

***BETWEEN A ROCK  
AND A HARD PLACE:  
Space, Gender & Hierarchy  
in British Gangland Film***

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**Submitted to the University of Hertfordshire  
in partial fulfilment  
of the requirements of the degree of PhD  
October 2010**

## *Acknowledgements*

Firstly, I'd like to thank Alan Brooke for his unfailing enthusiasm, encouragement and inspiration throughout an unexpected academic journey, which he initiated over a decade ago: following my enquiry regarding a weekly evening class in the History of Art, he persuaded me instead to embark upon a full-time BA (Hons) in Cultural Studies, subsequently employing me as lecturer and tutor on the course team and beyond! Thanks also to Dr Penny Lane, who insisted I should 'consider' a PhD (and subsequently refused to take no for an answer); to Jenny Bloodworth, for her friendship when I needed it most; and to my supervisors, Professor Tony Shaw and Dr Steven Peacock, without whom this thesis would not have seen the light of day. Most of all, however, I am of course indebted to my family for their enduring patience, love and support: it goes without saying that I wouldn't have achieved any of this without you.

## *Abstract*

A principal aim of this research has been to establish the capacity of British Gangland film to articulate its era of production through the cinematic interpretation of contemporary concerns and anxieties in narratives relating to the criminal underworld. In order to do so, the study has concentrated on the analysis of space, gender and hierarchy within representative generic texts produced between 1945 and the present.

The thesis is divided into three sections: the first offers a general overview of British Gangland film from the 65 years under discussion with the aim of identifying recurring generic patterns and motifs. The second and third sections are more specifically focused, their chapters examining the narrative significance and development of the male and the female protagonist respectively.

Within the films under discussion, the relationship between these protagonists and their environment represents a fundamental generic component, resulting in an emphasis on space and place. Space within these narratives is inherently territorial, and thus irrevocably bound up with hierarchies of power. The predominantly urban locations in which the narratives are set represent a twilight world, a *demi-monde*, which is rarely neutral but dominated by the patriarchal order structuring the notion of 'Gangland'. Such spaces are therefore inextricably linked with gender, hierarchy, and dynamic power relations.

Whilst it would have been possible to explore each of these areas in isolation through specifically relevant theoretical perspectives, their interdependence is central to this study. Consequently, a holistic theoretical approach has facilitated analysis of the symbiotic relationship between the three key elements of space, gender and hierarchy and the processes involved in the generation of meaning: this has resulted in a reading of British Gangland film as cultural artefact, reflecting its circumstances of production.

## *Preface*

In general, referencing has been derived from the *MHRA Style Guide*; this includes footnotes relating to specific sources together with a comprehensive bibliography.<sup>1</sup> The notable exception to this referencing system is the films themselves: within the body of the text, the first reference to a film title is followed by its year of production in parentheses; in subsequent references the title stands alone. Rather than appending full production details as footnotes, these are incorporated within two filmographies at the end of the thesis - one alphabetical, the other chronological.

As noted in Chapter One, a number of commentators have identified similarities between the genre under discussion and the Western, a significant constituent factor in both being the specific space and place in which the narratives are played out. This invocation of an identifiable generic 'world' which exists both in reality and in the imagination has contributed to the convention of using a capital initial when writing on the Western: as the cultural and spatial setting of the narratives discussed here can be read as equally evocative, a similar form has been used when referring to the heterotopian world of Gangland.

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<sup>1</sup> Glanville Price & MHRA Sub-Committee (eds.), *MHRA Style Guide*, (London: Modern Humanities Research Association, 2002)

## *Table of Contents*

Abstract	i
Preface	ii
Introduction	1
Chapter One: A Theoretical Overview	14
Chapter Two: Mapping the Underworld through British Gangland Film Part I: 1945 - 1970	31
Chapter Three: Mapping the Underworld through British Gangland Film Part II: 1971 to the Present	54
Chapter Four: The Spiv & the City: Spieling his way through the Urban Landscape	74
Chapter Five: From <i>Brighton Rock</i> to Northern Grit: Excursions from the Metropolis	97
Chapter Six: From Back Streets to Penthouse Suites: The Domain of the Good-Time Girl	118
Chapter Seven: 'A Woman's Place': Charting her Progress through the <i>Demi-Monde</i>	142
Conclusion	167
Bibliography	176
Filmographies	183

# *Introduction*

Film historian Robert Murphy believes that 'apart from a brief upsurge between 1942 and 1947, British cinema has been disparaged and despised for almost all its existence'.<sup>1</sup> Whether or not one agrees with Murphy's contention, it is interesting to note that the genre of British Gangland film began to take shape during this period, and that one of its seminal texts, the Boulting Brothers' *Brighton Rock*, was released as this golden age drew to a close in 1947. Consequently, one aim of this thesis is to demonstrate that far from representing a grand finale to the 'upsurge' identified by Murphy, *Brighton Rock* was one of a number of texts which heralded the arrival of an enduring and responsive British genre with the capacity to interpret the historical circumstances in which its films have been produced.

This thesis therefore examines a range of representative texts from the genre produced between 1945 and the present. Recurring themes and motifs are identified through extensive textual analysis with the aim of establishing a generic capacity to articulate prevailing social, cultural and moral concerns. Whilst the original intention was to focus exclusively on a reading of space and place within these narratives, it quickly became apparent that it would be more productive to situate such spatial analysis within the context of its generic relationship with gender and hierarchical power. Further, the generic interdependence of these three elements is presented here as fundamental to the generation of meaning, with identifiable variations and developments in their portrayal over the decades contributing to the interpretation of these texts as cultural artefacts.

Consequently, the films included in the following chapters were chosen according to their capacity to evidence three principal features: the dynamic relationship between space, gender and hierarchy; the contribution of iconography and mise-en-scène to generically conventional tropes; and the socio-historical circumstances within which an individual text was produced. As will become apparent, these criteria were considered of greater relevance to the thesis than the critical reception of individual films. A particularly salient example is Douglas Hickox's *Brannigan* (1975), starring John Wayne as the eponymous Chicago police detective in pursuit of a Mafioso on the run in London. In addition to being panned by the critics, *Brannigan* did not fare well at the box office. Nonetheless, as discussed in Chapter Three, the film complies with the three specified criteria to such an extent that it becomes almost parodic, thereby exemplifying the significance of generic convention (and its chronological development) to a comprehensive reading of these narratives.

This particular example is also indicative of the diversity of British Gangland film, and the way in which established codes and conventions are fundamental to

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Murphy (ed.), *The British Cinema Book*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. (London: BFI Publishing, 2001), p.xi.

generic cohesion and identity. It is a premise borne out by the eclectic nature of the films included here: iconic benchmarks such as *Brighton Rock* (1947) and *Performance* (1970) appear alongside little-known B-movies and low-budget projects such as *Beat Girl* (1959) and *London to Brighton* (2006), as well as 'star vehicles' such as *Brannigan*, above. As noted, in each case it was therefore the clarity with which the generic interpretation of space, gender and hierarchy was portrayed which merited a film's inclusion. This allowed assessment of similarities and differences across a broad range of texts produced over the past 65 years, analysis of such diverse examples confirming the value of this methodology. In addition, individual films were selected according to their relevance to specific themes: for instance, narratives such as *Good Time Girl* (1948) and *The Long Good Friday* (1980) were included in order to demonstrate developments in the generic portrayal of 'a woman's place' over the decades.

Inevitably, the final selection of films was whittled down from a much greater number of generic texts, the majority of which were originally identified through primary and secondary sources. These included contemporary reviews and articles in trade publications, newspapers and magazines, together with more recent edited volumes, monographs and journal articles. Most of the films were available in DVD format, either through major online retailers and rental companies or small independent specialists. This enabled repeated viewings, which resulted in an appreciation of the nuances of individual examples in addition to common themes, issues and motifs contributing to generic convention. There was just one film which was unavailable to rent or purchase, but this was subsequently viewed courtesy of the BFI Library in Stephen Street.<sup>2</sup>

The BFI was also the source of archive material referred to throughout the thesis, including newspaper cuttings, trade publications, press books and BBFC scenario reports. In addition, selected internet sites were used to obtain background information relating to the production of individual films (including shooting locations); for more recent independent reviews and articles; and, in the case of *Get Carter* (1971) discussed in Chapter Five, to establish the organic relationship between reality and the fictive, heterotopian world of film through fan-based websites.<sup>3</sup>

Despite its cultural relevance and enduring cinematic popularity, the genre of British Gangland film has nonetheless remained somewhat neglected in terms of critical attention. As Steve Chibnall and Robert Murphy observe, the underworld genre 'is likely to assume a prominence in discussion of the national cinemas of the

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<sup>2</sup> British Film Institute, 21 Stephen Street, London W1T 1LN. Tel: +44 (0)20 7255 1444.  
<<http://www.bfi.org.uk/filmtvinfo/library/>>

<sup>3</sup> Michel Foucault's concept of heterotopia (literally 'other' or 'opposite' space) is discussed in Chapter One. Michel Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces', trans. by Jay Miskowiec, *Diacritics*, Spring 1986, pp.22-27.



United States, Japan and France'; they therefore ask why these films play 'little or no part in critics' discussions of British cinema'.<sup>4</sup> Whilst it would be impossible for a study of this length to investigate British Gangland film in its entirety, it is nonetheless anticipated that through the specific analysis of space, gender and hierarchy within representative examples, this thesis will contribute to an awareness of the potential of the genre for fruitful academic exploration.

Other than monographs dealing with individual (and predominantly canonical) generic examples, essays and articles relating to the British Gangland genre are more often incorporated within writing on British film in general. As a result, although published over a decade ago, Chibnall and Murphy's edited volume *British Crime Cinema* remains the only academic study dedicated solely to the specific genre under discussion.<sup>5</sup> Despite the wide-ranging inference of the volume's title, the editors further define their focus in the introductory chapter as 'underworld films'.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, this thesis makes a distinction between the explicit genre of British Gangland film and the more general category of the crime film with which it co-exists. Whilst several writers cite *Brighton Rock* as one of the first fully-fledged examples of the Gangland genre, the British crime film was in production from as early as 1905 during the silent era.<sup>7</sup> Early examples include *The Life of Charles Peace* (1905) and two films charting the exploits of *Three-Fingered Kate* (1910, 1912).

As suggested by these titles, a fundamental difference between the two genres is the nature and *modus operandi* of their protagonists: particularly in earlier crime narratives, they were individuals perpetrating independent and/or isolated criminal acts, or Fagin-like characters running small, autonomous gangs. However, in the films constituting the focus of the following chapters, the concept of a post-war 'Gangland' is predicated on the intricate hierarchical relationships of a cohesive criminal underworld engaged in sustained, and often organised, crime.

Within the context of this thesis, the term 'organised crime' is used to refer to persistent and repeated criminal activity on a sliding scale involving an interactive local, national or international network of criminals (albeit incorporating rival factions), and often encompassing a number of distinct specialisms. Its representation within British Gangland film can therefore be pinpointed historically, for as Tony Williams has observed, 'unlike America in the Prohibition era, an

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<sup>4</sup> Steve Chibnall & Robert Murphy (eds.), *British Crime Cinema* (London & New York: Routledge, 1999), p.1.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p.2.

<sup>7</sup> Steve Chibnall describes *Brighton Rock* as 'a milestone film [which] gave us the first realistic depiction of the British criminal underworld.' He goes on to suggest that the film 'might also be considered the godfather of classic crime films like *Get Carter* and *The Long Good Friday*'. Steve Chibnall, *Brighton Rock* (London & New York: I B Tauris, 2005), sleeve notes.

organised crime network along the lines of the Mafia in America and the Triads in China did not exist in pre-war British society'.<sup>8</sup> Whilst not every example analysed here incorporates organised crime within its narrative, it is the socio-historical specificity identified by Williams which has determined that the following investigation will focus on generic texts produced since 1945. Williams' observation also contributes to the premise that such films can be read as cultural artefacts.

As indicated above, in addition to evidencing the premise of the generic text as artefact, a principle aim of this thesis has been to establish the significance of the relationship between space, gender and hierarchy in the generation of meaning within these narratives. This is achieved through textual analysis of representative examples underpinned by the theoretical framework discussed in Chapter One, which draws on a range of perspectives from film and cultural theory.<sup>9</sup> Given the tripartite focus of the thesis, the theoretical framework is necessarily diverse. Whilst it would be possible to analyse each of the core elements in isolation through specifically relevant theoretical perspectives, their interdependence is central to this study. Consequently, a holistic, multifaceted theoretical approach has been adopted in order to appreciate the dynamics of their productive relationship.

The concept of a cohesive and recognisable genre is equally implicit within the thesis, in particular the concept of generic convention, as it allows the identification of shifts and changes in response to contextual circumstance and prevailing social mores. A significant example is the portrayal of prostitution within British Gangland film: this is infinitely more explicit in films such as *Mona Lisa* (1986) and *London to Brighton* (2006) than in earlier narratives such as *Noose* (1948) and *The Flesh is Weak* (1957), the often harrowing realism of these later texts leaving little to the imagination.

The socio-historical specificity of these texts finds resonance in Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of the chronotope.<sup>10</sup> Literally translating as 'time-space', Bakhtin suggests that 'spatial and temporal indicators' combine to produce a narrative which is identifiable with the era in which it is produced.<sup>11</sup> His thesis therefore incorporates the significance of spatial setting and generic form with regard to establishing the temporal moment in which a narrative has been conceived and, furthermore, which it subsequently reflects. Within British Gangland film, this is

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<sup>8</sup> Tony Williams, 'The British Gangster Film' in Alain Silver & James Ursini (eds.), *The Gangster Film Reader* (Pompton Plains, NJ: Limelight Editions, 2007), p.238.

<sup>9</sup> Individual texts were selected for their 'representativeness' of one or more of the three core elements, but also for the insight they offer into temporal generic trends.

<sup>10</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin, 'Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel: Notes Towards a Historical Poetics' in Michael Holquist (ed.), *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M.M. Bakhtin*, trans. by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), p.84.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

evidenced in part by the specific nature of criminal activity depicted in generic examples produced over the decades, but also the increasing explicitness with which these scenarios are portrayed. Contemporary concerns regarding the disillusionment of servicemen returning from active duty in the immediate post-war era constitute a narrative focus in films such as *Appointment with Crime* (1946), *Dancing with Crime* (1947) and *They Made me a Fugitive* (1947), whereas underage prostitution and drug-trafficking are central to more recent examples such as *London to Brighton* (2006) and *My Kingdom* (2008).

The nature of characters populating the narrative and their relationship with their environment are also intrinsic to a chronotopic textual reading. Within the genre under discussion, this model is exemplified by the protagonists' interaction with war-torn landscapes in generic texts produced in the late 1940s and early 1950s such as *Waterloo Road* (1947), *Hugh & Cry* (1947) and *Night & the City* (1950); their involvement with, or reaction against, the Thatcherite regeneration of London's Docklands and areas of the North East referenced in films such as *The Long Good Friday* (1980) and *Stormy Monday* (1988); but also, as mentioned above, the perennial conceptual notion of a woman's metaphorical 'place' within the male-dominated territory of Gangland.

Analysis of the spaces in which these narratives are played out will therefore represent a key element within the thesis. Whilst cinematic space and place is recognised here as an established area of academic research, relatively little has been published which relates specifically to the genre of British Gangland film.<sup>12</sup> Consequently, a further aim is to address this deficiency, and Michel Foucault's concept of heterotopia has proved productive in this respect.<sup>13</sup> As discussed further in Chapter One, Foucault's notion incorporates identifiable places within society which are distinct from, and yet exist within, the world at large. A further characteristic is the hierarchical configuration of power which often governs these spaces, the prison being offered by Foucault as an archetypal heterotopia.<sup>14</sup> The prison represents a classic pyramidal model, the greatest power being the prerogative of the few at its apex. It will be argued here that the hierarchical construct of Gangland also exemplifies Foucault's concept: in the case of the

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<sup>12</sup> Of specific relevance here is Charlotte Brunson, 'Space in the British Crime Film' in Chibnall & Murphy, *British Crime Film*. See also Charlotte Brunson, *London in Cinema: The Cinematic City since 1945* (London: BFI Publishing, 2007). Steve Chibnall & Julian Petley (eds.), *Journal of British Cinema and Television*, Vol. 4, Issue 2, 2007: special issue entitled 'Space and Place in British Cinema and Television'. Julia Hallam, 'Film, space and place: researching a city in film' in *New Review of Film and Television Studies* Vol. 8, Issue 3, September 2010, pp. 277-296.

<sup>13</sup> Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces'.

<sup>14</sup> The prison constitutes a central spatial motif in Joseph Losey's *The Criminal* (1960), discussed in Chapter Two.

underworld, the pyramidal model is reflected yet inverted, with those considered most deviant wielding the most power.

Such power is often articulated semiotically through generic representations of space: in *Brighton Rock*, gang member Dallow (William Hartnell) climbs the crumbling staircase of a seedy lodging house in order to speak to his young leader, Pinkie Brown (Richard Attenborough). A later scene depicts Pinkie ascending the sweeping staircase of a grand hotel for an audience with powerful overlord Colleoni (Charles Golding), comparison between the two oppositional spaces serving to articulate the status of these characters within the context of prevailing hierarchies. *Night & the City* offers a further example, in which the Gangland supremacy of art dealer Kristo (Herbert Lom) is conveyed through his elevated position on Hammersmith Bridge as he surveys the drowning of his victim in the murky waters of the River Thames below.

With further regard to space (and reinforcing Bakhtin's notion of the chronotope), the relationship between the male protagonist and his urban environment is also significant. Robert Warshow's essay 'The Gangster as Tragic Hero' is a seminal text in which this relationship is expounded.<sup>15</sup> Justifiably, Warshow has been criticised for the fact that his essay is predicated on only three filmic examples of the American gangster genre; nonetheless, as will be demonstrated, the premise of the relationship on which Warshow bases his analysis is consistently borne out within this thesis across a diverse range of British Gangland film, and most specifically those discussed in Chapter Four, 'The Spiv and the City'.

Reference to Warshow's essay illustrates the relevance to this thesis of writing on the American gangster genre. Whilst it is acknowledged that academic study of both British Gangland film and its American progenitor has been selective and consequently remains somewhat incomplete, there has been appreciably more written on Hollywood's interpretation of the genre.<sup>16</sup> Where pertinent, reference to academic study of the American gangster movie will therefore complement that relating to its British counterpart.

The thesis will be developed over seven chapters. Following the theoretical overview constituting Chapter One, the generic significance of space, gender and hierarchy will be explored over six subsequent chapters divided into three pairs:

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<sup>15</sup> Robert Warshow, 'The Gangster as Tragic Hero' in *The Immediate Experience*, (Cambridge, Ma. & London: Harvard University Press, 2002), p.101. The article was first published in *The Partisan Review* in February 1948.

<sup>16</sup> Lee Grieveson has noted that 'academic and popular studies of the [American] gangster film have consistently focused on a small number of well-known films, rarely moving far beyond *Little Caesar* (1931), *The Public Enemy* (1931), *Scarface* (1932) or *The Godfather* trilogy (1972, 1974 and 1990).' Lee Grieveson, Esther Sonnet and Peter Stanfield (eds.), *Mob Culture: Hidden Histories of the American Gangster Film* (Oxford: Berg, 2005), p.1.

Chapters Two and Three, 'Mapping the Underworld', represent a two-part chronological investigation into a diverse range of generic examples in order to illustrate the narrative scope of British Gangland film, but equally to establish the way in which recurring tropes and motifs have contributed to generic convention over the six-and-a-half decades under discussion.

The two following chapters focus on the male protagonist within the genre: Chapter Four, 'The Spiv and the City', examines four texts from the sub-genre identified by Robert Murphy as the British Spiv Cycle.<sup>17</sup> As this epithet suggests, these films focus on the archetypal male character at their centre, described by Peter Wollen as a 'flashy black-marketeer' and spawned by rationing imposed during the Second World War.<sup>18</sup> Having established the socio-historical background to these films, analyses in this chapter exemplify the theme introduced above and prevalent throughout the thesis, namely the relationship between the male protagonist and his spatial environment.

Chapter Five, 'From *Brighton Rock* to Northern Grit', examines two celebrated examples from the Gangland canon: the Boultings' contribution from 1947 cited in the chapter title, and Mike Hodges' cult classic *Get Carter* from 1971. Once again, the spatial setting is significant to these analyses, and both films exemplify the dynamics of hierarchical Gangland power which constitute a further recurring theme throughout the thesis. In addition, the portrayal of gender and sexuality in Hodges' film is identified as particularly representative of its era of production.

The final pair of chapters focuses on the female protagonist within the genre. Chapter Six, 'The Domain of the Good Time Girl', and Chapter Seven, 'A Woman's Place', establish the generic parameters which shape female roles within these narratives and determine their place as inferior to the male. The sexualisation and fetishisation of the female body is a significant issue within both chapters, and is examined through generic examples produced between 1948 and 2006. A further objective is therefore to assess whether or not such portrayals have progressed over the six decades spanned by the analysed texts, or whether a woman's place within these rigid Gangland hierarchies is ultimately immutable.

In this respect, these two final chapters reflect Esther Sonnet's concern with shifting the emphasis from filmic analysis of the male protagonist to that of the female, as she suggests that within the restrictive boundaries imposed by previous academic study, such women have been rendered invisible.<sup>19</sup> Although it is

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<sup>17</sup> Robert Murphy, 'The Spiv Cycle' in *Realism and Tinsel: Cinema and Society in Britain 1939-1948* (London: Routledge, 1989), pp.34-60.

<sup>18</sup> Peter Wollen, 'The Vienna Project', *Sight & Sound*, July 1999, p.17.

<sup>19</sup> Esther Sonnet, 'Ladies Love Brutes: Reclaiming Female Pleasures in the Lost History of Hollywood Gangster Cycles, 1929-1931' in Grieveson *et al.*, *Mob Culture*, pp.93-119.

specifically the female within the American gangster movie with whom Sonnet is concerned, her argument is nonetheless pertinent to the female within British Gangland film. Consequently, Chapters Six and Seven employ selected elements of feminist theory in order to highlight the significance of the female protagonist within this male-dominated genre. Whilst there are exceptions to Sonnet's rather sweeping claim – Dominique Mainon's essay 'A New Kind of Girl for a New Kind of World' is one such example – it is undoubtedly the case that with regard to both the American and British genres, the majority of studies take the male protagonist as their primary focus.<sup>20</sup> The two final chapters of the thesis can therefore be read as a bid to redress the balance with regard to the study of women within British Gangland film in particular.

The unrelenting male orientation of Gangland narratives has led a number of commentators to cite the gangster genre as heir apparent to the Western.<sup>21</sup> This inequity with regard to gender representation is common to both, and is underpinned by two other core elements of the thesis, namely territorial space and hierarchical power: as John McCarty observes, 'gunplay and the violent struggle for power and territory are the thematic linchpins that hold both [genres] together'. McCarty goes on to reiterate the successional relationship between the two in his assertion that the Western 'became the victim not only of the gangster movie's superior firepower, but the greater relevance the gangster movie's morality plays had to audiences moving quickly into another millennium'.<sup>22</sup>

The classic dichotomy between good and evil embodied within McCarty's reference to the morality play emphasises the notion of cinematic narratives as a form of ideological discourse. It will be argued here that it is the particular nature of prevailing social and moral concerns incorporated within individual Gangland narratives which contributes to their capacity to articulate a film's era of production. The illicit circumvention of government-imposed rationing as central to the post-war British Spiv Cycle bears witness to this; similarly, with regard to film of the 1950s, Anne Kaplan cites the portrayal of objectified female sexuality as particularly significant.<sup>23</sup> Kaplan goes on to suggest that 'the 1950s represent very much the end

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<sup>20</sup> Dominique Mainon, 'A New Kind of Girl for a New Kind of World' in Silver & Ursini, *Gangster Film Reader*, pp.277-290. A further example relating specifically to the British genre is Viv Chadder 'The Higher Heel: Women and the Post-War British Crime' in Chibnall & Murphy, *British Crime Cinema*, pp.66-80.

<sup>21</sup> Barry Langford cites several examples in his discussion on 'The Gangster Film: Genre and Society' in Langford, *Film Genre: Hollywood and Beyond* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), p.134. This generic relationship is discussed further in Chapter One.

<sup>22</sup> John McCarty, *Bullets Over Hollywood* (Cambridge, MA: Perseus Press, 2004), p.1.

<sup>23</sup> E Anne Kaplan, *Women and Film: Both Sides of the Camera* (London: Routledge, 2000), p.4.

of something: the films are interesting because they show earlier codes straining at the seams'.<sup>24</sup>

A further example of temporal referencing is the British gangster's enthusiastic embrace of upward mobility in the Thatcherite eighties, an era in which money (rather than class) became synonymous with power and status. Whilst this has been a familiar trope within the genre as a whole throughout the past sixty-five years, it is one which manifested itself even more overtly during the 1980s, thus exemplifying Bakhtin's notion of the chronotope, cited above. Filmic examples discussed here include the materialist trappings and luxurious lifestyle of Gangland boss Harold Shand (Bob Hoskins) in *The Long Good Friday* (1980), and the meteoric rise of young hustler Paul (Ian Sears) in *Empire State* (1987) from 'rent boy' to nascent property tycoon.

With particular reference to such male characters or 'types', Andrew Spicer suggests that 'the radical differences in the male types in contemporary British films tell us much about current fears and anxieties', adding that 'the contrast with the types found in the earlier period serves to highlight the changes that have taken place'.<sup>25</sup> Spicer thus concludes that such comparative study 'helps to define the preoccupations of both periods more clearly'.<sup>26</sup> It is a statement which finds resonance with the concept of film as cultural artefact cited here, and which can be applied equally productively to 'typical' portrayals of the female.

Within British Gangland film, a crucial generic function intrinsic to the role of the female is predicated on her difference from the male. Superficially, such otherness is frequently used to reinforce the protagonist's masculinity; however, by establishing the female as 'non-male' she is also rendered potentially transgressive and therefore unstable. Gender relations are thus predominantly portrayed as dysfunctional, embodying a disproportionate male/female hierarchy: indeed, a misogynistic disregard is the norm, unless the female in question is deemed either useful or dangerous.

Following Spicer's categorisation of male types, analyses throughout this thesis (and in Chapters Six and Seven in particular) will consequently demonstrate that the range of female roles within British Gangland film has been perennially restrictive. Such roles are frequently limited to sexualised stereotypes such as the 'gangster's moll', the good-time girl, the hostess, the prostitute, and the stripper. There are, of course, exceptions to this rule; however, through their difference, such exceptions serve to highlight and reinforce the generic norm. Accordingly, stereotypical

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<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> Andrew Spicer, *Typical Men: the Representation of Masculinity in Popular British Cinema* (London: I B Taurus, 2003), p.4.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

representations within the Gangland genre comply with Claire Johnston's observation that 'despite the enormous emphasis placed on woman as spectacle in the cinema, woman as woman is largely absent.'<sup>27</sup>

This concept will be exemplified in several instances throughout the thesis by Laura Mulvey's notion of the 'male gaze'.<sup>28</sup> Emphasising the power of a patriarchal hegemony within the cinema, Mulvey suggests that the cinematic look or gaze is constructed both from and for the male point of view (i.e. its focus is created by the male film maker/director/cameraman for the male spectator). Johnston's perception of 'woman as spectacle' therefore becomes self-perpetuating: the male gaze reduces women to fetishised, sexualised objects, resulting in female stereotyping both on and off the screen. Chapter One of this thesis cites Mulvey's theory as problematic as it does not allow for any alternative to the heterosexual male spectator; however, the concept of the male gaze will be expanded through examples in the following chapters to incorporate a multi-oriented 'bearer of the look'.

Despite broadening Mulvey's template to take account of alternative 'gazes' within these narratives, British Gangland film remains a resolutely male-oriented genre, offering a relentless portrayal of a patriarchal order – a gendered hierarchy in which the female is repeatedly situated as inferior to the male. It will be demonstrated here that the spatial setting of these generic texts serves to emphasise the concept of male dominance which is central to Mulvey's premise. As already noted, space within these Gangland narratives is predominantly urban by nature; more specifically, it frequently incorporates a seedy *demi-monde* of red light districts, brothels, sex shops and strip joints, alongside more legitimate spaces such as backstreet pubs, clubs and dance halls. The objectification of the female within such generically familiar Gangland settings therefore serves to reinforce the dynamics of gendered power relations, simultaneously offering a graphic example of Johnston's woman-as-spectacle for the enjoyment of Mulvey's male gaze.

The generically conventional relationship between space, gender and hierarchy can be identified as a filmic articulation of reality. This is illustrated by Chibnall and Murphy's belief that 'the English underworld is no less mean or nasty than it ever was [and therefore] continues to provide inspiration for tales of treachery, courage and troubled sexuality which enriches British cinema.'<sup>29</sup> Chibnall and Murphy's statement also exemplifies the dynamics of a constantly evolving and responsive genre with the capacity to articulate its contextual circumstances. The generic texts

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<sup>27</sup> Claire Johnston, 'Women's Cinema as Counter-Cinema' in Sue Thornham (ed.), *Feminist Film Theory* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), p.33.

<sup>28</sup> Laura Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', *Screen* Vol. 6, No. 3, Autumn 1975, pp.6-18. The original paper had been written two years earlier in 1975.

<sup>29</sup> Chibnall & Murphy, *British Crime Cinema*, p.14.



analysed here will demonstrate that this is the case whether individual films within the genre achieve iconic status or are critically dismissed as also-rans.

Accordingly, whilst canonical films from the British Gangland genre such as *Brighton Rock* (1947), *Performance* (1970), *Get Carter* (1971), and *The Long Good Friday* (1980) are included in the following chapters, such status is not a prerequisite in terms of a generic capacity to reflect prevailing issues and concerns. Irrespective of a film's popularity with critics or audiences, its inclusion here is based on the clarity with which recurring generic motifs can be identified in association with the three-part focus of the thesis. The rationale behind this prerequisite is that whilst space and/or gender and/or hierarchy can be read as significant elements within the majority of mainstream filmic genres, it is their specific configuration within British Gangland film which is intrinsic to the construction of meaning.<sup>30</sup>

Within the films under discussion, the relationship between the protagonists and their environment has been cited above as representing a key generic constituent, resulting in an emphasis on space and place: as also noted, space within these narratives is inherently territorial, and so irrevocably bound up with hierarchies of power. This predominantly urban environment is rarely neutral, but dominated by the patriarchal order which structures the notion of 'Gangland': consequently, such spaces are inextricably linked with gender, hierarchy, and dynamic power relations.

This configuration is intrinsic to, and determined by, generic convention, and thus audience expectation. Meaning can therefore be identified as a reciprocal process between the film-maker and the audience: indeed, as Graeme Turner has stated, 'the role of the audience in determining meaning cannot be overestimated'.<sup>31</sup> Whilst it is the inherent familiarity of generic motifs, patterns and parameters which contributes to the generation of meaning, it is also the development of such convention which enables the reading of individual film texts as cultural and temporal signifiers.

Turner's observation that 'conventions of representing the female in film are examples of the dialectic [nature] of film' is also of particular relevance.<sup>32</sup> Within the British Gangland genre, this is exemplified by the figure of the prostitute, whose portrayal in earlier texts such as *The Flesh is Weak* (1957) is marked by the fetishised glamour of her appearance. By contrast, in later texts such as *London to Brighton* (2006), it is the female protagonist's fundamental 'ordinariness' that renders her

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<sup>30</sup> Similarly, gender and *mise-en-scène* are significant within the historical drama, as are spatial setting and *mise-en-scène* within the sci-fi narrative, and space, gender, and iconography within the Western.

<sup>31</sup> Graeme Turner, *Film as Social Practice* 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. (London & New York: Routledge, 1997), p.49.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p.81.

interpretation so realistic. However, the full 'meaning' of these figures can only be elicited through a reading of their relationship with space and gendered hierarchical power: specifically the streets on which they ply their trade, and the men by whom they are exploited, and who control their destiny.

Through analysis of space, gender and hierarchy, this study will therefore demonstrate that it is the symbiotic relationship between these interdependent elements which is responsible for the generation of significant meaning within the genre under discussion: indeed, the thesis is based on the premise that to study any one of the three components in isolation from the other two would result in a limited, if not distorted, interpretation of these narratives. It is therefore anticipated that the multifaceted theoretical approach underpinning this investigation and discussed in Chapter One will enable the chapters that follow to evidence the implications of space, gender and hierarchy for a productive reading of British Gangland film.

# CHAPTER ONE

## *A Theoretical Overview*

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of the various approaches constituting a theoretical framework for the following investigation into British Gangland film. As indicated in the Introduction, in addition to the general concept of film as cultural artefact, this framework includes the role of genre, mise-en-scène and iconography within the construction of meaning; the reading of space and place as intrinsic to the analysis of Gangland narratives; and the significance of the interplay between space, gender and hierarchy to a reading of this particular genre.

As noted, although the thesis is concerned exclusively with British Gangland film, reference will also be made to writing on the American gangster movie: whilst specifics relating to narrative orientation and geographical location of the two genres may differ, in more general terms they exhibit similarities in their mise-en-scène and iconography, and their protagonists (both male and female) share many generically conventional characteristics.

The reading of film through genre can be viewed as a more egalitarian alternative to auteurism, inasmuch as the latter approach not only privileges auteurist texts within a filmic/cultural hierarchy, but it relies upon a linear, 'top-down' dynamic with regard to the production of meaning, which is seen as emanating from the director-as-auteur.<sup>1</sup> The concept of genre, however, relies upon a reciprocal three-way relationship within the production process between the director, the film and the audience: generic codes and conventions guide both audience expectation and the film-maker's artistic and commercial *modus operandi* (which may include challenging those codes, conventions and expectations). This process also enables productive analysis of any text within a genre, irrespective of its critical reception.

Accordingly, as noted by Neale, genre analysis enables the criticism of mainstream texts 'to take account of conditions of the production and consumption of films and their relation to ideology' – a statement which is relevant to the reading of film as cultural artefact intrinsic to this thesis.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, Neale sees the concept of genre as an historical process which changes and develops over time; when examined retrospectively, the constituent factors governing any particular genre therefore become unavoidably both culturally and historically specific.<sup>3</sup> Further, Neale believes that 'the ideological significance of any [...] genre is always to be sought in a context-specific analysis. It cannot simply be deduced from the nature of the institutions responsible for its production and circulation, nor can it ever be

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<sup>1</sup> Whilst this is generally so, the rigid application of generic parameters can also lead to a hierarchy of film texts according to the extent of their perceived compliance with or challenge to established codes and conventions.

<sup>2</sup> Steve Neale, 'Questions of Genre', *Screen*, Vol. 31, No. 1, Spring 1990, p.64.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p.65.

known in advance', a notion which fundamentally reinforces the ability of popular mainstream film to articulate the era in which it was produced.<sup>4</sup>

This is a concept reiterated by Lawrence Alloway, who highlights the organic, ephemeral nature of genre: rather than static, 'classic' categories, he therefore argues for generic cycles, runs or sets as the product of temporal circumstance.<sup>5</sup> Emphasising the historical specificity of British Gangland film, Tony Williams describes the genre as 'a fairly recent phenomenon', suggesting that 'a fully defined British gangster genre did not really develop until after 1945 in a cinema attempting to assert its own sense of national identity apart from Hollywood.'<sup>6</sup>

Whilst Chibnall and Murphy concur, citing the post-war British Spiv Cycle as representing 'the first surge of an indigenous [...] underworld genre',<sup>7</sup> the fledgling home-grown Gangland narrative nonetheless shared certain qualities with its American counterpart, not least a menacing sense of foreboding in its representation of the darker side of contemporary society. In both instances, therefore, these narratives interpreted prevailing social and economic circumstance: whilst the American gangster genre has frequently been identified as a product of the Depression and Prohibition (with gang warfare resulting from the illegal production and supply of alcohol),<sup>8</sup> the imagination of British film-makers was fuelled by underworld activity stimulated by the privations of wartime rationing, a rise in prostitution, and a prevailing illegal gambling culture.

Despite the fact that both American and British interpretations of the genre draw on historical reality, the distinction drawn by Tzvetan Todorov between social/cultural verisimilitude and generic verisimilitude is nonetheless pertinent to this study.<sup>9</sup> Both can be seen as implicit within audience expectation: the former representing the extent to which a film conveys a convincing sense of realism, the latter the extent to which texts conform to generic codes and conventions. Consequently, generic verisimilitude assumes priority within science fiction, as it would be problematic to assess the extent to which texts within the genre constitute a reflection of reality: the verisimilitude of a sci-fi film is therefore judged primarily according to its compliance with generic convention. However, in the case of Gangland film, both cultural and generic verisimilitude are of consequence due to the fact the genre draws on tangible social fears and anxieties, which in turn

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<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Lawrence Alloway, *Violent America: the Movies 1946-64* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1971).

<sup>6</sup> Tony Williams, 'The British Gangster Film' in Silver & Ursini, *Gangster Film Reader*, p.237.

<sup>7</sup> Steve Chibnall & Robert Murphy, 'Parole Overdue: releasing the British crime film into the critical community' in *British Crime Cinema*, p.7.

<sup>8</sup> See, for example, Langford, 'The Gangster Film: Genre and Society', p.137, and Colin McArthur, 'Iconography of the Gangster Film' in Silver & Ursini, *Gangster Film Reader*, p.42.

<sup>9</sup> Tzvetan Todorov, 'An Introduction to Verisimilitude' in *The Poetics of Prose* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977), pp.42-52.

contribute to a recognisable generic configuration of the narratives themselves together with their associated *mise-en-scène*.

This interdependence can be read as contributing to a narrative capacity for interpreting prevailing circumstance. Following Todorov, Neale has argued that in narrative film or fiction, 'reality' is always constructed.<sup>10</sup> This is indicative of a cultural hegemony, inasmuch as what is deemed 'realistic' complies with dominant discourses influencing what is acceptable and/or credible at any particular time, and underlining the dynamic relationship between verisimilitude and realism. Christine Gledhill observes that:

While the concept of verisimilitude refers to normative perceptions of reality – what is generally accepted to be so – the demand for a 'new' realism from oppositional or emerging groups opens up the contest over the definition of the real, and forces changes in the codes of verisimilitude.<sup>11</sup>

Gledhill concludes that realism therefore 'becomes an assault on cultural verisimilitude: it demands representation of what has not been seen before, what has been unthinkable because unrepresentable.'<sup>12</sup> In that sense, and certainly in the case of British Gangland film, it also challenges generic verisimilitude and convention: the more explicit portrayal of transgressive or deviant sexuality within the genre is a prime example, together with the increased proliferation of extreme, often ritualistic, violence.<sup>13</sup>

The protagonists' relationship with their spatial environment is also generically significant, and represents a further example of the correlation between reality and the imagination. This is a point discussed in Warshow's seminal article, 'The Gangster as Tragic Hero', in which he suggests that:

The gangster is the man of the city, with the city's language and knowledge, with its queer and dishonest skills and its terrible daring [...] For the gangster there is only the city; he must inhabit it in order to personify it: not the real city, but that dangerous and sad city of the imagination which is so much more important [...] The real city, one might say, produces only criminals; the imaginary city produces the gangster.<sup>14</sup>

Reinforcing the relevance of both cultural and generic verisimilitude to Gangland film, Warshow suggests that it is 'in an ultimate sense that the type [genre] appeals

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<sup>10</sup> Neale, 'Questions of Genre'.

<sup>11</sup> Christine Gledhill, 'Genre and Gender: the Case of Soap Opera' in Stuart Hall (ed.) *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (London: Sage Publications, 2000), p.360.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> Camel & Roeg's *Performance* (1970), discussed in Chapter Two, exemplifies both tropes: sexual experimentation is bound up with the blurring of gender identity and, in an early scene, the meting out of extreme violence is linked with sado-masochistic pleasure.

