milieu shapes the consciousness, a disintegrating milieu could cause the consciousness also to become divided. 'Jerusalem' is the synthesis of V's and Gull's respective psychogeography; it represents a new psychogeography that is a process, whereby consciousness, space, and

time collide and become related again in no specific way, but certainly in ways that would negate all their previous relations. Jerusalem is the undoing of the pre-existing fabric of meaning which always put consciousness/being, space, and time in a vertical order: it is Jerusalem that causes fissures to appear in what is otherwise a perfect (in the sense that it is cohesive) surface of meaning, shocking the *cogito* as it does so. This element of shock marks a new experience of ecstasy, of transcendence and psychogeography. Henceforth psychogeography is neither an imposition nor a reaction against an imposition, but a spectacle ripped to pieces to unveil a surprise. In all three works, Moore gains the vantage point to witness the rupture of the land, which, for him, is psychogeographic: he sees that a brute force underlies Londonscape and that London will be ruptured. The energy latent in the land provokes Moore to re-envision 'Englishness,' psychogeographically, and yet his psychogeographic visions – his vision of Jerusalem for instance – remain vague, non-essentialist.

In contrast to Moore, Sinclair supposes that the traces of an otherwordly London have long emerged and have ever since inhered in day-to-day perceptions of London. Urban oddities such as the mostly disappeared St Mary Matfelon and the nameless edifices in the yard of St Anne's Limehouse only await the psychogeographer's discovery. These mysterious landmarks whose memories are only half-remembered are the gaping wounds upon Londonscape; they are absences which define and haunt London. Sinclair's work as psychogeographer is to pry into these wounds to excite a pain so intense that it would quite overwhelm reason. Sinclair does not observe London from a vantage point because for him, to write psychogeography is to *immerse* oneself in an overwhelming un-reason whereby the rational agent that is 'I' is finished and

transcended, such that 'I' is – or rather becomes – another. The psychogeographer probes into the meaningful vacuums upon the land to discover his own transience as a being, since being and the world wherein he *is* are mutually ephemeral. The writer of psychogeography must always presume London is somewhere else, someplace downriver, while the Londoner, who is being-in-the-world, is also necessarily another. Differently put, psychogeography is an alienating voice emanating from within 'Sinclair,' the Londoner and psychogeographer: Sinclair, who is a being-in-London, writes psychogeography so that he will become another and, in this sense, achieve transcendence; he writes frantically or 'automatically' in order to detect the brute force that is about to erupt in London.

In *White Chappell*, Sinclair shows that writing psychogeography is an act of violence: he writes in a faltering voice of reason that mutilates whatever rational thought it articulates, for here psychogeography is *logos*, perverted. Any ostensible word of reason the psychogeographer utters must make "a horror hybrid" of London, the site upon which God Himself was said to have conferred His blessings, caused its trade to thrive, and given England a proud history. This patriotic retelling of London history is supposed to serve the purpose of encouraging all London laborers to work harder. But Sinclair butchers this mythicized beginning of London by speaking of it, psychogeographically. Sinclair's psychogeography is not unlike a sacrilegious theology, the voice of a pretend reason whose true intention is to instill confusion – a voice mocking what it purports to espouse. This mocking voice emanates from a disintegrating consciousness who, being-in-London, is as much fated to become another as he was to inherit Gull's aggrandizing

reading of London. In *White Chappell*, the psychogeographer 'Sinclair' is Gull as well as Gull's Other, a synthetic being in a manner of speaking.

Distrusting his own voice, Sinclair writes ever so hesitantly, and he traces London's God merely in relative terms, that is, in terms of *différance*. Sinclair traces in London the presence of a God who is nothing more than a composite of colors, a relative composition that is not absolute enough to be God *as such*. Sinclair falsifies and erases Gull's idol in the act of rendering him, psychogeographically, as a being constituted of *clarté* and *obscurité*, a division of colors too dialectical – too human in its conception – to be divine. A London where even divine reason proves unreliable is a world of fluctuations, and any being therein is condemned to become another. What is – or rather what appears to *be* – always conceals within an estranging otherness, an antithesis of sorts. For Sinclair, psychogeography is the instinctive awareness of the incongruity between inside and outside, being and becoming. What Sinclair presents as opposed – the word and the writer of psychogeography, being and its world – direct the flow of Sinclair's psychogeographical consciousness elsewhere, such that Sinclair is compelled to trace another London where he, too, may become another.