<sup>14</sup> Warshow, 'The Gangster as Tragic Hero', p.101.

to its audience's experience of reality; much more immediately, it appeals to previous experience of the type itself: it creates its own field of reference'.<sup>15</sup>

Neale is one of several authors to follow Warshow in comparing the generic structure of the (American) gangster movie with that of the Western.<sup>16</sup> Whilst spatially, the highly developed and densely populated urban environment of the former stands in binary opposition to the naturally hostile and sparsely populated habitat of the latter, Neale perceives the gangster as 'the Westerner's urban mirror image, enacting the conflicts and complexities of an emergent urban modern imaginary as the cowboy enacts those of a residual agrarian myth.'<sup>17</sup> It would therefore seem logical to conclude that the uncompromising nature of both generic environments gives shape to the narratives they spawn, but also to the protagonists who interact with them: this is no less the case within the British Gangland genre.

Barry Langford has observed that 'like the Westerner, the gangster and his values have been embedded in a fairly stable thematic and iconographic universe.'<sup>18</sup> In terms of visual imagery, genre criticism developed the notion of iconography as intrinsic to an empirical model which would allow the recognition and differentiation of generic categories within the cinema. With particular reference to the gangster movie, McArthur suggests that:

The recurrent patterns of imagery can be usefully divided into three categories: those surrounding the physical presence, attributes, and dress of the actors and the characters they play; those emanating from the milieu within which the characters operate; and those connected with the technology at the characters' disposal.<sup>19</sup>

The similarities between the Western and the gangster movie are therefore exemplified by McArthur's three categories. Firstly, the 'physical presence, attributes and dress' of their characters incorporate iconographic actors such as John Wayne in the Western or James Cagney in the gangster movie, who have become familiar to audiences through their physical appearance and the idiosyncratic gestures they display in the portrayal of generically conventional characters.<sup>20</sup> This is aided by their costumes and props, which incorporate iconic elements such as a

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p.100.

<sup>16</sup> See, for example, Neale, 'Westerns & Gangster Films since the 1970s', pp.22-47.

<sup>17</sup> Langford, 'The Gangster Film: Genre & Society', p.134.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> McArthur, 'Iconography of the Gangster Film', p.39.

<sup>20</sup> Aware of their importance to the industry's financial success, British studios were anxious to create generic stars in the Hollywood mould. A.E. Wilson in the *Daily Star* (25 October 1946) therefore suggested that British actor William Hartnell should be promoted as 'a British Cagney or Bogart'. A more recent example is Ray Winstone, who has become familiar within the British genre from *Scum* (1979) to *44 Inch Chest* (2010) and *London Boulevard* (due for release in February 2011).

Stetson and six-gun, or fedora and 'violin case'. Secondly, the distinctive 'milieux in which [these] characters operate' refers to their generic habitat or environment, as discussed above with reference to Neale; in the case of the gangster, this is also exemplified by Warshow's thesis. Thirdly, the 'technology at their disposal' includes the endemic weaponry synonymous with both the gangster and the gunslinger: such 'technology' represents not only the tools of the two genres' respective trades but a powerful phallic extension of the protagonists themselves.

Within British Gangland film, an idiosyncratic example of McArthur's third category is the curving length of the sabre used by Ronnie and Reggie Kray to administer a 'Chelsea smile' to selected adversaries, an act gleefully depicted in Peter Medak's biopic *The Krays* (1990). Mike Hodges' *Get Carter* (1971) is a further case in point: in comparison with the ubiquitous six-gun in the cowboy's holster, the elongated dimensions of the more powerful double-barrelled shotgun brandished by Hodges' eponymous anti-hero render it a totemic articulation of his supremacy and sexual potency.<sup>21</sup>

Further, through the establishment of generic parameters, audience familiarity allows film-makers to utilise iconographic symbolism semiotically and metonymically, but also humorously: an example is the pair of antique shotguns featured in Guy Ritchie's *Lock, Stock & Two Smoking Barrels* (1998), which offers not only comic entertainment for the aficionado (the fragile impracticality and inherent value of the weapons rendering them *objets d'art* and thus at odds with the generic norm) but the additional satisfaction derived from recognising the iconographic reference to *Get Carter*, a cult film from a previous decade. Whilst *mise-en-scène* is intrinsic to semiotic meaning and a certain visual style, the concept of iconography can consequently be seen as a more explicit means of establishing, maintaining, and subsequently developing generic codes and conventions within a dynamic and constantly evolving set of relations.

Given the male-oriented nature of the genre of Gangland film and the corresponding significance of gender within it, selected elements of feminist theory will facilitate textual analysis in the chapters that follow. This will include Mulvey's ground-breaking essay from 1973, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema': drawing on Freudo-Lacanian psychoanalysis, and more specifically the areas of desire and subjectivity, Mulvey emphasises the importance of the patriarchal viewpoint in the cinema.<sup>22</sup> She argues that as Freud's notion of scopophilia (the pleasure of looking) is male-oriented, the cinematic look or gaze is therefore constructed both from and

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<sup>21</sup> The six-gun was not the only iconic weapon to appear in the Western, the Winchester rifle representing a further example. However, the six-gun had a particular function in articulating masculine prowess, not least within the concept of the 'fast draw'.

<sup>22</sup> Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema'.



for a male point of view (i.e. the 'male gaze' does not simply emanate from the spectator, but originates with the male director, cameraman, etc.).

Freud identifies two components within scopophilia: voyeurism linked to sexual attraction, and narcissistic identification. In her essay Mulvey suggests that such identification is always with the male (who is the pivot of the film), whilst the objectified female is often seen as a threat. This threat is the result of 'castration complex', a Freudian concept identifying the female's envy of the phallus and her consequent desire to castrate the male – a characteristic frequently ascribed to the *femme fatale* in *film noir*. As James Naremore observes, 'Although the noir *femme fatale* is usually punished, she remains a threat to the proper order of things, and in a few cases, the male protagonist is 'simply destroyed' because he cannot resist her charms.'<sup>23</sup> Kaplan suggests the *femme fatale* as the object of a 'fetishistic fascination', citing Barbara Stanwyck's Phyllis Dietrichson in *Double Indemnity* (1944) as an example.<sup>24</sup> Filmically, as a result of this predatory sexuality, the female is reduced to an iconic representation of the erotic, her 'lack' rendering her subordinate to her male counterpart.

Whilst representing a watershed with regard to analysis of the representation of women in film, Mulvey's essay is nonetheless problematic as, in general, it fails to acknowledge the *voyeuse* (or indeed any alternative to the heterosexual male spectator), thus in one sense privileging and maintaining the traditional patriarchal model.<sup>25</sup> Nonetheless, Mulvey's identification of the dualism represented by the voyeurism and narcissism of the spectator is exemplified by the films discussed throughout the thesis (and those in Chapters Six and Seven in particular), not only through reference to the female protagonist, but also her relationship with the male.

Simone de Beauvoir believed that 'one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman', a statement which refers to the acquisition or attainment of femininity: the concept of 'becoming' a woman is thus identified as a dynamic process.<sup>26</sup> Although

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<sup>23</sup> James Naremore, *More than Night: Film Noir in its Contexts* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998), p.221.

<sup>24</sup> E Anne Kaplan, *Women in Film Noir* (London: BFI Publishing, 1980), p.105.

<sup>25</sup> Mulvey herself later acknowledged such criticism, clarifying and expanding her thesis in a subsequent article: 'Afterthoughts on 'Visual Pleasure in Narrative Cinema' Inspired by King Vidor's *Duel in the Sun* (1946)' in the journal *Framework*, Summer 1981, pp.12-15. Mulvey's work on the gaze has stimulated much academic debate, and has also been developed and expanded by other authors to incorporate the homoerotic gaze, the female gaze, and the racial gaze. Examples include Richard Dyer, 'Don't Look Now: The Male Pin-Up' in *Only Entertainment* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp.103-120; Lorraine Gamman & Margaret Marshment (eds.), *The Female Gaze: Women as Viewers of Popular Culture*, (London: Women's Press, 1987); and Jane Gaines, 'White Privilege and Looking Relations: Race & Gender in Feminist Film Theory', *Screen* Vol. 29, Issue 4, Autumn 1988, pp.12-27.

<sup>26</sup> Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. by H. M. Parshley (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), p.267.

Beauvoir considers that process to be initiated in part by an idealistic, controlling desire symptomatic of patriarchal hegemony, this thesis will assess the way in which portrayals of the feminine within British Gangland film have nonetheless evolved in recent decades. For despite such femininity constituting an inherent, almost mandatory compliance with the acceptable face of 'womanhood', these portrayals include stronger, more complex characterisation. This extends Mulvey's premise by offering the female spectator greater opportunity for positive identification with the female protagonist on screen (narcissism), whilst expanding the orientation and focus of the cinematic gaze, male heterosexual or otherwise (voyeurism).<sup>27</sup>

Whilst such roles may have developed over the decades in terms of dramatic depth, with a few notable exceptions female characterisation within British Gangland film is still restricted to the genre's enduring stereotypes, such as the prostitute, the nightclub hostess and the 'exotic dancer'. Such women are inevitably linked to specific space and place within these Gangland narratives, developing Warshaw's thesis regarding the relationship between the male protagonist and his environment to incorporate the female. In addition, as noted with reference to Kaplan in the Introduction, the depiction of female sexuality has become significantly more explicit since the 1950s, reinforcing the notion of a generic capacity to articulate prevailing social mores and thus an individual film's era of production.<sup>28</sup>

Within this context, the historiographical value of film is intrinsic to the following chapters, which comply with Robert Rosenstone's observation that film must be seen 'not in terms of how it compares to written history, but as a way of recounting the past with its own rules of representation.'<sup>29</sup> Such 'rules of representation' incorporate the fact that no film depicting either past or present can ever be deemed totally neutral or impartial: the filmic text can therefore generally be regarded as representing either a concurrence with, or a reaction against, the hegemonic viewpoint, and capable of signifying the temporal and cultural context within which it has been produced.

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<sup>27</sup> Freud argued that the gap between the real and the imaginary is the location of desire. Three specific elements are relevant here: the narcissistic – a desire to see ourselves reflected on the screen (with reference to Lacan's mirror phase, this desire incorporates the idea of the 'reflection' being a more perfect version of ourselves); the voyeuristic – a desire to watch others, often rendering them as erotic objects in the process; and the fetishistic – the process of giving material things a disproportionate status. For further discussion of psychoanalysis and film, see Robert Stam, 'From Linguistics to Psychoanalysis' in *Film Theory: an Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2000), pp.158-169.

<sup>28</sup> Kaplan, *Women and Film*, p.4.

<sup>29</sup> Robert A Rosenstone (ed.), *Revisioning History: Film and the Construction of a New Past* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), p.4.

In this sense, Bakhtin's essay on the chronotope is relevant to the analysis of Gangland narratives.<sup>30</sup> Bakhtin explores the chronotope (literally 'time-space') as a means of recognising and interpreting the way in which literary tropes and genres evoke the contextual circumstances of a novel's conception and production:

In the literary artistic chronotope, spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole. Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history.<sup>31</sup>

Bakhtin goes on to suggest that chronotopes in literature possess 'an intrinsic *generic* significance'; however, of equal significance is the symbiotic influence between the consequent production of meaning and the associated narrative form. He therefore describes chronotopes as 'the organizing centres for the fundamental narrative events of the novel', suggesting further that 'the chronotope is the place where the knots of narrative are tied and untied. It can be said without qualification that to them belongs the meaning that shapes narrative.'<sup>32</sup>

Bakhtin believes the chronotope 'materializes time in space', and, further, that 'concrete spatiotemporal structures [...] limit narrative possibility, shape characterization, and mould a discursive simulacrum of life', a clear comment on the way in which generic parameters generate what might be described as a particular world view – a phenomenon exemplified by Gangland film.<sup>33</sup> In addition, as this genre portrays a 'world within a world', the relationship between the two generates further meaning and evokes corresponding hierarchical binary patterns: 'here versus there', 'us versus them', 'morality versus transgression', for example.

Spatially, 'Gangland' is a transgressive, subversive, male-dominated and male-oriented environment in which ideologies of power are often manifested within a dystopian array of seedy pubs, clubs, race tracks, pool halls and boxing rings. Writing on *film noir* (a genre sharing a certain perspective with Gangland film), Vivian Sobchack suggests that chronotopes 'are not merely the spatio-temporal backdrop for narrative events, but are also the literal and concrete ground from which narrative and character emerge as the temporalization of human action', i.e. they situate such action both historically and contextually.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> As noted in the Introduction, Bakhtin suggests that a literary narrative reflects its era of production through generic and spatial configurations. Bakhtin's concept is expanded within this thesis to incorporate the association of particular narrative and filmic tropes with specific periods in the history of British Gangland film. Bakhtin, 'Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel'.

<sup>31</sup> Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, p.84.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p.250.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> Vivian Sobchack, 'Lounge Time: Post-war Crises and the Chronotope of Film Noir' [unpublished essay] cited in Stam, *Subversive Pleasures*, p.12.

For Bakhtin, such contextuality is vital; he believes the author's relationship with culture to be dialogic in nature, and thus responsible for a particular text being produced at a particular time, an assertion that reinforces the argument presented here regarding film being a product of its cultural and temporal circumstance. Consequently, Bakhtin analyses the protagonist in relation to both space and time, suggesting that it was within early narratives such as the epics of ancient Greece that human form began to be conceived historically. As Pam Morris points out, 'this historicizing involves not just increasing realism with which the geographical and temporal world is specified but also, more importantly, the consciousness of the hero becomes open to process.'<sup>35</sup> In addition to a symbolic relationship between the protagonist and his surroundings (a further concept inherent within the Gangland genre, and identified by Warshow, above), this development incorporates a growing sense of subjectivity and thus identity within narrative form.<sup>36</sup>

Bakhtin is therefore not only interested in the relationship between the human being and his environment, but the way in which an individual relates to others within that world, fictional or otherwise. He believes that we come to understand who we are only through the dialogical process: as Robert Stam observes, 'Bakhtin foregrounds the human capacity to mutually 'author' one another', and that one can only become oneself by 'revealing oneself to another, through another, with another's help.'<sup>37</sup> This finds resonance with the Lacanian-influenced concept in which the cinema screen can be read as a metaphor for the mirror, having the capacity to reflect and reinforce both individual and collective spectator/audience identities.<sup>38</sup>

Analysis of specific film texts over the following chapters will demonstrate that this 'authoring' of characters through comparative means (i.e. the interplay of relations) is intrinsic to maintaining the hierarchies that structure the cinematic world in general, and Gangland in particular. For, taking Bakhtin's point further, this process is clearly not confined to relationships between individuals, nor those between peer groups, but the complex plurality of relationships between such individuals, peer groups, and dominant, ideological power structures (the legal system, the government, etc.).

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<sup>35</sup> Pam Morris, (ed.), *The Bakhtin Reader: Selected Writings of Bakhtin, Medvedev, Voloshinov* (London: Arnold, 1994), p.18.

<sup>36</sup> Warshow, 'The Gangster as Tragic Hero'.

<sup>37</sup> Robert Stam, *Subversive Pleasures: Bakhtin, Cultural Criticism and Film* (Baltimore & London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), p.6.

<sup>38</sup> Jacques Lacan, 'The Mirror Stage as Formative of the I' in *Ecrits: a Selection* (London: Routledge, 2001), pp.1-8. Drawing on Freud's work on the ego, Lacan identifies the mirror phase as the moment at which an infant recognises their reflected image as the whole, perfect self. This motif is frequently ascribed to the cinematic interpretation of the 'perfect' body, allowing the opportunity for both voyeurism and narcissism.

In addition, following Bakhtin's argument, the relationship between characters in Gangland film and the urban spaces of their generic environment can be seen as 'limiting', if not proactively defining, both characterisation and narrative possibilities. As Stam suggests, the chronotope provides specific settings in which particular types of narrative not only unfold but literally 'take place'; however, paraphrasing Bakhtin, he warns that although 'these concrete spatiotemporal structures [...] are correlatable with the real historical world', they are 'not equitable with it because they are always mediated by art.'<sup>39</sup> Whilst this is undoubtedly so, it will be argued that despite the fact Gangland narratives represent the mediated [artistic] interpretation of a film-maker, they are nonetheless a product of specific socio-historical relations.

This is a view reinforced by Michael Montgomery: whilst referring specifically to Hollywood's filmic interpretation of Gangland rather than that of the British film industry, his remarks are pertinent to this thesis nonetheless. He suggests the resurgence in popularity of 'the gangster film' in America during the late 1980s cannot simply be explained as 'a sentimental rapprochement to the narrative form. It occurred because audiences could once again match such distinguishing features as aggressiveness, violent retaliation, [and] moral compromise to their own [society]'.<sup>40</sup> Montgomery also believes that 'a film that cannot be situated by audiences in the context of their own lives is one that quite literally cannot be made to mean'. It is thus equally apparent that 'pleasant visions could not have been projected through a model city plagued with the 'real' problems' depicted by the genre, as 'such films would not have had the same *kairos* or realistic edge.'<sup>41</sup> Montgomery goes on to compare the genre's emphasis on realism with British 'kitchen sink' dramas of the late 1950s/early 1960s, proposing that they '[enlist] film locales for a double duty - both as the background for the action and as stamps of authentication', pointing out that 'space as site of action' is therefore frequently subordinated to 'space as locus of meaning'.<sup>42</sup>

The relationship between space and time in the chronotope is echoed in Michel Foucault's essay 'Of Other Spaces', in which he establishes the notion of heterotopia. Foucault suggests that heterotopia constitutes 'a kind of effectively enacted Utopia in which the real sites [...] that can be found within culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted'.<sup>43</sup> Consequently, heterotopian space represents a place outside reality, fashioned through a cultural consensus based upon mythical

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<sup>39</sup> Stam, *Subversive Pleasures*, p.11.

<sup>40</sup> Michael V Montgomery, *Carnivals and Commonplaces: Bakhtin's Chronotope, Cultural Studies and Film* (New York: P. Lang, 1993), p.2.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p.4.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p.59.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p.24.

or intellectual constructs, but it is also the idea of a world in microcosm, a world reduced to its key components.

Foucault's rationalisation of heterotopia includes what he defines as its six principles, the relevant points of which are summarised below. In the introduction to the essay, Foucault suggests that 'certain ideological conflicts animating present-day polemics oppose the pious descendents of time and the determined inhabitants of space'.<sup>44</sup> This statement is interpreted here as a challenge to traditional accounts of history represented by examples such as revered texts and cultural artefacts preserved within the hallowed spaces of libraries and museums (both of which are cited by Foucault as heterotopian by nature).<sup>45</sup> This challenge serves to endorse alternative methods of interpreting the past such as Rosenstone's concept of film-as-history (above).

Foucault goes on to observe that 'the heterotopia is capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible'.<sup>46</sup> This concept is clearly applicable to the capacity of the library and the museum to conjure up simultaneously within one heterotopian space what Foucault terms 'the near and the far' (culturally, geographically and historically in these two examples).<sup>47</sup> It will be argued here that the premise is therefore equally relevant to the filmic construction and juxtaposition of similarly alternative and antithetical worlds. Whilst Foucault himself does not examine the filmic world as heterotopian, he nonetheless cites as an example the projection of a three-dimensional space onto a two-dimensional screen in the cinema. He also suggests that 'heterotopias are most often linked to slices in time', a concept finding specific resonance with Bakhtin's notion of the chronotope.

Foucault's penultimate principle is rooted in the idea that 'heterotopias always presuppose a system of opening and closing', and that the individual may have to submit to certain rites in order to gain access; he also suggests that it appears 'everyone can enter into these [heterotopian] sites, but in fact that is only an illusion'.<sup>48</sup> This assertion is relevant to the restrictions imposed by censorship regarding access to the cinema building itself and, as a consequence, to the fictitious world depicted on the screen. In addition, within the context of the following chapters, the concept of ritualistic admission can be identified through the 'closed ranks' of the hierarchical Gangland underworld. The concept of a filmic heterotopia is also pertinent to Foucault's final principle, which identifies the creation of 'a space that is other, another real space, as perfect, as meticulous, as well arranged, as ours is

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<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p.22.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p.26.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p.25.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p.26 & p.1.

<sup>48</sup> Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces', p.26.

messy, ill-constructed and jumbled.<sup>49</sup> It is a notion which is reflected in the painstaking construction of a filmic interpretation of reality through *mise-en-scène*.

Complementing Foucault's discussion on heterotopia, specific areas of his writing on power will be considered in order to reinforce the dynamics of hierarchical relationships within Gangland film. This includes the notion of panopticism, which Foucault based on 18<sup>th</sup> century social theorist Jeremy Bentham's model for a prison.<sup>50</sup> Offered by Foucault as a metaphor for the intrusive surveillance of modern society, Bentham's Panopticon requires only one guard positioned in a central tower within a circular building divided into multiple cells. Whilst each cell (and therefore its inmate) is visible to the guard, he himself cannot be seen. The guard is therefore rendered omniscient, and yet such power is derived from those incarcerated being unsure whether or not they are under scrutiny at any one time: as a result the prisoners become self-regulating, exemplifying Foucault's observation that 'the perfection of power should tend to render [its application] unnecessary'.<sup>51</sup> It is a model exemplified by the pyramidal, hierarchical power structures prevalent within Gangland and its cinematic interpretation.

It is acknowledged here that Foucault's work has been the subject of significant criticism from a number of academics, often as a result of what Lynn Hunt has described as the 'jerry-built constructions' of some of his arguments.<sup>52</sup> Sara Mills concurs, suggesting that [French philosopher] 'Foucault's turn to history has not necessarily been applauded by historians, since he makes a very cavalier use of historical records and he is notoriously lax with his documentation.'<sup>53</sup> Nonetheless, much of his work on discourse and the function of institutional power within society has stimulated considerable historiographic reappraisal, and Mills emphasises that, despite his critics, Foucault's writing has 'sparked off debate [and] productive critical thinking'.<sup>54</sup> It is anticipated that this will be the case here, albeit through reference to selected areas of his work. This thesis therefore makes no claim to sustained analysis of Foucault's expansive academic corpus, but rather follows the author's own view of his writing as 'a kind of toolbox which others can rummage through to find a tool they can use however they wish in their own area', concluding that 'I write for users, not readers'.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p.27.

<sup>50</sup> Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (London: Allen Lane, 1977).

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p.201.

<sup>52</sup> Lynn Hunt (ed.), *The New Cultural History* (Berkeley, Los Angeles & London: University of California Press, 1989), p.8.

<sup>53</sup> Sara Mills, *Michel Foucault* (London & New York: Routledge, 2005), p.23.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p.3.

<sup>55</sup> Cited by Véronique Mottier, 'A Toolbox of Deadly Spanners', *Times Higher Education Supplement*, 13 October 1995.

Within the context of this thesis, the interpretation of heterotopia is therefore proactively expanded through the conceptual, hierarchical space of Gangland, but also through analysis of individual places within it (the geographically and culturally specific *demi-monde* of Soho, for example). Further, the application of heterotopia in combination with Bakhtin's chronotope has proved a productive partnership here, as both concepts highlight the dynamics of the relationship between an ever-changing 'real world' and the shifting nature of the resulting fictional narrative. This is echoed in the way the audience's interaction with the text inflect both its meaning and its interpretation: Roland Barthes' premise of the 'death of the author' is therefore complemented by Bakhtin's concern with the 'rights of the reader'.<sup>56</sup> Not only does this acknowledge the way in which a text will be read differently by subsequent generations due to historical circumstance, but the way in which the social, cultural or political orientation of the audience will be reflected in the textual interpretation in a given situation.

The multiplicity of interpretations to be derived from a single text is furthered by the cumulative production of meaning engendered by a group of similar texts – a filmic genre in this case. However, of equal importance is an understanding of the circumstances or conditions responsible for generating such meaning. The textual analyses that follow will thus be informed by a perception of the way in which a film is influenced by and consequently infers the social, cultural, and economic context within which it is produced. The thesis is therefore reliant upon an implicit social, cultural and economic awareness relating to the decades in question, such as the post-war continuation of rationing into the 1950s, the explosion of youth culture in the 1960s, and the Thatcherite ethos of 'upward mobility' in the 1980s.

In this regard, Arthur Marwick's study of *Culture in Britain since 1945* offers a relevant account that charts the development of popular cultural forms within the context of prevailing social, political and economic forces.<sup>57</sup> Whilst covering a hugely diverse range of topics, Marwick does so in breadth rather than depth. Nonetheless, he is particularly skilful in illustrating the importance of the symbiosis between cultural genres such as art, literature, drama, music, film and the mass media, weaving the élite and the popular, the mainstream and the progressive, into a cohesive tapestry that reinforces the necessity to consider the cultural picture as a whole, rather than disparate elements in isolation.

Marwick also stresses that 'British culture' is not simply culture with an exclusively British pedigree, but one which is affected by external influences –

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<sup>56</sup> The concept of the 'death of the author' is discussed in Roland Barthes' *Image, Music Text* (London: Fontana Press Harper Collins, 1977). Bakhtin refers to the 'right of the reader' in *The Dialogic Imagination*.

<sup>57</sup> Arthur Marwick, *Culture in Britain since 1945* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991).



Europe and the United States in particular. Marwick's observation relates to the identifiable imposition of external cultures, such as the Americanisation of British popular music. Somewhat paradoxically therefore, the impact of such outside influences on the genre under discussion resulted in the establishment of a resolutely British interpretation of Gangland film, representing a challenge to Hollywood's supremacy. Consequently, the genre incorporates predominantly British actors, recognisably British (and, more often, specifically English) space and place and, crucially, narratives which articulate British rather than American social and moral concerns.<sup>58</sup>

In this sense, film can be seen as comparable to myth, inasmuch as the function of the latter is to communicate and reinforce cultural identity together with dominant ideology – the concepts of norm and transgression, the acceptable and the unacceptable within a particular society.<sup>59</sup> Due to its subject matter, the genre of post-war British Gangland film represents a particularly salient illustration; this thesis therefore concurs with Robert Allen and Douglas Gomery who suggest that 'however indirectly and obliquely, movies are social representations. That is, they derive their images and sounds, themes and stories ultimately from their [immediate] social environment'.<sup>60</sup> As with myth and folklore, this incorporates the capacity to reinforce cultural identity. In addition, Allen and Gomery's concept is reliant upon historic specificity and the explicit contemporaneity of the resulting narratives: their argument can therefore also be read as reiterating the significance of Bakhtin's chronotope to mainstream film.

The preceding discussion has underlined the significance of cultural and historical circumstances of production to the analysis of film texts. It is a perspective supported by James Chapman, Mark Glancy and Sue Harper's suggestion that 'few scholars today would not accept the importance of historical context to a full understanding of the medium [of film]': they go on to compare favourably the

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<sup>58</sup> Where foreign actors are included within the cast of a Gangland film, their otherness frequently serves to reinforce the Britishness of the narrative.

<sup>59</sup> The concept of film as correlatable to cultural myth in possessing the capacity to communicate and reinforce cultural ideals draws on the work of anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss, who initiated an academic project in which thousands of myths from a number of cultures were analysed. He established that, despite the diversity of their origins, the myths shared a significant number of basic elements which both reflected and reinforced common aspects of cultural life. Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Myth and Meaning* (London: Routledge and Keagan Paul, 1978). A similar study based on Russian folk tales carried out by Vladimir Propp deduced that there was also a limited number of recurring character functions and plot elements from which such narratives were constructed – a characteristic shared with the concept of genre. Vladimir Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1968). Whilst Lévi-Strauss's study contributed to the structuralist approach to film, Propp developed his literary theory in accordance with Russian Formalism.

<sup>60</sup> Robert C Allen & Douglas Gomery, *Film History: Theory and Practice* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1985), p.158.

methodology intrinsic to film history with that of 'other types of history'.<sup>61</sup> Similarly, Hayden White perceives film as 'imagistic evidence'; he also asserts that it should be regarded as 'a discourse in its own right, and one capable of telling us things about its referents that are [...] of a kind that can only be told by means of visual images'.<sup>62</sup> However, he also warns that in order to render what he terms 'historiophoty' [the historiographical use of film] academically viable, the visual image needs to be read with 'a lexicon, grammar and syntax' that is identifiably different from that used within written history: it is a 'lexicon, grammar and syntax' implicit within the textual analyses central to this thesis.<sup>63</sup>

Significant within this interpretative process is a reading of generic space and place, and analyses in the following chapters will illustrate the crucial role these elements play within the construction of meaning. As Steve Chibnall and Julian Petley have observed, throughout the history of British cinema:

place [has rarely been] simply somewhere seen by the eye of the camera, but rather a site of rhetorical claims and ideological connotations, not simply a location where the action was set, but a crucial part of film's signifying system, a topography that was infused with covert, nascent or over-determined meaning.<sup>64</sup>

It is a statement which is especially relevant to the complexities inherent within the urban landscape of the Gangland genre – Warshow's 'sad city of the imagination' – and also to its juxtaposition with alternative, oppositional spaces (such juxtaposition complying with the principles of Foucault's heterotopia).

More particularly, both the general space of the Gangland underworld and the specific places within it have been identified as resolutely male in orientation. As a result, the presence of the female within this masculine world also contributes specific meaning to these narratives. In addition to the objectified sexuality of the female which constitutes the focus for the male gaze, she is often a symbol of transgression or subversion, her place being portrayed relentlessly as inferior to the male and thus contributing to the notion of Gangland as a hierarchical construct.

Allied to the concept of hierarchy is the notion of power. In order to maintain dominant control within Gangland hierarchies, a culture of spectacle is often employed through displays calculated to reinforce such power. Cinematically, this is exemplified by the stringing up of a mutilated body in Michael Tuchner's *Villain* (1971); the infliction of a 'Chelsea smile' in Peter Medak's *The Krays* (1990), referred

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<sup>61</sup> James Chapman, Mark Glancy and Sue Harper (eds.), *The New Film History: Sources, Methods, Approaches* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), p.4.

<sup>62</sup> Hayden White, 'Historiography and Historiophoty', *American Historical Review*, Vol.93, May 1988, p.1193.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> Chibnall & Petley, 'Space and Place in British Cinema and Television', p.213.

to in the Introduction; and the systematic and bloody butchering of a rival gang lord in Paul McGuigan's *Gangster No 1* (2000). Foucault's work on the dynamics of power is once again relevant here, as he is insistent that power is something which is performed.<sup>65</sup> Foucault suggests that a society's 'threshold of modernity' has been crossed when power becomes primarily concerned with 'the administration of life': consequently, the performative nature of Gangland power replicates a feudal model, which serves to reinforce the underworld's heterotopian 'otherness' together with the significance of hierarchical power.<sup>66</sup>

In summary, this chapter has outlined the multifaceted theoretical framework which informs the following investigation into space, gender and hierarchy in British Gangland film. Aspects of film theory, outlined above, will enable textual analysis of representative generic examples. In addition, in order to explore the three core elements of the thesis effectively, a number of theoretical perspectives will be employed. With regard to space, three essays have been cited as particularly relevant: Michel Foucault's 'Of Other Spaces', Mikhail Bakhtin's 'Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel', and Robert Warshow's 'The Gangster as Tragic Hero'. Selected feminist theory, including work by Laura Mulvey, Simone de Beauvoir, Sandra Bartky and Christine Johnston will facilitate the study of gender; and Foucault's writing on dynamic power relations will inform analysis of hierarchy. However, whilst it would be possible to examine each of these core elements in isolation, it is a primary contention of this thesis that meaning is generated within these film texts through their interdependence. Consequently, whilst gender constitutes the principal focus in Chapters Four to Seven in particular, it is the symbiotic relationship between the elements of space, gender and hierarchy within British Gangland film which will guide the following study.

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<sup>65</sup> Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, p.98.

<sup>66</sup> Foucault, *Discipline & Punish*, p.143.

## CHAPTER TWO

*Mapping the Underworld  
through  
British Gangland Film:  
1945-1970*

Having offered a summary of the academic framework underpinning the thesis in Chapter One, the two following chapters will examine representative examples of British Gangland film produced since the Second World War through a number of topical sub-headings. The aim is to acknowledge the diversity of the genre, whilst identifying recurrent narrative patterns and visual motifs. The textual analyses forming the basis for these two chapters (and indeed those that follow) will illustrate the individual significance of, and the relationship between, space and place, gender representation, and hierarchies of power. These analyses will highlight themes and issues which have contributed to, complied with, and occasionally challenged, generic convention.

Within British Gangland film, the portrayal of stereotypical gender relations is significant to such generic convention. In *Typical Men*, Andrew Spicer's comprehensive analysis of masculinity in British film, the author states that 'cultural types [...] are the staple representation of gender in popular fiction because they are easily recognisable and condense a range of important attitudes and values'.<sup>1</sup> This is certainly the case within Gangland film, a number of persistent recurring characters (both male and female) constituting a recognisable hierarchy populating generically familiar space and place. Each contributes to an expression of contemporary notions of immorality, decadence, avarice, and/or depravity, often accompanied by the male protagonist's egotistical desire for power or revenge – the attainment of either rarely being achieved without recourse to violence, at times extreme.

Variations in filmic interpretations of these characteristics according to their era of production reinforce the chronotopic nature of the Gangland genre.<sup>2</sup> Through reference to texts produced since 1945, discussion over the next two chapters will consider the temporal significance of such characteristics within the context of space, gender and hierarchy. The intention is not to select individual texts as necessarily representative of a specific era, but to demonstrate the way in which British Gangland film has responded to contemporary circumstance. Whilst the precise nature of social, cultural and moral concerns may have fluctuated over the decades, these analyses will illustrate the way in which film makers have nonetheless contributed to a coherent yet reflexive genre through the use of *mise-en-scène*, iconography, 'faces' and spaces.<sup>3</sup>

In addition to meaning being generated by the interrelationship between the three core elements of space, gender and hierarchy in the following analyses, Gangland hierarchy is of particular significance in *Appointment with Crime* (1946), *The*

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<sup>1</sup> Andrew Spicer, *Typical Men: The Representation of Masculinity in Popular British Cinema* (London & New York: I.B. Taurus, 2001), p.1.

<sup>2</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin, 'Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel', discussed in Chapter One.

<sup>3</sup> Generically familiar 'faces' include actors such as William Hartnell, Herbert Lom, Stanley Baker, Michael Caine, Bob Hoskins, and Ray Winstone. 'Face' is underworld argot for 'gangster'.

*Criminal* (1960) and *Performance* (1970); gender and sexuality are implicit within the storyline in *The Flesh is Weak* (1957), *The Small World of Sammy Lee* (1963) and *Performance*; and space is a key component of the narrative in *Hue and Cry* (1947), *The Flesh is Weak*, *The Criminal*, and *Performance*.

### **The Post-War Urban Landscape**

The British Spiv Cycle (discussed further in Chapter Four) can be identified as a sub-genre articulating a very specific aspect of the underworld during an equally specific period in history. In addition, the broader generic context of post-war Gangland film went further in expressing the desire to shrug off the regimented austerity of the war years with little regard for the law. Despite reflecting this desire, plotlines also continued to exhibit similarly rigid class-bound hierarchies, which would remain intact for some time to come.

Such entrenched attitudes to class are illustrated by John Harlow's *Appointment With Crime* (1946), in which William Hartnell plays Leo Martin, a small-time crook and ex-serviceman. The film is thus further linked to its era of production through reference to the experiences of such men who often found it difficult to readjust to everyday life on leaving the armed forces following active service.<sup>4</sup> During a bungled smash and grab raid on a Bond Street jeweller, Martin is abandoned at the scene of the crime by his immediate boss Gus Loman (Raymond Lovell) and the getaway driver (Victor Weske) when the security shuttering protecting the shop window slams down, breaking his wrists. Unable to free himself, Martin is arrested and imprisoned, his carefully calculated revenge driving the rest of the narrative.

At the pinnacle of this criminal power structure stands an apparently respectable, upper-class art dealer, Gregory Lang (Herbert Lom). Lang's wealth, social standing and cultural eminence are articulated through the fine antiques and artworks adorning his luxurious residence, and stand testament to his position within the Gangland hierarchy. Lang's elegant smoking jacket, cigarette holder and mannerisms hint at his homosexuality, but this effete exterior conceals an indomitable ruthlessness.

Spatially, the spheres in which each of the characters operates are representative of their rank within the underworld. Meaning is often generated through binary opposition: with the exception of his butler, Lang appears the sole occupant of his palatial home, and its rarefied atmosphere is presented as a world apart from the tawdry and overcrowded *palais de danse* of which Loman is manager, and in which Martin constructs his meticulous alibi with the aid of an unsuspecting dance hostess (Carol Dane). Martin buys the girl's company for the entire evening with a lengthy

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<sup>4</sup> This narrative device is exemplified by protagonist Clem Morgan (Trevor Howard) in *They Made Me a Fugitive* (1947), discussed in Chapter Four.

strip of sixpenny tickets – an apparently grand gesture which parodies Lang’s financial sway and thus connotes Martin’s (male) pecuniary power over her. However, this exchange also suggests that her occupation is only a step away from prostitution, rendering the dance hall a liminal space, a gateway to the underworld.

Having represented one of the most popular places of entertainment during the War, *palais de danses* appear in a number of films from the 1940s and early 50s. These include Sydney Gilliat’s *Waterloo Road* (1944), discussed in Chapter Four, where the local *palais* is the space from which an irate serviceman attempts to retrieve his wife from the clutches of a local ‘entrepreneur’ and lothario; in John Boulting’s *Brighton Rock* (1947) it is one of the places in which Pinkie exerts his control over Rose; and in John Paddy Carstairs’ *Dancing With Crime* (1947), the liminality of the dance hall is reiterated as it functions as the front for a gang of black marketeers.

The ‘pally’ performs a similar role in Basil Dearden’s *Pool of London* (1951), as it is one of the spaces through which a merchant seaman operates a petty smuggling racket whilst on shore-leave from his ship.<sup>5</sup> In its configuration of the dynamics of power and ritual, Foucault cites the ship as an example of heterotopia: as with the heterotopian space of the prison, regimented command on board ship mirrors the uncompromising hierarchies that constitute Gangland itself.<sup>6</sup> Recurring patterns of power relations together with the spaces in which they are played out exemplify the premise discussed in the previous chapter – that established codes and conventions enable the film maker to utilise audience expectation in order to expand generic boundaries.

Familiarity engendered through such generic codes and conventions also renders them a potential source of comedy and satire. Whilst much of the prolific output of the British film industry within the genre during the late 1940s/early 1950s complied with the dark and violent storylines associated with the urban Gangland milieu, consequent audience familiarity allowed Michael Balcon’s first production under the Ealing banner to offer a parody of the generic norm.<sup>7</sup> Despite its comic orientation, *Hue and Cry* (1947) nonetheless encapsulates the essence of post-war Britain – indeed, Andrew Marr judges Balcon ‘a great interpreter’ of the period, and ‘second

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<sup>5</sup> A further example is Ealing Studio’s *Dance Hall* (1950), in which the eponymous venue is depicted as under threat from the Americanisation of popular culture; the interiors were shot on location at the Hammersmith Palais. The popularity of the dance hall waned during the following decade as the ‘big band’ sound was superseded by amplified music performed by smaller groups and, ultimately, by recorded music in the discotheque. The space of the dance hall can therefore be read as temporally specific.

<sup>6</sup> Foucault, ‘Of Other Spaces’, p.27.

<sup>7</sup> As Roger Westcombe suggests, Balcon’s antipathy towards Hollywood fuelled ‘numerous clever sendups of Hollywood pulp clichés from the Western [to various] crime/gangster/noir reflexes’ in the film. <[http://www.bighousefilm.co./reviews/hue\\_and\\_cry.htm](http://www.bighousefilm.co./reviews/hue_and_cry.htm)> [accessed 12.10.2009]

only to Churchill in crafting how the British remember themselves in the middle of the twentieth century.’<sup>8</sup>

Reflecting its year of release, a significant visual motif is that of regeneration within the war-ravaged metropolis. Shots of the ubiquitous bombsite are thus interspersed with those of the teeming building site, its indomitable workforce engaged in communal endeavour to construct the landscape of the future: it is a scenario bearing out Charlotte Brunsdon’s observation that in British cinema of the period such damaged places were ‘spaces of possibility’.<sup>9</sup> Consequently, whilst their original spatial function may have been obliterated by the *Luftwaffe*, a row of bombed out houses in a terraced street has been appropriated by the juvenile gang who represent the collective protagonist of the narrative, turning the former domestic habitat into a playground, a meeting place, and a stage for rites of passage: the ritualistic hierarchies enacted within this arena therefore contribute to its heterotopian qualities.

The narrative revolves around a weekly boys’ comic, *The Trump*, whose ‘blood and thunder’ stories capture the imagination of the youngsters. One of the older boys, Joe (Harry Fowler), discovers that a local Gangland boss is using a particular serial in the comic to carry encoded messages giving details of forthcoming ‘jobs’ to local criminals. Unbeknown to Joe, the devious villain in question is none other than his new employer Nightingale (Jack Warner, cast against type), who runs an illegal fur-smuggling operation from his apparently respectable fruit and vegetable business in Covent Garden. This is a further multifaceted space, with its warehouses, market stalls and crowded alleyways connoting an alternative, heterotopian world behind its legitimate facade. Having cracked the code, Joe and the gang set out to trap the criminals in a series of escapades described by Mark Hasan as ‘showing some shocking brutality between the youths and the adult crooks, plus a finale that’s surprisingly graphic in its depiction of [...] the villain’s ultimate comeuppance.’<sup>10</sup>

Hasan’s observation highlights the capacity of film to reinforce prevailing post-war concepts such as the justice of retribution against the iniquitous enemy. Balcon’s project is therefore interesting in its complexity, for whilst superficially a cross between an adventure story for older children and a comedy for the young at heart, the film nonetheless carries a multifarious array of themes, messages and

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<sup>8</sup> Andrew Marr, *A History of Modern Britain* (London: Pan Books, 2009), p.119.

<sup>9</sup> Brunsdon, ‘Towards a History of Empty Spaces’, p.226.

<sup>10</sup> Mark R. Hasan, ‘Hue and Cry’, available at <[http://www.kqek.com/dvd\\_reviews/h/3290\\_HueCry1947.htm](http://www.kqek.com/dvd_reviews/h/3290_HueCry1947.htm)> [accessed 11.11.2009]



values which anchor it resolutely and chronotopically to its era of production.<sup>11</sup> These include the youngsters as representative of Britain's future: their courage and dogged determination to fight for good against evil against all odds offers a clear metaphor for British victory in the war, their highly organised campaign demonstrating intelligence and innovation against a dangerous adversary.

In their youth and modernity, the gang also stands in binary opposition to the elderly and somewhat eccentric author of the original stories (Alastair Sim), who lives in cluttered Victorian splendour in a Gothic mansion block. Whilst both the man and his immediate environment are symbolic of a bygone era, the heterotopian world represented by his library shelves nonetheless invokes a hierarchy predicated on the power of knowledge: the volumes on display offer the key to breaking the code, suggesting the merits of education in outwitting the enemy and securing the future.

Spatially, *Hue and Cry* offers a blend of the real and the virtual, with much of the film being shot on location. However, the youngsters' imagination transforms their derelict headquarters into something way beyond a bombsite, and an early scene depicts a fantasy world in a bubble above Joe's head: as he reads the comic and conjures up images of the villains engaged in their nefarious activities, the scene initially raises questions as to whether the criminal scenario is all a flight of fancy. The tense realism of the narrative that follows is therefore unexpected, and emphasised by a scene in which the young band are trapped in a department store at night (a spatial representation of middle-class respectability). Believing they are being pursued by Nightingale's men, they make their escape through the sewers running beneath the store, an act requiring further courage and determination as they wade through the symbolic filth below ground with only the aid of a flickering torch.

Additional examples of effective *mise-en-scène* together with parodic intertextual reference include the chiaroscuro lighting on the stairs inside the mansion block: the youngsters' fears are played out through exaggerated shadows on the wall, a distorted human silhouette evoking Murnau's *Nosferatu* (1921) and thus further emphasising the notion of evil. Reinforcing the power of communal effort by the underdog in vanquishing a mightier foe, the grand finale also offers a powerful visual statement as hundreds of children summoned by the gang storm the scarred and rubble-strewn docklands over which Nightingale is attempting to make his escape.

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<sup>11</sup> The screenplay was written by ex-policeman T.E.B. (Tibby) Clarke, who went on to write several more films for Ealing including *The Blue Lamp*, Dir. Basil Dearden, 1950.

The gang is itself a hierarchical entity, whose members' rank and responsibility are not simply dependent upon age and length of service: whilst Joe's fellow gang members are predominantly male, there is a token girl amongst their crew. Showing plucky determination, she is accepted as 'one of the lads'; nonetheless, it is her role to place a protective maternal arm around the youngest boy when he demonstrates his fear of the underworld criminals.

This scene exemplifies the way in which gender is clearly defined within the narrative, and in an earlier scene Joe is berated by his aproned mother at the dinner table for 'starting a new loaf before the other one's finished'. As bread was rationed between 1946 and 1948, her concern offers a further contemporary reference but also reinforces women's role in managing the household. However, her domestic drudgery and social responsibility stand in stark opposition to the well-heeled glamour of gangster's moll Rhona (Valerie White) who also works for the publisher of *The Trump*, thus representing the new breed of independent working woman; and spatially, the luxurious villa in Hampstead which Rhona shares with Nightingale is a world away from the terraced row in which Joe's family and those of his fellow gang members reside.

### 'Sex and the City'

The portrayal of Rhona's independence in conjunction with her overt sexuality (an early scene shows her relishing – and actively encouraging – the attentions of a younger male colleague) was indicative of a development within British Gangland film: although the sexualisation of the female is a generically familiar trope, it is more often combined with her representation as victim, and inferior to the male protagonist.<sup>12</sup> This was a situation that found resonance within British film in general, Christine Geraghty citing criticism from contemporary magazine the *Picturegoer* regarding British cinema's failure to provide good roles for women – a state of affairs confirmed by actress Glynis Johns' observation in an edition from March 1955 that women in films 'take second place to actors, ships and machines'.<sup>13</sup> This problem of a male-dominated hierarchy stemmed in part from an apparently concerted effort by the media to portray a woman's place as (back) in the home, following their war effort during the previous decade. However, the British film industry was also under threat from an unprecedented increase in the ownership of television sets stimulated by the broadcast of the Coronation in 1953 (the home environment offering more comfortable viewing than the often run-down local

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<sup>12</sup> The role of the female within this genre should not be confused with *film noir's* predatory *femme fatale* to whom Rhona's character makes parodic reference.

<sup>13</sup> Christine Geraghty, *British Cinema in the Fifties* (London: Routledge, 2000), p.159. This criticism is somewhat ironic, given the proliferation of bikini-clad starlets adorning the front cover of the publication during the 1950s: see examples in *Picturegoer Online* available at <<http://www.picturegoer.net>> [accessed 11.12.2009]

cinema – or ‘flea pit’, as it was dubbed). Indeed, Philip Corrigan notes that between 1954 and 1958, ‘some 500 million disappear from the annual attendances at cinemas’.<sup>14</sup>

Focus on female sexuality therefore increased during the 1950s as the film industry struggled to retain audiences and entice deserters back to the fold.<sup>15</sup> Whilst partially a response to topical discourse challenging prevailing hegemony, screening the type of material that was not available from the somewhat staid BBC was seen as a potentially effective marketing ploy.<sup>16</sup> By pushing the boundaries of acceptability within genres such as horror, science fiction and crime (and taking advantage of the marketing potential of the newly introduced X-certificate), the British film industry not only hoped to counter the impact of visual entertainment within the home, but the threat posed to their share of the domestic market by an older, persistent adversary, Hollywood.<sup>17</sup>

Consequently, one factor within their strategy was the development of starlets such as Diana Dors, who was marketed as Britain’s answer to iconographic figures Marilyn Monroe and Jayne Mansfield, the industry deliberately promoting what Sandra Bartky has identified as the constructed artifice of femininity.<sup>18</sup> Echoing Simone de Beauvoir’s belief (cited in Chapter One) that ‘one is not born, but rather becomes a woman’, Bartky states that ‘we are born male or female, but not masculine or feminine. Femininity is an artifice, an achievement’; further, she

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<sup>14</sup> Philip Corrigan, ‘Film Entertainment as Ideology and Pleasure’ in James Curran and Vincent Porter (eds.) *British Cinema History*, (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1983), p.30.

<sup>15</sup> Christine Geraghty observes that cinema in the 1950s ‘became marked by a sense of [...] heightened sexuality.’ Geraghty, *British Cinema in the Fifties*, p.7. Amy Sargeant concurs, citing the industry’s recognition of the potential of cinema as ‘a venue in which material could be shown that was deemed unsuitable for domestic television transmission’. Amy Sargeant, *British Cinema: a Critical History* (London: BFI Publishing, 2005), p.205. This was a state of affairs replicating that of the USA in the late 1940s, Lee Grieveson citing the increased production of ‘adult fare’ required to counteract the increasing threat to cinema attendance from family-oriented television.’ Grieveson *et al.*, *The Mob*, p.6.

<sup>16</sup> The subject was not solely confined to the medium of film. In addition to more liberal attitudes towards sex following the war, Alfred Kinsey’s report on *Sexual Behaviour in the Human Female* (Philadelphia: Saunders, 1953) was influential in bringing into the public domain a subject which had previously been regarded as socially taboo. With regard to home viewing, the BBC held a monopoly until the mid-1950s as their commercial rival ITV did not begin broadcasting until 1955.

<sup>17</sup> The X-certificate, prohibiting admittance to anyone under the age of 16, was introduced by the British Board of Film Censors in 1951 (the age limit was not raised to 18 until 1971). Noting the marketing potential of the new classification in the 1950s, Amy Sargeant observes that the X-certificate ‘allowed for the release of [...] seminally controversial material.’ Sargeant, *British Cinema*, p.205.

<sup>18</sup> Sandra Bartky, ‘Foucault, Femininity and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power’ in Katie Conboy, Nadia Medina and Sarah Stanbury (eds.), *Writing on the Body: Female Embodiment & Feminist Theory*, (New York & Chichester: Columbia University Press, 1997).

suggests that it is [patriarchally-oriented] 'disciplinary practices that produce a body which in gesture and appearance is recognisably feminine.'<sup>19</sup>

Within the genre under discussion, examples include films such as *Yield to the Night* (1957), *Tread Softly, Stranger* (1958), and *Passport to Shame* (1958) which carried the tagline 'A Picture Best Understood By Adults': the promotional material for all three exploited Dors' voluptuous figure, peroxide blonde hair and pouting lips. Dors therefore not only embodied Bartky's male-oriented 'constructed artifice', but actively promoted it, thus perpetuating generically conventional portrayals of the female protagonist in British Gangland film.

Despite continuing to develop their own interpretation of Gangland, British filmmakers were not averse to including American or European actors in the cast during the 1950s, as they were perceived as adding glamour to what were often low-budget productions.<sup>20</sup> The additional function of these actors was to imbue the role of foreign 'other' with authenticity, such otherness also signifying a capacity for criminal transgression, if not depravity. Don Chaffey's *The Flesh is Weak* (1957) is a case in point: starring Hollywood matinee idol John Derek, the film also featured popular Italian actress Milly Vitale. Produced by the aptly named Eros Films, the plot revolves around three Italian brothers, the Gianis, who operate a lucrative prostitution racket in Soho.

The narrative draws upon the exploits of the infamous Messina gang, a powerful Maltese family who controlled an extensive vice ring in the West End during the 1930s, 40s and early 50s, incorporating extortion, money laundering, drug trafficking and pornography, in addition to a highly profitable network of prostitutes.<sup>21</sup> As discussed further in Chapter Six, prostitution had risen dramatically during World War Two and continued to represent a cause for concern. Following three years of deliberation, the Wolfenden Committee finally published their report on prostitution and homosexuality in 1957. Suggesting there had been 'a general loosening of former moral standards', one of the Committee's recommendations was a clamp-down on streetwalkers – a scenario replicated in Leigh Vance's screenplay, in which a number of the Giani girls patrolling, and therefore debasing, public space are either moved on or picked up by the police.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, p.132.

<sup>20</sup> As Steve Chibnall points out, including American actors also added 'genre authenticity', and offered a better chance of success at the US box office. Chibnall & Murphy, 'Ordinary People', p.94.

<sup>21</sup> Simon Sheridan notes that prostitution alone netted the Messinas over £1,000 per week – 'an incredible amount of money at the time'. *X-Rated – Adventures of an Exploitation Filmmaker* (Richmond: Reynolds & Hearn, 2008). The Messina family were active in the trafficking of women from the early 1900s, from their original base in Egypt.

<sup>22</sup> Sir John Wolfenden, *Report of the Committee on Homosexual Offences and Prostitution* (London: HMSO, 1957), p.20.

The Gianis run their business from a flat over an anonymous café that looks out onto a small square and pedestrian thoroughfare in which the girls ply their trade. The premises therefore provide the gang members with a panoptic viewpoint: a variation on Mulvey's male gaze.<sup>23</sup> In addition, the house to which the girls take their clients is presided over by an ageing madam (Freda Jackson), the Gianis' proxy, allowing the brothers apparent jurisdiction over the spaces in which their employees operate. Nonetheless, in addition to these duties, retired Giani-girl Trixie also shows maternal concern for the girls (the new recruits in particular), and the women operate as a hierarchical yet mutually supportive sisterhood.

A further hierarchy is apparent between the brothers themselves: oldest sibling Angelo (Martin Benson) is clearly the patriarchal head of the family and firmly in control – a characteristic emphasised by his habit of drinking milk rather than alcohol – whilst the impatience and impetuosity of young blood Tony (John Derek) are portrayed as a potential chink in their collective armour. In an early scene, Tony walks through the café and upstairs to the flat where his two older brothers are poring over a map of the area, discussing the streets under their control. This sense of territory is heightened when rival Mafia boss Salvi (Charles Lloyd Pack) enters the café demanding to see Angelo, and threatening to 'move in' on the Gianis' terrain. When Tony subsequently tells his older brother not to worry as he will 'handle Salvi', Angelo responds with the exasperated voice of experience: 'Oh sure, you handle Salvi, someone else handles you. Pretty soon the streets are crawling with cops and we have no business coming in!' – a remark which reinforces not only the theoretical concept of territory but the specific physical space it represents as crucial to their livelihood.

The *modus operandi* of the Giani brothers is exemplified by the arrival in the city of Marissa (Vitale), a naive young Italian on her first visit to England. Her appearance in the opening scene is inherently dowdy: clutching a small suitcase and a brown paper parcel tied with string, her flat shoes, loose raincoat and head scarf disguise the sensual beauty that will prove her downfall. Spatially, her journey is significant: from the bustling transience of the crowded railway station, she initially seeks the spartan security of a 'Foundation Hostel for Young Women'.<sup>24</sup> Setting out to look for a job the following morning, Marissa is observed by Giani henchman Henry (Harold Lang) as she skirts the periphery of Soho; significantly, a lingering shot of the gutter provides a metonymic backdrop to the opening credits that punctuate her quest.

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<sup>23</sup> Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*. Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure & Narrative Cinema'. Both concepts are discussed in Chapter One.

<sup>24</sup> As Angelo Giani later makes reference to the religious education of 'some of these girls', the hostel can also be read as a spatial substitute for the convent ethos of Marissa's native Roman Catholicism.

Having purchased a newspaper to peruse the situations vacant, Marissa enters the seemingly innocuous space of a coffee bar where she is targeted by Henry, who proceeds to set the trap. Establishing that she is looking for 'something different' by way of employment, Henry suggests the role of hostess at a club frequented by 'top people - financiers, film stars, high society - the lot!'. However, 'The Golden Bucket', described by Henry as 'superior', proves to be anything but: following a staged scenario in which a drunken punter attempts to force himself on the horrified girl, she is 'rescued' by the ostensibly gallant Tony Giani.

Marissa's champion proceeds to seduce her over the next few days, removing her to the apparent spatial sanctuary of a luxury flat in Brighton. The seduction is complemented by extravagant furs, beautiful jewellery and designer clothes, but rather than the gifts of a wealthy young suitor, they represent the trappings of her imminent trade. Having secured the adoration and devotion of the young girl (a further hierarchical, exploitative, yet almost paternalistic relationship), Giani continues to ensnare her through a fabricated account of his financial ruin, to which the only possible solution is for Marissa to sell her body ... 'for us!'.

From the opulence of the Brighton apartment (representing the summit of her spatial trajectory), she is summarily relocated to the heterotopian space of the Gianis' brothel, and her first faltering steps as a fledgling streetwalker are captured in a semiotically-loaded close-up of her elegantly shod feet on the grimy pavement. By contrast, following a trumped-up charge orchestrated by the Gianis, a later scene depicts her exit from Holloway prison in figure-hugging dress and luxuriant fur cape as confidant and assured - her appearance bearing witness to her earlier (deliberately ironic) assertion that 'I have a profession now'. Nonetheless, the meagre brown paper parcel of belongings she carries betrays her hardened exterior, making semiotic reference to the vulnerable young girl depicted at the beginning of the film.

Discussion in Chapter One identified the similarity between the function of film and myth in identifying and punishing transgression, thus reinforcing the hegemonic viewpoint: the spatial settings in *The Flesh is Weak* contribute to this notion. Following the neutrality of the railway station and the hostel, Marissa moves through a series of spaces in which her transgressions become increasingly discernible and the punishments increasingly severe, from her initial foray as a hostess in 'The Golden Bucket' where she accepts money for her company from men she has no desire to be with, to the jewellery and furs she accepts from Tony in the Brighton flat where she shares his bed in the mistaken belief they will marry, to full-blown prostitution in the brothel and on the street. In narrative terms, *The Flesh is Weak* thus represents a Pygmalionesque distortion: rather than turning her into a

lady, the Gianis' ambition is realised by turning her into a whore.<sup>25</sup> Marissa's final punishment is incarceration within the heterotopian space of the prison, in which a utilitarian uniform replaces her elegant clothes as she scrubs the floor on her hands and knees – the futility of her task (to render the prison 'clean') replicating the impossibility of cleansing her own tainted body.

Marissa's submissive position together with her prison attire and lack of make-up reinforces the fact she is being punished for the sin of revealing her beauty in order to invite the male gaze. Laura Mulvey proposes that by integrating elements of voyeurism and narcissism into its narratives, classical cinema not only stimulates the desire to look, but authenticates and perpetuates the patriarchal interpretation of what constitutes 'woman'.<sup>26</sup> In the case of Marissa, this is emphasised by the fact the male protagonist is instrumental in her transformation from gauche young tourist to the fetishised perfection of designer-clad siren within a twilight world in which her own identity is subsumed. Having consequently acquired what Mulvey would identify as 'to-be-looked-at-ness', Marissa is rendered the object of the male gaze; and yet, having achieved that perfection, she is punished for it, stripped of her glamour and forced to perform menial domestic duties on her knees. The concept of 'woman' thus operates on two stereotypical levels in this example, both of which reinforce her as passive and powerless within the patriarchal domain.

The theme of the female as object of the gaze is continued in Ken Hughes' *The Small World of Sammy Lee* from 1962, in which Anthony Newley plays the eponymous strip club compère. Reinforcing its heterotopian nature, Wolfgang Suschitsky's black and white cinematography constructs a convincing, almost hermetically-sealed Soho milieu.<sup>27</sup> Symbolically, within the extended introductory tracking shot surveying the 'small world' of the title, the camera notes an early morning street-cleansing operation. Following a water cart and a refuse collection (a motif with similar connotations to Marissa's futile efforts with the scrubbing brush), the camera continues through Soho's ethnically diverse restaurants and coffee bars, sex shops and revue bars.

The narrative is driven by Sammy's quest to raise £300 by the end of the day to pay off the money he has just lost in an illegal all-night poker game, from which he is seen emerging, bleary-eyed, into the daylight. His increasingly frenzied forays into the Soho *demi-monde* to raise the cash by any means are hampered by the fact he has to return to introduce hourly shows at the strip club – a domain in which,

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<sup>25</sup> First performed in 1913, George Bernard Shaw's play *Pygmalion* tells the story of a professor of phonetics who trains a cockney flower girl in speech and etiquette, dressing her in elegant finery in order to pass her off as a lady in refined society.

<sup>26</sup> Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema'.

<sup>27</sup> Suschitsky has been prolific, his body of work including Mike Hodges' *Get Carter* (1971) discussed in Chapter Five.

despite his gender, he holds little status, the audience leaving him in no doubt they are there to watch the girls perform rather than listen to his tired jokes.

His campaign to ward off the Gangland debt collectors is interrupted by the arrival of Patsy (Julia Foster), a girl he had met previously whilst on tour in the North of England – a region whose otherness is emphasised by the girl's incompatibility with the communal identity articulated through the spaces and places constituting Sammy's Soho haunts. Patsy's hesitant steps as she approaches the club are complemented by her modest outfit and wholesome appearance, all of which serve to emphasise the sordidness of both Sammy's environment and his existence.

Failing to collect sufficient funds together to ward off his demise, Sammy decides to join Patsy in her return to Bradford in a bid for freedom. However, the two heavies employed to mete out his punishment arrive before he can board the coach, and Patsy looks on helplessly from inside the vehicle as it pulls out of Victoria leaving Sammy behind. He is then driven to an area of wasteland where, having been relieved of the cash he had managed to collect together, the senior of his two adversaries (Kenneth J Warren) delivers a vicious beating amongst the semiotic piles of rotting debris. In a surprising twist, the henchman finally takes pity on his victim, tossing the wad of money onto the ground next to Sammy's unconscious body. It is a gesture which suggests the money itself is irrelevant: Sammy has been punished to exemplify the power of those to whom he is in debt.

The disparity between *The Flesh is Weak* and *Sammy Lee* is the sleazy realism with which the *demi-monde* is portrayed in the latter film, and Suschitsky's photography makes an important contribution to this. However, whereas the earlier film delivers a moralising message, Ken Hughes' screenplay appears to document Sammy's situation without judgement: the women in the strip club are not overtly glamorised nor their profession explicitly condemned, and events in the ineffectual showman's life are simply portrayed as a series of misfortunes which he does not have the strength of character to overcome.

Significantly, it is the 'love of a good woman' (Patsy) which opens up his potential escape route. In addition, in a moment of comic relief, Sammy himself is ironically depicted as the object of the female gaze: as Sammy is dressing, his neighbour, Joan (Toni Palmer), enters his flat without knocking and suggests that she had hoped to catch him 'starkers'. Making further comment on his sexuality, she also observes that Sammy should keep a dog as a pet rather than the errant cat of which he is so fond, deeming his feline attachment 'a bit poofy'. Whilst his heterosexuality is not necessarily questioned, his masculinity thus appears compromised by his inability to take control of his life and those within it.



## A Man's World

By contrast, ex-boxer Stanley Baker was an iconographic actor who had risen to prominence during the late 1950s and whose machismo was in no doubt whatsoever. Given David Wishart's assessment of Baker as 'tough, gritty, combustible - and possessing an aura of dark, even menacing power', it is perhaps unsurprising that he undertook a number of roles within British Gangland film, playing characters on both sides of the law.<sup>28</sup> Having portrayed an ex-convict in Cy Endfield's *Hell Drivers* in 1957, a juvenile liaison officer in Basil Dearden's *Violent Playground* in 1958, and a police inspector in Val Guest's *Hell is a City* in 1959, Baker took the title role in Joseph Losey's *The Criminal* in 1960 (Baker drawing on the infamous racetrack gangster and protection racketeer Alfred Dimes for his character, Johnny Bannion).<sup>29</sup>

Aided by Alun Owen's screenplay, Losey's film represents an uncompromising interpretation of the inextricably linked heterotopian spaces of the prison and the Gangland underworld outside its walls, both of which dominate the narrative.<sup>30</sup> Melanie Williams cites Losey's intent 'to show life in prison as it really was: where the guards were bribed and where there were ruling gangs in opposition to each other'.<sup>31</sup> Williams' statement therefore counters Foucault's model of one-way panoptic power by highlighting the complexity of the dynamic hierarchical power structures that predominate inside such institutions.

With regard to external Gangland hierarchies, Chibnall observes that *The Criminal* 'situates its narrative in a zone of transition where the old patterns of both criminality and masculinity are being challenged by [...] fresh opportunities for consumption and a new corporatism in criminal organisation.'<sup>32</sup> Consequently, whereas Johnny Bannion apparently reigns supreme within the spatial confines of Cell Block B, his supremacy is being challenged on the outside by his double-crossing American partner Mike Carter (Sam Wannamaker), who suggests that as their criminal activities are now part of a 'proper' (syndicated) set up, Bannion's independent and somewhat eclectic *modus operandi* has become outdated. It is an observation that acknowledges the parallel modernisation (and casualties) of post-

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<sup>28</sup> David Wishart. 'Stanley Baker'. Available at <<http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0048939/>> [accessed 11.12.2009]

<sup>29</sup> Andrew Spicer states that Dimes was a friend of Baker, and acted as consultant on *The Criminal*. Spicer, *Typical Men*, p.140.

<sup>30</sup> Colin Gardner notes that Owen took over the screenplay from 'Hammer stalwart' Johnny Sangster, whose original was dismissed by Losey as 'a hackneyed, plagiaristic mosaic of every US prison film ever made'; Owen was brought in on Baker's recommendation. Colin Gardner, *Joseph Losey* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), p.73.

<sup>31</sup> Melanie Williams, 'The Criminal', available at <<http://www.screenonline.org.uk/film/id/485487/index.html>> [accessed 11.12.2009]

<sup>32</sup> Chibnall, 'Ordinary People', p.102.

war Britain, both culturally and economically, as Carter ultimately informs Bannion that ‘your sort doesn’t fit in to an organisation’.<sup>33</sup>

Contemporary vocalist Cleo Laine sings the haunting ballad ‘Thieving Boy’ over the film’s opening credits, during which two prisoners are observed going through the ritualistic admissions process.<sup>34</sup> One of the newcomers is returning convict Kelly (Kenneth Cope) – an archrival of Bannion whose own release is imminent. Kelly is immediately recognised by veteran inmate, Scout (Jack Rodney), who follows Laine’s theme tune with an impromptu rendition of the children’s rhyme ‘Knick-knack-paddywhack’ which he sings as he passes through the prison, substituting the news that ‘Kelly’s back, Kelly’s back’ for one of the original lines. This method of spreading information among the prisoners is reiterated by an improvised calypso played by another inmate on his guitar (an uncredited Tommy Eytel), incorporating sardonic observations on Kelly’s return.<sup>35</sup>

Foucault’s conflation of knowledge with power is exemplified by this short sequence, which also hints at the subversion of institutional supremacy within the prison. Losey is particularly adept at depicting the dynamics of the power relations that prevail within this heterotopian space: Bannion’s status within the prison hierarchy garners a grudging acknowledgement from sadistic Chief Warden Barrow (Patrick McGee), and the machinations that maintain Bannion’s status in Cell Block ‘B’ are mirrored in Cell Block ‘A’ under the domination of Gangland chief Arthur Saffron (Grégoire Aslan).

These various enclaves contribute to what Foucault would describe as a ‘carceral archipelago’, a notion articulating the symbiotic power relations inherent within modern society in which multiple institutions govern and control the population.<sup>36</sup> The various cell blocks making up the prison therefore represent a scaled-down model of Foucault’s concept. With regard to both space and hierarchy, Colin Gardner notes that Losey was able to ‘collapse the difference between inside [prison]

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<sup>33</sup> Bearing out the claim that Baker’s character was based on Alfred Dimes, Andrew Spicer observes that ‘Dimes was talented and strikingly handsome, but his creativity was shackled by a rigid and inexorable set of gangland codes’. Spicer, *Typical Men*, p.140.

<sup>34</sup> John Dankworth, ‘Thieving Boy’, 1960. Husband and wife duo Johnny Dankworth and Cleo Laine contributed to what might be described as the soundtrack to the era through Dankworth’s jazz-oriented compositions and Laine’s distinctive voice.

<sup>35</sup> This musical motif makes cultural reference to the first African slaves on the sugar plantations in Trinidad. As they were forbidden to talk to each other, they used calypso as a means of communication, and to mock the slave masters without their being aware. Guyanese actor and musician Eytel emigrated to Britain in 1951, enjoying success with his calypso band throughout the 50s and 60s. His presence in the film together with Laine and Dankworth’s contribution reinforce its socio-historical context.

<sup>36</sup> Foucault, *Discipline & Punish*. Foucault’s notion was inspired by the experiences of Aleksander Solzhenitsyn’s semi-autobiographical account of *The Gulag Archipelago 1918-1956* (London: Harper Collins, 2002).

and outside, between the discipline machine and the organised crime machine', so that ultimately there is little difference between the 'unwritten codes of conduct and loyalty, as well as powerful pecking orders' that typify the two.<sup>37</sup>

On Bannion's release to the outside world, he is met by Carter who has organised a party in Bannion's London flat to mark the occasion – a sequence reinforcing the significance of both gender and space to the genre. The alcohol-fuelled celebrations are interrupted by the arrival of Bannion's histrionic ex-girlfriend Maggie (Jill Bennett); her unceremonious ejection from the party brings it to an abrupt end, and the guests depart. Nonetheless, following his stint in prison three to a cell, Bannion appears to relish being left alone to enjoy the trappings of his bachelor pad (although despite its luxury, the nude pin-ups and paintings that mark the space as a male domain reference similar, tawdry images torn from magazines that decorated some of the prison cells).

Revelling in the pleasures enabled by his freedom, Bannion prepares to use a sunlamp; however, as he lies down on the bed, he discovers the beautiful Suzanne (Margit Saad) beneath its black satin sheets. Whilst they have never met – tellingly, Bannion asks 'what are you?' rather than 'who are you?' – it is apparently the allure of his infamous reputation that has drawn her to Bannion's bed. This scene articulates the more permissive nature of the 'swinging sixties' and acknowledges the growing culture of celebrity with its attendant 'groupies' and material rewards, irrespective of class. Whilst Bannion's use of the sunlamp appears at odds with his unswerving masculinity, it nonetheless reinforces the prevailing ethos in terms of consumption being led less by necessity than indulgence – access to such indulgence representing a key difference between prison and the outside world, and also between this era and the previous two decades.

Bannion had used his three years 'inside' to plan in minute detail a lucrative heist in which he is aided and abetted by Carter and the syndicate: impersonating an official racetrack bookie among the tic-tac men and teeming crowds on Silver Stakes day, he makes off with the £40,000 proceeds from the Members' Tote.<sup>38</sup> Initially everything goes to plan and he drives into the countryside to bury the spoils, which are now secured in a metal chest. In a high-angled extreme long shot, Bannion is reduced to an insignificant, diminutive figure against the sweeping snow-covered landscape as he digs a deep hole in the middle of a field before dropping the coffin-like chest into the earth. The shot intimates his status as a small and therefore inconsequential cog within a bigger corporate wheel, but also the ultimately

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<sup>37</sup> Gardner, *Joseph Losey*, p.73.

<sup>38</sup> Further anchoring the film to its era of production, this scene features 'Prince Monolulu', a tipster familiar to racetrack crowds and television viewers of the time through his flamboyant costume of plumed headdress, embroidered silk jacket and pantaloons, together with the cry 'I gotta horse!'

transitory nature of his quest for money and power. By refusing to reveal where the cash is buried, Bannion believes he has outwitted the omnipotent syndicate; however, the funereal motifs in this scene are prophetic, as the field will represent the site of his death at the duplicitous hands of Mike Carter, his partner turned corporate player.

Dan Callaghan notes that 'the dominant themes of Losey's eclectic work are emotional instability, emotional and physical violence, and perverse sexual power plays'.<sup>39</sup> Accordingly, it is a female who initiates the sequence of events leading to Bannion's downfall, as he is reported to the police as a possible suspect in the heist by his jealous ex-girlfriend after she sees him buying an engagement ring for Suzanne with some of the proceeds. Back in prison as a result, the syndicate orchestrates Bannion's escape with the aid of Saffron and his network; however, rather than imbuing Bannion with power, sole knowledge of the money's whereabouts renders him acutely - fatally - vulnerable, for as Colin Gardner observes, 'the homogenization of organised crime' swallows up 'independent operators like Bannion, [who] isn't smart enough to see that his own free-wheeling individualism has no place in the corporate world.'<sup>40</sup>

### Blurring the Boundaries

Gardner has also suggested that Bannion's character represents 'an inflated personification of the true 'performer', an early prototype for Chas Devlin, James Fox's psychopathic gangster in Donald Cammell and Nicolas Roeg's *Performance*', released in 1970.<sup>41</sup> Relentlessly dismissed as the decade that taste forgot, the 70s were marked by dwindling Hollywood investment and plummeting audience figures - a situation exacerbated by the increase in television viewing and the introduction of the video recorder. Much of the lamentable output produced by British film makers during this time is aptly described by Amy Sargeant as 'schlock and dross'.<sup>42</sup> Nonetheless, it was also a decade punctuated by auteurist projects and, despite Warner Bros.' reluctance to release *Performance*, Cammell and Roeg's film can be regarded retrospectively at least as a groundbreaking contribution to cinema in general and to British Gangland film in particular.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Dan Callahan, 'Joseph Losey', available at <<http://archive.sensesofcinema.com/contents/directors/03/losey.html>> [accessed 30.10.2009]

<sup>40</sup> Gardner, *Joseph Losey*, p.77.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p.74.

<sup>42</sup> Sargeant cites examples such as the soft porn *Confessions of...* series; the *Carry On* series; and TV spin-offs such as *Till Death Us Do Part*, *On the Buses*, *Please Sir*, and Frankie Howerd's *Up Pompeii* and *Up the Chastity Belt* (among others). These spin-offs nonetheless offered what she describes as 'impressive box-office receipts'. Sargeant, *British Cinema*, p.266.

<sup>43</sup> Other auteurs making notable contributions to British film during this period include Lindsay Anderson, Derek Jarman, Ken Russell and Stanley Kubrick.

Ironically, perhaps, Warner Bros.' enthusiasm for the project had been generated by the success of 'swinging London' films such as John Schlesinger's *Darling* (1965) and Antonioni's *Blow Up* (1966), but also the Beatles' commercially and critically successful *A Hard Day's Night* (1964), followed by *Help!* (1965). Warner Bros. consequently viewed Jagger's role in *Performance* as a means of capitalising on the burgeoning pop music scene and the fans' insatiable appetite for access to their idols beyond black and white stills in fanzines. However, Warner Bros. executives were so appalled when viewing the finished product that they shelved the film indefinitely: its eventual release was met with vociferous condemnation from many critics, not least for its blatant portrayal of sex and violence as a pleasurable partnership, and its apparent validation of drug-enhanced sexual hedonism.<sup>44</sup> As Rebekah Wood notes, 'The studio thought they were getting a crime caper starring Mick Jagger. What they got was *Performance* -- an orgy of violence, sex and psychotropic drugs'. Nonetheless, Wood is not alone in deeming it 'the best British film ever made.'<sup>45</sup>

Peter Wollen identifies *Performance* as 'the British film which comes closest to a modernist art film in the New Wave mould', and it is a work which blurs the boundaries in terms of generic categorisation.<sup>46</sup> The concept of 'blurring' or 'merging' prevails throughout the narrative itself, which functions as an allegory - a parallel to the tale of Hassan-i-Sabbah, whose postulants were drugged and taken to a Garden of Delights. Their indoctrination into the cult was so complete that they would undertake any task asked of them, including committing murder and taking their own life. Reflecting this legend, *Performance* also portrays two alternative worlds: the Gangland underworld in which the narrative begins, followed by Chas Devlin's voluntary incarceration in the bohemian home of reclusive rock star Turner (Mick Jagger) in which Turner quotes the Old Man of the Mountain's final words 'Nothing is true. Everything is permitted'.<sup>47</sup>

This latter space can therefore be read as a metonymic interpretation of Persian guru Hassan-i-Sabbah's Garden of Delights, and also the philosophical tenets by which his followers lived. Appropriately, Foucault offers the Persian garden as a heterotopian example, suggesting it brings together the four corners of the world in microcosm and possesses 'very deep and seemingly imposed meanings'.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Although completed in 1968, *Performance* was not released until 1970, Colin MacCabe stating that 'Warner Bros. had sat on the film for years, terrified of the immorality they had perpetrated'.

Colin MacCabe, *Performance* (London: BFI Publishing, 1998), p.8.

<sup>45</sup> Rebekah Wood, 'The Acid House', *Neon*, March 1988, p.108.

<sup>46</sup> Peter Wollen, 'Possession', *Sight and Sound*, Vol. V, Issue 9, 1995, p.20.

<sup>47</sup> Peter Wollen concurs, suggesting that 'reference to the Old Man of the Mountain [Hassan-i-Sabbah] takes us even closer to the heart of *Performance*, to the common root of killer and hippie, assassin and *hashishin*.' *Ibid.*, p.21.

<sup>48</sup> Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces', p.25.

Complementing this heterotopian motif of 'the juxtaposition of the near and far',<sup>49</sup> Peter Wollen suggests that 'as a drug text, *Performance* is a palimpsest of Morocco and hashish, Castañeda and Magic Mushrooms, [Keith] Richards' country home Redlands and LSD'.<sup>50</sup>

Spatially, Turner's home within the narrative also represents such elision and regeneration, standing as a metaphor for sixties hippie culture with its dual mantra of free love and experimentation.<sup>51</sup> The concept of Turner's domain was based on the home Rolling Stone Brian Jones shared with Anita Pallenberg near Gloucester Road, the interior of which had been influenced by Christopher Gibbs (also the designer on *Performance*). Following a trip to Morocco, Gibbs had introduced exotic rugs and wall hangings, draped the lamps with scarves, and added Arabic robes and slippers to the wardrobe: all these elements were incorporated within Turner's residence, along with magic mushrooms, hashish and heroin.<sup>52</sup>

The narrative begins with an altercation between Chas and his Gangland boss, Harry Flowers (Johnny Shannon); this leads to a visit from two of Flowers' gang who trash his compulsively neat and tidy flat before beating him up.<sup>53</sup> As Chas has been shown obsessively lining up items on his coffee table, on his desk, and in a chest of drawers, it is difficult to know which is the greater punishment, particularly as the sadistic whipping that ends the scene is sexualised through intercut images of Chas making love with his girlfriend as he watches himself in a mirror. The semi-conscious Chas is left bleeding and covered in feathers from the pillows, his previously immaculate walls now daubed in red paint spelling out the word 'POOF'. The scene makes visual reference to tarring and feathering – a form of feudal punishment, and therefore a graphic representation of the performative nature of hierarchical power structures implicit within the heterotopia of Gangland.

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<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> Wollen, 'Possession', p.22. Richards' home 'Redlands' was the scene of a legendary drugs bust, which Wollen (*ibid.*) suggests 'was in effect a show bust, designed to stamp out the emergent counterculture'. It prompted William Rees-Mogg's article in Jagger's defence: 'Who breaks a butterfly upon a wheel?' *Times*, 3 July 1967.

<sup>51</sup> Appropriately, perhaps, the crumbling mansion in 'Powis Square, Notting Hill' was in fact a façade, the actual property used for the interior filming being located in Lowndes Square, Knightsbridge.

<sup>52</sup> When Chas arrives at Powis Square, there is a tray of magic mushrooms on the doorstep alongside the milk; there are also some Mars Bars (a popular cultural reference to their alleged use by Marian Faithfull). A later scene depicts more magic mushrooms being grown in a greenhouse on the property, together with cannabis plants.

<sup>53</sup> In a further blurring of identity, Johnny Shannon was part of the underworld milieu in which James Fox was immersed prior to filming in order to acquire the accent and mannerisms appropriate to an East End gangster. Fox encountered Shannon, a boxing trainer, during this period and suggested him for the role of Flowers. It was the start of a prolific acting career for Shannon in film and TV.