Being-becoming is a manifestation of *différance*, the trace of a better, more utopian London uncorrupted by Thatcherite politics, located downriver. This notion of a London downriver leads the psychogeographer astray from the mighty Thames, the imagined wellspring of modern reason in modern London. The conduit for trade making the city a river civilization after a fashion, the Thames is depicted as a cause for English pride, as well as a vindication of English heritage in London in *Downriver*. 'Heritage' is a catch-all term for a wide array of London memories: Hawksmoor and Wren, London's

Genesis, London in colonial times, the Ripper, the Ripper's victims in Whitechapel, Queen Victoria and the Widow (i.e. Thatcher). 'Heritage' is vast enough an idea to entrap being-in-London and arrest its becoming. In reaction against heritage, Sinclair writes psychogeography in London to trace God, the divine other in relation to whom he may become another: I who is another transcends his milieu, causing it to rupture. Whereas heritage or nostalgia in general threatens to still time, Sinclair impels the arrival of the future by writing psychogeography to become another and, in this vein, to announce his own death, thus to wash his hands of London's heritage affair.

The very word 'downriver' implies fluidity and motion; it also refers to transcendence and God in *Downriver*. Sinclair writes psychogeography to journey downriver in search of transcendence, and so he descends into linguistic incoherence, irrationality, *obscurité*. Quite unlike Moore, Sinclair does not presume that transcendence is a movement of ascension whereby the psychogeographer would gain the vantage point to witness the unraveling of London, and the consequent rise of the otherworldly. Sinclair pursues psychogeography with an air of self-abandon. Psychogeography is and will forever be Sinclair's failed endeavor to read London time diachronically, rationally; his failings nonetheless have engendered alternative visions of London, as well as alternate ways of being and becoming. Sinclair writes psychogeography to destabilize the idea of being-in-the-world, establishing instead the three elements of psychogeography: consciousness, time, and space.

Could it then be said that psychogeography is only a projection of the Thames? If so, could psychogeography only ever be composed in London? Considering that psychogeography is an attestation to 'being-in-the-world,' it very well can take place

anywhere: the milieu is merely a situation wherein becomings and transcendence are possible. A symbol of 'English heritage,' and, as such, an endorsement of the efforts to mark London in the present as a continuation of its Victorian past, the Thames elicits in every Londoner, every London-being, a different reaction. Only beings in the vicinity of the river could react to it, psychogeographically or otherwise. A different cityscape would comprise different traces which breed its own God; it would inspire different sacrilegious theologies and prophesy other kinds of transcendence, other ways reuniting with the Other.

Psychogeography resists definitions – however liberal – to the very end because it purposes to alienate the *cogito*, the supposed beginning of thought. Even urban landscapes which inspire psychogeography exist only to be negated and transcended, for psychogeography necessarily means that the urban subject is condemned to negate the site wherein (s)he *is*; (s)he will always borrow another's lens to view the city which, more often than not, is construed as impersonal, fast-paced, and susceptible to rapid change. Psychogeography further hastens the pace by ripping apart the urban fabric alongside all the visions it cultivates, while butchering all those who *are*-in-the-world. This theoretical re-working of psychogeography means that many other conceptions of the disintegrating city could be considered psychogeographical, even if they were not initially thought to be so. Various London visionaries who are also masters of fragmentation and pastiche – Virginia Woolf, Peter Ackroyd, J.G. Ballard, Julian Barnes, Michael Moorcock, Salman Rushdie, to name but a few – could be studied anew from a psychogeographic perspective, or at least in view of Ackroyd's advice for his fellow British writers to surrender the pursuit for "a false aesthetic of subjectivity and a false

context of realism" and instead "invest created forms with our own significance [by which he means French literary theories such as Deconstruction]" (Ackroyd qtd. in Bradbury 454).

Ackroyd's remark calls attention to an affinity between psychogeography and postmodern writing: both express "incredulity toward meta-narratives" (Lyotard qtd. in Bradbury 456), towards our surrounding material reality, a "world of icons, screens, surfaces" (Jameson qtd. in Bradbury 456). Psychogeographical thinking/writing is disjunctive enough to be qualified as "postmodern," to be sure; yet it is not merely an expression of incredulity or an exercise in negation, for in psychogeography, negation is promptly followed by multiple positings, just as 'I' is invariably 'split' and multiplied. Specifically, psychogeography anticipates the collapse of simulacra alongside the rise of alternative universes – speculative otherworlds including both utopias and dystopias.[50] Thus, within "postmodernity," psychogeography has discovered its ties to some major literary traditions, say, travel writing, the *Bildungsroman,* utopian/dystopian literature, and speculative fiction.