In mortal danger, Chas heads for the railway station to make his escape, but overhears a young man in the waiting room discussing the fact he has left his room at '81 Powis Road' owing back rent. Chas therefore decides to forego his train journey and turns up at Turner's home; he claims to be a friend of the previous tenant, offering to pay off the debt and take the room for himself. By doing so, he escapes (albeit temporarily) from the grim reality and violence of the underworld, unknowingly exchanging it for an hallucinogenic world of sexual experimentation and mind games. Turner's lover Pherber (Anita Pallenberg) is instrumental in this, feeding Chas magic mushrooms in order to break down his determined 'straightness', both in terms of his sexuality and his outlook on life. Turner's own feminine side is already evident, and reinforced in a scene in which he morphs into the androgynous Lucy (Michèle Breton), the third member of his *ménage-a-trois*, whilst lying on the bed with Chas.

The heterotopian motif of the mirror is repeated throughout this second part of the film, representing a graphic interpretation of Lacan's thesis on its ability to reflect and reaffirm the perfect self. In this case, its use constitutes another form of experimentation, a scene in which Pherber reflects first her breast, then her face onto Chas's body representing a playful metonym which serves to challenge the refugee's determined defence of his heterosexuality. The sequence also embodies Lacan's theory in the recognition of separate entities combining to produce the perfect whole.

In a further visual statement on the fluidity of identity, Chas subsequently views himself in a full-length mirror as he attempts to create a new persona for a passport photograph to enable his onward journey. He tries on exotic items from Turner's wardrobe whilst wearing a shoulder-length wig: with these flowing garments and long hair, the mirror offers a heterotopian reflection of the newly-feminised Chas in yet another world, another 'performance', as he now resembles the image of Turner on a poster displayed on the wall depicting the rock star in concert.

The sequence references an earlier scene in Chas's flat in which he assesses his reflection in a mirror as he dresses with meticulous precision, his sharp suit and neatly pressed shirt complemented with cufflinks selected from carefully ordered boxes in a drawer. Whilst ostensibly adding layers from Turner's wardrobe in order to disguise this original identity, the insinuation is that such 'dressing up' has paradoxically revealed Chas's true sexual orientation. Further, it reiterates Judith Butler's argument (from Foucault) that gender is in itself a performance.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Butler argues that 'there is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender [...] Identity is performatively constituted by the very expressions that are said to be its results'. Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (London: Routledge, 1990), p.25.

The verisimilitude of these oppositional milieux – the rigid boundaries of the underworld and Turner’s boundless fantasy world – is achieved through richly detailed *mise-en-scène*, but also an array of cultural references including repeated allusion to the writing of Jorge Luis Borges, enabling a number of narrative interpretations.<sup>55</sup> In addition, the film offers a chronotopic representation of the end of the 60s: Mick Jagger’s presence as the jaded rock star in this exotic, drug-enhanced bohemia suggests a ‘fly-on-the-wall’ snapshot, but on a broader, allegorical level, Paul Huckerby suggests *Performance* is ‘a perfect example along with Altamont and the Manson murders, of the hippy dream destroyed by violence’.<sup>56</sup>

Accordingly, the end of the narrative depicts Harry Flowers’ men arriving at Turner’s home having hunted Chas down; before leaving with them, Chas goes upstairs to see Turner. Initially suggesting he is aware of Chas’s destination, Turner then changes his mind, saying ‘I don’t know’. ‘Yes you do’, replies Chas, before shooting Turner through the crown of his bowed head. The camera shows the path of the bullet as it passes through Turner’s body, destroying a portrait of Borges before smashing a mirror. A pencilled note reads ‘Gone to Persia’: a metaphor for the Garden of Delights and the afterlife.<sup>57</sup> Following a shot of Turner’s staring corpse hunched in a cupboard (an image suggesting this particular identity has been ‘tidied away’), Chas walks out to the Rolls Royce in which Flowers is waiting, still sporting the Turneresque wig. Flowers greets Chas by name as he gets into the car; however, as they drive away and the figure turns, it is Turner’s face that looks out of the window.

This fictional merging of identities reflected a contemporary symbiosis between the two constructed worlds of Gangland and the glitterati. As Peter Wollen notes, ‘as early as the 50s, the Chelsea *beau monde* was mingling with the criminal world’, and by the 60s the Kray twins’ celebrity lifestyle included being photographed by David Bailey alongside rock stars, film stars and supermodels.<sup>58,59</sup> Regarding

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<sup>55</sup> Other references include the writing of William Burroughs, Vladimir Nabokov, Jean Genet and Antonin Artaud; a scene depicting three naked corpses echoes the work of Francis Bacon; and middle-eastern influences are articulated through music, images, myth and the *hashishin*.

<sup>56</sup> Paul Huckerby, *Performance* available at <<http://www.electricsheepmagazine.co.uk/reviews/2007/03/04/performance/>> [Accessed 01.03.2008]

<sup>57</sup> Because the legend of Hassan-i-Sabbah incorporates the notion that the *hashashin* would take their own lives at his request in order to be allowed back into the Garden, this suggests that Turner’s death is a suicide pact rather than a murder.

<sup>58</sup> Wollen, ‘Possession’, p.23.

<sup>59</sup> Antonioni’s *Blow Up* (1966) drew heavily on Bailey, whose contribution to the creation of ‘Swinging London’ included his *Box of Pin-Ups* (1964), a collection of photographic prints of ‘celebrities’ of the time, including The Beatles, supermodel Jean Shrimpton, and the Krays, sold as a boxed set. Perhaps anticipating the themes explored in *Performance*, *Pin-Ups* also incorporated a portrait of Bailey taken by Mick Jagger, and one of Jagger by Bailey.



*Performance* itself, Wollen describes it as 'a film with its own precise co-ordinates in space, time and life [...] a strange vision of England as its own fantastic double'.<sup>60</sup> It is an eloquent statement, and one that reiterates the both the heterotopian and chronotopic nature of film, together with its ability to respond to contemporary circumstance and capture the moment.

In addition to their reflexive nature, Gangland texts discussed within this chapter have introduced the wide-ranging scope of the genre, together with its status as a cohesive, constantly-evolving body of work. These studies have served to reiterate the dynamic process of genre analysis discussed in Chapter One, as they bear witness to the organic nature of film and its capacity to respond to prevailing ideologies. Examples here include the trauma of social readjustment experienced by many ex-servicemen articulated through the ordeal of Leo Martin in *Appointment with Crime*; the ethos of 'all for one and one for all' fundamental to the rebuilding of post-war Britain and reinforced by the exploits of the juvenile gang in *Hue and Cry*; the exploitation of female sexuality in the late 1950s/early 1960s exemplified by *The Flesh is Weak* and *The Small World of Sammy Lee*; the complementary focus on the male protagonist in *The Criminal*; and the graphic articulation of self-indulgent, drug-fuelled hedonism in the late 1960s/early 1970s exemplified by Mick Jagger's Turner in *Performance*.

Generic examples analysed in this chapter have also reinforced the significance of space, gender and hierarchy to a reading of Gangland film. As discussed above, the relationship between space and hierarchy is a particular theme in *Appointment with Crime*, and in *Hue and Cry*. It is a relationship intrinsic to heterotopian space, including those of the prison in *The Flesh is Weak* and *The Criminal*, and the self-contained realm of Soho in *The Small World of Sammy Lee*. All three of these heterotopian examples also illustrate a very specific relationship with gender: through prison segregation in the first two texts, but also the explicit hierarchical divide between male and female in the sordid strip clubs and sex shops in *Sammy Lee*, and the red light district and the brothel in *The Flesh is Weak*.

Turner's home in *Performance* further demonstrates the dynamic relationship between the three elements. The space itself represents a heterotopian haven from the outside world for the reclusive rock star, and from the more specific, hierarchical underworld for Chas. Nonetheless, on entering the house, Chas's lucid sense of self is rapidly compromised. There are initially clear hierarchical parameters within this heterotopian space; however, along with gendered identity and sexuality, these become blurred through experimentation and the use of hallucinogens administered by Turner and the females within the domain of his *ménage-a-trois*.

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<sup>60</sup> Wollen, 'Possession', p.23.

In Chapter Three, the relationship between space, gender and hierarchy will be investigated further through five Gangland narratives produced between 1971 and the new millennium. The equation of space with hierarchical power is significant, together with the consequence of gender and sexuality within such hierarchies. In addition, these texts include explicit reference to bisexuality, homosexuality, and male prostitution, thus expanding the concept of sexual permissiveness and fluidity and reiterating the capacity of the genre to articulate prevailing social, cultural and moral issues.

## CHAPTER THREE

# *Mapping the Underworld through British Gangland Film: 1971 to the Present*

Following analysis of representative generic texts produced between 1945 and 1970 in Chapter Two, this chapter will discuss examples from the subsequent three decades. The aim of both chapters is similar: to demonstrate the narrative range of British Gangland film, whilst identifying motifs related to space, gender and hierarchy within the genre and their collective role in the construction of meaning. In the texts analysed below, space is particularly significant in *Villain* (1971), *Brannigan* (1975) and *Empire State* (1987); hierarchy is a powerful narrative theme in *Villain*, *Empire State*, *Face* (1997), and *Gangster No. 1* (2000); and gender and sexuality are implicit within *Villain*, *Empire State*, and *Gangster No. 1*. In addition, the following readings exemplify the contribution of generic convention, iconography and mise-en-scène to such textual analysis, which in turn assist in anchoring these films to their era of production.

### **An Englishman's Home**

As observed in the previous chapter, the genre of British Gangland film has often blurred the boundaries between reality and fiction by referencing key figures or events in its narratives. References to the Messina brothers in *The Flesh is Weak* (1958) and to Alfred Dimes in *The Criminal* (1960) were complemented by Camel and Roeg's *Performance* (1970), in which Mick Jagger experiments with a contemporary alter ego, and the character of Harry Flowers is played by underworld figure Johnny Shannon.

It was also noted that identity linked to sexual orientation rather than gender is a principal theme running through Camel and Roeg's narrative. The storyline revolving around a wages heist in Michael Tuchner's *Villain*, released the following year, is similarly underpinned by the recurrent themes of hierarchical Gangland power and deviant sexuality. It is a motif inferred by two characters in particular: protagonist Vic Dakin (Richard Burton) – a psychotic criminal whose fictitious identity draws heavily on Ronnie Kray – and his occasional henchman, lover, and inveterate fixer, Wolfe Lissen (Ian McShane). Like Kray, Dakin adores his mother (whom he treats with great tenderness and respect); he also nurtures a sadistic homosexual obsession with 'Wolfie', and has no hesitation in meting out extreme physical violence to his enemies (either himself or by proxy) in order to get what he wants, or simply to reinforce his power and status within the prevailing Gangland hierarchy. They are characteristics representing a further reference to both Ronnie and Reggie Kray.

Unusually, *Villain* is filmed entirely on location, enabling the narrative to develop through a number of authentic spaces, within which the individual domestic habitat is a recurring motif: this includes the masculine sparsity of a metropolitan bachelor pad, the opulent country mansion of an orgiastic marquis, and the domestic banality of Dakin's sun-dappled suburban semi, shared with his mother. However, the film

opens with an establishing panning shot over an urban jumble of anonymous apartments and office blocks at dawn, with the familiar skyline of London in the distance. The camera cuts to the interior of an exclusive casino at close of play, following croupier Benny (Stephen Sheppard) as he heads home to find that Dakin and two of his men have invaded the territorial space of his flat and taken up temporary residence.

After an initial beating, Dakin pulls out his trademark cut-throat razor, accusing Benny with great relish of having 'talked too much'. As Dakin and his heavies leave the apartment block, they sidestep some drops of blood on the pavement: 'Bleedin' pigeons!' remarks Dakin, as the camera follows his skyward glance to reveal Benny's battered, blood-soaked body dangling from the balcony of the flat.<sup>1</sup> The remark intimates Dakin's (mistaken) perception of his victim as a 'stool-pigeon' or police informant. His actions therefore comply with Foucault's notion of the 'culture of spectacle': in historical terms, the culture of spectacle preceded carceral culture, and included public execution as a visual warning to potential transgressors.<sup>2</sup> Through this gross act of excess, Dakin reveals himself as a generically conventional psychotic megalomaniac in a public performance motivated as much by the bloody exhibition of his egotistical power as the spurious justification of punishment.

Spatially, the unwarranted violence of this exhibition is immediately countered by a shot of Dakin pulling up in his respectable, unostentatious Rover outside the neat and tidy home he shares with his mother; the property is situated in a quiet suburban street, now bathed in the early morning sunlight. Waking her with a cup of tea (which he urges her to drink 'while it's hot'), the ostensibly dutiful Dakin sits by his mother's bedside in front of a photograph of the Queen and suggests they drive down to the coast for the day. This is an apparently regular excursion which, in addition to his concern that his mother should enjoy her cup of tea, connotes normality to Dakin: these actions are designed to negate any perception of his power-crazed psychosis held by the outside world – and, indeed, himself.

The camera cuts to the off-duty DI Matthews (Nigel Davenport). Tending to the verdant space of his already immaculate garden, Matthews is interrupted by the arrival of his DS (Collin Welland) who informs him that 'They strung [Benny] up like a bleedin' carcass and hung him from a balcony five storeys up'. The inherent tranquillity within both these highly ordered domestic spaces constitutes a dramatic foil for the violent mayhem that Dakin and his mob are about to unleash.

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<sup>1</sup> This scene also draws on reality, as Kray associate David Litvinov suffered a similar fate after giving information to the police (cited in Iain Sinclair, 'Smart Guys', *Sight and Sound*, Vol. VI, Issue 8, 1996, p.24).

<sup>2</sup> Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*. Carceral punishment is that in which the perpetrator is 'incarcerated' or imprisoned, and therefore removed from the public gaze.

Good old-fashioned protection racketeering provides Dakin's main source of income, but following a tip-off he decides to branch out with a wages snatch from a plastics factory. Situated outside the confines of the city, the recently-built industrial estate boasts the clean, efficient lines of contemporary commercial buildings accessed by newly-constructed dual carriageways. It is a similarly pristine and ordered space to Dakin's home and Matthews' garden, but in this instance representing the modernisation of British industry; it also offers new horizons for Dakin's own 'firm'. Nonetheless, the bland anonymity of the place provokes Dakin to observe 'Fancy living here, eh? Telly all the week, screw the wife on Saturday!' – a remark suggesting domestic lives that have become as automated and featureless as the factories that fund them.

In direct spatial contrast is the country mansion in which the bisexual Wolfe abandons his unsuspecting aristocratic girlfriend Venetia (Fiona Lewis) to a weekend orgy for the express purpose of obtaining blackmail material on Dakin's behalf: it is an action cementing their respective positions within Dakin's ranks.<sup>3</sup> Inferring the contemporary notion of sexual fluidity, Venetia asks 'Who's *she*?' as their flamboyantly camp host walks by. 'He's only a marquis, isn't he? [...] Influencing friends and making people!', replies Wolfe, underlining the dynamics of hierarchical power responsible for their presence.

Venetia later identifies high-ranking MP Gerald Draycott (Donald Sinden) among the colourfully louche gathering; when she comments that 'he wouldn't get my vote', Wolfe responds 'it's not your *vote* he's after' – a remark reinforcing her role as a commodified 'good-time girl' within the gendered hierarchy, at which point he leaves her to Draycott.<sup>4</sup> Subsequently, Wolfe arranges to meet Draycott at the House of Commons. Presenting him with photographic evidence procured during the weekend, he persuades Draycott to intervene in Dakin's arrest on suspicion of his involvement in the heist. Whilst the reluctant MP does so successfully, Dakin's reprieve is fleeting as he is eventually caught in an elaborate set-up orchestrated by DI Matthews.

Following the violent and bloody chaos of the wages snatch and its aftermath, the narrative draws to a close in a two-part showdown which begins in the magnificent

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<sup>3</sup> Venetia's social background is representative of the blurring of class boundaries taking place from the 1960s onwards and makes contemporary reference to members of the aristocracy who mixed with underworld figures such as the Kray Twins. This was a key theme in the Channel Four documentary series *Toffs and Crims*, the first of which exposed the alleged relationship between notorious East End hardman John Bindon and Princess Margaret. 'The Princess and the Gangster', *Toffs and Crims*, Channel 4, 9 February 2009.

<sup>4</sup> The character of the sexually adventurous Gerald Draycott makes reference to Conservative MP Lord Boothby, with whom Ronnie Kray was alleged to have had a sexual relationship. Boothby had also maintained a longstanding affair with Dorothy Macmillan, wife of Prime Minister Harold Macmillan.

dereliction of Wandsworth Gas Works. A powerfully evocative shot depicts Dakin and Wolfe dwarfed by the cathedral proportions of the soaring steelwork as they make their way through the imposing space to confront Edwin (Joss Ackland) – the one person who knows the whereabouts of the money from the robbery. Edwin is flanked by Dakin’s two heavies, Duncan and Webb (Tony Selby and Del Henney); they have kidnapped Edwin from hospital, where he had been held under 24-hour police guard having been transferred from prison for treatment.

The *mise-en-scène* is significant here, as Edwin is dressed in pyjamas and wrapped in a blanket, the vast industrial landscape serving to emphasise the vulnerability of this frail and sickly man. He informs Dakin that the money is hidden close by, and the camera follows Dakin’s Rover as they drive alongside the arches of a railway viaduct to retrieve it. Holding Edwin at gunpoint, Dakin’s frustration grows as the ailing man feigns confusion over the exact location of the stash. However, the gang leader’s obvious impatience with Edwin’s fumbling swiftly turns to psychotic rage as Wolfe yells out that the police have arrived, and it dawns on Dakin that Edwin has betrayed them. Without hesitation, he fires three fatal shots, leaving Edwin face down in the dirt.

The subsequent scene exemplifies graphically the dual role of space and hierarchy within the narrative. The railway viaduct borders one side of a vast piece of flattened urban wasteland; council flats and a building site complete the boundary, and the appropriately impotent towers of Battersea Power Station punctuate the skyline. The wasteland represents a liminal space – a space of transition with regard to Dakin’s stature and his hold over those concerned. The camera scans the perimeter of this anomic arena, focusing intermittently on groups of bystanders who look down on the unfolding drama from the building site, and the balconies and walkways of the flats. When Matthews suggests to Dakin that ‘You can’t put the frighteners on all of [these witnesses]’, Dakin responds ‘If I looked at any one of them they’d piss in their pants, because I’m VIC DAKIN!’, to which the sardonic Matthews retorts ‘Used to be.’ After a further brief exchange, the camera offers a point-of-view panning shot as Dakin surveys the onlookers staring down from their vantage points above him. Roaring in desperation, he utters the film’s final words: ‘Who are YOU looking at?’. For once wishing to escape ‘the gaze’, Dakin’s rhetorical question registers his lack of power and status outside the confines of his own sycophantic world.

### **Britannia and the 51<sup>st</sup> State**

Whilst the often subtle use of *mise-en-scène* within Michael Tuchner’s *Villain* is a strength, particularly in terms of space and place, its use in conjunction with Gangland iconography in Douglas Hickox’s *Brannigan* (1975) almost renders the film a pastiche, despite underpinning the producers’ intention to market the film to

audiences in both the UK and the United States in an attempt to counter dwindling box office returns. The narrative revolves around the quest of the eponymous police officer to locate and retrieve a member of the Chicago underworld who is on the run in London.

Whilst capitalising on the generic convention of Gangland film, certain iconographic elements (including the casting of John Wayne in the starring role) render British production *Brannigan* almost indistinguishable from a Western narrative at times, bearing out Warshow's observations discussed in Chapter One regarding the similarities between the two genres.<sup>5</sup> Representing a blatant reinforcement of Brannigan's masculinity through such iconography, the sequence behind the opening credits features his badge of office (mirroring that of the sheriff in the Western) and his revolver – an iconic Colt Diamondback .38 Special.<sup>6</sup> These images are augmented by the phallic symbolism inherent within repeated extreme close-ups of one of the weapon's bullets standing on end.

In narrative terms, a cinematic montage of London's heritage sites provides a patriotic spatial backdrop to the incursion of a transgressive foreign other in the guise of a Chicago Mafioso, but also Wayne's eponymous US police lieutenant from whom the hood is on the run. Brannigan's alien presence in England's capital city (complemented by Wayne's alien presence in a Gangland narrative) replicates the generic trope in the Western in which the outsider rides into town to aid the local sheriff in restoring law and order. Nonetheless, in terms of space and place, the presence of foreign interlopers from both sides of the law constitutes a violation of territorial propriety here: the steadfast, unrelenting Englishness of the narrative's locations is consequently reinforced by the otherness of Brannigan and his prey.

The film opens in Brannigan's home town, a spatial setting established through a brief cinematic tour of the Chicago cityscape, together with its underworld, its freeways and its airport. Following the arrival of Brannigan's flight at Heathrow (confirmed by British-accented announcements), sweeping panoramic views of London emphasize the capital's geographical and cultural identity and, crucially, its difference from Chicago. Throughout the film, the spatial concept of 'London' (cinematic shorthand for 'England') is constructed through a montage of iconographic references that includes the Houses of Parliament, Tower Bridge and the Thames; Piccadilly Circus and Trafalgar Square; mounted Horse Guards riding through Whitehall; and the Victorian arcade of Leadenhall Market. Ben Larkin (John Vernon), the gangster pursued by Brannigan, is seen wallowing in ostentatious luxury at the prestigious RAC Health Club in Pall Mall; Larkin and his lawyer are resident at the Dorchester, complete with Rolls Royce and liveried doormen; and

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<sup>5</sup> Warshow, 'The Gangster as Tragic Hero'.

<sup>6</sup> This is the iconic weapon carried by Steve McQueen in cult film *Bullitt* (1968).



Brannigan is taken to the historic Garrick Club to meet Commander Swann for lunch.

Reinforcing the generic significance of gender, Brannigan is delivered to the Garrick Club's hallowed portals by the female DS assigned as his driver (Judy Geeson). When Brannigan asks 'Aren't you joining us?' she responds 'If I walked in there I'd cause a dozen heart attacks - it's a *men's* club, rules strictly enforced.' In order to gain admittance via the magnificent portrait-lined staircase, the casually-dressed Brannigan is presented with a tie by the porter: this sense of ritual and restricted access confirms the exclusive, gender-specific domain of the 'gentlemen's club' as heterotopian by nature, and evokes an alternative interpretation of Foucault's notion of the 'pious descendants of time and determined inhabitants of space' cited in Chapter One.<sup>7</sup>

Charlotte Brunson has suggested that 'place in cinema is made through the editing together of different spaces which may or may not have any [geographical] proximity'.<sup>8</sup> Accordingly, the virtuality of this constructed London is endorsed by Commander Swann's office which, despite Scotland Yard's actual position north of the river, boasts a panoramic view (north) across the Thames to the Houses of Parliament.<sup>9</sup> Despite the historic and cultural significance of this setting, as with Jules Dassin's *Night and the City* discussed in Chapter Four, *Brannigan* presents a two-tier city: the respectable, constructed veneer of travelogue London, but also its underbelly. The latter is represented here by the cliché of a Soho brothel displaying a scantily-clad female behind a neon sign reading 'Private Tuition in French', and the more realistic, liminal space of a derelict building on desolate mudflats between land and water where the kidnapped Larkin is held hostage by rival gang members.<sup>10</sup>

Whilst the iconography and mise-en-scène are hardly subtle, they nonetheless exemplify the way in which filmic heterotopia is constructed. In a very specific series of spaces, Brannigan is demoted from kingpin to tourist, unfamiliar with his environment and its inherent codes and conventions. Despite the notable difference in physical stature between John Wayne and David Attenborough, Commander Swann is therefore the more powerful, although Wayne's maverick Brannigan repeatedly challenges that hierarchical power - and wins, on occasion.

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<sup>7</sup> Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces'.

<sup>8</sup> Brunson, 'Towards a History of Empty Spaces', p.222.

<sup>9</sup> The office used in the film was in fact situated in St Thomas's hospital (south of the river), which allowed the views across the Thames to Westminster. A further example of such filmic sleight of hand is a scene in which Brannigan detonates an explosive device planted by the enemy in the bathroom of his Battersea apartment; however, the resulting hole in the wall reveals an incongruous view of the Albert Memorial in Hyde Park (approximately three miles away).

<sup>10</sup> The disused Beckton Gas Works provided the effective setting for these scenes.

Swann is on home territory, however, and has history on his side, as evidenced by the multiple visual references to England's heritage. In a final exchange, Brannigan asks 'Do you think you can keep [the two prisoners] safe till I can get a couple of airplane tickets?', a jibe which is countered by Swann's reply: 'Oh, I think we can manage that ... as long as *you* don't lose them once they're back in the colonies!'. It is a response which clearly reiterates a sense of territorial command by invoking the concept of a physical and cultural domain governed by imperial power – a trope replicated within the construct of Gangland itself.

Space is also used in a conceptual sense in Ron Peck's *Empire State* (1987), to the extent that the film's opening raises questions regarding both its genre and temporal setting. Prior to the opening credits, a brief car chase at dawn ends with a vehicle mounting the curb and hitting a lamppost. The camera offers an extreme close-up of the left eye of a young woman in the passenger seat as she drifts in and out of consciousness – in and out of the 'real' world. When she comes to, the girl is clearly dazed and still unsteady on her feet. Tentatively, she makes her way into a nearby building, and then into the lift; when the doors open again, she is faced with the single word 'METROPOLIS' emblazoned across the wall behind an empty reception desk. An automated female voice welcomes the visitor, and asks her to take a seat, adding 'someone will be with you shortly', despite the fact it is still early morning.

Through its *mise-en-scène*, this brief sequence evokes the genre of science fiction rather than Gangland: the sliding doors of the lift replicate those of a spaceship or futuristic interior; the disembodied female voice is reminiscent of countless sci-fi narratives; and 'Metropolis' makes reference to one of the great iconic examples of the genre, Fritz Lang's film of the same name from 1927. The girl, (Cathryn Harrison), does not sit as requested, but walks through the deserted space to an office; it is in disarray, with a chair overturned and an electronic typewriter spattered with blood, the genre shifting here from sci-fi to *film noir*. When she presses a key on the machine, it prints out the message: 'Marion. Remember what I told you. Write it.'<sup>11</sup> Clearly unsettled by what she has read, she glances at some newspaper cuttings by the side of the typewriter, on top of which is a postcard depicting a building identified by its huge neon sign as 'Empire State'. It is only as the film draws to a close that it becomes clear this scene represents the end, rather than the beginning, of the narrative.

The title of the film appears to constitute a straightforward reference to the structure depicted on the postcard, a nightclub and entertainment space around which much of the narrative revolves. Whilst on a night out at 'Empire State', the

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<sup>11</sup> Pre-dating the PC, the electronic typewriter had the capacity to store a line of text before printing it out when the return key was pressed. This piece of *mise-en-scène* therefore contributes to the temporal setting of the narrative.

girl from the opening scene (subsequently identified as 'Marion' to whom the typed message was addressed) meets an investigative journalist (Lorcan Cranitch). He has been sent to the club to write a piece on the drug-related death of two youngsters and the Gangland activity it represents. Having uncovered compromising evidence, the journalist is followed as he leaves with Marion in order to write up the story for his publication, *Metropolis*. When Marion regains consciousness, he has already been abducted by his pursuers: the automated announcement 'someone will be with you shortly' is therefore loaded with potential danger.

In addition to the eponymous nightclub, the concept of an 'empire state' refers to a further plotline – the potential spatial redevelopment of a section of London's Docklands and the surrounding rundown residential area by a wealthy American investor (Martin Landau): it is a deal connoting reverse colonisation and the concept of Britain as America's 51<sup>st</sup> state. The reality of the seamy lives and backgrounds of the Gangland protagonists populating the narrative stands in stark contrast to the luxurious gentrification of the proposed scheme. An additional narrative device concerns the dichotomy between the social implications of replacing the impoverished housing in the area with an elite haven for the super-rich, a spatial reference to the boom in property development that characterised the 1980s.

Space (actual, virtual and imagined) is therefore significant within the text. Having been flown in by helicopter to a champagne reception at which he is expected to sign the contract, the American is shown an impressive scale model – the imagined space of the proposed 'El Dorado'; however, he tells the investment team he wants to take a walk through the 'real London' before making up his mind. As the security gate to the project shuts behind him, he walks forward into a completely different world of decaying, dilapidated housing; graffiti on a wall is dominated by the slogan 'KILL THE RICH SCUMBAG BASTARDS'.

The process of the old being supplanted by the new is a metaphor for the rise to power of a modern style of criminal, a theme prevalent in *The Criminal*, discussed in Chapter Two. In this narrative, the 'old school' is represented by Frank (Ray MacAnally), boxing promoter and owner of *Empire State*. The club is divided into several distinct spaces incorporating a legitimate, up-market members-only boxing club, a restaurant, a number of bars, and various dance floors. It is these dance areas in particular that reflect a distinct 80s ambience: contained within a cavernous warehouse-style interior with spartan décor and 'designer drugs' on offer, they reference the rave culture of the era, reinforced by a diegetic soundtrack of persistent electronic dance music.

Gender is also relevant to this space, as the bars appear to cater for a range of sexual tastes – one being staffed by attractive females dressed in revealing gold lamé leotards and stiletto heels, another by topless, muscle-bound barmen. Accordingly,

male prostitution represents a powerful theme, and rather than the generically conventional depiction of female exploitation and its associated venues, *Empire State* features a *demi-monde* of gay bars, male strippers and rent boys as a key narrative component linking the various sub-plots.

One of the central characters, Paul (Ian Shears), is an ex-rent boy whom Frank rescued at sixteen from the exploitative space of 'the rack' in Piccadilly Circus: a bouncer from the club observes that 'Frank practically brought him up'. Nonetheless, having asked Paul to look over some of his businesses, Frank's protégé ended up taking them for himself and is now *persona non grata* at 'Empire State', particularly as he was responsible for introducing a brisk trade in illegal substances into the club. Angrily, Frank reminds Paul that 'This is my place and I run it clean. I warned you [...] I'll break anyone selling that filth in here.'

Paul is also the mastermind behind the American investment project, choosing 'Empire State' as the venue for the postponed signing of the contracts in a deliberately provocative stance representing a challenge to Frank's power within the Gangland hierarchy. When Frank tries to throw him out, Paul retorts that he will be 'running things around here' soon, because Frank's lease is up for renewal: 'There's a new class of money moving in. This place will be pulled apart, brick by brick and put back together again with a bit of class, a bit of style', a prophecy that reinforces the theme of the conversion of space through redevelopment and gentrification, but also the parallel 'yuppie' rise to power of the new-style criminal.

However, it is the old-fashioned, generically conventional space of the club's boxing arena that represents the setting for the final hierarchical showdown – a bare-knuckle, 'no holds barred' bout, representing Foucault's culture of spectacle once again. A traditional East End boxer fights on behalf of the old-school club owner, whilst an oriental martial arts contender represents the young protégé. Everything rests on the outcome, Frank encouraging the spectators to place ever more extravagant bets and Paul himself wagering all he owns and more in the arrogant belief that he cannot lose.

As the American investor pulls out of the redevelopment deal at the last minute, the audience is witness to the traditional boxer's victory over the martial arts exponent – that of the old school over the new – and thus the young pretender's ultimate failure to usurp his mentor and gain control of his empire. This sense of entrenched Gangland hierarchy is exemplified by John Hill's suggestion that 'the old-style British gangster not only becomes associated [...] with 'tradition', but also with the resistance of small-scale local capital to the globalising economic forces represented by the American'.<sup>12</sup> It is a situation replicated in John Mackenzie's *The*

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<sup>12</sup> John Hill, 'Allegorising the Nation' in Chibnall & Murphy, *British Crime Cinema*, p.166.

*Long Good Friday* (1980, discussed in Chapter Six) and, more specifically, in Mike Figgis's 1988 debut, *Stormy Monday*, which makes reference to the capitalist intervention that changed the face of Newcastle and the North East.

### A Question of Identity

The jostling for hierarchical power and position depicted in *Empire State* as a challenge to entrenched codes and conventions of the old school is a recurrent generic device within British Gangland film; in Antonia Bird's *Face* (1997) it is given a political twist and deployed on two levels – the individual and the institutional. This trope is developed through a narrative featuring a payroll heist carried out by a gang whose members mistakenly declare themselves invincibly 'staunch' as a result of their apparent solidarity. The heist and its bloody aftermath are set against the back-story of gang member and central protagonist Ray (Robert Carlyle), a former political activist whose participation in picket line protests in support of the miners' strike and the Wapping printworkers' dispute during the mid-1980s are shown in grainy flashback at various points.

Violent clashes with baton-wielding police in riot gear followed by the campaigns' respective collapse have resulted in Ray's cynical attitude towards society in general and institutional power in particular, and provide the motivation for his turn to crime: his disillusionment reflects Foucault's thesis regarding the way in which the concepts of 'norm' and 'transgression' within society (together with appropriate punishment for the latter) are formed through ideological discourse emanating from such institutional power.<sup>13</sup>

Ray's Communist-cardholding mother Alice (Sue Johnston) and his girlfriend Connie (Lena Headey) nonetheless remain 'staunch' in their fight against such political injustice: in a contemporary political reference, they are seen protesting against the proposed deportation and consequent torture of Kurdish nationals. In a poignant scene, Ray approaches his mother during the demonstration to ask for an indefinite loan of some money together with her car, as he is being pursued by the police for his part in the heist and its subsequent death toll. Despite their now divergent philosophies on life, Alice has no hesitation in complying.

Alice's parental commitment is mirrored by old-school gang member Dave (Ray Winstone) whose paternal fears for his own daughter prove well-founded as her boyfriend is later exposed as a corrupt police officer. This generically-familiar 'bent copper' is the catalyst for the disastrous aftermath of the heist and therefore stands testament to Ray's claims regarding the insidious nature of institutional power. On the morning of the robbery, Dave is at the wheel of Ray's Volvo as they collect the

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<sup>13</sup> This is a recurrent theme within Foucault's work, including *Discipline & Punish* cited in the previous chapter.

various gang members, including new recruit Jason (Damon Albarn), the teenage nephew of local Gangland boss Sonny (a cameo appearance by Peter Vaughan). Ray's suggestion that Dave drive the car is a subtle intimation of the hierarchy within the gang, as is rookie Jason's position in the back seat.

The robbery has obviously been meticulously planned, but despite successfully smashing through the walls of the depot to retrieve the cash with the aid of a truck-mounted battering ram, they find that rather than the £2 million in large denomination notes they were expecting, there is less than £350,000 in total.<sup>14</sup> Their frustration leads to disagreement when sharing out the proceeds, particularly when Julian (Philip Davis) claims £40,000 in 'expenses' for providing the truck and the getaway car. Having pulled a gun in order to reinforce his point, Julian is overcome by the other gang members and, after a severe beating, reluctantly admits the actual costs were significantly less. Once the money has been shared out the gang members go their separate ways, but this incident has severely ruptured their sense of cohesion and their previously unshakeable trust has been replaced with volatile suspicion.

In a further illustration of the instability of hierarchical power, one by one the gang discovers their stash has been stolen, and a hunt begins for the 'face' responsible for the outrage.<sup>15</sup> Initially, Dave suggests Julian is behind the thefts, but his share has gone too. Suspicion shifts to Gangland boss Sonny, but on arrival at his home they discover his nephew Jason's blood-drenched body, the boy's death caused by a bullet through the neck at point blank range. Realising they are likely to be held responsible, the remaining crew make a swift exit. However, they have been followed by plain clothes police officers who immediately call for fully armed uniformed back-up, and an explosive shoot-out ensues – once again underlining the genre's alliance with the Western.

Colin McArthur's generic category of the 'technology at the characters' disposal' (cited in Chapter One) emphasises the notion of hierarchy between the institutional and the individual within this scene.<sup>16</sup> It is also designed to build upon Ray's flashbacks depicting the violence meted out by police on the picket lines (exemplified by a low-angle point-of-view shot empowering a mounted police officer as his horse rears above protestors), and therefore justifying Ray's antipathy. Having managed to escape the shootout unscathed, Ray is devastated to discover when they meet up later that Dave 'of all people' is the perpetrator of the thefts and their associated murders, as he is being blackmailed by his daughter's boyfriend

<sup>14</sup> This is possibly a reference to a failed payroll heist by Freddie Foreman in 1961, in which the gang was pursued by armed police.

<sup>15</sup> As previously noted, 'face' is Gangland argot for gangster. The film's title is thus a play on words, as the crew attempt to identify the perpetrator of the crime.

<sup>16</sup> McArthur, 'Iconography of the Gangster Film', p.39.

Chris (Andrew Tiernan) – a detective sergeant and the brains behind the payroll heist.<sup>17</sup>

Despite incorporating elements of extreme violence within its tangled networks of power, the credibility of Ronan Bennett's screenplay is enhanced through what Philip Kemp describes as director Antonia Bird's 'acute sense of place', her choice of cohesive locations garnering a generic authenticity.<sup>18</sup> Recognising that 'Bird knows her London intimately and makes vivid, atmospheric use of it', Kemp notes that: 'unlike most London-set dramas where streets distant from each other are lazily spatchcocked together, the geography of each journey in *Face* makes perfect sense'.<sup>19</sup> In contrast to those in *Brannigan*, Bird 'favours locations such as Haringay and the Isle of Dogs over more iconic parts of London', providing 'a framework for [the film's] class-bound politics'.<sup>20</sup>

In addition, therefore, *Face* offers a deeper, philosophical undercurrent, and represents a retrospective critique of Thatcherite Britain: whilst Ray feels betrayed by those in power, his consequent turn to crime ironically demonstrates a similar individualist ethic which sits uncomfortably with the proactive socialism of Alice and Connie. Equally, the gang's 'staunch' solidarity quickly crumbles once the money has been shared out and it becomes every man for himself.

Validating Ray's cynicism, the corruption of hierarchical, institutional power is ultimately revealed as responsible for their catastrophic demise: when the remaining gang members arrive at Chris's flat in an attempt to retrieve their cash, the corrupt DS mocks their naivety in believing he is alone in his corruption. Inadvertently summing up Ray's nihilistic disillusionment, he sneers:

I belong to an institution. Money goes everywhere these days. It doesn't stop at the door of the police station any more than it stops at the door of the hospital or the school. There are no 'public' servants. There is no 'public' service. All there is, is the money – and the people who have it.

Whilst it is clear that Chris enjoys the associated material benefits – he owns an impressive apartment and drives a large Mercedes – equally important to him is the equation of money with power. These material benefits therefore constitute status symbols, and contribute to his constructed identity – the 'face' he presents to the world.

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<sup>17</sup> The corrupt DS had demanded £500,000 from Dave prior to the job, so when the heist netted less than expected Dave had no option but to retrieve the money from the rest of the gang in order to safeguard his daughter.

<sup>18</sup> Philip Kemp, 'Face', *Sight & Sound*, Vol. VII, Issue 10, October 1997, p.48.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> David Morrison, <[www.screenonline.org.uk/film/id/482218/index.html](http://www.screenonline.org.uk/film/id/482218/index.html)> [accessed 24.03.2009] The political theme is reinforced by the film's soundtrack, which includes Paul Weller's 'Everything has a Price to Pay', and Billy Bragg's 'Waiting for the Great Leap Forwards'.

For Ray and the gang, however, armed robbery is simply a challenging alternative to paying taxes on the nine-to-five grind. Throughout the film Dave professes himself 'too old for all this', and in an earlier scene when Jason suggests the possibility of another job, Ray advises him to go straight, revealing that in eleven years with the gang he has spent five of them inside, and 'any money I've had, I could have earned double driving a van or a mini-cab'. When Jason taunts him for what he sees as weakness, saying derisively 'they told me you was 'staunch'!', Ray responds angrily 'Being 'staunch', being 'solid' - it's all *shit!*': it is an outburst echoing Ray's disenchantment with the failure of the Unions in their fight for the common good.

The overriding implication here is that individuals can never beat the might of the system and, more specifically, that crime doesn't pay. Initially at least, this is not a message conveyed by Paul McGuigan's *Gangster No. 1* (2000), which charts one man's determined quest for territorial power and supremacy within the Gangland hierarchy. Whilst McGuigan makes use of extended flashback throughout the film, the narrative begins in the present as the anonymous 'Gangster' (Malcolm McDowell) hosts a ringside table at a prestigious boxing match.<sup>21</sup> Appropriately, the non-diegetic soundtrack to the scene is provided by Sacha Distel's 'The Good Life'.<sup>22</sup>

Drinking champagne from a cut glass flute and smoking a symbolically oversized cigar, Gangster holds court under crystal chandeliers, sharing raucous anecdotes with the assembled company. Suddenly the mood turns, as one of the guests informs the table that 'Freddie Mays is getting out next week.' Immediately, the animated, brightly-lit scene darkens, and the screen is filled with a close-up of Gangster as he registers this information and its implications. The figures behind him move in slow-motion, and the mellifluous tones of the Distel soundtrack are replaced by the ominously discordant notes of John Dankworth's film score.

Following the opening credits, the right side of a split screen depicts Gangster in the present outside the club in dinner jacket, dress shirt and bow tie, leaning against the wall as he comes to terms with the news of Mays' release; the left side of the screen portrays his younger, jean-clad self (Paul Bettany) in a snooker hall. As the left-hand image takes over the screen, McDowell's voice informs us that '*This ... is 1968*'.

In a sequence establishing the prevailing hierarchy, Young Gangster's snooker game is interrupted by a summons to meet Freddie Mays, whom McDowell's voiceover describes admiringly as 'the Butcher of Mayfair [...] The man was a *legend*

<sup>21</sup> Although not addressed by name throughout the entire film, McDowell's character is listed as 'Gangster 55' in the credits, perhaps a reference to his age. His younger self, played by Paul Bettany, is listed as 'Young Gangster'.

<sup>22</sup> 'The Good Life'. Sacha Distel & Jack Reardon. Performed by Neil Hannon.



– he'd only done a copper in Bethnal Green and got away with it!' The camera cuts from an image of Mays descending the steps of the court as a free man to a low-angled shot of an architecturally-extreme tower block. As the camera sweeps up the distorted, vertiginous height of the building, Gangster continues: 'That's how you get to the top – kill a bent cop, make a splash. After that, Freddie was king.'

The building representing this forceful spatial statement is the Lauderdale Tower at the Barbican – appropriately, an example of the 'Brutalist' style of architecture.<sup>23</sup> Whilst in reality not completed until 1974, the cutting edge modernism of the project conveys the mood of the era portrayed in the film. It also stands in spatial opposition to Young Gangster's own less illustrious residence, a meagre, featureless bedsit shown later in the narrative.<sup>24</sup> As Young Gangster takes his place on quilted black leather in the sunken seating area of Mays' opulent penthouse suite, McDowell's voiceover recalls 'What a place – a fuckin' palace!'. It is an observation reinforcing the conflation of space with hierarchical power.

The generic significance of the sartorial accoutrements of such power is reiterated as Gangster recalls Mays' 'legendary entrance': 'In he came, there he was, in those handmade Italian leather shoes, silk socks – and the suit? Do me a favour! The man was class ... a class act ... im-fuckin'-peccable.' As he sits down, Mays is the subject of the younger man's lingering visual appraisal, the voiceover declaring 'What a man. I mean a *real* man.' The moment is clearly homoerotic, but also conveys the youngster's nascent lust for hierarchical power and all its trappings. As with the corrupt police officer in *Face*, these 'trappings' are the tools with which the public persona is meticulously constructed.

In a scene repeating the association between power and constructed identity, Young Gangster is invited to join Mays' firm. Making reference to the phallic symbolism of the oversize Havana in the opening scene, Mays opens a cigar box from which he takes a roll of notes (£500), telling his new recruit to 'get kitted out'. The fact Mays keeps such amounts in a cigar box reinforces the cash culture of the Gangland fraternity; with regard to gender and sexuality, the gesture also constitutes a ritualistic bestowal of manhood. Consequently, the tyro appears in the following scene clad in a Jermyn Street suit rather than scruffy jeans and tee-shirt, an appropriately sharp haircut replacing his previous collar-length locks. Young

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<sup>23</sup> The term 'Brutalism' is derived from the French phrase 'beton brut' – trans. 'raw concrete' – used by Le Corbusier to describe the many post-war buildings he designed using this material. In Britain, it was first used in 1954 by architects Alison and Peter Smithson.

<sup>24</sup> According to the film's Press Book, production designer Richard Bridgland recreated a meticulous 1960s setting for the flashbacks with the aid of Erwin Fieger's photography together with advice from Bruce Reynolds (one of the perpetrators of the Great Train Robbery) who acted as special consultant. In addition, Bridgland and McGuigan scoured London for appropriately '1960s modern' locations.

Gangster's sartorial makeover complies with generic convention, echoing that of Chas in *Performance* (Chapter Two), and George in *Mona Lisa* (Chapter Five), but also the transformation of Marissa in *The Flesh is Weak* (Chapter Two), and Gwen in *Good Time Girl* (Chapter Five).

Ensuring he secures his place within the Gangland hierarchy, Gangster's first job replicates the balcony scene in Tuchner's *Villain*, as he and two associates dangle their victim from an upper walkway of a block of flats. He then earns praise from Mays for his 'creativity' when, suggesting they 'get this car back on the road', he knocks a jacked-up taxi cab down onto the owner working beneath it in the street, because he has failed to meet his protection payments. However, even Mays believes Young Gangster has taken things too far when he and two henchmen exact violent retribution on a rival acolyte with the aid of golf clubs on a pitch and putt course; landing the now virtually lifeless victim in hospital for nine months, the final blow is accompanied by the celebratory yell 'Fore!'.

Reiterating the fundamental significance of territorial space to the Gangland hierarchy, this sadistic reprisal was motivated by the torching of Mays' prestigious nightclub by a rival gang. Mays and Young Gangster pay the opposing leader, Lennie Taylor (Jamie Foreman), a visit in his own emporium, which is very downmarket by comparison.<sup>25</sup> The two gang lords sit on opposite sides of a table, their respective henchmen strategically placed behind them in an almost medieval configuration of power. They reach an uneasy truce and a celebratory toast is proposed; however, as they drive away in Mays' E-Type Jaguar, the pair are derisive regarding Taylor's inherent lack of class, Mays declaring 'Warm champagne? What a fuckin' prick!'.

Mays suggests going 'for a real drink' at a West End club, and during the journey Young Gangster mentally itemises Mays' clothes and jewellery as representative of his power and Gangland status. When Mays notices him looking at the pearl tie pin he is wearing, he removes it and gives it to the younger man. This is a significant moment as the pearls on the tie pin form the initials FM, and the gesture is once again symbolic: unbeknown to Mays, it is the first step in Young Gangster's appropriation of both his identity and his empire. His growing obsession is visually reinforced when they reach the club and Young Gangster watches Mays through a glass partition, lining up his own reflection so that his head appears on Mays' body: a Lacanian manifestation of the perfect self.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Jamie Foreman is the son of infamous underworld enforcer Freddie Foreman, who worked for the Kray Twins during the 1960s.

<sup>26</sup> Bridgland says he responded to the 'mythic quality' of the narrative, suggesting that 'What takes over is the image. The mirrors, gold and glitter play a part because [they're] empty, like the hollow victory Gangster scores'. *Gangster No. 1* Press Book.

Later in the evening, in a sequence exemplifying the generic significance of gender and sexuality, club hostess Karen (Saffron Burrows) mistakes Young Gangster for Freddie Mays when she is sent by her boss to their table and notices the initials 'FM' on the pearl tie pin; he does not disillusion her. When Mays returns to the table, the mistake is rectified and Karen offers to light Mays' cigar for him. Taking it between her lips, the erotic symbolism involved in this lingering, sensual gesture causes the petulant Young Gangster to intensify his psychotic stare as he observes the couple from a distance, having been dismissed from the intimacy of this space to the dance floor by Mays. His jealousy is palpable: his position at Mays' side has been usurped.

Subsequently, Young Gangster discovers that Lennie Taylor is planning to have Mays killed. The young pretender recognises this as an opportunity to seize power. Instead of warning his boss, he therefore allows the attack to take place, watching from his car as Mays is gunned down and Karen (now Mays' fiancée) has her throat slit by Taylor's henchman, Maxie (Andrew Lincoln). Later, as he drives to Taylor's apartment in order to execute the rival gang lord's meticulous and protracted murder, he notes the symbolic (permissive) 'green light' en route; he then takes stock of his Beretta and tools on the back seat. Entering the lift, and verifying his credentials for the ordeal to come, he declares himself 'Superman, King Kong!'. Nonetheless, this apparently invincible conflation of superhuman and wild beast is accompanied by a silent Munch-like scream, further articulating his psychosis.<sup>27</sup>

On entering the apartment, Young Gangster immediately establishes his domination, disabling Taylor by shooting him in the leg. He then turns up the volume on the stereo in order to drown out the screams of his victim before methodically laying out his instruments of torture: an axe, hammer, pick and chisel complement a craftsman's roll of smaller hand tools.<sup>28</sup> He then undresses down to his underwear, lining up his shoes and folding his designer clothes meticulously in order to preserve their immaculacy before setting about the bloody execution: mirroring Chas's obsessions in *Performance*, the mise-en-scène highlights not only the significance of appearance, but the identity and inherent power this clothing conveys.

In a graphic interpretation of the cinematic gaze, the scene is shot using a camera attached to the victim's forehead, the viewer being subjected to the terrifying spectacle of blows raining down from Taylor's (horizontal) point of view, the screen

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<sup>27</sup> Edvard Munch's painting *The Scream* (first edition 1893) has been linked to the depiction of depersonalisation disorder, in which an individual suffers a distortion of sense of self and their environment: it is therefore appropriate here. The blood-red background to Munch's painting is replicated in Lennie Taylor's sitting room as the traumatised Young Gangster surveys the carnage.

<sup>28</sup> The stereo is playing Anthony Newley singing the schmaltzy 'Why?', the first line of which states 'I'll never let you go. Why? Because I love you' – a lyric articulating his demonic obsession.

fading to black from time to time as he drifts in and out of consciousness. A similarly psychotic fate awaits henchman Maxie. The irony of this protracted and bloody rite of passage is that it is entirely self-imposed: in an extreme rendition of Foucault's culture of spectacle, Young Gangster is proving to the Gangland hierarchy, to Freddie Mays, but ultimately to himself, that he has what it takes to be a worthy successor to 'the king', 'the Butcher of Mayfair'.

Continuing his quest for power, Young Gangster is subsequently surprised to discover that both Mays and Karen survived their attempted assassination, yet when Mays is wrongly arrested for Taylor's murder, he does nothing to intervene. As the gang squabbles in Mays' apartment over the way forward in the light of their leader's thirty-year stretch, Young Gangster assumes control, moving across the room to take Mays' literal and metaphorical seat. Gangster's voiceover proclaims: 'The King is dead. Long live the King!', reaffirming the irrefutable concept of successional, hierarchical power. Gangster proceeds to chronicle his subsequent rise over the next three decades through a montage incorporating a generically-appropriate portfolio of high stakes gambling, horse-race fixing and drug trafficking: by 1981, he declares 'I've got 300 people working for me - top that, Mr Mays!'. However, in keeping with director Paul McGuigan's assessment of the narrative as a Greek tragedy, this meteoric rise is followed by a spectacular and very literal fall.<sup>29</sup>

On his release, Mays is summoned for an audience with his usurper. Reiterating the distorted balance of power achieved by his former employee, Mays' presence in his own appropriated penthouse suite mirrors Young Gangster's appearance by 'royal command' in the same space thirty years earlier. Mays now has a Bachelor of Arts degree and a revised perspective on life: despite vigorous attempts, including laying a revolver in his lap and demanding that Mays shoot him, Gangster cannot rile his former idol. Declaring that he is looking forward to his future with Karen as 'an old man in a cheap suit', Mays leaves the apartment having rejected not only the patronising, conscience-salving bundles of cash he has been offered by his former protégé, but his Gangland persona. In the closing scene, symbolically stripped to his underwear once again, Gangster is hovering on the roof of the tower block. Having set the wads of cash alight, he throws them at the night sky screaming 'I'm number one, number one, number one ...', before throwing himself over the edge: 'No. 1' has finally been exposed as 'No One', his existence empty and meaningless.

### **Morphology of the Gangland Tale**

Identifying Antonia Bird's *Face* (1997) as a precursor that 'set the bandwagon rolling', Chibnall identifies films in the Gangland genre released between 1998 and 2001 as British cinema's most significant cycle since the New Wave of the 1960s,

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<sup>29</sup> A 'featurette' on the DVD of *Gangster No. 1* (2002 edition) carries a brief interview with McGuigan.

further suggesting that previous landmarks such as *Get Carter* (1971) and *The Long Good Friday* (1980) have been used in the cycle 'not as templates, but as resources to be affectionately rummaged through for inspiration and ironic quotation'.<sup>30</sup> *Gangster No. 1* is no exception, Malcolm McDowell's appearance clearly referencing his character Alex DeLarge, the psychopath with a taste for 'ultraviolence' in Stanley Kubrick's *A Clockwork Orange* (1971). A fleeting glimpse of Lennie Taylor's henchman Maxie fleeing from Young Gangster wearing nothing but a pair of socks also recalls an observation at the beginning of *Get Carter* in which an 'actor' in a pornographic slideshow is described by one of the party as 'bollock-naked with his socks still on'; in addition, Maxie's torture and subsequent defenestration by Young Gangster make reference to Alex DeLarge's suicide bid.

Such postmodern playfulness and intertextuality is not only reliant upon familiarity with individual film texts, but the repetition of spatial and narrative devices, iconography and mise-en-scène in order to construct identifiable generic convention, a phenomenon illustrated by the preceding analyses of selected film texts from the past sixty years. Whilst the specifics may fluctuate from narrative to narrative and from decade to decade, the heterotopian concept of a Gangland underworld is nonetheless constructed through the reiteration of the protagonists' relationship with a familiar array of space and place, both interior and exterior.

With specific reference to generic space, Chibnall likens Gangland film to 'an urban folk tale', evoking a world in which 'mini cabs and sex shops, spiliers and lock-ups, pawn brokers and bookies' proliferate.<sup>31</sup> To that list could be added clubs and casinos, race tracks and boxing rings, brothels and revue bars, penthouse suites and lodging houses, dance halls and bingo halls. Liminality is embodied by the 'gateway' of the church and the cemetery; by the transitory space of trains and railway stations; by the indeterminate state of bombsites and wasteland; and by the seaside pier and promenade – neither land nor water.

## Conclusion

The aim of Chapters Two and Three has been to map the underworld articulated through the medium of British Gangland film. The generically-familiar components making up Gangland space and place in these textual analyses (noted above) have been complemented by those relating to gender, sexuality, and hierarchical power structures. In terms of gender, the sexualisation of the female body in examples such as *The Flesh is Weak* and *The Small World of Sammy Lee* is a trope intrinsic to her predominant inferiority to the male in the majority of Gangland narratives. Together with the portrayal of female characters within generically conventional,

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<sup>30</sup> Steve Chibnall, 'Travels in Ladland' in Robert Murphy (ed.), *The British Cinema Book*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. (London: BFI Publishing, 2001), p.282.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p.284.

male-dominated spaces such as the strip club, the night club and the brothel, Judy Geeson's nonchalant acceptance of her exclusion from the 'gentlemen's club' in *Brannigan* represents an alternative example of gendered hierarchy offering a very literal interpretation of a woman's 'place' within the male domain.

With regard to the structure implicit within male-oriented Gangland hierarchies, power and status are often achieved through the fear of extreme violence and its execution, such as that meted out in *Performance*, *Villain*, and *Gangster No. 1*. In addition, the underworld dynamics depicted in *The Criminal*, *Empire State* and *Gangster No. 1* illustrate that trust is habitually abused, resulting in a dangerous vulnerability. Rather than a cohesive, 'staunch' brotherhood, the obsession with power which drives Gangland relations frequently results in alienation, isolation and a loss of the supremacy on which such hierarchies are predicated.

Territorial space is also significant, often representing a catalyst in the struggle for hierarchical power. In addition, the male protagonist's dynamic relationship with his immediate environment offers an alternative articulation of space within each of these narratives, epitomising Warshow's premise discussed in Chapter One. Given the central role of the male protagonist within these storylines, gender and gendered power relations are a further concern; nonetheless, male domination is not a foregone conclusion, with a number of females challenging their generically conventional sexualisation, subservience, or dependence.

The preceding examples highlight the cohesive, organic nature of the relationship between space, gender and hierarchy within British Gangland film. This symbiosis will be examined further with particular reference to the male protagonist in Chapters Four and Five, whilst the two final chapters will focus on the role of the female within the genre. More specifically, Chapter Four examines texts from the British Spiv Cycle: as will be discussed, these narratives are set against the temporal backdrop of a post-war black market and therefore constitute a sub-genre exemplifying the reflexive nature of Gangland film and its role as cultural artefact.

## CHAPTER FOUR

*The Spiv & the City:  
Spieling his way  
through the  
Urban Landscape*

As noted in the Introduction, although it is possible to trace the origins of the British crime film back to the earliest days of cinema, it is generally accepted that the more specific genre of British Gangland film came to the fore immediately following the Second World War. This period also saw the production of a sub-genre of films identified in retrospect as the British Spiv Cycle, examples from which represent the focus in what constitutes the first of two chapters examining the male protagonist.<sup>1</sup>

The following chapters will illustrate that contemporary themes and issues which prevail throughout the Spiv Cycle are further developed in the wider Gangland genre across the decades. These include the significance of space, and in particular the gangster's relationship with his urban environment; the centrality of the male protagonist to the narrative and consequent hierarchical gender relations; and the wider hierarchical and territorial power structures constituting Gangland itself. This chapter therefore recognises the contribution of the Spiv Cycle to the establishment of early generic convention within an identifiably British interpretation of the Gangland genre as a whole, and as specifically representative of its era of production.

### **Socio-Historical Background**

The 'spiv' was a dubious character with a persuasive sales pitch or 'spiel', who made a living through procuring and selling goods of questionable origin which were in short supply due to rationing. According to Peter Wollen, 'the crucial difference between the spiv - a flashy black-marketeer - and the classic gangster, was the degree of sympathy the spiv attracted among audiences weary of wartime and post-war shortages'.<sup>2</sup> Suggesting an almost mythical Robin Hood status, Wollen adds to his definition that 'black-marketeers may have been outside the law, but they performed an obvious public service'.<sup>3</sup>

The films discussed in this chapter feature the spiv as a principal protagonist, standing as a prime example of the point made in Chapter One regarding the organic nature of filmic genres and their capacity to respond to and reflect contemporary circumstance. Generic narrative elements common to the cycle included the shortage, even after the War, of food staples as well as luxury goods, allowing the spiv to proliferate on the screen as well as in society at large.<sup>4</sup> Prior to their post-war depiction on film, it was the wartime conditions of a few years earlier

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Wollen states that 'The Spiv Cycle of British films first came into view towards the end of the war. In essence, it represented a mutation in the traditional British crime film that took place in response to the changing pattern of crime itself'. Wollen, 'The Vienna Project', p.16.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p.17.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Examples of the former include milk, cheese, eggs and meat; of the latter, clothing and petrol. Alcohol and tobacco were not actually rationed, but were in short supply and so difficult to acquire.



which had initially been responsible for allowing the black market – and thus the spiv – to thrive, namely a combination of the deprivations imposed by rationing; blackout regulations offering potential criminals the cover of darkness; and, as noted by Robert Murphy, a much reduced police force (in terms of manpower but also the effectiveness of those remaining), due to large numbers of the younger and fitter men being drafted into the armed forces.<sup>5</sup> Spatially, this rendered shops, factories, warehouses, railway depots and docks vulnerable to both organised gangs and opportunists. Hierarchically, the imposition of rationing offered the opportunity for illegal trade on a sliding scale: from the individual housewife after an extra ration of meat to feed the family, to large-scale organised crime.<sup>6</sup>

In simplistic terms, this meant that every member of the cinema audience had experienced both the lack of various commodities (from ‘nylons’ and cigarettes to basic food supplies), and therefore the desire to acquire them. The general frustration that pervaded alongside an active resentment against the government-imposed rationing system complies with Foucault’s definition of a ‘local’ or ‘immediate’ anti-authority struggle; his cited examples include ‘opposition of the power of men over women, of parents over children, [...] of administration of the ways people live’.<sup>7</sup> The Spiv Cycle thus reflected certain scenarios with which the audiences themselves had been acquainted to a greater or lesser degree, albeit depicted within an often dark and melodramatic context.

### Critical Reception

Whether despite this context or because of it, the sub-genre quickly became a popular box office attraction. Consequently, the film industry lost no time in combining depictions of the spiv’s underworld activities with stylistic influences from Italian neo-realism and American *film noir* (itself drawing on German expressionism),<sup>8</sup> to produce a uniquely British cinematic interpretation within narratives which were set, almost without exception, in specifically English (rather than ambiguously British) urban environments.<sup>9</sup> Although successful at the box

<sup>5</sup> Robert Murphy, ‘The Spiv Cycle’, *Realism and Tinsel: Cinema and Society in Britain 1939-49* (London & New York: Routledge, 1992), p.147.

<sup>6</sup> Murphy (*ibid.*) cites the theft of 14,000 ration books from a government office in Hertfordshire in 1944, as well as ‘600,000 supplementary clothing coupons from a London employment exchange, and 100,000 ration books from the Romford Food Office’, the estimated value of the latter being half a million pounds on the black market.

<sup>7</sup> Michel Foucault, ‘The Subject and Power’ in H. Dreyfus and P. Rabinov (eds.) *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), p.218.

<sup>8</sup> Tim Palleine, ‘Spin a Dark Web’ in Chibnall & Murphy, *British Crime Cinema*, pp.27-36, discusses the Spiv Cycle as a legacy of Neo-realism and *film noir*. See also Andrew Dickos, ‘German Expressionism and the Roots of the Film Noir’, *Street with No Name: A History of the Classic American Film Noir* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2002), pp.9-19.

<sup>9</sup> Chibnall and Murphy suggest that ‘the crime film’s relevance is overwhelmingly to English (as opposed to British) metropolitan society’. *British Crime Cinema*, p.15.

office, these films nonetheless attracted frequent adverse press from the critics. As Jim Leach points out:

It is hardly surprising that these films, vividly depicting a criminal underworld thriving on social corruption, populated by psychologically disturbed characters, should have been seen [by their critics] as a symptom of “post-war depression and spiritual confusion”.<sup>10</sup>

As will be seen, however, it was not just the depiction of black marketeering and ‘social corruption’ to which the critics objected, but the violent means through which such criminal pursuits were executed; a generic depiction of the specific maltreatment and exploitation of women was also a concern. This chapter will therefore consider the spatial context within which these narratives are played out; the spiv’s relationship with both his environment and the females within it; and the hierarchical power relations that prevail, through analysis of four films: *Waterloo Road* (1945), *They Made Me a Fugitive* (1947), *Noose* (1948), and *Night & the City* (1950). These analyses will also reaffirm the contribution of the sub-genre to the capacity of Gangland film to reflect its circumstances of production through the depiction of contemporary notions of norm and transgression.

### Theoretical Background

Foucault observes that ‘in the Middle Ages there was a hierarchic ensemble of places: sacred places and profane places: protected places and open, exposed places: urban places and rural places (all [concerning] the lives of real men)’.<sup>11</sup> Similarly, the underworld inhabited by the spiv in the films discussed here is indeed considered profane within the context of Government regulation; it is certainly protected by those who wish to maintain and prolong its existence; and it is always urban rather than rural, and defined by explicit boundaries. Allied to such boundaries within the broader spatial context of Gangland in general are territorial ‘manors’, those governed by individuals such as Jack Spot and Billy Hill during the 1950s and, later, the Kray Twins, being viciously defended.<sup>12</sup>

In addition to the spatial specificity of the texts under consideration, the temporal specificity of wartime black marketeering and ‘spivery’ also bears witness to Bakhtin’s notion of the chronotope cited in Chapter One, in which he suggests that generic tropes have the capacity to evoke the contextual circumstances of narrative production. Applying Bakhtin’s theory, narratives within the Spiv Cycle were born out of the ‘contextual circumstances’ of wartime rationing, to which a proactive black market was intrinsic. Supporting the contention that film is

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<sup>10</sup> Jim Leach, *British Film* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p.163.

<sup>11</sup> Foucault, ‘Of Other Spaces’, p.22.

<sup>12</sup> Robert Murphy’s *Smash and Grab: Gangsters in the London Underworld* (London: Faber & Faber, 1993) offers a comprehensive background history.

heterotopian by nature, the concept of the chronotope complements Foucault's suggestion that 'heterotopias are most often linked to slices in time – which is to say that they open onto what might be termed, for the sake of symmetry, 'heterochronies''.<sup>13</sup> Foucault uses the museum as an example of the way in which such 'slices in time' are evoked through the collections on display, but the same principle is equally effective when considering film as cultural artefact. The following analyses of four representative texts from the Spiv Cycle exemplify this premise.

### ***Waterloo Road* (1945)**

Sydney Gilliat's *Waterloo Road* offered one of the spiv's earliest filmic incarnations, in which Stewart Granger played smooth operator and ladies' man Ted Purvis. The narrative moves between a number of different spaces which can be identified as intrinsically public or domestic in orientation. The opening sequence presents a dynamic montage of steam trains, railway bridges and station platforms thronging with forces personnel, anchoring the narrative to its wartime setting.<sup>14</sup>

For Foucault, the train represents 'an extraordinary bundle of relations'; he suggests that heterotopias in general 'function in relation to all the space that remains', and the railway carriage or compartment exemplifies that principle as its meaning exists in a state of flux according to its geographical location and functional deployment at any one time.<sup>15</sup> The train is a recurring motif throughout the film, and this sequence immediately reinforces the transitory nature of life for those in uniform, as well as establishing the narrative device of the physical and emotional separation imposed by the War.

Exemplifying film's capacity to manipulate time, the subsequent sequence begins with a further close-up of a whistling steam train thundering into a tunnel, connoting the passage of time to the present. The camera pans to an overview of a busy street; a barrel organ and the cries of a costermonger contribute to the hurly-burly. This shot is followed by a close-up of a single door in the same street, bearing the credentials 'Dr. Montgomery, Physician & Surgeon'. As the door opens, the doctor (Alastair Sim) is seen leaving his surgery and passing the time of day with a market stall holder. He stops at a stall further up the street to buy a wooden toy (also a train, repeating the motif): it is a first birthday present for 'the Colter baby', the doctor reflecting that 'I played quite a part in his little story myself'. The narrative is then told in flashback as Montgomery recalls the events over 24 hours in

<sup>13</sup> Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces', p.26.

<sup>14</sup> Although not released until 1945, production on *Waterloo Road* was completed in 1944 (i.e. prior to the end of the War); however, the majority of the narrative is set in 1941 and told through flashback.

<sup>15</sup> Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces', p.27.

1941 that initially threatened the parents' marriage (and thus the baby's conception), together with his own role in reuniting them.

As the following analysis demonstrates, the tripartite theme of space, gender and hierarchy is complemented by the centrality of the working class Colter family to the narrative. Their traditional terraced house is home to Mrs Colter Senior; elder daughter Ruby and her husband; daughter-in-law Tillie; younger daughter Vera; and their lodger. A clear hierarchy is maintained, with Ruby (Alison Leggatt) perceiving herself as superior to sister-in-law Tillie (Joy Shelton), and young Vera (Vera Frances) constantly being reprimanded for listening in or commenting upon adult affairs; in addition (and much to her chagrin), Vera's lowly status is emphasised when her ration of bacon is given to the lodger as a matter of course.

Physically separated from this domesticity, Tillie's husband, Jim (John Mills), is away on active service. Living cheek by jowl with Jim's family simply compounds Tillie's sense of isolation, adding to her frustration that the war has denied the couple the chance of setting up their own home and acquiring their own territorial space. As a result, Ruby has become suspicious of Tillie's allegedly platonic relationship with local 'flash Harry' Ted Purvis, and writes to brother Jim to alert him.

An early scene depicts the family in the local air raid shelter – a converted underground station. It is a crowded space that blurs the boundaries between the public and the domestic, having become a 'home from home' for the locals: young Vera is seen settling down for the night in a make-shift bunk bed, and the following morning a shirtless Ted Purvis uses an electric shaver plugged into an overhead socket to restore his suave appearance. Although initially resistant, Tillie's loneliness makes her vulnerable to Purvis's advances, and as she leaves the shelter she succumbs to his invitation to meet under the clock at Waterloo railway station: the 'here and now' represented by the motif of the clock together with the public neutrality of this transitory space offering the illusion of safety.

The area surrounding Waterloo Station is Purvis's operational terrain, but it is also Jim Colter's home territory – the space in which he grew up, and of which he has comprehensive knowledge. The neighbourhood therefore represents the spatial setting for a power struggle between the two men, in which location plays a significant role. Unbeknown to Tillie, Jim has gone absent without leave as a result of Ruby's letter, and is frantically trying to establish Tillie's whereabouts in order to determine whether there is any foundation to his sister's allegations. The urgency in Jim's search is two-fold: not only is he anxious to find his wife and save their marriage but, having gone AWOL, he is now on the run from the institutional power of the military police. In a race against time, Jim is seen sprinting through the network of back streets around Waterloo with its corner shops, tattoo parlours and

alleyways, his superior knowledge of the 'manor' enabling him to evade capture. However, Jim's search for Tillie inevitably takes the viewer on a neighbourhood tour of the seedy world of Ted Purvis: 'pin-table king, racketeer and bully'.<sup>16</sup>

Jim's search begins at the 'Lucky Star', an amusement arcade owned by Purvis, who appears to be rather more affluent than the archetypal spiv: in addition to the arcade, he owns a ladies' hairdressers and a small fleet of taxis ('I bought a couple as soon as the war broke out'). Finding Purvis absent from the 'Lucky Star', Jim tries the hair salon but without success. On asking the manageress and erstwhile girlfriend of Purvis (Jean Kent) whether she has any suggestions as to where he might look, she replies:

Now let's see. Ted might have taken [Tillie] to the dogs, only there's no dogs today; he might be at the pictures picking up a few hints from Victor Mature; or he might be at the Alcazar, jitterbugging ... I think that about covers his war effort!

In addition to reinforcing his image as a Lothario and establishing his territorial domain, the girl informs Jim that Purvis has paid for a forged medical certificate, enabling him to avoid being called up and thus continue his black market operations for which the 'Lucky Star' is a front.

The sequence that follows exemplifies the evocative power of the photographic image as a heterotopian trope, also offering a further heterotopian reading of the railway carriage. As Tillie sets out for her rendezvous with Purvis, she passes by a photographer's studio and notices her own wedding photo displayed in the window. This halts her in her tracks as, in a further flashback, she fondly recalls her wedding day and the plans for the future she and Jim made during the train journey at the beginning of their honeymoon. Within his definition of heterotopia, Foucault includes the railway carriage as intrinsic to the rituals associated with the honeymoon, suggesting that traditionally, the 'young woman's deflowering could take place 'nowhere' and, at the moment of its occurrence, the train or honeymoon hotel was indeed the place of this nowhere, this heterotopia without geographical markers.'<sup>17</sup>

Following this moment of romantic reverie, Tillie resolves that when she reaches the rendezvous she will tell Purvis she has changed her mind. Inevitably, however, although pretending to accept her rebuttal, Purvis subsequently dupes her into having lunch with him at the local pub, and then accompanying him to the 'Alcazar' dance hall where he plies her with more alcohol. Further highlighting the distinction between public and personal space, Purvis persuades Tillie to go back to his flat above the 'Lucky Star' on the pretext that it is his birthday and he has invited some

<sup>16</sup> Murphy, *Realism and Tinsel*, p.149: this is a citation from a contemporary review.

<sup>17</sup> Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces', p.24.

friends round. The camera acknowledges a sign at the top of the stairs stating 'Private. No Access'. The word 'Private' is also etched into the glass of the entrance door to the flat, demarcating the boundary between Purvis' public and personal domains. Equally, it differentiates the flat from the crowded public space of the air raid shelter, suggesting Purvis' less than honourable intentions once the door marked 'Private' closes.

As Dr Montgomery makes his way to the underground shelter, he observes Purvis taking Tillie up to his flat. Finding Jim in the shelter, Montgomery tells him of Tillie's whereabouts, advising Jim to 'look out for his right hook' as it transpires Purvis has a track record in the boxing ring to add to his *résumé*. A generically typical space, the boxing ring represents a spatial metaphor for the inevitable fight for honour which ensues as, despite the mayhem of the air raid which is now raging, Jim races over to the 'Lucky Star': following the encounter, the serviceman emerges somewhat battered but victorious, his wife restored to his side. The film closes with Dr Montgomery presenting Jim Colter, Jnr. with his birthday gift in a home now flanked by rubble and bomb sites, the doctor musing on how future generations will view their parents' efforts during the War.

The Colter family is representative of the solidity of the working classes so often portrayed in film shorts, documentary, and fiction film of the time as the backbone of Britain. However, the message here is somewhat patronising, as within this social hierarchy it takes the superior insight of the educated middle-class doctor to facilitate the reconciliation between the married couple. As cited above, Montgomery himself takes credit for playing a key role in the process prior to telling the story in flashback: the fact he is ostensibly the film's 'narrator' renders him a voice of authority, thus reaffirming his hierarchical status.

Montgomery apparently considers himself an expert on gender, too, as in a man-to-man chat explaining Tillie's uncharacteristic behaviour, he reminds Jim that the war is harder on 'womenfolk', as they have 'more of the beaver instinct in 'em [...] Give 'em half a chance and they'll build a home out of an old plank and a rusty nail, and a cradle out of an orange box. Deny it to them and an oppressed and rebellious nature runs amuck!'. In addition, when Montgomery presents the wooden train to the Colter baby in the final scene, he admonishes Tillie for cuddling the child when he cries, adding that 'he'll make a good citizen if you bring him up the way I tell you!'. The doctor's remark infers that Tillie would not have the skills to do so without his guidance, his professional qualifications overriding any natural maternal instinct she may possess as a woman.

Jim Colter and Ted Purvis are also used effectively to represent the classic hierarchical opposition between good and evil. Whilst everyman Jim is rewarded by the return of his wife, super-spiv Purvis is informed by Dr Montgomery that the

forged medical certificate he had purchased on the black market had ironically been accurate all along; he therefore warns Purvis that 'wine, women and song will be playing an increasingly *unimportant* part' within his particular future.

This oppositional theme is underpinned by the intercutting of the antagonists' physical altercation over Tillie with actuality footage of fire-fighters attempting to combat the devastation being wreaked all around them by the air raid. As in *Hue and Cry* (discussed in Chapter Two), this renders their conflict metonymic, not only questioning the relevance and intensity of the issues between the two rivals within the context of a world war, but also offering a parallel between their fight and that between Britain and Nazi Germany as one between right and wrong; and between the bravery, morality and decency of Jim and people like him, and the selfishness, greed and avarice symptomatic of Purvis's corrupt underworld.

### *They Made Me a Fugitive* (1947)

Nonetheless, the portrayal of the criminal world in *Waterloo Road* was tame in comparison with the interpretation unleashed upon an unsuspecting public by Alberto Cavalcanti in *They Made Me a Fugitive*, released in June 1947. Hostile reviewers lost no time in condemning elements within the film such as 'the degradation and beating up of women', together with its 'violence, brutality, and sordidness'.<sup>18</sup> Of additional concern to the critics was their belief that films in the crime genre as a whole not only reflected a general disintegration of British post-war society, but actively encouraged what Arthur Vesselo, in an oft-quoted contemporary article for *Sight and Sound*, describes as 'an unpleasant undertone, a parade of frustrated violence, an inversion and disordering of moral values, a groping into the grimier recesses of the mind.'<sup>19</sup> Citing *They Made Me a Fugitive* in particular, and highlighting Cavalcanti's uncompromising directorial style, Vesselo criticises the film as:

a tale of sordidness, corruption and violence almost unrelieved. It is too easy to claim that this film is merely a copy of the American gangster-model, or that it is defectively put together. In fact, the atmosphere of London's underworld is all too plausibly conveyed [...]; the film is horrifyingly well-made.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>18</sup> *Monthly Film Bulletin* Vol.13, No.148, April 1946, p.45; C.A. Lejeune, *Observer*, 29 June 1947.

<sup>19</sup> Arthur Vesselo, 'The Quarter in Britain', *Sight and Sound*, Vol.16, Issue 63, Autumn 1947, p.120. Demonstrating the longevity of such concerns, similar issues were raised by Richard Attenborough in an article in which he condemns director Guy Ritchie for the 'pornography of violence' exhibited by *Lock Stock and Two Smoking Barrels* (1998) and *Snatch* (2000). *Sunday Telegraph*, 22 October 2000.

<sup>20</sup> Vesselo, 'The Quarter in Britain', p.120.

Commenting further on Vesselo's tirade, James Chapman observes that 'the fact its director was a renowned realist film-maker made all the more deplorable its focus on criminal low-life.'<sup>21</sup>

Also considered 'deplorable' (and emphasising a contemporary concern with class hierarchies) was that the film's central protagonist, ex-RAF officer Clem Morgan (Trevor Howard), finds post-war civilian life so monotonous and unfulfilling that he turns firstly to drink and then to crime for some excitement; he thus exchanges the heterotopian hierarchy of the armed forces for that of the underworld (and, later, the prison). It is the binary opposition between the previously respectable and courageous de-mobbed officer and the archetypal low-life characters of the gang Morgan joins recklessly (whilst drunk) on the toss of a coin, which rendered the plotline especially distasteful to critics. This particular scenario takes place in a bar, the inebriated Morgan introducing his girlfriend to the gang's leader, Narcy (Griffith Jones), as his 'popsie', before raising a toast to the newly formed 'Narcissus & Morgan - the poor man's Fortnum & Mason!'.<sup>22</sup> The toast confirms the nature of Morgan's new career (trading in luxury goods on the black market), and the description of his girlfriend complies with the prevailing view of women within the underworld he is about to enter.

Hierarchical power relations represent a generically conventional concern, both within the heterotopian construct of Gangland and the society within which it exists. Accordingly, Narcy views Morgan's social standing as an attribute and an important contribution to their potential: "E's got class. Not that I'ven't goddit meself, but 'e was *born* into it'. Narcy's personal method of connoting such 'class' is through affectation and ostentation (an ornately monogrammed 'N' appears on his shirt pocket, handkerchief and ring, as well as embellishing a clock in his office); he also uses a cigarette holder and is often to be seen filing his nails. It is through such dandyism that he sets himself above the others within the gang's hierarchy, and this perceived acquisition of status by means other than birth and education can be read as a metaphor for post-war social mobility. In this case, however, it is not just status that is achieved by Narcy, but power.

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<sup>21</sup> James Chapman, 'Sordidness, Corruption and Violence almost Unrelieved': Critics, Censors and the Post-war British Crime Film', *Contemporary British History*, June 2008, Vol.22, No.2, p.189. In the 1930s, Cavalcanti had been invited by iconic documentary-maker John Grierson to join him at the GPO Film Unit, where he worked in various capacities on a diverse range of films, taking over as Acting Head when Grierson left in 1937. In 1940, Cavalcanti moved to Michael Balcon's Ealing Studios, where he applied his experience and noted realist flair to, among other projects, a number of propaganda films. He subsequently went on to direct *They Made Me a Fugitive* for independent production company Associated Films Corporation.

<sup>22</sup> Whilst usually referred to as 'Narcy', Narcissus is the character's full surname - reference to the eponymous myth serving to emphasise his high self-regard.