Psychogeography has an affinity with some seminal SF works that emphasize the notion of journeying, from *Gulliver's Travels* to the *War of the Worlds*, or *The Time Machine.* Of course, the journey motif is also evident in non-SF works such as Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* or Hunter S. Thompson's *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*: the latter, in particular, is a critique of the notion of Manifest Destiny, of America's policy of Westward expansion. Regardless of their generic differences, all these travelogues

[50] As mentioned in the Introductory Chapter, psychogeography does share speculative fiction's goal to induce cognitive estrangement and so (re)-organize "variable spatio-temporal, biological, social, and other characteristics and constellations into specific fictional worlds" (Suvin 26). If psychogeographers prophesy apocalyptic destructions of the city, they also envision its regeneration.

convey a desire for exploration and discovery, which, as we know, spawned some expansionist ideologies and left us the legacy of colonialism. The urge to wander could easily segue into post-colonial subject matters such as that of diaspora and the nomad; in this respect, psychogeography's relevance well exceeds the framework of English neoliberalism.

Yet even London psychogeography need not be confined to the political context of neoliberalism and/or Thatcherism, since discussions of the one or the other tend to be accompanied by the subject of a nostalgic patriotism, of 'Englishness.' The term 'Englishness' suggests a blatant disregard for Britons who are not English. As Ho writes in "Post-Imperial Landscape," Britishness is supposedly a more inclusive identity than Englishness – meaning that the latter is exclusive, perhaps even essentialist. What Britons look back to find is not an actual cultural identity but a manifestation of nostalgia, a sentiment that fans a willful blindness to present hardships. As Malcom Bradbury tells us, what with the downfall of Empire and its economic decline since the end of World War Two, Britain "was inclined to look back, exploiting what it had most of: the past" (273).

The term 'Englishness' may refer to this fetishization of the past, which in turn has given rise to the heritage industry. In the literary world, nostalgia can take the form of a fetish with the canon (the Great Tradition). Some examples of (mock) heritage writing include A.S. Byatt's *Possession* (1990), John Fowles' pastiche Victorian romance *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1969), and Julian Barnes' *England, England* (1988). Angus Wilson's *The Old Men at the Zoo* (1961) is likewise a critique of neo-traditionalism, i.e., a pandemic reverence for a mysterious (meaningless, or immaterial) Englishness. The works of psychogeography discussed in this thesis are also mimicries of this patriotic

reverence: Moore and Sinclair both celebrate Englishness and London, albeit that they do so to enhance the mystery surrounding these entities. Moore and Sinclair were inspired to initiate their respective psychogeographical quest because they came to see Englishness and London as words without any concrete meaning. Both write to assign meaning to this portentous void (but in vain), and so their writings follow some mystical tendencies.

In light of this interpretation of psychogeography, I would say that this project is not about psychogeography in general (which would fit Guy Debord's description better), but rather about psychogeographic mysticism. Moore's and Sinclair's respective psychogeography deals with obscurities such as urban legends that give London and by extension, England, an aura of mystery. That is to say, all these conversations about heritage persist even though they have failed to illuminate any essential English meaning; these conversations persist on the basis of *pure faith*, while pandering to the unjustifiable, unempirical impression of Englishness as an essential something that would reveal some undying truth about English culture. In this respect, Englishness is a persisting thought, something that owes its value to nothing concrete and empirical, but only to a general insistence that it is a thing of substance. Englishness has been preserved on the basis of nothing but conviction; it is an identity narrative that serves an explanatory function *rather like a faith*. That an act of faith such as this makes an identity explainable, understandable is not intrinsically problematic. What is troubling is, rather, the blurring of the line between faith and empirical truth, which seems to have given the word Englishness an essentialist suggestion. Sinclair and Moore particularly distrust Thatcher's re-vamping of London, which serves the patriotic purpose of realizing Englishness in London space, as though to give it an empirical touch. The need for psychogeographic

mysticism arises when Englishness becomes a meaningful something that is implanted in the physical space of London, such that London is quintessentially English: to again see Englishness as faith, that is, something mystical rather than empirical, Sinclair and Moore take it upon themselves to envision atemporal, immaterial, and in this regard transcendent London otherworlds.

To put it broadly then, psychogeography is a critical tool with which one estranges essentialist notions of the nation even beyond the context of London; it is an aesthetic which derives political worth from its esotericism and thereby its absence in any neoliberal, utilitarian framework of reference. Psychogeography, more particularly, is that which transports us to utopic otherworlds founded upon a dialectic thought process. It is in other words a series of aporetic breakdowns which facilitate the enterprise of envisioning a mystical un-reason capable of countering the highly functional, highly regulated urban mechanism that London exemplifies alongside other world cities. Beyond London, psychogeography is a way for us to query the idea of the quotidian in a Marxian vein, so that we can discover ways to resist functionalism and late capitalism in the supposedly banal urban everyday. In this respect, psychogeography is a literary representation of urban life that associates the overtly political – post-colonial and Marxist critiques for instance – with the phenomenon of urban existence, in other words the philosophical; it is a critical module which expands as these connections proliferate, or a utopian aesthetic which alienates pervasive political sentiments such as nostalgia and patriotism, despite – or rather because of – its esoteric foundation.

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