Foucault suggests that 'power must be analysed as something which [...] functions in the form of a chain' and that it is 'employed and exercised through a net-like organisation [within which] individuals are the vehicles of power, not its point of application'.<sup>23</sup> As Foucault's model is representative of dynamic power relations rather than stasis, it is appropriate to a hierarchical Gangland culture in which individuals are not simply the recipients of power but a medium through which it is both activated and realised.

Consequently, despite the apparent effeminacy of his constructed persona, Narcy maintains his domination through a sadistic and voyeuristic enjoyment of 'violence as spectacle' which he inflicts indiscriminately on both male and female victims, either himself or by proxy – a further contributory factor to the critics' appalled response. Once again, it is the oppositional aspects of Narcy's character – the apparent effeminacy disguising the underlying vicious brutality; the metal knuckle-duster concealed within the silk-lined velvet jacket – that render him so menacing, thus contributing a specific dynamic to the narrative. A particularly disturbing scene depicts him salaciously inviting his muscle-bound sidekick to beat a gang member's terrified girlfriend with a studded leather belt – his 'coaxer' – to force her into revealing her lover's whereabouts. The fact she relies on her looks to make a living renders the potential beating even more malicious.

Not all women are depicted as helpless or vulnerable, however. When Morgan is sentenced to 15 years in Dartmoor having been framed by Narcy for killing a policeman, he makes his escape and breaks into an isolated house on the moors inhabited by a chillingly composed wife (Vida Hope) and her alcoholic husband. In binary opposition to the male-oriented, regimented space of the prison, this domestic space is very much a female domain: as Morgan approaches the house, curtains billow invitingly from the open French windows of an elegant sitting room in which the wife is playing classical music on a grand piano.

Challenging generically conventional gender portrayals along with her apparent gentility, it quickly becomes evident that the desperation engendered by her husband's condition renders this female a force to be reckoned with, once again evoking Foucault's notion of the dynamics of oppression. The woman tries to persuade the previously starving and bedraggled Morgan to kill her drunken spouse in return for the food and new set of clothes she has given him. When he refuses, she simply does the job herself, subsequently accusing Morgan of the murder and setting the police on his trail, thus reinforcing the *noir* tendencies of the film.

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<sup>23</sup> Michel Foucault, 'Two Lectures', in Colin Gordon (ed.), *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings* (Brighton: Harvester, 1980), p.98.

As Sara Mills observes, for Foucault power is ‘something which someone does or performs in a particular context’, and this scene exemplifies his view of power as ‘strategic’.<sup>24</sup> Within British Gangland film in general and Cavalcanti’s *Fugitive* in particular, such strategy inevitably involves violence. Nonetheless, despite Vesselo’s assertion (above) that the ‘sordidness, violence and corruption [are] almost unrelieved’,<sup>25</sup> the film also contains elements of comic relief in which a further feisty female character, Aggie (Mary Merrall) is implicit.

Aggie is a lady of a certain age with a taste for the Gothic, who appears to hold some sway over ‘the boys’ with whom she drinks and smokes cheroots, presiding over their numerous card games. Her Gothic tendencies therefore complement the extravagantly-named (and tongue-in-cheek) ‘Valhalla Co. Undertaking Service’ which provides the front for Narcy’s gang: with his dark, slicked-back hair, sartorial elegance, and penchant for coffins, a caricature of Dracula is surely inferred.

As in *Waterloo Road*, the opening sequence offers the apparent everyday banality of a busy street in the East End of London through its mise-en-scène, which also reinforces the temporal setting of the narrative. In addition to various bicycles and pedestrians, a milkman pushing a handcart stops outside the local dairy. He is followed by a horse-drawn hearse which comes to a halt at the Valhalla funeral parlour next door: in keeping with its proprietor, the hearse is ostentatiously ornate, the horses sport black feathered plumes, and the undertakers wear top hats, with wing collars and pin-striped trousers beneath their long black overcoats.

Removing a coffin from the rear of the hearse, they ask various onlookers and a passing policeman on the beat to stand to one side: ‘Let’s offer a little respect here, please.’ Aggie greets them with due reverence (hands together, her gaze cast heavenwards, uttering the phrase ‘*sic transit gloria mundi*’) as she opens the door, allowing them passage to the rear of the premises.<sup>26</sup> However, as the lid of the coffin is removed, rather than the body of ‘the late Alfred George Dabcock’, a stash of ‘Gold Flake’ cigarettes is revealed.

Whilst the scene constitutes a comedic foil for the violence yet to come, the funeral parlour can also be seen as a liminal gateway – not only to the ‘underworld’ of the black market, but to a further heterotopian space, that of the cemetery; moreover, the concept of ‘Valhalla’ extends beyond that to a fully-fledged utopia –

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<sup>24</sup> Mills, *Michel Foucault*, p.35.

<sup>25</sup> Vesselo, ‘The Quarter in Britain’, p.120.

<sup>26</sup> *Sic transit gloria mundi* translates as ‘thus passes the glory of the world’: clearly a pun, given the actual contents of the coffin.

and one which, as the Foucauldian example of the cemetery, is also hierarchical and thus offers an oppositional parallel to the dystopia of Gangland itself.<sup>27</sup>

Reflecting contemporary concerns regarding the power of film to influence its audience (and emphasising the concept of such texts as chronotopic), the original submitted script had been the subject of various amendments, in particular with regard to the toning down of brutality and violence.<sup>28</sup> Nonetheless, a scene in which Narcy not only hits his girlfriend Sally (Sally Gray) in the face but kicks her repeatedly once she has fallen to the floor, remained intact. A scene that did have to be amended was an exchange early on in the submitted scenario, when Morgan is perturbed to find the gang is planning to deal in cocaine in addition to domestic black market goods.<sup>29</sup> It is Morgan's objection to this (and his consequent decision to leave the gang) that prompts Narcy to frame him for the manslaughter of a police officer in order to have him imprisoned and therefore render him unable to compromise the gang's affairs.

Morgan's consequent incarceration in Dartmoor is conveyed through a series of expressionistic spaces. When Sally comes to visit him, they sit opposite each other in a booth, communicating through a chicken-wire screen; alternating point-of-view shots depict Sally's face in soft-focus through the mesh, whilst by contrast her reciprocal view of Morgan is sharply delineated. In addition, the shadows and distorted angles of the prison interior are juxtaposed with Morgan working as part of a chain gang in the ironic 'freedom' of Dartmoor's vast windswept expanse under dark and stormy skies. Reinforcing his sense of post-war anomie, it becomes evident on Morgan's escape that the inhospitable and desolate moorland is much more his terrain than the urban metropolis of his new 'career': it is a motif which expands, yet exemplifies, Warshow's thesis regarding the protagonist's relationship with his environment.

The theatre in which Sally performs in the chorus offers a further example of the expressionist influence. She is seen on stage in a dance troupe supporting a whimsical duet between two lovers in a woodland glade, a scenario heightening the

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<sup>27</sup> Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces', p.25. Foucault describes the cemetery as 'a hierarchy of possible tombs'.

<sup>28</sup> Chapman, *Contemporary British History*, p.189.

<sup>29</sup> Despite Morgan's refusal to have anything to do with drug trafficking (which was one of the few positive messages within the script), the censors insisted that in any allusion to the drug, cocaine should be referred to as 'sherbet' (BBFC Scenario Reports 1946-47). Within the general context of such overt sadism and brutality, this seems a minor point; nonetheless, the film-makers adhered to the censors' request. The censors' disquiet regarding this film and its implications for British cinema is discussed by a number of commentators including James C Robertson ('The Censors and British Gangland' in Chibnall & Murphy, *British Crime Cinema*, pp.18-19), James Chapman (*Contemporary British History*, p.189), and Steve Chibnall (*Brighton Rock* (London: I B Taurus, 2005, pp.31-32).

sordid reality of her world outside. This space also bears out Foucault's assessment of the theatre as heterotopian as he suggests that it 'brings onto the rectangle of the stage [...] a whole series of places that are foreign to one another'.<sup>30</sup> After the performance Sally returns to her dressing room where the brightly-lit mirrors offer the viewer multiple images of her beauty, before Narcy makes an appearance. 'Well, if it isn't Superman!' quips Sally, a remark which is repaid with a sharp slap across the face and the observation 'That was just to get me hand in'. In a further expressionist motif, as Narcy looms over Sally his own face is reflected in the mirror as a monstrous distortion before he proceeds with the rest of the beating.

The film's finale takes place at night in the Valhalla funeral parlour and the rain-lashed street outside. The camera reveals the enormous letters 'RIP' gracing the ridge of the Valhalla's rooftop over a drainpipe channelling the incessant rainwater onto the cobblestones below. The interior tracking shot that follows is rich in iconography: among the clutter of funereal paraphernalia and a stock of carelessly stacked coffins, a framed notice declares 'It Is Later Than You Think', a plaster angel sounds the last trump, and the ornate decoration on a Victorian mantel clock incorporates both a skeletal grim reaper and an hour-glass representing the 'sands of time'. When Morgan makes his appearance, a fight to the death ensues.

Whilst the altercation initially involves the entire gang, Morgan nonetheless gains the upper hand and Narcy flees, making his exit through a skylight. The climax depicts the two men grappling on the rain-slicked tiles of the steeply-pitched roof, dwarfed by the letters RIP, before Narcy loses his footing and falls to the street below. The police have arrived and witness the scene, but despite Sally begging the dying Narcy to tell the truth in order to clear Morgan's name, he refuses to do so; instead, his final words express the hope that Sally and Morgan 'both rot in hell.' Nonetheless, in spatial terms Narcy is lying outside 'Valhalla' as he breathes his last; this scenario therefore infers that it is he who will fail to gain admittance to Utopia.

*They Made Me a Fugitive* exemplifies generic concerns with hierarchy relating to the machinations of power within its criminal enclaves. Hierarchical power structures are also epitomised by the disproportionate male/female pecking order played out through the narrative's dysfunctional relationships. Andrew Clay has noted that within the Spiv Cycle in particular there are either "good" women who help the hero, or 'bad' women who impede or threaten his safety', and *They Made Me a Fugitive* certainly complies with this principle.<sup>31</sup> Whereas Sally not only helps Morgan but promises she will wait for him until he is released from prison, the woman whose husband Morgan refuses to kill exacerbates his situation by framing him for a second murder he did not commit.

<sup>30</sup> Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces', p.25.

<sup>31</sup> Andrew Clay, 'Men, Women and Money' in Chibnall & Murphy, *British Crime Cinema*, p.54.

**Noose (1948)**

Edmond T Gréville's *Noose* represents an unusual alternative to the generic formula, as in this instance it is the female who takes the lead, and the 'hero' who helps her in her task. Establishing its spatial setting, the film opens with a wide panning shot across initially anonymous urban rooftops, but it is just possible to distinguish Big Ben and the dome of St Paul's on the distant horizon. This opening sequence is intercut with a poster declaring 'We Work or Want!', referring to a legitimate workforce struggling to make ends meet in a post-war economy, as opposed to those making a living through dishonest means on the black market: immediately a hierarchy is established based on conformity and transgression. The wording on the poster fades through a dissolve to a shot of a lamp post reflected upside down in a large puddle. Within his thesis on heterotopia, Foucault offers the mirrored reflection as an example: it is also a recurring motif throughout Gréville's film, this initial image insinuating the distortion and disequilibrium of the world we are about to enter, and reiterating the genre's expressionist influences.<sup>32</sup>

As the camera pans up from the pavement to a church beyond, a priest in a traditional broad-brimmed hat walks down the church steps to pin a notice on the board outside. A close-up of the lettering on the notice board reveals the church as that of 'St Giuseppe, Soho', further establishing the location for the narrative that follows. The fact that this is clearly a Catholic church (named for an Italian saint, and, as evidenced by his dress, presided over by a priest rather than an Anglican vicar) is significant to the closing moments of the film. The religious space of the Church itself is also offered here in counterpoint to the inference of the earlier distorted reflection: a low-angled shot looking up to the roof of St Giuseppe's reinforces the classic dichotomy between good and evil.

In a change of tempo, the next scene introduces the sub-genre's familiar protagonist: the jaunty, flashily-suited Bar Gorman (Nigel Patrick), who walks briskly through the streets of Soho. Obviously well known in the area, he greets all and sundry with a friendly quip. Just before reaching his office, he stops to buy a buttonhole from an elderly flower seller, asking after her husband before giving her a generous tip and blowing her a kiss. Gorman is business manager and second in command to the Italian 'Knucksie' Sugiani (Joseph Calleia), an iconic Godfather-style figurehead, so named due to his fondness for two solid silver knuckledusters which he has no hesitation in using on intransigent females.

Sugiani's numerous criminal activities include counterfeiting, smuggling, black marketeering, murder, and possibly prostitution through his prestigious night club, the 'Blue Moon', (although, in deference to contemporary censorship regulations,

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<sup>32</sup> Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces', p.24.

this particular activity is not overtly referenced). In a sense, both are caricatures, Nigel Patrick offering an energetically comedic interpretation of Gorman as a generically conventional Cockney spiv. The Maltese actor Joseph Calleia, a Hollywood stalwart well-known for his Italian and Hispanic character roles, plays the suave Sugiani – an older, more sophisticated and obviously wealthy ‘entrepreneur’ with the power to attract a string of beautiful women. However, whilst Sugiani’s apparent charm disguises a ruthless disregard for life, Gorman diverges from generic convention when it becomes clear that he is a family man who is seen on more than one occasion affectionately addressing the photograph of his wife and daughter displayed upon his desk.

Carol Landis plays glamorous American fashion journalist Linda Medbury, working for London newspaper the *Evening Echo*; her fiancé, ex-commando ‘Jumbo’ Hoyle (Derek Farr), is a sports writer on the same paper. Linda is currently writing a feature on Dior’s ‘New Look’, a significant sartorial moment in women’s fashion during the late 40s/early 50s.<sup>33</sup> However, she becomes side-tracked when learning of Sugiani’s underworld activities in an encounter with his ex-girlfriend in a bar: the girl (possibly a prostitute) is distraught, having just had to identify the dead body of her best friend, strangled by ‘the Barber’ (Hay Petrie) on Sugiani’s orders.

Intrigued by this brush with the underworld, Linda attempts to persuade the paper’s editor that she should write an investigative piece on Sugiani; he refuses, however, telling her she should concentrate on her New Look feature instead, adding that he has ‘30 men who could write that kind of story ... but we don’t have gangsters over here!’ In addition to the inference that she should refrain from judging Britain by the standards of her own country, his comment also reflects gender stereotyping: the fashion world rather than the underworld being a far more suitable milieu for a female journalist. In a spirited attempt to counter her editor’s patriarchal stance – and upholding a view prevalent at the time – Linda points out that black marketeers like Sugiani ‘make the queues longer and the rations shorter’ (thus inferring such an investigation would be in the public interest), albeit to no avail.

Further challenging contemporary gender stereotyping, Linda is nonetheless determined to expose Sugiani as a Gangland overlord and put paid to his regime of vice, despite her fiancé reminding her what had become of previous individuals who had attempted to do the same. Maintaining the affectionate yet condescending tone that prevails throughout, Hoyle succinctly objectifies Linda when he informs

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<sup>33</sup> Introduced by Christian Dior, the style had been dubbed ‘the New Look’ by *Life* magazine in 1947. It deliberately countered the austerity of wartime fashion (dictated by the rationing of fabric), incorporating a slim, fitted jacket but a voluminous mid-calf skirt that used a minimum of ten yards of fabric, rendering the look glamorous and extravagant rather than utilitarian.

her that 'I have a use for this pretty thing you know, and I don't want it found in a river!'. When it becomes clear she is not to be dissuaded, Hoyle visits an old comrade at arms, Pudd'n Bason (John Slater), at his boxing gym.

The masculine space of the gym is frequented by a number of ex-servicemen who have returned to their pre-war employment of market porters, stallholders and cabbies, referenced by the poster in the opening sequence. They plan 'Operation Noose' together – a military-style raid on Sugiani's empire using the porters and their network of contacts as a commando unit. Echoing the finale of *Hue and Cry*, the men have rounded up 'barrow boys from Covent Garden', 'porters from Billingsgate' and 'cabbies from Chelsea', such spatial specificity reinforcing the power of their collaboration. However, there is concern as to how the men will distinguish one another in the fray from those fighting for Sugiani, and it is decided those on the side of Operation Noose will wear football shirts – a further visual and cultural reference to both their working class loyalties and their solidarity.

Although the police warn Hoyle not to do anything 'outside the law', the men are determined to go through with the final raid on Sugiani's 'Blue Moon'. During the fracas, Sugiani makes his escape through a window, down some scaffolding, and into St Giuseppe's opposite. Whilst on the scaffolding, he brushes against a dangling rope, the end of which is tied into a loop for lifting building materials; it is a reference to the film's title and a portent of his fate.

When the police enter the church, Sugiani is leaning forward in a pew apparently deep in prayer, the insinuation being that, as an Italian, he is re-embracing his Catholic faith, seeking absolution (and thus redemption) for his past sins. However, when they approach Sugiani, it becomes clear he has been strangled with a silk stocking that still lies around his neck – the noose of the film's title and the trademark of the Barber, who is seen fleeing the church before being knocked down by a police car travelling at speed to the crime scene. Gorman is subsequently apprehended and arrested, and Hoyle and Linda are seen in the street outside the 'Blue Moon', walking away together over the shards of broken glass that represent the disintegration of Sugiani's empire.

Geoff Brown and Bryony Dixon suggest that, throughout his body of work, Gréville's 'baroque visual style [is] marked by mobile camerawork, surprising transitions, and much play with reflections in mirrors and puddles.'<sup>34</sup> As already noted, the heterotopian mirrored reflection is a recurring theme here, beginning with the inverted lamp post in the puddle in the opening scene. This distortion is reiterated later in the 'Blue Moon' when a beautiful couple performs a Latin

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<sup>34</sup> Geoff Brown and Bryony Dixon, *Reference Guide to British and Irish Film Directors*, <<http://www.screenonline.org.uk/people/id/1114980/index.html>> [17.07.2008]

American showpiece on a mirrored dance floor. The camera frequently focuses on their reflection rather than on the dancers themselves, suggesting a world whose perfection can only ever be illusory. Sitting at a table nearby, Sugiani's latest girlfriend picks up a multi-faceted cut-glass stopper from a decanter, lifting it to her eye to view the same scene fractured into a myriad of kaleidoscopic images; this ruptured entity is in turn symbolic of the distorted, dystopian nature of reality.

A further example occurs earlier in the film. Linda is pouring a drink for her fiancé from a mirrored cabinet, her face being reflected (once again, upside down) at the point in the conversation where she refuses to give in to his plea not to go ahead with her investigation into Sugiani. The scenario suggests two sides to her character: the dutiful future wife and the independent free spirit. This duality is reinforced when her fiancé suggests that 'all I want to do now is to marry you and settle down in some quiet little place'. Rather than independent career-girl Linda bridling at the inference of such domesticity, she replies that she has also 'dreamed of that little place - and I can feel the gingham apron tied around [my waist]!'. It is an exchange suggesting her interest in Sugiani is a passing phase, an aberration, and that she will subsequently settle down and take on the more gender-appropriate role of Hoyle's wife.

A further scene in which the reflection motif plays a part is Gorman's arrest in the flat of a dressmaker, Nelly, to whom he has become something of a benefactor: the incident is simultaneously depicted in a full-length double mirror in her workroom. The confident self-assurance of the man about town depicted in the opening scenes has now evaporated. Nelly has made a beautiful dress as a gift for Gorman's daughter, but realising he cannot go home, he asks Nelly to give it to his wife along with an envelope of money. The dual reflection in the mirror throughout the scene suggests the possibility of two alternate lifestyles, the honest and the dishonest. Recognising he has chosen the wrong option, Gorman speaks fondly of his wife saying that 'if I'd listened to her this would never have happened'; he also declares to Nelly that 'I wish I'd been one of the world's workers, like you' - a further reference to the official moral stance on the spiv.

### ***Night and the City (1950)***

In an article for *Sight and Sound* from 1946, Roger Manvell observes that 'there is a certain psychological flavour to [these] gangster pictures, since they are dealing for the most part with people in a pathological condition.'<sup>35</sup> This 'flavour' is well-served by the expressionist style embraced by many of the film-makers concerned, Gréville's use of mirrors and reflections in *Noose* reinforcing the distortion and

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<sup>35</sup> Roger Manvell, 'The Gangster Comes Home', *Sight and Sound*, Vol. XV, No. 58, p.63.



psychological dislocation that prevails, which in turn evidence the film's classic *film noir* influences.

A further *noir*-influenced example within the Spiv Cycle is Jules Dassin's *Night and the City* (1950), which was filmed on an unusually tight schedule as Dassin (who had fled to London to escape the McCarthyite communist 'witch hunt') was under such political pressure to complete; as a result, much of the film was completed at night, an element which complemented the darkness of the narrative. Whilst stylistically emulating classic American *film noir* with its chiaroscuro lighting and disorienting camera angles, the bi-product of Dassin's pressured creativity nonetheless constitutes a photographic record of an authentic post-war London – a temporal and spatial specificity that simply could not have been replicated had the film been shot in a different era, or exclusively in the studio rather than on location.

Once again, the narrative's setting is established from the outset. Behind the opening titles the camera pans across the majestic skyline of London – the Houses of Parliament and Big Ben, Embankment, Tower Bridge – moving on to the neon-lit energy of Piccadilly Circus by night. Immediately, a very specific version of London is established, one which is temporally located through the double-decker buses, cars and taxi cabs of the period that dominate the busy streets. However, the visual establishment of this London is a deliberate strategy designed to reinforce its hierarchical binary opposition to the underworld setting of the narrative that subsequently unfolds: the establishment of a respectable façade beneath which a dystopian London operates.

In the seconds that follow, we are shown a man apparently running for his life: the fleeting presence of American anti-hero Harry Fabian (Richard Widmark) in 'official', respectable London is established by this frantic flight from his pursuers being set against a backdrop that includes St Paul's Cathedral. However, Fabian's journey swiftly takes him away from this environment across the bombed-out wasteland of post-Blitz London, down dark streets and menacing alleyways, until he eventually reaches sanctuary.

This sanctuary takes the form of a further oppositional setting: a neat and tidy room, a feminine space with its homely touches that include a vase of flowers and a table set for afternoon tea – a world away from the chaotic, sordid underworld to which Fabian belongs. It is the bed-sitting room of his long-suffering girlfriend (Gene Tierney), whom Fabian now desperately tries to convince to invest in his latest money-making scheme: a suburban greyhound track. She declines, but nonetheless scrapes together enough money to pay off the debt from his previous 'project' in order to get the creditors off his tail.

As a result, Fabian returns to the streets with a confident air: replicating Bar Gorman's jaunty walk on his way to work in *Noose*, Fabian is greeted by a number of familiar faces as he makes his way through night-time Soho and, like Gorman, he stops to buy a buttonhole from a flower seller, giving an accordion player a generous tip. His destination is the 'Silver Fox', a club run by former hostess Helen (Googie Withers) for whom he acts as a hustler. Handing out costume jewellery to enhance their appearance, Helen coaches her girls in the skills of extracting money from the punters.

Despite her gender, Helen is proactively implicit in the generically familiar commodification of the female body. The exploitation depicted within the confines of the club is parodied in a later scene in which prosthetic limbs, wheelchairs, eye patches and signs reading 'Totally Disabled Through War Service' are handed out to a team of able-bodied grifters by 'the Fiddler', one of Fabian's underworld contacts who runs a begging scam on the streets. As with the jewellery doled out to the hostesses at the 'Silver Fox', these various accessories will be returned at the end of the shift, along with a cut of the takings.

These early scenes emphasise the central role of illicit financial gain to underworld narratives and, in Fabian's case in particular, its equation with hierarchical status. Whilst inevitably failing to realise his investment in the greyhound track, Fabian subsequently creates the opportunity to establish a commercial wrestling enterprise. Having accumulated sufficient funds, he opens an authentic gymnasium, identified by the erection of a grandiose sign above the entrance proclaiming 'Fabian Enterprises'. He is also seen taking delivery of a nameplate for his desk reading 'Harry Fabian, Managing Director', reiterating his desire for status within the Gangland hierarchy.

However, despite the best of intentions, Fabian is unwittingly encroaching on both the literal and metaphorical territory of 'Kristo' (Herbert Lom), a wealthy and powerful expatriate Greek, and the local all-in wrestling entrepreneur. Infuriated by the American's audacity, but also by the fact that Fabian is inadvertently responsible for the death of his father, Kristo puts out the word that he wants Fabian's own life in retribution. What follows is a further frenetic tour of the city for the viewer, as the camera follows Kristo's lethal instruction being spread rapidly on the streets with which we have become familiar. However, it is at this point that the two incarnations of London merge, as we see the word being passed from one shady contact to another, but often within the spatial arena of official London. This demonstrates that the two worlds are inextricably linked after all, and that despite its respectable façade, the undesirable elements of a twilight underworld lie just beneath the surface, threatening to disrupt the status quo at any time.

The failure of Fabian's venture followed by the invincible revenge of his rival constitute a dynamic climax to the narrative, as Fabian is pursued once again, this time to his inevitable death. The claustrophobic, squalid and traitorous Gangland world he so nearly managed to escape spills over into the more abstract space of a misty River Thames at dawn, its Stygian atmosphere offering a metaphor for death and the afterlife. Fabian's lifeless body is unceremoniously dumped into the water under the watchful eye of Kristo, whose supremacy is implied through an extreme low-angled shot as he surveys proceedings from his superior vantage point on the majestic Hammersmith Bridge.

Although generally the British press were vociferously critical of Dassin's interpretation, many claiming the director had conveniently 'made up' his version of London, every exterior scene was in fact filmed on location within the city and its hinterland.<sup>36</sup> Rather than the studio-enhanced simulacrum inferred by his critics, this film therefore represents a temporal snapshot of a photogenically diverse cityscape: one comprised not solely of historical buildings and tourist sites, but a teeming underworld of clubs, pubs, dog tracks, begging scams, wrestling venues and smuggling operations, peopled with a rich, almost Dickensian cast of characters.

The heterotopian quality is therefore created through elision – London is realised through a polymorphous montage of actual locations. One of the rare contemporary British reviews to recognise the contribution of location shots to the film's veracity appeared in *Today's Cinema* in April 1950, the reviewer enthusiastically describing the 'authentic London backgrounds, brilliantly photographed and artistically presented', citing them as 'an important asset' to swift plot development, and suggesting they 'paint a lurid picture of underworld life.'<sup>37</sup>

Such spaces construct a familiar environment within the Gangland genre; however, with regard to gender, the *noir* influences in *Night and the City* are also exemplified through two atypical female characters in particular. Whilst Dassin incorporates generically conventional club singers, hostesses and gin-soaked has-beens as a matter of course, nightclub manageress Helen is equal in ambition to Fabian, but with the ability to play the long game. Having worked her way up through the ranks to marry the wealthy owner of the 'Silver Fox' purely for his money (her carefully calculated power lies in the fact that he genuinely loves her), she now has plans to double-cross him and open her own establishment.

A further example is Irish riverwoman Anna O'Leary (Maureen Delaney), who runs a smuggling operation from a barge on the Thames. An unconventional character, she appears happy with her lot and therefore disinterested in Fabian's glib

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<sup>36</sup> Interview with Jules Dassin. *Night and the City*. British Film Institute. 2007. DVD.

<sup>37</sup> 'Night & the City', *Today's Cinema*, 14 April 1950, pp.10-11.

offer of 'a life of ease and plenty' should she accept the invitation to invest in his enterprise. Recognising the folly his offer represents, she responds that 'Anna O'Leary don't take no chances: I'm a hard working, hard-headed business woman'. These are qualities she shares with Helen, along with a disregard for contemporary views on a woman's 'place': spatially, the liminal separation of her living quarters from solid land stands as a semiotic reinforcement of her non-conformity.

### Conclusion

Robert Murphy describes *Night and the City* as 'marvellously evocative', suggesting that 'Dassin brings more of London to the screen than any film before the 'Swinging London' films of the sixties'.<sup>38</sup> Dassin's use of space as a constituent element within the narrative exemplifies Robert Warshow's concept of the protagonist's relationship with his environment, for this post-war London is not simply a backdrop to Fabian's frenzied attempts to raise cash or to escape his predators: it is a landscape with which he interacts, and of which he and rest of the underworld fraternity are an integral part.<sup>39</sup>

Similarly, in *They Made Me a Fugitive*, Narcy is indelibly tied to the East End (and the black market) through the Valhalla funeral parlour, whilst conversely Morgan appears ill at ease and an interloper within this environment, reaffirming that spivery is not his natural calling. In *Waterloo Road*, Purvis has established his identity through the appropriation of space in the form of an amusement arcade and a hairdressing salon, taking further ownership of his territory through the acquisition of a fleet of taxis. This sense of spatial tenure is heightened in *Noose*, in which Gorman and Sugiani are portrayed as respected figures within their domain, the opulence of Sugiani's headquarters in particular representing a powerful articulation of his authority.

Gender is similarly significant to the narratives analysed in this chapter. As with portrayals of space, representations of gender are often combined with the notion of power and therefore hierarchy. Generically conventional females such as Tillie in *Waterloo Road* and Sally in *They Made Me a Fugitive* serve to reinforce the dominance of the male protagonist, Tillie in particular communicating a female vulnerability which heightens the power of the dominant male - both the predatory (Ted Purvis) and the heroic (Jim Colter).

As exemplified by Helen and Anna O'Leary in *Night and the City*, the Spiv Cycle also incorporates female characters who appear to challenge such convention, their otherness serving to reinforce the genre's stereotypes: further examples include career girl Linda in *Noose*, and the woman who frames Clem Morgan for the murder

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<sup>38</sup> Murphy, *Realism and Tinsel*, p.164.

<sup>39</sup> Warshow, 'The Gangster as Tragic Hero'.

of her husband in *Fugitive*. However, it is made clear that Linda's long term ambition is the domestic conformity represented by her forthcoming marriage, whilst Morgan's female adversary resorts to murdering her husband as the only means of escape from a repressive patriarchy. Nonetheless, Foucault is adamant that such power structures are not necessarily totally negative, as they can galvanise the potentially repressed into action. Within the context of the Spiv Cycle, a specific example is the establishment of the black market which can be seen as a direct challenge to government-imposed rationing, and a 'creative' use of resources by the central protagonists.

Despite such contemporary narrative relevance garnering initial box office success, the Spiv Cycle did not represent an enduring episode in British cinema, both the tenure and the demise of the sub-genre epitomising the responsive capacity of Gangland film. The years following the war saw virtually full employment, together with the establishment of a National Health Service; by the early 1950s the pre-war power of the police force was re-established, and rationing finally came to an end in 1954. As these circumstances eradicated the need for black market enterprise, the Spiv Cycle came to an abrupt end.

Nonetheless, this did not mean that cinema audiences lost interest in the Gangland genre as a whole. As further analysis of space, gender and hierarchy in the following chapters will demonstrate, the narratives simply changed and evolved to reflect their shifting social, cultural and political context. This is particularly evident in Chapter Five, which forms the second part of the examination into the male protagonist through analysis of two iconic texts. The first, *Brighton Rock*, was released in 1947 and was therefore contemporaneous with the Spiv Cycle, sharing a number of generic themes; however, it has since been recognised as one of the first fully-fledged examples of British Gangland film. Released over three decades later, *Get Carter* (1979) exemplifies the development of the genre together with its chronotopic nature through a more explicit and overt narrative treatment of generic themes such as sexuality and violence. The canonical, 'benchmark' status of both films merits their further investigation within this thesis.

## CHAPTER FIVE

*From Brighton Rock  
to Northern Grit:  
Excursions from the Metropolis*

As indicated in the previous chapter, the relatively brief duration of the British Spiv Cycle was ultimately determined by rationing instigated by the Second World War. The Government's subsequent repeal of such restrictions all but eradicated the black market and the spiv's *raison d'être*, a phenomenon reflected by films on the subject falling from fashion. Nonetheless, the underworld trope embodied by the sub-genre had proved commercially successful, and with an eye on the contemporary popularity of American gangster narratives (both literary and filmic), the British film industry set about developing their own interpretation. They were clearly successful, American entertainment trade weekly *Variety* observing in 1948 that 'British producers are competing with each other in rushing mobster yarns to the screen [proving they] can turn out a gangster picture as brutal as any Hollywood had devised'.<sup>1</sup>

### Geographical Expansion

As reflected by the chapter title, a number of films within the genre began to venture beyond England's metropolis or capital city: locations eventually stretched from London's coastal other, Brighton, to more northerly points such as Manchester, Liverpool and Tyneside, reinforcing Gangland as a national, albeit territorial, heterotopia.<sup>2</sup> The following discussion will consider two significant texts exemplifying the legacy of that expansion, which can also be regarded as canonical examples of the genre. Given its reputation as a progenitor of full-blown British Gangland film, the Boulting Brothers' *Brighton Rock* (1947), set in the eponymous seaside town, constitutes the first detailed analysis.<sup>3</sup> Moving north to Newcastle, Mike Hodges' iconic contribution, *Get Carter* (1971), represents the second. Both texts also exemplify the capacity of film to articulate contemporary themes, issues and concerns. Within *Brighton Rock* these include a burgeoning post-war Gangland culture based on spatial territory and hierarchical power, whilst in *Get Carter*, sexual permissiveness and transgression complement the generic tropes of territorial space and dynamic power relations.

With regard to the spatial representation of Gangland within these texts (and the protagonists' intrinsic connection with that space), it is worth reiterating Robert Warshow's belief cited in Chapter One that 'for the gangster there is only

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<sup>1</sup> <<http://www.variety.com/review/VE1117789541.html?categoryid=31&cs=1>> [accessed 14.12.2008]

<sup>2</sup> Further examples include *Tread Softly, Stranger* (1958) (Rotherham); *The Violent Playground* (1958) (Liverpool); *Hell is a City* (1959) (Manchester and the Yorkshire Moors); *Stormy Monday*, (1988) (Newcastle); *Essex Boys* (2000) (Thurrock and Southend-on-Sea); *My Kingdom* (2001) (Liverpool). Venturing even further north, the hybridised Gangland horror *Shallow Grave* (1994) is set in Edinburgh.

<sup>3</sup> Geoff Mayer suggests that *Brighton Rock* 'marked a significant change in the development of the British gangster film.' Geoff Mayer & Brian McDonnell, *The Encyclopedia of Film Noir* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2007), p.121.

the city; he must inhabit it in order to personify it: not the real city, but that dangerous and sad city of the imagination which is so much more important'.<sup>4</sup> Within the context of this thesis, Warshow's observation complements Foucault's definition of heterotopias as 'places [which] are outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality'.<sup>5</sup>

Both citations support the notion that Gangland is as much a conceptual consensus as a tangible space or place, and it is such consensus that allows filmmakers to reconstruct this 'city of the imagination' in alternative geographical locations. The following analyses will therefore consider generic elements contributing to that consensus, including prevailing hierarchies of power, and the intrinsic significance of gender and sexuality to both narratives. Whilst these elements underpin the concept of a generic heterotopia (and thus the virtual nature of 'Gangland' identified by Warshow), it will nonetheless be argued that the spatial specificity of the physical locations concerned also renders them an intrinsic constituent of each of the narratives discussed.

### **Brighton Rock (1947)**

Released in December 1947, *Brighton Rock* is one of the most frequently cited British Gangland films, and often referred to by both critics and academics as one of the genre's finest examples. Adapted from the novel by Graham Greene, the narrative is set in Brighton between the wars.<sup>6</sup> Following the demise of his mentor Kite, the young Pinkie Brown (Richard Attenborough) has taken over leadership of Kite's gang. In retribution for Kite's death, Pinkie murders the man he holds responsible – newspaper reporter Fred Hale (Alan Wheatley).

As part of a marketing promotion for the *Daily Messenger*, Fred is in Brighton under the alias 'Kolley Kibber', placing 'adventure cards' along a designated route: anyone finding a card and returning it to the *Messenger* will win a prize. As Fred is murdered before he finishes placing his quota of cards, Pinkie orders

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<sup>4</sup> Warshow, 'The Gangster as Tragic Hero', p101.

<sup>5</sup> Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces', p.24.

<sup>6</sup> An opening statement to the film establishes the geographical and spatial setting for the narrative, but also its specific timeframe: 'Brighton today is a large, jolly, friendly seaside town in Sussex, exactly one hour's journey from London. But in the years between the two wars, behind the Regency terraces and crowded beaches, there was another Brighton of dark alleyways and festering slums. From here, the poison of crime and violence and gang warfare began to spread, until the challenge was taken up by the police. This is the story of that other Brighton, now happily no more.' This spatial emphasis on the 'dark alleyways and festering slums' together with generic elements of 'the poison of crime and violence and gang warfare' belonging to the past rather than the present was consciously and proactively diplomatic: as a preface to the brutal and somewhat sordid events to which audiences were about to be subjected, it represented an attempt by the Boulting Brothers to appease the local Council in order to ensure that the all-important location shooting for the film could be undertaken without undue hindrance.



gang member Spicer (Wylie Watson) to distribute those remaining in order to confuse Fred's time of death and establish an alibi. However, after Spicer completes the task, a young waitress (Carol Marsh) discovers one of the cards as she changes a tablecloth, and subsequently realises the man who left it was not the same person whose photograph appears in the paper as 'Kolley Kibber'. The narrative is driven by Pinkie's attempts to silence both the pusillanimous Spicer and the young waitress, Rose.

Despite deviating from generic spatial convention by relocating the narrative to a British seaside town, Warshow's observations (above) are nonetheless amply demonstrated by the film's unsettling darkness and chilling characterisation, which were by turn both denigrated and commended by contemporary film critics. In the *Sunday Express*, Jack Davies described the film as 'sordid, squalid, sadistic and altogether unpleasant', whilst in *Reynold's News* Joan Lester commended it as a 'bold analysis of spivery.'<sup>7</sup> Six decades on, *Empire* magazine continues to reflect the narrative's successful foray beyond the customary nocturnal cityscape, suggesting that:

Director John Boulting brings the fabled Greenland, that vile landscape ripened on sin and betrayal at the black heart of all [Greene's] novels, to sensuous life. You feel the throb of Brighton's cramped summer streets, the raddled squawks of hungry gulls, and the sizzle of frying food. Yet beneath this papered veneer of normality, lurks a seething underworld, shorn of glamour, where righteousness will finally usher the film to its fateful, cruel conclusion.<sup>8</sup>

This definition of 'Greenland' reinforces the genre's characteristic anomie, together with the heterotopian and dystopian nature of the underworld in which these narratives are played out.<sup>9</sup> Spatially, the generically familiar portrayal of a superficial respectability disguising that sinister underworld is further illustrated by a contemporary review from film critic C A Lejeune: whilst expressing her general distaste for films in the genre, she nonetheless heaps praise upon the Boulting Brothers' 'picture making', suggesting they have 'taken the audience triumphantly behind the front of Brighton in the holiday season, into an underworld as subtle as the Casbah, where sleazy lodging-houses bed shameful secrets, and a youth can become a seasoned murderer at seventeen.'<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Jack Davis, *Sunday Express*, 11 January 1948. Joan Lester, *Reynold's News*, 9 August 1948.

<sup>8</sup> <<http://www.empireonline.com/reviews/ReviewComplete.asp?FID=7912>> [accessed 11.11.2008]

<sup>9</sup> As film critic Philip French observes, it was Marxist critic Arthur Calder-Marshall who first coined the epithet 'Greenland' to describe the 'seedy world of evil, sin and betrayal' that prevails in the author's novels. Philip French, 'Pinkie in Greenland', *Observer*, 19 May 2002.

<sup>10</sup> C A Lejeune, *Observer*, 12 January 1948. A further example is Jules Dassin's *Night and the City*, discussed in Chapter Four.

In addition to this spatial stratification, Greene's screenplay sustains a further sense of hierarchy through its moral and religious overtones, specifically those related to Roman Catholicism. Embodied by the physical and spiritual space of a church, Christianity exemplifies both Foucault's concept of heterotopia and, through its inherent hierarchies, his concern with dynamic power relations: 'God on high', the clergy, and the congregation, for example, but also through the heterotopian nature of its ritualistic practices aided by unfamiliar language, religious artefacts, and the semiotic significance of its costumes, from simple habit to full ceremonial regalia. On one level, *Brighton Rock* represents the persistent hierarchical dichotomy between good and evil, between utopia and dystopia, heaven and hell, but it also constitutes 'the clearest exposition of [Greene's] view of humanity'.<sup>11</sup> Consequently, the Boulting Brothers' film exemplifies Robert Warshow's belief that 'from its beginnings, [the genre] has been a consistent and astonishingly complete presentation of the modern sense of tragedy'.<sup>12</sup>

Perversely, therefore, the opening shot appears to challenge generic convention, as the camera pans over a sun-drenched Brighton beach thronging with happy holidaymakers. Nonetheless, illustrating Lejeune's observation (above), and reinforcing the importance of space to the narrative, the vibrant holiday mood established by both the crowded beach and Kolley Kibber's arrival at the busy railway station changes abruptly as the camera cuts to a shot of a dark and empty alleyway followed by the shabby, peeling interior of a run-down lodging house. This visual contrast establishes a template for the film, in which brightly lit, open spaces are often filled with bustling crowds, whereas scenes connoting imminent danger or depravity are sparsely populated and characterised by menacing shadows or isolating darkness.

In a scene establishing prevailing hierarchies, Cubitt (Nigel Stock), a member of the erstwhile Kite's gang, enters the grimy, cluttered kitchen of the lodging house carrying the *Daily Messenger*. Having drawn attention to a feature on the adventure card promotion to the assembled company, fellow gang member Dallow (William Hartnell) quickly identifies the image of 'Kolley Kibber' as that of Fred Hale. Dallow is adamant that they should inform Pinkie immediately, as 'Pinkie loved Kite, and Kite trusted Fred, and if Fred hadn't written that paragraph [in the paper], Kite would still be alive now.' Whilst offering a succinct summary of recent events and establishing Fred as a threat to the gang's survival, Dallow's proclamation raises questions regarding Pinkie's relationship with Kite. However, as Jake Arnott observes, 'although Attenborough's boy

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<sup>11</sup> Review of *Brighton Rock*, *News Chronicle*, 10 January 1948.

<sup>12</sup> Warshow, 'The Gangster as Tragic Hero', p.99.

monster glows with perversity, and certain English gangsters might well have taken a shine to a bit of rough trade by the pier', the specific nature of the relationship between the two men is 'left unsaid'.<sup>13</sup>

The camera follows Dallow upstairs as he hurries to inform Pinkie of Fred's intrusion into their Gangland territory. Opening the door to Pinkie's room, Dallow's entrance is interpreted by a point-of-view shot through a pair of hands obsessively playing 'cat's cradle': the hands are Pinkie's, and the fact that Dallow has to climb the stairs to the floor above is significant, implying the younger man's status within the hierarchy of the gang. In a determined reiteration of this power structure, Pinkie, Dallow and Cubitt subsequently track Fred down to the public bar of the 'Four Feathers'. Whilst a mid close-up of Fred fills the foreground, his pursuers' disruptive incursion into this public space is portrayed through a reflection in a mirror on the wall behind him.<sup>14</sup> The mirror symbolises Fred's psyche, their refracted presence in the bar depicting the realisation of his greatest fear.

On leaving the pub, Fred moves swiftly through the winding alleyways of The Lanes - an area of antique shops that has become a Brighton tourist attraction; emphasising the film's alternative setting, its maze-like quality also constitutes a spatial representation of the intrigue and duplicity inherent within the criminal underworld. In an attempt to evade capture and its inevitable repercussions, Fred is heading for the railway station. On finding Cubitt waiting for him, he jumps onto a passing bus, alighting near Brighton Pier - a further iconographic verification of the narrative setting. Stretching out to sea, the extended length of the pier appears to offer an alternative means of escape; however, by its very nature, the escape it represents is purely illusory - a temporary carnivalesque respite from reality.

The development of this spatial theme in the following sequence reinforces the heterotopian nature of the text as Fred boards a fairground ride: ominously touted by the attendant as 'ninety seconds of pure terror', it is appropriately

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<sup>13</sup> Jake Arnott, 'Mad, Bad and Dangerous to Know', *Guardian*, 20 July 2002. Suspicion of their bond being more than platonic is nonetheless given credence by Pinkie's virulent misogyny, which is demonstrated with increasing intensity throughout the narrative.

<sup>14</sup> As Dallow and Cubitt torment and threaten Fred, Pinkie is still absent-mindedly playing with his cat's cradle, a repetitive activity indicative of his obsessive neurosis. Becoming increasingly agitated by the sound of a woman singing popular songs in the saloon bar next door, he sends a display of glasses on the bar crashing to the floor, demanding 'Can't anyone shut that brass's mouth?'. This is a key moment as it introduces the revulsion Pinkie feels towards both women and sexual intercourse in equal measure, and thus sets up the sadistic ending to the narrative.

named 'Dante's Inferno'.<sup>15</sup> As the ride is about to start, Pinkie suddenly appears and sits in the seat next to him. They pass into the tunnel, with monstrous forms and ghoulish apparitions at every turn; when the ghost train finally emerges, Pinkie is sitting alone having murdered Fred and disposed of the body. The tunnel is thus symbolic, as it can be seen as representing the entrance to an alternative heterotopian underworld – the realm of the departed.

Brighton Pier is also the space in which Pinkie arranges to meet the young waitress, Rose. Having established that she realises Spicer is not Kolley Kibber from the photograph in the paper ('I never forget a face'), Rose has unwittingly revealed herself as a threat. It is night time, and they are alone on the deserted pier as they shelter from a thunder storm. Fingering a bottle of vitriol in his pocket, and by way of a graphic warning to Rose, Pinkie mentions a girl whose 'looks were ruined' by a gang she betrayed: the horrified Rose whispers 'You *wouldn't*, would you Pinkie?'.

Having instigated his power over the girl, Pinkie and Rose conform to the film's spatial template as they move from the rain-lashed isolation and menacing darkness of the pier into the brightly lit, densely crowded space of the *palais de danse*. The confident sophistication of an elegant female singer fronting the dance band serves to emphasise young Rose's gauche naivety, which is underlined by Pinkie's contemptuous observation 'You're soft enough, aren't you!'. As they sit watching the couples on the crowded dance floor, a rosary falls from the girl's bag. Realising she is a Catholic, Pinkie tells her he is too, proclaiming that 'these atheists know nothing' – a disdainful statement which incorporates believers and non-believers into the heterotopian religious hierarchy outlined above.

The interdependent relationship between hierarchy, gender and space is exemplified by the following sequence, on Pinkie's return to the lodging house.

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<sup>15</sup> Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy*, trans. by C H Sisson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998). Sustaining the narrative's religious motif, 'Inferno', or 'Hell', is the first canticle of Dante's epic poem *The Divine Comedy*, and represents the Christian soul learning to recognise sin. As Dante approaches the gates of Hell, he reads the inscription 'Abandon hope, all ye who enter here', an apt proclamation given Fred's situation. As the three canticles of Dante's work introduce Hell, Purgatory, and Heaven respectively, the title of the fairground ride lends further hierarchical and heterotopian qualities to the narrative, and is also representative of the depravity and degeneracy of the criminal underworld which Fred has inadvertently broached. Brighton Pier can itself be read as heterotopian, and features in two further texts - *Mona Lisa* (1986) and *London to Brighton* (2006) - analysed in Chapter Six.<sup>15</sup> In all three narratives, the liminal space of the pier is used to establish binary opposition, as the carnivalesque playfulness embodied within a constructed, virtual world that draws on myth and legend offers distraction and apparent escape from the life-threatening reality lurking beyond its parameters. Brighton Pier is also used in Tuchner's *Villain* (1971) discussed in Chapter Two, in which it represents a constructed 'normality' in opposition to the depravity of Dakin's real life.

The young gang leader is toying with a cut-throat razor as Cubitt asks whether he intends to marry Rose. Pinkie's reaction is telling – he is obviously appalled at the thought of marriage, to the extent that murdering the girl would be preferable.<sup>16</sup> However, Spicer reminds him that a wife cannot give evidence against her husband, demonstrating not only the hierarchical nature of Pinkie's own relationship with Rose, but the hierarchies intrinsic to the judicial system and, by default, the patriarchal structure of post-war society as a whole. There is also discussion regarding the refusal of Brewer and Corkery, two bookmakers to whom the gang currently provide 'protection', to pay their 'subs', without which they cannot continue to operate within the gang's demarcated spatial territory. Removing a second cut-throat razor from a drawer, Pinkie takes Dallow with him to make the collection.

Pinkie discovers the reason he has not been paid is that powerful Gangland overlord Colleoni (Charles Goldner) has now taken over Kite's terrain.<sup>17</sup> In an example of the dialogic relationship between power and resistance cited by Foucault (discussed in Chapter One), territorial Gangland space thus represents a locus of continuous struggle resulting in constantly shifting hierarchies of power. Appropriately, Colleoni occupies a suite at the luxurious 'Cosmopolitan Hotel'; when Pinkie arrives at reception, he is observed by the older man from a balcony above the foyer as he is led up the sweeping staircase by a young bellboy. Visually, this offers a clear statement regarding hierarchy: Colleoni's elevated Gangland status far transcends Pinkie's, and in terms of respectability/acceptability, even the uniformed bellboy (significantly above him on the stairs) is his superior.

The grand staircase itself is also metonymic as it reflects the heights Pinkie would need to scale in order to match his rival: in addition, it parodies Dallow's ascent of the crumbling staircase in the squalid lodging house to speak to Pinkie in the earlier scene. This same staircase in the lodging house is the setting for Spicer's demise, when Pinkie pushes him through the broken banister to the hallway below. A glass skylight in the roof reflects the image of Spicer's dead body above the head of his young murderer, who stands on the landing looking

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<sup>16</sup> This exchange reinforces the revulsion he feels towards women, raising further questions regarding his sexuality.

<sup>17</sup> Although Colleoni's nationality is not specified, the Italian name together with Goldner's heavily accented portrayal appear to reference contemporary gang leader Darby Sabini, reinforcing the film's temporal context. Film critic Jake Arnott concurs: 'Colleoni could be based on Darby Sabini, who ran the Italian mob in Clerkenwell and retired to Brighton in the 1940s. In early editions of the novel, though, he is clearly Jewish. This drew accusations of anti-semitism, and Greene made changes in later editions, but there were Jewish gangsters at that time. Jack Spot was the most notable; in the 1950s he gave a pitch at Epsom races to a pair of ambitious young thugs - Ronald and Reginald Kray.' Arnott, *Guardian*, 20 July 2002.

down on his prey with evident satisfaction. Whilst once again using the staircase motif to signify hierarchical power, the reflection of the body in the skylight also questions whether Spicer's soul will now be in heaven (above), or condemned to eternal damnation (below).

Exercising his patriarchal power, Pinkie has taken Spicer's advice to marry Rose in order to ensure her silence. As he paces the floor of the Register Office prior to the ceremony, Pinkie is accompanied by his dipsomaniac lawyer, Prewitt (Harcourt Williams), who quotes *Hamlet*: 'If thou wouldst marry, marry a fool; for wise men know well enough what monsters you make of them.' In Shakespeare's play, this is followed by Hamlet demanding that Ophelia should 'Get thee to a nunnery, go!', an expression of Hamlet's disgust by what he perceives to be her sexual depravity. Prewitt's quotation was therefore clearly selected to reinforce Pinkie's revulsion regarding both women and any aspect of sexual relations; the consequent allusion to a nunnery is also a portent of Rose's heterotopian (if not utopian) destination at the end of the film.

Reiterating spatial and religious motifs, Rose and Pinkie return to the pier following their brief ceremony. The camera focuses on a coin-operated model of choristers dressed in robes and surpluses ringing bells in a church tower. Rose's child-like fascination with this religious space in miniature reiterates not only her faith but her immaturity. This irritates Pinkie, who instructs her to 'leave it alone': despite being no older than his new bride, his parental tone reinforces their hierarchical relationship. As she obediently walks away, Rose notices a booth with a sign inviting passers-by to 'record your own voice'. She asks Pinkie to record a message for her, and although initially reticent, he suddenly agrees, smiling sadistically.

Once alone in the booth – a temporary, confined privacy amid the crowded space of the pier – the message he records is venomous: 'You asked me to make a record of my voice. Well, here it is. What you wanted me to say was that I love you ... I hate you, you little slut! You make me sick!' Back at the lodging house, one of the other residents gives Rose an old gramophone player: it is a gesture which threatens Pinkie's supremacy. When Pinkie sees it he becomes worried that his message could be used as evidence and therefore tries to destroy the recording; however Rose comes back into the room before he manages to do so completely.

Later, he suggests to Rose that they go for a walk. It is pouring with rain, but Pinkie leads her once again to the end of the pier, where he tells her their only way out is 'dying together'. The devout Rose is horrified, declaring it 'the worst sin of all!': he looks disgusted as she clings to him, sobbing. However, suspecting Pinkie's intentions, Dallow has called the police: as Pinkie sees them

approach he is clearly terrified of the consequences. Backing himself into a corner of the pier, he subsequently falls to his death into the murky waters below.

A sparsely furnished room in a convent represents the final space of the film, in which a crucifix hangs on the whitewashed wall above a single bed. Rose tells the Mother Superior standing by her side that she has proof of her dead husband's love for her, asking permission to play Pinkie's recording on the old gramophone she has brought with her from the lodging house. However, because of the damage to the record caused by Pinkie's attempt to destroy what he saw as potential evidence, the needle sticks at the point at which he says 'you want me to say I love you ... I love you ... I love you ...'. The camera sweeps up to a shot of the crucifix suggesting miraculous intervention, and therefore reaffirming the power and majesty of God as the pinnacle of the ultimate hierarchy.

Further illustrating the status of film as cultural artefact, Greene was criticised roundly in some quarters at the time for what was regarded as a 'softer' narrative conclusion in comparison with his original in the novel.<sup>18</sup> However, in addition to citing intervention from the BBFC as instrumental in determining an alternative to the intended climax to the film, Greene pointed out that 'Anybody who wanted a happy ending would feel that they had had a happy ending. Anybody who had any sense would know that the next time Rose would probably push the needle over the scratch and get the full message'.<sup>19</sup>

Greene's comments formed part of a written response to a scathing review by *Daily Mirror* critic Reg Whitley, who famously dismissed *Brighton Rock* as 'false, cheap, nasty sensationalism'.<sup>20</sup> In Greene's letter to the *Mirror's* editor, which appeared in the paper the following day, he professed himself 'bewildered' by Whitley's outburst, correcting inaccuracies in the review and concluding that 'your critic's disgust is an indication that one purpose of the film - the presenting of a character possessed by evil - has been successfully achieved.'<sup>21</sup> Both Whitley's criticism and Greene's response reinforce the capacity of film to articulate contemporary concerns, contributing to its cultural significance.

The earlier parochial fears of Brighton's Council regarding the effect on the town's tourist trade (cited above) were elevated to national consciousness in Whitley's assertion that '*Brighton Rock* will create abroad [an] untrue picture of

<sup>18</sup> David Thomson, 'The Riddle of Mr Razors', *Guardian*, 17 May 2002.

<sup>19</sup> Arnott, *Guardian*, 20 July 2002. The initials BBFC refer to the British Board of Film Censors, the body responsible for film classification and censorship.

<sup>20</sup> Reg Whitley, *Daily Mirror*, 8 January 1948.

<sup>21</sup> Graham Greene, *Daily Mirror*, 9 January 1948.

life in Britain'. Conversely, however, it was the uncomfortable level of realism achieved by the Boulting Brothers which attracted praise from other critics at the time, and went on to establish the film as iconic.<sup>22</sup> Accordingly, Mike Hodges, television journalist, documentary-maker, and director of the later filmic icon *Get Carter* (1971), cites *Brighton Rock* as influential in the conceptualisation of his own Gangland project.<sup>23</sup>

### *Get Carter* (1971)

With specific reference to the development of the male protagonist within the genre, and reiterating *Brighton Rock*'s pioneering status, Nick Freeman suggests that 'Pinkie emerges as the prototypical screen gangster through his display of recurring characteristics'.<sup>24</sup> Thus, whilst Michael Caine's interpretation of the eponymous Jack Carter is very much of its time, his character nonetheless exhibits the same ruthless desire for revenge motivated by loyalty, coupled with a total disregard for human life, that had personified Pinkie Brown nearly quarter of a century earlier.

As with *Brighton Rock*, *Get Carter* was adapted from a novel, Ted Lewis's *Jack's Return Home*, published in 1970. Both narratives drew on factual events, reflecting their temporal and spatial circumstances: whereas Graham Greene's novel had been motivated by the racetrack gangs that proliferated in Brighton between the wars, Ted Lewis's plot was inspired by a Gangland killing in 1967 which had been dubbed 'the one arm bandit murder' by the press due to its connection with the supply of fruit machines to pubs and clubs in the North East. However, as discussed below, although Lewis's novel is set in Scunthorpe, Mike Hodges considered Newcastle and its environs more appropriate in terms of their power to articulate key elements in the narrative, which (as indicated by Lewis's original title) depicts Carter's return home to avenge the murder of his morally upright brother, Frank.

Reinforcing the significance of space within the genre, and reiterating Warshow's observation regarding the dynamic relationship between the gangster and his environment, Mike Hodges suggested he wanted to find a 'really hard place', believing that *Get Carter* is 'not just about the villain, it's about

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<sup>22</sup> See, for example, C A Lejeune's review, n.9. Andrew Spicer concurs, suggesting that 'the meticulously detailed shabby and seedy interiors and the extensive location shooting made reviewers unsure whether it was a genre film or a quasi-documentary about the post-war delinquent.' Spicer, *Typical Men*, p.130.

<sup>23</sup> 'Mike Hodges discusses *Get Carter* with the NFT audience, 23 September 1997', Chibnall & Murphy, *British Crime Cinema*, pp.117-122.

<sup>24</sup> Nick Freeman, 'That Was Business – This is Personal: Professions of Violence in English Cinema from *Brighton Rock* to *The Krays*', *Close-Up*, Issue 1 (Winter 1996/1997), p.5.



observing the [...] deprivation of the country from which this character comes'.<sup>25</sup> Hodges emphasises the symbiosis between space and the filmic text in his recollection that the press files informing his research 'gave me a lot of detail, so I was able to bring the city into the film'.<sup>26</sup> Offering further insight into the hierarchy of underworld characters populating these spaces, Hodges further recalls:

I had seen villains. I had mixed with, or observed, people of the kind that were in the film; but *Carter's* not all that different from what actually transpired to be true in Newcastle [...] It was remarkable how far that sort of thing went on in reality.<sup>27</sup>

Reiterating the benchmark status of this iconic text and its role within the development of the genre, *Get Carter's* Director of Photography Wolfgang Suschitzky observes that 'this was a pioneering film in its use of real locations and real looking people.'<sup>28</sup> With regard to this blurring of boundaries between reality and fiction, Mikhail Bakhtin warns against confusing the real and represented worlds; nonetheless, he believes there is continual 'mutual interaction'.<sup>29</sup> Spatially, it is evident that such 'interaction' with Hodges' chosen locations was central to his conceptualisation, a phenomenon which has subsequently acquired even greater heterotopian significance. Foucault suggests that heterotopian spaces have the ability to 'suspend, neutralize or invert the set of relationships designed, reflected, or mirrored by themselves'.<sup>30</sup> That is

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<sup>25</sup> Chris Darke, 'From Gangland to the Casino Table', *Independent*, 4 June 1999. As Edward Porter observes in a brief review of the film, this is 'a Newcastle whose grimness may startle anybody who knows the city only in its present day form.' *Sunday Times* 'Culture' section, 4 April 2010, p.60.

<sup>26</sup> Darke, 'From Gangland to the Casino Table'. This is also discussed on the Turner Classic Movies website. Hodges incorporated aspects of various news stories into the film, using several of their locations. <<http://www.mrqe.com/movies/m100063305>> [accessed 17.01.2009] Somewhat fittingly, it was due to his documentary and current affairs background that Hodges had been selected to direct *Get Carter* by producer Michael Klinger, who had 'correctly assumed that Hodges might bring an appropriately *noirish* tension and gritty homegrown social realism to the film'. Ali Caterall and Simon Wells, *Your Face Here: British Cult Movies since the Sixties* (London: Fourth Estate, 2002), p.96.

<sup>27</sup> 'Mike Hodges discusses *Get Carter* with the NFT audience' in Chibnall & Murphy, *British Crime Cinema*, p.119.

<sup>28</sup> Director's commentary. *Get Carter*. Dir. Mike Hodges. Warner Home Video. 2005. [DVD]. As noted in Chapter Two, Suschitzky had been the DP on *The Small World of Sammy Lee* (1960): Andrew Spicer's suggestion that in *Get Carter* he went on to create 'a realistic Newcastle as a degenerate society predicated on graft, corruption and ubiquitous pornography' implies similarities between these two dystopian worlds. Spicer, *Typical Men*, p.141.

<sup>29</sup> Bakhtin, 'Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel', p.255.

<sup>30</sup> Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces', p.24.

certainly true of film, but also the virtual space of the Internet which, as noted by Justin Smith, holds increasing relevance to the study of film and its reception.<sup>31</sup>

Accordingly, it plays host to a number of websites devoted to *Get Carter*, several making reference to the physical space and place that characterise the film; indeed, local journalist Dennis Ramshaw goes as far as suggesting that 'the real star of the film [...] is the North East itself'.<sup>32</sup> Correspondingly, the primary focus of the *Get Carter* themed website established in 2001 by Michael Brady is the actual locations used by Hodges and his crew to evoke the haunts of his anti-hero, which have subsequently gained something of a mythical status within the locality, furthering Bakhtin's concept of 'mutual interaction' between real and represented space.<sup>33</sup>

Whilst the majority of the narrative takes place within these North East settings, the film opens in the London apartment of crime boss Gerald Fletcher (Terrence Rigby). A pensive Jack Carter looks down onto the street through the floor to ceiling windows of Fletcher's luxurious penthouse, his elevated view representing the binary opposition between the constructed, heterotopian nature of this hierarchical 'paradise', and the reality of the outside world beneath him. Fletcher and his brother, Sid (John Bindon) – his partner in crime, and thus an implicit cultural reference to the Kray twins – are watching a pornographic slide show with a group of associates.<sup>34</sup> It is clear, however, that the slides are of little interest to the preoccupied Carter as he wanders over to help himself to a drink from the well-stocked bar. Fletcher is heard telling Carter 'We don't want you going up the North, Jack' [*sic*], saying the gang has connections up there, and

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<sup>31</sup> Justin Smith, 'The Wicker Man (1973). Email Digest: A Case Study in Web Ethnography' in Chapman, Glancy & Harper, *The New Film History*, pp.229-244.

<sup>32</sup> Dennis Ramshaw, 'They searched Tyneside to Get Carter', *Newcastle Evening Chronicle*, 8 March 1971.

<sup>33</sup> <<http://www.getcartertour.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk/getcarter>> [accessed 08.03.2009]  
The site offers a virtual tour with stills from the film and photographs of the locations as they are now. Included on the site is a clip from BBC *Look North* from 6 January 2009, the day after the demolition of Gateshead's Trinity Car Park – the setting for a number of key scenes in the film. In addition to the car park, *Get Carter* tour guide Chris Riley takes *Look North* reporter Jerry Jackson over Robert Stephenson's High Level Bridge (where Carter meets Frank's girlfriend, Margaret); to Corbett Street and the house that became the 'Las Vegas' lodging house; to Dryderdale Hall near Hamsterley Forest (Kinnear's property 'The Heights'), whose current owner comments that interest in the place as a *Get Carter* landmark has increased rather than diminished over the years; and finally to North Blyth coal staithes and Cambois Beach, Northumberland, and Blackhall Rocks and colliery, County Durham, that combine in elision to provide the setting for the final scene.

<sup>34</sup> John Bindon was ideally cast, as he had an array of criminal convictions (serving several prison sentences during his lifetime), and was an alleged associate of both the Krays and the Richardsons.

they wouldn't want him 'screwing them up.'<sup>35</sup> When Fletcher asks Carter the purpose of his visit, he responds 'to find out what happened': his brother, Frank, has died in suspicious circumstances.

On his journey to Newcastle, Carter sits in a first class rail carriage reading Raymond Chandler's *Farewell My Lovely*, a subtle yet iconographic hint regarding his ultimate fate that also signifies the generic nature of the revenge tragedy which is about to unfold.<sup>36</sup> As stated in Chapter Four, Foucault regards the train as heterotopian, and in this instance it is symbolic of mobility – both social and migratory.<sup>37</sup> Given that Carter is travelling back to his working-class roots, the first class carriage is therefore significant; however, the train itself can also be read chronotopically, as it is a device which links the present to the past within specific spatial parameters.<sup>38</sup>

On his arrival in Newcastle, Carter's first stop is the crowded 'Long Bar'. Within this resolutely working-class space, Carter is conspicuous in his well-cut suit, ordering the barman to serve his pint 'in a thin glass' before pulling out a packet of *Gauloises*. Hodges had originally included the word 'please' in the script for this scene, but Caine deliberately omitted it.<sup>39</sup> Instead, he snaps his fingers rapidly at the barman in a gesture conveying the implacability of a man used to giving orders (and to being obeyed), and reinforcing a sense of power and hierarchy.

On leaving the pub, Carter's next stop is a cheap boarding house. Ostentatiously named the 'Las Vegas', it is one of Foucault's 'counter sites' – a place which is simultaneously 'real' and imaginary as, in addition to its primary function, it constitutes a reference by Hodges to a recurring theme of gambling throughout the film, including the aforementioned fruit machine racket, high stake poker games, horse racing, and bingo – all pastimes which evoke their own

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<sup>35</sup> Once again this draws on reality, as Ronnie and Reggie Kray had already expanded their territory beyond London to include interests in the Midlands, and by the mid-1960s had set their sights on Newcastle itself.

<sup>36</sup> In the opposite corner, another male passenger is reading the *Sun* newspaper, its banner headline proclaiming 'Chiefs Warn of Gang War'. The use of a headline in the press to set the scene replicates the opening of *Brighton Rock* and the close-up of an article declaring 'Brighton Gangster's Body Found': in both instances, the newspaper constitutes a gateway between reality and the invocation of a heterotopian Gangland in the imagination of the reader/cinema audience. It later transpires that this anonymous passenger is Carter's contracted killer, the headline reinforcing Fletcher's warning regarding the gang's connections.

<sup>37</sup> Foucault, 'Of Other Places', p.23.

<sup>38</sup> For further discussion on the chronotopic/heterotopian function of the train, see Paula J Massood, 'Which Way to the Promised Land? Spike Lee's *Clockers* and the Legacy of the African American City' in *African American Review*, Summer 2001, pp.263-279.

<sup>39</sup> Director's commentary. *Get Carter*.

intrinsic spatial environments.<sup>40</sup> The blowsy landlady shows Carter to his room; a framed tapestry over the double bed demands ‘What would Jesus say?’, offering further comment on the issues of morality that crowd the narrative.<sup>41</sup>

Carter subsequently visits his brother’s house, one of a row of back-to-back terraces. Spatially, the bleak, run-down interior with its old-fashioned furniture and peeling wallpaper is in stark visual contrast to the luxury of Fletcher’s London apartment. Carter wanders through various rooms in the house, taking a long-barrelled shotgun and cartridges down from the wardrobe in his brother’s bedroom.<sup>42</sup> He then goes downstairs to the front room where Frank’s body is lying at rest: after briefly resting his own hand on his brother’s, Carter covers Frank’s face with the shroud. Whilst apparently affectionate, this gentle gesture is in total opposition to the violent retribution he is yet to mete out. The following morning, Carter shaves using an electric razor plugged into the light socket directly above Frank’s open coffin in the dingy front room, an image that is again symbolic of the different spatial and cultural worlds inhabited by the two brothers, but also Carter’s complete indifference to death.

A little later, the funeral cortège is shown leaving from the rear of the row of terraces against the backdrop of a dramatic industrial landscape.<sup>43</sup> As the two funeral cars enter the gates of the crematorium, another much grander cortège containing six vehicles is leaving, emphasising the inferior social status of the deceased; the multiple hearses in the shot can also be read as inferring the numerous deaths that will occur before the end of the film. The cemetery is one of Foucault’s specified heterotopias which, having been situated outside the city rather than within its spatial boundaries from the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, ‘came to constitute no longer the sacred and immortal heart of the city, but the other city, where each family possesses its dark resting place’.<sup>44</sup> The cortège is thus transporting the corpse from the city of the living to the city of the dead.

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<sup>40</sup> Foucault, ‘Of Other Spaces’, p.24. As an international gambling mecca, the American city of Las Vegas can itself be read as heterotopian: a place where time is suspended (the casinos display no clocks), and whose inhabitants (like those of the boarding house that takes its name) are, for the most part, transitory.

<sup>41</sup> Given Hodges’ claim (cited above) that the film was influenced by *Brighton Rock*, this is perhaps also a reference to the general themes within Greene’s text, but more specifically to the crucifix above Rose’s bed in the final scene.

<sup>42</sup> The image of Carter brandishing the weapon later in the film has itself become iconic, and has subsequently been referenced in several generic texts, including Guy Ritchie’s *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels* (1998), and Paul Williams’ *London to Brighton* (2006) discussed in Chapter Six.

<sup>43</sup> The shot features Dunston Power Station as its centrepiece. Situated on the banks of the River Tyne, this landmark was demolished in the 1980s and therefore offers a further temporal signifier.

<sup>44</sup> Foucault, ‘Of Other Spaces’, p.25.

Thomas Elsaesser has suggested that the plot of *Get Carter* is so convoluted as to render it almost irrelevant.<sup>45</sup> However, whilst multi-faceted, it is in fact a classic linear narrative within which the murder of Carter's brother Frank is the catalyst. Whilst Frank's funeral symbolises the end of his life, the occasion marks the beginning of Carter's pursuit of the truth regarding his brother's demise. Carter subsequently discovers that Frank's teenage daughter, Doreen, has been persuaded to play the part of a schoolgirl in a pornographic short, *Teacher's Pet*, a bi-product of the substantial business enterprise of local Gangland boss Cyril Kinnear (the character's portrayal by playwright John Osborne constituting a further contemporary reference). Having found out about the film, and also the people responsible, Frank was murdered to prevent him from going to the police and exposing Kinnear's empire. *Get Carter* therefore represents the protagonist's journey, both physical and metaphorical, as he uncovers the events leading to his brother's death, each element of the puzzle being symbolically played out within specific spatial arenas.

The first of these spaces is the crowded Newcastle Racecourse. The camera focuses on Albert Smith (Glynn Edwards), a small-time bookie and associate of Frank whom Carter wants to question; he holds a hot dog between his teeth, parodying a shot in the opening scene showing Fletcher smoking a fat cigar. When Albert catches sight of Carter, a look of horror crosses his face, and the hot dog falls from his mouth as he moves swiftly out of Carter's range of vision. Although brief, this sequence reiterates an unspoken yet inherent sense of Gangland hierarchy, positioning Albert among its lower echelons. Whilst searching for his prey, Carter encounters old adversary Eric Paice (Ian Hendry), attired in a chauffeur's uniform. Despite Paice claiming to be 'respectable now', Carter is suspicious and follows him to 'The Heights', the country residence of crime baron Kinnear: it is a space clearly chosen for its connotation of wealth and power.

Paice is chauffeuring three of Kinnear's associates to the male-oriented domain of a high-stakes poker game; as Paice pulls into the driveway of 'The Heights', Carter leaves his car on the road and sneaks past the security guards into the house. Inside, the poker game is in progress, and although Carter is trespassing, Kinnear treats him as a welcome visitor, instructing glamorous companion Glenda (Geraldine Mofatt) to get Carter a drink: as the only female present, Glenda's designated role is evident. Acknowledging their own respective positions within the Gangland hierarchy, Carter feigns respect for his

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<sup>45</sup> Thomas Elsaesser, 'Between Style and Ideology', *Monogram*, Vol. 3 1972, p.6. It is a complimentary observation which acknowledges director Mike Hodges' contribution to generic and stylistic convention.

host by addressing him as 'Mr Kinnear', whilst Kinnear sustains a patronising bonhomie, calling him 'Jack'. It is a scenario replicating the relationship between Colleoni and Pinkie Brown, and the spatial dynamics of their encounter at the 'Cosmopolitan' in *Brighton Rock*.

The significance of gender to the Gangland genre is reinforced in a later scene in which Glenda's sexual allure is implicit, her fetishised presence representing a contemporary interpretation of the generically conventional gangster's moll. Having stirred up trouble in his quest for the truth, Carter is being pursued by two anonymous Gangland heavies intent on his demise. He finds Glenda waiting for him in a white open-top sports car, declaring 'You didn't know you had a fairy godmother, did you?'.<sup>46</sup> When Carter asks 'Where are you taking me to, Princess?', she replies 'To the castle of the demon king, of course!', an exchange that reinforces both the Proppian and heterotopian nature of Gangland narrative.<sup>47</sup>

Driving recklessly, Glenda takes him to the top level of a multi-storey car park, where local businessman Cliff Brumby (Brian Mosely) is waiting. Having discovered that Carter wants to establish who was behind his brother's murder, Brumby suggests it would be 'useful' if it were the same person (Kinnear) he was trying to get off his own back. However, despite Brumby offering him £5,000 to kill their mutual adversary, Carter scoffs at the suggestion and leaves with Glenda in the sports car, the concrete austerity of the car park serving to emphasise her feminine sensuality.

A montage of erotic symbolism follows, exemplifying Mulvey's notion of the male gaze.<sup>48</sup> Having focused briefly on Glenda's leather-gloved hand manipulating the gear lever, the camera scans her cleavage and long legs appreciatively before moving down to a close-up of her foot on the accelerator as she revs the engine. This fast-paced sequence is intercut with the couple making love in her apartment: the speedometer registers 100mph, with the camera subsequently cutting to the exhaust as the engine dies following their climax. Whilst bordering on the parodic, the scene is nonetheless representative of the characteristics that led to the film's translation into a comic strip for *Loaded*

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<sup>46</sup> The vehicle is a Talbot Sunbeam, a further contemporary signifier.

<sup>47</sup> As noted in Chapter One, in *Morphology of the Folk Tale* (1928), Russian literary theorist Vladimir Propp analysed hundreds of myths and fairy tales. He identified eight recurring stock characters, each of which performs a certain function within the narrative: the hero, the villain, the donor, the dispatcher, the false hero, the helper, the princess, and her father. The fact that Glenda's sports car is white and it is she who has rescued the hero is an ironic, almost comedic, gender-role reversal, the 'princess' taking on the traditional role of the 'knight on a white charger'.

<sup>48</sup> Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema'.

magazine.<sup>49</sup> This exemplifies Warshow's suggestion that generic texts and conventions 'have imposed themselves upon the general consciousness and become the accepted vehicles of a particular set of attitudes.'<sup>50</sup> It also reinforces both the chronotopic nature of the Gangland narrative and its inherent sexualised representation of the female.

Whilst Glenda takes a bath, Carter plays a blue movie in which she has told him she takes the lead: it is *Teacher's Pet*. As the film progresses, he suddenly recognises his niece. Tears begin to roll down his cheeks – the only time Carter shows any emotion other than anger throughout the entire film; he identifies the two other 'actors' as the bookie Albert Smith and Frank's girlfriend, Margaret (Dorothy White). He climbs the stairs to the bathroom and begins to question Glenda about who set the film up, and who 'pulled' the young girl. She is evasive, so Carter suddenly grabs her and holds her under the water; they are bullying tactics which reference her imminent fate. Having man-handled her out of the bath, the next shot shows Glenda with smeared make up and dripping hair, her clothes clinging to her damp body as Carter drags her to the sports car, ordering her to get into the boot.<sup>51</sup>

Moving through a series of evocative spaces, Carter proceeds cold-bloodedly and systematically to take revenge on those involved in his niece's corruption and his brother's subsequent murder. Firstly, he drives to the docks, leaving Glenda's car on the quayside as the ferry comes in. Glenda remains captive in the boot as Carter boards the ferry on foot to cross the river in search of Albert. Bundling the bookie through the public space (and relative safety) of the betting shop, Carter takes his quarry into the back yard in order to extract details of the circumstances leading to Frank's death. Satisfied that Albert has told him all he knows, he pulls a knife on his victim, stabbing him fatally.

Returning on the ferry, Carter finds Fletcher's men waiting for him accompanied by Eric Paice – an alliance emphasising the incestuous nature of Gangland hierarchy. A gun battle ensues during which Paice calls over to Carter asking whether he wants to know how he 'finished' him: Paice had discovered that in addition to defying Fletcher by going 'up the North' and breaching enemy territory, Carter has transgressed further boundaries by committing adultery with Fletcher's wife, and Paice has lost no time divulging that information.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> First published by IPC in 1994, and carrying the slogan 'For men who should know better', *Loaded* is described as 'the original lad's mag' by Julia Day, 'Loaded Bounces Back', *Guardian*, 18 August 2005.

<sup>50</sup> Warshow, 'The Gangster as Tragic Hero', p.100.

<sup>51</sup> This is a scene replicated in *London to Brighton* (2006), discussed in Chapter Six.

<sup>52</sup> In a key scene significant to gender and sexuality within the genre, Carter has 'telephone sex' with Fletcher's wife (Britt Ekland). Fully aware that his landlady is listening in, Carter's call

Returning to his Land Rover, Paice yells across to Carter that 'your car needs a wash!'. With Glenda still incarcerated in the boot, Paice proceeds to ram the sports car, pushing it over the quayside into the water. Carter shows no emotion and makes no attempt to rescue her – his lack of response connoting a misogynistic disregard for the 'good-time girl', but also the dispensability of human life that characterises the genre as a whole.

Continuing his methodical and spatially-oriented campaign of retribution, Carter proceeds to take revenge on the rest of those involved in the corruption and its associated murder. Luring Brumby back to the car park, he beats him unconscious before tipping his body off the top floor. He then posts the reel of *Teacher's Pet* to the vice squad in order to implicate Kinnear. Having followed Frank's girlfriend, Margaret, to a bingo hall, he abducts her, taking her to 'The Heights' where Kinnear is hosting an evening of orgiastic debauchery. In the manicured grounds of the mansion, having forced Margaret to remove her clothes at gunpoint, Carter injects her with a lethal dose of heroin. Dumping Margaret's body in Kinnear's ornamental lake and thereby implicating the crime baron in her death, he lays Margaret's discarded clothes in a trail from the house to the water's edge for the police to find, subsequently dialling 999 in order to initiate a raid on the property.

In a further spatially-oriented sequence, the camera cuts to the docks: an increasingly frenzied Carter is in pursuit of Paice who, realising he is in mortal danger, runs for his life along the waterfront. Against a background of the desolate shoreline, the breaking waves are black with coal slurry deposited into the sea by skips on an automated cable mechanism, their pollution representing a metaphor for the filth that has contaminated the innocence of Carter's niece and led to his brother's death. Carter finally corners Paice as he collapses, exhausted, half way up the hill. Holding him at gun point, Carter pulls a bottle of whisky from his coat, offering it to Paice: 'I should think you could do with a drink!'. Paice accepts the bottle and takes a swig, but Carter forces him to drink more, telling him he will make him drink the whole bottle, just like Paice did to his brother Frank.<sup>53</sup>

Screaming now, Carter asks whether they passed the bottle round when his brother's car 'went over the top' in the staged suicide. He then takes the shotgun, but instead of firing it, he takes the shaft in his hands, raises it in the air

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from the 'Las Vegas' is intercut with shots of contemporary sex symbol Eklund ecstatically writhing around semi-naked on her bed in Fletcher's London flat. Emblematic of contemporary 'Playboy culture', this was a further ingredient transmuted to the comic strip in *Loaded*.

<sup>53</sup> In order to make Frank's murder appear as suicide, he had been forced to drink a bottle of whisky before his car was pushed over the cliffs with Frank in the driver's seat.



and bludgeons Paice to death with the butt.<sup>54</sup> The camera cuts to Paice's body being transported in one of the skips on the cable as Carter walks down the hill beneath it, carrying the shotgun over his shoulder and chuckling manically to himself. He watches the corpse being mechanically dumped into the sea, the relentless circular route of the automated skips representing the inevitability that life will carry on as before, despite the violence and brutality of Carter's revenge. As he walks along the beach, Carter prepares to throw the shotgun into the waves; however, a single shot rings out and Carter slumps to the ground. A bullet wound in his forehead confirms the protagonist's demise, his body lapped by the waves of the incoming tide.

Nick Freeman believes that 'English films have [...] concentrated upon examining the image and characteristics of the gangster, and using him as a symbolic representation of the country's wider consideration of itself', and certainly the narrative in Hodges' adaptation (and in Lewis's original) can be read as a Lacanian/heterotopian reflection of the social and historical circumstances in which they were produced.<sup>55</sup> Leading up to the temporal setting for *Get Carter*, the 'Swinging Sixties' had witnessed a hitherto unparalleled sexual permissiveness, alongside a significant increase in recreational drug use; in addition, by the end of the decade, class barriers were beginning to crumble in a society in which disposable income was becoming as influential as social pedigree, as witnessed by the spatial arenas of Fletcher's penthouse and Kinnear's mansion.

By virtue of the relevant affluence of his lifestyle, Jack Carter represents the 'local boy made good', a status semiotically communicated by his well-cut suits and cosmopolitan mannerisms; in addition, and as suggested above, his sexual profligacy is indicative of the legacy of the Sixties' spirit of 'free love' – a point reinforced by Kinnear's house party. However, albeit not as extreme as the psychotic misogyny of Pinkie Brown, Carter also exhibits a patronising condescension in his treatment of females in the narrative, who appear all too willing to indulge his desires – a quality Robert Murphy cites as demonstrating 'an uncomfortable reminder that nostalgia for unacceptable pre-feminist representations of women accounts for *Get Carter's* current popularity' – and, presumably, for its transformation into the comic strip in *Loaded*.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> This barbaric act articulates the loss of Carter's characteristic icy self-control, and is therefore indicative of his heightened emotional state.

<sup>55</sup> Freeman, 'That was business - this is personal', p.3.

<sup>56</sup> Robert Murphy, 'A Revenger's Tragedy – *Get Carter*' in Chibnall & Murphy, *British Crime Cinema*, p.131.

## Conclusion

Following the preceding analysis of texts within the Spiv Cycle, this chapter has offered insight into the generic development of Gangland film, together with its capacity to reflect contemporary cultural mores. Through analysis of two seminal examples within the genre, this has been aided by particular reference to the interaction between the male protagonist and his spatial environment. The fact that both narratives discussed here take place outside the conventional setting of London's underworld serves to intensify the dialogic relationship between space and the Gangland genre, heightening a sense of heterotopian otherness: two specific examples from the discussion above are the semiotic liminality of the pier in *Brighton Rock*, and the elision of disparate spaces suggesting a single setting for the finale in *Get Carter*.

Similarities between the dynamic hierarchies of power within these Gangland narratives have also been identified. Whilst Pinkie Brown has taken over Kite's gang following the demise of his mentor, the teenager subsequently loses control of Kite's protection racket and associated spatial territory to Gangland overlord Colleoni. Correspondingly, whilst Jack Carter appears successful in meting out retribution to all concerned with the corruption of his niece and his brother's death, ultimately he is punished for flouting Fletcher's authority - a transgression he pays for with his life.

In addition, these analyses have highlighted a generically conventional hierarchy between the male protagonist and the narratives' female characters, together with reference to transgressive or deviant sexuality. In *Brighton Rock* such sexuality is largely suppressed or clouded in ambiguity - Pinkie's insinuated relationship with Kite, for example, and the fact that his name is a variant on 'Rose' and therefore intimates effeminacy. However, the portrayal of sexuality within *Get Carter* is unremittingly blatant, and exemplified by Carter's casual sex with Glenda and his landlady; his affair with Fletcher's wife; the pornography involving his teenage niece; and Kinnear's orgiastic house party. Such sexuality together with the fetishisation of the female body can be identified as a consistent element within the Gangland genre: accordingly, the two final chapters will focus on female characterisation within Gangland narratives in order to establish whether such convention has moved on from these abidingly one-dimensional representations.

## CHAPTER SIX

*From Back Streets to  
Penthouse Suites:  
the Domain of  
the Good-Time Girl*

Following discussion in the previous two chapters regarding the relationship between the male protagonist and space, gender and hierarchy in British Gangland film, Chapters Six and Seven will consider the female within this context. A further aim is to assess whether the depiction of central female characters within the genre has developed from the 'abidingly one-dimensional representations' suggested in the conclusion to Chapter Five. In order to do so, these chapters will consider representative examples produced throughout the period under review.

### **The Underworld as Gendered Dystopia**

Three films will form the focus for the following analysis: David MacDonald's *Good Time Girl* (1948), Neil Jordan's *Mona Lisa* (1986), and Paul Williams' *London to Brighton* (2006). A key narrative device common to all three (the portrayal of which becomes increasingly explicit over the decades) is the vulnerability of young female runaways who constitute easy prey for the exploitative male. London is the primary location for the three texts; however, Brighton represents the capital's spatial other within each narrative, offering not only an alternative to, but a potential escape from, the underbelly of the metropolis.

This is a concept reflected in James Berardinelli's assessment of Neil Jordan's filmic interpretation of that underworld in *Mona Lisa*. In a description which can be seen as expanding upon Robert Warshow's premise of the gangster's relationship with his environment, Berardinelli links the female irrevocably with the male-oriented spaces constituting the generic invocation of Gangland:

Jordan's unconventional view of London is almost gothic, and rivals the most unflattering screen portrayal of a modern city in any film, including New York in Martin Scorsese's *Taxi Driver*. With its porn shops, strip clubs, and prostitute-clogged sidewalks, the portrait painted by *Mona Lisa* is far from a postcard representation.<sup>1</sup>

Contributing to the notion of a gendered dystopia, Melanie Bell-Williams suggests that 'in their engagement with 'deviant' female sexuality', such filmic portrayals are 'suggestive of the social discourses concerning normal and abnormal femininity.'<sup>2</sup> Where pertinent, reference will therefore be made to relevant legislation pertaining to prostitution as this is clearly inherent within such discourses, which are in turn reflected in the changing portrayal of women within the genre. More specifically, this chapter will examine the specific domain of the 'good-time girl', whose generic role is suggested by her designation - namely, a woman of easy virtue intrinsic to the 'good time' of her male companion(s) on whom

<sup>1</sup> James Berardinelli. <<http://www.reelreviews.net/movies/m/mona.html>> [accessed 4.12.2008]

<sup>2</sup> Melanie Bell-Williams, 'Shop-Soiled' Women: Female Sexuality and the Figure of the Prostitute in 1950s British Cinema', *Journal of British Cinema and Television*, Vol. 3, Issue 2, 2006, p.267.

she is often financially dependent.<sup>3</sup> There is therefore a fine line between these girls and the professional prostitute, and both will provide a focus for the following analyses.

### **Socio-Historical Background**

Hierarchies of power and their corresponding spatial arenas are intrinsic to the stratification of the sex industry and to its dystopian filmic portrayal.<sup>4</sup> These hierarchies are represented by the relationship between male figures such as pimps, ponces and club owners, and the women they employ; but also between these 'employers' and the official patriarchal bodies attempting to regulate prostitution such as the government, the judiciary, and the police force.<sup>5</sup> In addition, there exists what amounts to a caste system amongst the women themselves, in which an incontrovertible link with space and place is maintained: in London, for example, the lower class 'streetwalkers' congregate in areas such as King's Cross, whilst the higher class (and higher paid) 'escorts' or 'call girls' work in more salubrious locales such as luxurious apartments or hotel suites in Mayfair and the West End.

Whilst each interpretation of the underworld depicted within these three films may be specific to their era of production, the exploitation their narratives exemplify represents nothing new. Industrialisation followed by the onset of war combined to exacerbate an age-old problem: in addition to back-street lodging houses and bedsits, the spaces in which the lower echelons of these women traditionally operated were those such as docks, ports and garrison towns, with the constantly shifting population of itinerant workers, merchant seamen, and military personnel offering a ready market for their trade.<sup>6</sup>

Space and place therefore constitute a key component within a power struggle in which various Acts and Amendments represent a self-perpetuating cycle: initially seeking to discourage 'loitering or soliciting [in the street] for the purposes of prostitution' and thus driving such activity behind closed doors, subsequent legislation sought to eliminate illegal brothels, resulting in prostitution being pushed

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<sup>3</sup> *Roget's Thesaurus* translates the term as 'reveller', 'pleasure-seeker', and 'debauchee'. Susan L Lloyd (ed.), *Roget's Thesaurus* (Harlow: Longman, 1982). 'Looking for a 'good time', mister?' is also a stereotypical pick-up line used by streetwalkers.

<sup>4</sup> These spaces are themselves hierarchical, represented by the 'back streets and penthouse suites' of the chapter title, interspersed with lap dancing/strip clubs, brothels, etc.

<sup>5</sup> According to Donald Thomas, a 'pimp' solicits on behalf of a girl whereas a 'ponce' does not, but takes a cut, usually half, in return for 'protection'. Donald Thomas, *Villains' Paradise*, (London: John Murray, 2005), p.266.

<sup>6</sup> This had become so endemic by the First World War that patrols of uniformed women enforced curfews for younger girls and had the authority to search women's houses for enlisted men; they also kept surveillance in those towns with a military presence in order to intercept 'working women' drawn to the area by potential business.

back onto the street once again.<sup>7</sup> Helen Self observes that in consequence ‘many young women were turned out onto the streets where they became easy prey for pimps and bullies. In other words, the law resulted in an increase in exploitation.’<sup>8</sup> Inevitably, however, the influx of women returning to solicit in public places was considered a nuisance and an annoyance; laws were consequently introduced to remove them from public view, leading to the re-establishment of premises utilised for sexual enterprise. Young girls in particular continue to represent a lucrative commodity and, as stated above, their vulnerability both on the streets and behind closed doors is a theme shared by all three of the following textual analyses.

### ***Good Time Girl (1948)***

The first film (from which the chapter takes its sub-title) is *Good Time Girl*, directed by David MacDonald and released in 1948, three years after the end of the War. It is a morality tale, charting the dissolute descent of naive young runaway Gwen Rawlings (Jean Kent). The imposing space of a sombre wood-panelled office is the setting for the opening scene in which magistrate Miss Thorpe (Flora Robson) is asked by a police sergeant to speak to a fifteen-year-old girl in an attempt to make her see the error of her ways. Lyla Lawrence (a young Diana Dors) is brought before the magistrate, declaring that she wants the freedom to live on her own and have ‘the good things in life’ that she cannot hope to attain living at home with her parents. In response, Miss Thorpe begins to relate the cautionary tale of ‘Gwen Rawlings, who stood just where you’re standing now, not so long ago.’

The scene fades to a flashback of the sixteen-year-old Gwen, who works in a pawnbroker’s. She takes a borrowed diamante brooch out of her bag and puts it away in a cabinet, unaware that she is being watched by Pottinger, her boss (Elwyn Brook-Jones). He startles her, saying ‘You like nice things, don’t you Gwen?’, immediately recalling Lyla’s comments in the opening scene. Putting his hand on her arm, he tells her that if she is ‘a very nice girl’, he might give her the brooch. Gwen smacks his hand away, to which he responds angrily: ‘Alright then, I’m afraid it will have to be the police.’

Gwen is horrified, as she feels she has done nothing wrong. Pottinger appears to relent, saying he won’t call the police on this occasion, but then hands Gwen her coat: she has been sacked. Once again, however, he has a change of heart, his tone of voice now wheedling as he attempts negotiation: ‘Look, Gwen, I don’t want to be hard on you ... if you just give me a little kiss, we can forget this ever happened.’ He reaches towards her, but she slaps his face and runs out of the shop.

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<sup>7</sup> The Metropolitan Police Act 1839, Subsection 54. Cited by Helen J Self, ‘History Repeating Itself: the Regulation of Prostitution and Trafficking’ (2004)

<<http://www.perc.plymouth.ac.uk/solon/fcrn/documents/paper001.pdf>> [accessed 29.10.2008]

<sup>8</sup> Self, ‘History Repeating Itself’.

This is a key scene, as it establishes two themes intrinsic to this particular narrative, but also to the subgenre in general. Firstly, the vulnerability of young girls who yearn for 'nice things' they cannot afford (which, as illustrated in Paul Williams' *London to Brighton* below, may be as basic as a decent meal or somewhere to sleep); and secondly, that the swiftest means of attaining them is through sexually-oriented favours. Whilst Gwen is not initially prepared to pay that price, subsequent experiences change her mind.

The two opening scenes are played out within specific spatial spheres: the law, order and (apparent) justice of the magistrate's court governing the disparate individuals giving evidence within its hallowed chambers, and the Aladdin's cave of the pawnbroker's shop in which multiple and complex narratives combine within each object to represent their own testament. The shop itself represents a Pandora's Box of latent treasures, but also the narratives of those who have had to take recourse to the pawnbroker in times of need. In this sense it invokes the heterotopian characteristics of the museum, a world within a world, fabricated through the piecing together of the fragmented memories of individual possessions.

Gwen returns home much later that night, following her dismissal. Establishing this space as a catalyst in her downfall, she enters through a shabby front door with cracked panes of mis-matched glass to find her mother still hard at work using an old-fashioned flat iron on the laundry. The scene is shot through the balustrade of the staircase, giving the effect of the older woman being imprisoned within her drudgery and establishing the domestic space as a female domain. It also intimates the predicament of many working class women after the War who found their enforced return to such domesticity difficult after the relative freedom and rewards of the workplace, almost sanctioning Gwen and Lyla's desire for escape and the good things in life. In addition, the prison-bar motif is a portent of Gwen's eventual plight later in the narrative, when she herself is incarcerated for her perceived transgressions.

As she climbs the stairs to bed, Gwen's sister tells her that Pottinger has been round and 'snitched' to their father, who is now out drinking. A gendered hierarchy is thus reiterated, in which women are both bound by and answerable to the edicts of the superior male, even in his absence. As soon as her father returns home, he removes his belt to thrash Gwen. Her screams mingle with the strident whistle of a steam train: a close-up of the engine takes over the screen, suggesting both Gwen's pent-up frustration and her imminent departure. There is a tearful goodbye the following morning, during which her mother pleads with her not to go. However, Gwen is adamant that her father has 'belted' her for the last time, and she is seen ostensibly leaving behind the patriarchal order inherent within the run-down, narrow terraced street that has been her home for the past sixteen years.

A further spatial statement is made as this scene cuts to what is obviously a better district, with wider roads and tall, Victorian houses; a sign in a window advertises 'apartments', and Gwen is given the last remaining room at the top – a space connoting her aspiration to 'move up in the world'. Clearly relishing her new found independence and the paradoxical freedom represented by the small, enclosed space of her room, she is introduced by the landlady to another resident, Jimmy Rosso (Peter Glenville), an archetypal spiv sporting pin-striped suit, brilliantined hair and pencil-thin moustache. Realising that she has run away from home, he offers to get her a job as a hat-check girl in the nightclub where he works. Although initially wary of Rosso's predatory manner, she is pleased to have the opportunity of employment and agrees to meet him at the 'Swansdown Club' in Soho later that night.

Tellingly, the club is situated down a dark side street leading away from the flashing neon signs of the main thoroughfare, and is therefore a spatial representation of her imminent transgression from the straight and narrow. Once inside, she is introduced to the owner, Max (Herbert Lom), who asks her to lift her skirt so he can look at her legs. Very reluctantly, Gwen complies with this request; having assessed her as 'not bad', Max throws a uniform at her and tells her to get changed. She insists on doing so in the ladies' rather than in Max's office, to which he responds 'Ok, *Lady*, but make it snappy ... and shut the door!'. In addition to mocking her coyness, his instruction to 'shut the door' as she leaves demarcates his office as a male inner sanctum to which access is granted at his discretion. The scene highlights the power Max wields, reiterating the hierarchical nature of his relationship with his employees, but also that between male and female.

Gwen's insistence on changing in the ladies' reinforces this concept of gender-specific space; it is also an ironic pun, inasmuch as women working in a Soho nightclub would generally be considered 'ladies' in name only, if at all. Consequently, in a scene reiterating her naivety, but also the fact that all females are considered fair game within such a space, the club's bandleader makes a play for her. His sexual advances are interrupted by 'Red' Farrell (Dennis Price), who introduces himself as 'the only musician in the band'. Asking 'What's your name, victim?', she replies 'Gwen Rawlings, but I'm not a victim!' 'That's what you think', he replies, suggesting she should 'make a run for it while there's still time'. He adds to this paternalistic advice that she is caught in a spider's web, and although she laughs at him, the remark is prophetic. She has entered a hierarchical, male-dominated underworld with its own rules that she has yet to understand, and in which she will become enmeshed.

A few nights later Gwen rejects similar advances from fellow-resident Jimmy Rosso; it is a slight to his masculinity which he rewards by punching her in the face.



When Max sees her black eye he sacks Rosso, telling Gwen to take the night off. The implication of this superficial empathy is that her sullied looks would be no good for trade, thus emphasising Gwen's decorative role within this male-dominated environment. In retaliation, Rosso steals a pair of earrings from their mutual landlady, framing Gwen for the theft – a repetition of the experience that precipitated her leaving home. From hereon in Gwen's life represents a downward spiral. In the magistrates' court with Miss Thorpe presiding, Rosso is seen giving false evidence. Despite Red Farrell's testament in her defence (discredited by the bench because he had given Gwen, a minor, sanctuary in his home during his wife's absence), Rosso's fabrication of events is accepted and Gwen is sent to approved school.

On admittance, she undergoes a mandatory medical examination which, although not as intimate, recalls those inflicted upon prostitutes in the 19<sup>th</sup> century following legislation introduced to contain the spread of venereal disease.<sup>9</sup> Gwen's alleged transgression generates a similar assumption: that she is likely to spread infection (although in this case, scabies or head lice rather than VD). With a clean bill of health, she is issued with a uniform and told to get dressed, replicating the scene in Max's office. However, whereas on that occasion the uniform was symbolic of her new-found freedom, these clothes symbolise her incarceration, and Gwen screams hysterically at the injustice they represent.

In a sequence signifying the relationship between space and hierarchy, Gwen is then taken to the dormitory, where she is introduced to Roberta (Jill Balcon), the school bully. Given Gwen's delight on acquiring both the freedom and the privacy represented by her own room in the lodging house, the regimented, communal nature of this institutionalised space is significant. In addition, the dormitory represents an inverted microcosm of the school's heterotopian environment: its hierarchy exemplifies the dynamics of power relations, with Roberta initially confident that she will exert her dominance (both physically and psychologically) over the newcomer, just as she has over the rest of the girls.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> The Contagious Diseases Acts 1864, 1866, and 1869 can be seen as the catalyst for active public campaign, not least by the burgeoning women's movement which objected to the Acts' emphasis on enforced medical examination (and potential consequent prosecution) of the prostitutes themselves, whilst ignoring the responsibility of their clients. This was particularly the case in military towns and ports where a woman found to be infected with venereal disease could be detained for up to three months in a prison hospital, ostensibly to limit its spread, and yet the men who paid for their services were able to continue unhindered, thus negating the perceived benefits of such containment (the surveillance and incarceration intrinsic to this process reflecting Foucault's work on the prison and 'panopticism'). In addition, medical ignorance led to the same unwashed equipment being used in multiple examinations, a particularly effective method of spreading the disease still further.

<sup>10</sup> As the prison and the school are both offered by Foucault as heterotopian, this combination of the two spaces constitutes a further example.

Viv Chadder recognises that it is consequently 'Roberta who undertakes the true training process of the school.'<sup>11</sup> It is a subversion of institutional hierarchy which mirrors the transgressive power relations of the Gangland underworld as a whole, in which absolute loyalty is a prerequisite and deviance is punishable by often violent retribution. When Gwen refuses to accede to the older girl's authority the following morning, a brawl ensues between them which is interrupted by the Matron: in response to her reprimands, Gwen threatens to 'knock your block off, you silly old faggot!'. It is a demonstration of unexpected insubordination which suddenly and inadvertently gains Roberta's respect. Their new-found friendship is sealed with Roberta offering Gwen an illicit cigarette and some alcohol after lights out: this is symbolic, as drink is to play an increasing role in Gwen's downfall.

It is not long before Gwen manages to make her escape. Having nowhere else to go she returns to the 'Swansdown Club', only to find that Max is no longer proprietor and has moved to Brighton to a more upmarket establishment, the 'Silver Slipper' - a name ironically and prophetically evoking the rags-to-riches fairytale of Cinderella. When Gwen turns up wearing a stolen coat to hide her institutional uniform, Max is horrified. However, he reluctantly promises to get her some clothes but says he then wants nothing more to do with her as this is 'a respectable joint': he, too, has moved up in the world. In an authoritative yet paternalistic gesture, he escorts her upstairs and away from the public arena.

Reiterating the significance of both gender and space to the Gangland genre, Max is drinking at the bar with two spivs trading in black market Scotch when Gwen suddenly appears. Wearing a new outfit provided by Max, her appearance is stunning; despite this, he is furious. Not wanting her to intrude on (nor, indeed, 'infect') his new-found spatial idyll, Max had instructed her to use the back stairs; Gwen has thus transgressed her specified spatial boundaries. Nonetheless, one of the men, Danny Martin (Griffith Jones), asks to be introduced: it is to prove a fateful meeting. After lunching with Danny, he suggests they go back to his place - a luxurious flat in Brighton overlooking the sea. When Gwen suggests during the journey that he is taking a lot for granted, he laughs 'Oh it'll be granted!', a telling remark articulating a further hierarchical relationship between his experience and her naivety. Once at the flat, Gwen begins to drink; consequently, unlike the earlier incidents with Pottinger, Rosso, and the band leader, she is not so swift in averting Danny's physical advances.

Subsequent scenes depict her as the archetypal gangster's moll, Danny touting her as an expensively-dressed accessory. She is thus fulfilling an observation made earlier in the film by Red Farrell, who tells her she is a 'born sybarite', and that one

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<sup>11</sup> Chadder, 'The Higher Heel', p.69.

mink coat will never be enough – she will want three. However, despite luxuriating in the materialistic trappings of her new lifestyle (the ‘nice things’ she has always dreamed of), Gwen is becoming a drunkard, and one night she persuades Danny to let her take the wheel of his car despite having quaffed copious amounts of champagne. Driving recklessly, she knocks a cyclist down, wounding him fatally. In the days that follow, Gwen’s female vulnerability intensifies as she becomes increasingly fearful of the police, but also of Danny.

Repeating the recurring spatial motif established by her bedroom at home, followed by her room at the lodging house and the communal dormitory of the approved school, Gwen is alone in the bedroom she now shares with Danny. She packs a suitcase with her expensive new wardrobe before leaving the flat for good – a scene replicating her escape from the overbearing male dominance of her father at the beginning of the film. However, Danny quickly realises she has gone and catches up with her on the train to London. Apparently regarding her gender as inconsequential (thus mirroring Rosso’s earlier physical attack), Danny knocks Gwen out cold, retrieving the suitcase, her fur coat, and the money from her bag. His dispassionate reclamation of these items further emphasises his dehumanising view of Gwen as simply another dispensable accessory.

Initiating the final stage of her male-oriented downfall, two GI deserters discover Gwen on the train and take her under their wing. When they reach Victoria Station, they persuade her to go back with them to share ‘a quart of Scotch’, reiterating the role of alcohol in her demise. The trio subsequently carry out a hijack in which Gwen runs into the road to flag down an oncoming car, only realising at the last second that the driver is Red Farrell. Recognising Gwen and delighted to see her, Farrell gets out of the car and tries to embrace her. Pushing him away, she screams ‘Drive on, you fool!’, but her warning is too late – the GIs knock Farrell out, dragging him into a nearby park. Realising that he can identify their new accomplice, they pull out a gun and shoot his unconscious body.

As they are about to make their escape, the police arrive; the GIs run off, but a sobbing Gwen is pulled out of the car. The magistrate’s voice is then heard over the scenario: ‘When the policeman helped her out of the car, life came to an end for Gwen.’ The camera cuts to Lyla in the magistrate’s office, asking ‘What do you mean?’, to which Miss Thorpe replies ‘She’s got to wait another fifteen years for her second chance. You’ve got yours now ... make the most of it!’.

*Good Time Girl* is characterised by its sense of spatial determinism, exemplified by Gwen’s constant search for a better life – each attempt represented by male-dominated spaces such as the lodging house, the nightclub, and Danny’s Brighton apartment. A further example is the female-oriented approved school, in which

Gwen's active resentment of the judicial system following her wrongful incarceration is cemented by her interaction with Roberta.

Complementing this theme is the film's sense of paternalism and its role within the patriarchal order. Both Gwen and Lyla are the victims of abusive, drunken fathers and Gwen therefore seeks the company of older men in a futile attempt to replicate the ideal paternalistic figure: Max, Red Farrell, and Danny Martin are all substitutes for the father she has left behind. In the scene in which she persuades Danny to let her take the wheel of his car, she declares that it is to show the friends who are travelling with them 'what papa taught me', as it was from Danny that she learnt to drive.

The combined might of the welfare state and the judicial system is presented as a further, if more abstract, paternalistic influence. Embodied at the outset by the fatherly figure of the police sergeant whose intervention 'rescues' Lyla, Miss Thorpe, the stern yet sympathetic magistrate, balances the parental gender profile. Significantly, however, in each criminal episode it is Gwen as the transgressive female whose perceived deviance is punished, whilst the male perpetrators (Rosso, Danny, the GIs) escape the punitive authority of the law; and as sovereign of his own domain, the perversion of Pottinger's sexual advances (which instigate Gwen's downfall) is not even acknowledged, much less judged.

The cautionary narrative of *Good Time Girl* thus exemplifies Foucault's argument that 'discipline produces subjected and practised bodies, 'docile' bodies'.<sup>12</sup> In other words, as 'individuals' (male or female) we are nonetheless penalised if we do not conform to institutional regimes and dominant ideology, such conformity becoming ingrained and rendering us compliant. Sandra Bartky expands upon this concept, maintaining that women are compelled to inscribe their bodies with femininity through the disciplinary power emanating from a wide range of sources including images on film and television, advertising hoardings, and in magazines, all of which structure society's consciousness of women as 'bodily beings' within a heterotopian world of perfection.<sup>13</sup>

Bartky perceives resulting norms as producing the types of 'docile' female bodies required by patriarchal society in order to maintain male-dominated hierarchical structures. Clearly, prostitution is an extreme example of this process, the female body being overtly feminised and fetishised - a process Gwen undergoes in her transformation from naive young runaway to glamorous 'good-time girl', decorated in Dior and diamonds. Gwen's generically conventional function is therefore to

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<sup>12</sup> Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p.138.

<sup>13</sup> Sandra Bartky, 'Foucault, Femininity, and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power' in Irene Diamond and Lee Quinby (eds.), *Feminism and Foucault*, (Boston, Mass: Northeastern University Press, 1988) pp.61-86.

articulate Danny's power, status, and sexual potency through the semiotics of her appearance. Within the context of space and place, the female can thus be read as a map on which the predatory male stakes his territory; she is also a heterotopian mirror reflecting and validating patriarchal power over the object of his fantasy and desire.

### *Mona Lisa* (1986)

This concept of the female as constructed fantasy is a recurring theme within Neil Jordan's *Mona Lisa*, in which Leonardo da Vinci's enigmatic subject is embodied by the narrative's female protagonist, high-class call girl Simone (Cathy Tyson). The motif of 'woman-as-fantasy' or constructed artifice is reiterated by lines in the title song performed by Nat King Cole over the opening credits: 'Are you warm, are you real, Mona Lisa?/Or just a cold and lonely, lovely work of art?'. Accordingly, whilst a bleak verisimilitude had traditionally been a generic prerequisite in films taking prostitution and exploitation as their theme,<sup>14</sup> Jordan eschews an exclusively realist approach for a more expressionist interpretation. He was not alone in this; with specific regard to space and place, John Hill suggests that in the 1980s Gangland film in general demonstrated:

a strong movement [...] towards stylisation, transforming real locations into expressionist milieus and investing the city with something of the mythic dimension that it has traditionally possessed in Hollywood thrillers.<sup>15</sup>

Supporting this view, Andrew Spicer notes that British neo-noir (of which he offers Jordan's film as an example) often exhibits 'a deliberate blurring of the boundaries' between fantasy and reality.<sup>16</sup> Nonetheless, within *Mona Lisa*, Jordan's portrayal of the sleazy underworld of vice and pornography also displays a brutal authenticity bearing witness to the director's fastidious research prior to writing the screenplay, and his casting of prostitutes rather than actors as streetwalkers.<sup>17</sup> Spatially, the narrative moves between the sordid and the elite; however, their juxtaposition simply serves to emphasise that such debasement respects no boundaries, having the capacity to contaminate even the most salubrious locations.

Bob Hoskins plays ex-con George, newly released from prison after a seven-year stretch. His friend Thomas (Robbie Coltrane), an author of crime fiction, has offered George temporary accommodation within his eccentric workshop-cum-living quarters.<sup>18</sup> In order to fund his writing, Thomas repairs cars in this multi-functional

<sup>14</sup> See, for example, *The Flesh is Weak* (1957) and *The Small World of Sammy Lee* (1963) discussed in Chapter Two.

<sup>15</sup> John Hill, 'Allegorising the Nation' in Chibnall & Murphy, *British Crime Cinema*, p.160.

<sup>16</sup> Andrew Spicer (ed.), *European Film Noir* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), p.112.

<sup>17</sup> Neil Jordan, Director's commentary, *Mona Lisa* (DVD, 2006).

<sup>18</sup> Appropriate to the heterotopian concept of a 'world within a world', Thomas's home is a caravan situated inside the space of his large workshop.

space: reflecting the narrative's temporal setting, it is also the place from which he operates a profitable sideline in kitsch artefacts, fully embracing the contemporary Thatcherite spirit of individuality and entrepreneurialism. Although the specific details are never revealed, it appears that George's stint in prison was somehow connected with vicious Gangland boss Mortwell (Michael Caine); as a consequent 'favour' within this hierarchical underworld, he is given a job as driver to high-class call girl Simone.

Thomas has looked after George's beloved white Jaguar during his enforced absence, and it is this iconic vehicle in which George chauffeurs Simone to her various assignments.<sup>19</sup> As with Glenda's white sports car in *Get Carter* (discussed in Chapter Five), this motif implies a Proppian approach which enhances the expressionist nature of the narrative: the Jaguar becomes a contemporary 'white charger', and George increasingly perceives himself in the suitably patriarchal role of Simone's 'knight in shining armour'.<sup>20</sup>

Nonetheless, the first time George is summoned to collect her from the rarefied space of a luxury hotel, the elegant Simone makes it clear she is less than impressed by his appearance: indeed, she feels it compromises her own position. In an ironic reversal of generically conventional gender roles she therefore gives him a wad of cash to buy some more suitable clothes. Although George initially refuses her handout, Simone insists, telling him she can 'claim it'. Simone's turn of phrase reinforces a business-like approach to her trade; in addition, her relative affluence and autonomy illustrate the hierarchy inherent within her profession.

Whilst Simone's own position and the spaces within which she operates may be elite, their next destination is a seedy area around King's Cross. Simone tells George to drive slowly down a particular street as she appears to be looking for someone among the cheap prostitutes crowding its pavements: it is a journey they are to repeat on several occasions. As Spicer observes, the scene is 'lit to resemble a hell's mouth'.<sup>21</sup> Spatially, it is therefore effective in conveying the sordid brutality constituting the lives of prostitution's lower echelons.

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<sup>19</sup> Continuing the expressionistic trope, in an early scene George and Thomas drive off in the Jaguar together. They stop at a pet shop where George purchases a white rabbit, which he then delivers for the attention of his former employer, obnoxious local Gangland boss Mortwell. If read as a reference to Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, the rabbit can be seen as indicative of fantasy within the narrative that follows, an element reinforced by a later scene in which a white horse is seen tethered to a tree-house in a children's play area. This references John Franklin Bardin's *The Deadly Percheron*, a novel Thomas gives George to read, in which the protagonist believes himself to be delusional and unable to distinguish between fantasy and reality. First published in 1946, the eponymous Percheron of Bardin's novel is a white dray horse.

<sup>20</sup> Propp, *Morphology of the Folk Tale*.

<sup>21</sup> Spicer, *European Film Noir*, p.122.

Reiterating their hierarchical relationship, the following evening George waits for Simone in the bar of another exclusive hotel, having complied with her instruction to purchase a new outfit. However, when she sets eyes on him Simone is absolutely appalled, as George is now sporting a loud Hawaiian-style shirt and wide cream flares under a vibrant tan leather bomber jacket, topped off with a gold medallion. Staring in disbelief at his ineptitude, she declares him to be 'about as subtle as a pair of fishnet tights', adding 'I may as well hang a sign around my neck!' (proclaiming that she is a prostitute, and he her pimp). She therefore takes his sartorial makeover in hand herself, dressing him in an elegantly tailored suit, designer shirts, silk ties, and a cashmere overcoat in order to render his appearance suitably subtle and refined. Whilst constituting a reversal of gender stereotyping, it is a scenario which replicates the 'makeover' of Gwen in *Good Time Girl* and Marissa in *The Flesh is Weak* (discussed in Chapter Two), among many others.

Having previously been snubbed by a waiter within the hierarchical space of a luxury hotel due to his appearance, George is subsequently accepted without question by the same member of staff following Simone's sartorial intervention. This scenario contributes to a particular concern within the narrative, namely the fluidity and instability of identity: through her appearance and demeanour, Simone is accepted as someone other than herself within the opulent spatial settings of her professional world, and by dressing George appropriately, he becomes invisible and therefore acceptable. However, by destabilising George's sense of self, the patriarchal hierarchy is challenged as Simone renders him vulnerable and he begins to fall in love with her.<sup>22</sup>

With her aloof self-sufficiency and control, Simone's appearance offers a twist on Bartky's interpretation of the 'docile body', cited above. Nonetheless, a scene in which she walks through a hotel lobby with her elegant full length coat unbuttoned just enough to reveal she is wearing nothing but satin and lace lingerie beneath, complies with Russell Campbell's observation that 'a distinctive dress code for the prostitute [signifies] her availability through her attire and posture.'<sup>23</sup>

Reinforcing Simone's hierarchical position and in keeping with her professional rank, the space designated for her next assignment is a palatial private house in Highgate belonging to a wealthy Middle Eastern businessman. Whilst George waits for her, a uniformed servant brings coffee and sandwiches out to the car on a silver tray laid with fine china, stating that '*Madame* thought you might like some refreshment'. This emphasises not only Simone's acceptance but her status within a world beyond George's experience.

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<sup>22</sup> George's fantasy replicates both the delusion and confusion of Bardin's protagonist.

<sup>23</sup> Russell Campbell, *Marked Women: Prostitutes and Prostitution in the Cinema* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press: 2006), p.7.

Spatially, the luxury and gentility of this environment are used effectively by Jordan to emphasise the sordid reality of George's repeated forays into King's Cross to search the space he has dubbed 'the meat rack' for Simone's young friend, Cathy (Kate Hardie), a fifteen-year-old prostitute and heroin addict. He is horrified by what he sees, declaring 'They're so *young ...*', their youth clearly reminding him of his own daughter, whom his ex-wife has banned him from visiting since his release. Equally repellent to George are the generic spaces of the sex shops, peep shows, massage parlours and revue bars in the back streets of Soho where he continues his search on Simone's behalf. As in Ken Hughes' *Sammy Lee* discussed in Chapter Two, Jordan's use of actual locations renders the spaces in these scenes appropriately sleazy and other-worldly.

Reinforcing the dynamics of gendered power relations within prostitution, young Cathy is in the company of Mortwell's vicious and sadistic pimp Anderson when George eventually locates her.<sup>24</sup> She is subsequently delivered to the salubrious setting of a large house, which is apparently a world away from her customary territory, the 'hell's mouth' of King's Cross. Standing in extensive grounds, opera music emanates from its elegant interior. However, once again things are not what they appear, and it becomes clear that Cathy is not here of her own volition: the girl's extreme youth renders her a profitable commodity to her employer, this affluent space connoting the size of Mortwell's lucrative fee.

Having watched Mortwell leave the property, George breaks in and finds a video camera set up in front of a blind. On lifting the blind (and recalling the peep shows he has trawled in his previous searches), he discovers a two-way mirror through which he sees Cathy with a much older man. Reaffirming her lack of autonomy within this male-dominated, hierarchical world of perversion, she has a look of horror and disgust on her face. George immediately rushes in to rescue the girl, giving her a piggy-back ride across the vast lawn: a close-up of heroin and a syringe on a silver salver explains why he has had to carry her.

Having made their escape, George and Cathy meet up with Simone before driving to Brighton in the Jaguar. Spatially, their destination represents a paradox: initially, it allows George to maintain the fantasy of himself as Simone's heroic champion, as it is he who has rescued Cathy from the sordid filth of her existence and brought them to this 'safe haven'. However, it is also the space in which the fantasy begins to unravel, revealing harsh and unpalatable truths.

Cathy is suffering withdrawal symptoms, and Simone takes a private prescription from her handbag instructing George to go to the chemist. On his

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<sup>24</sup> The physical nature of Anderson's 'discipline' over the young girl represents an updated version of Rosso and Martin's assaults on Gwen in *Good Time Girl*.



return, George stares uncomprehendingly at the two women who are now lying on the bed, Simone comforting the younger girl. It has begun to dawn on him that drugs go hand in hand with prostitution offering temporary respite from its intolerable reality, but also that the relationship between Simone and Cathy may be more than platonic. George will later declare that 'I sold myself for a pair of dykes!': it is an observation which identifies his interpretation of the women's liaison as not only emasculating but transgressive, and therefore a disruption to the established patriarchal order.

George retreats to the spatial sanctuary of his own room. Taking a glass and miniature from the almost empty mini-bar, he sits down to watch the television in front of a coffee table littered with empty glasses, bottles and cans – his own means of escape. When she comes to find him, Simone reports that Cathy is asleep, to which he replies 'Like *Babes in the Wood*'. It is a further reference to a mythical tale, and one that reinforces the vulnerability of youth. However, in terms of space and place, George's comment can be read as an ironic observation of Cathy as an innocent abroad within the 'urban jungle'.

Superficially, Brighton appears to offer a spatial alternative to the voracious reality of that heterotopian jungle, a sense of escapism reiterated by George's declaration that 'I like the seaside ... I've always liked the seaside ... do you like the seaside?'. He and Simone take a walk along the pier, but once there George can no longer contain his anger and frustration. Asserting the physicality of his masculine superiority, George becomes aggressive towards Simone, grabbing her and roughly forcing her to dance a few steps with him: 'like men and women [are supposed to] do'.<sup>25</sup> He then buys them each a pair of novelty sunglasses, heart-shaped for Simone and star-shaped for himself, both designs connoting the blind futility of George's 'stars-in-his-eyes' romantic fantasy.

Suddenly, Simone screams his name in fright as she catches sight of Mortwell's henchmen behind them, the realities of a powerful Gangland hierarchy invading the liminality and other-worldliness of this carnivalesque space. A chase ensues as they run back along the pier, upending stalls and knocking people flying in their attempt to escape. A pair of dwarves from a sideshow mimics the rough and tumble, making a further surreal reference to Bardin's novel. Reaching the sanctuary of the hotel, George and Simone believe they are safe; on opening the door, they are therefore horror-struck to find Gangland supremo Mortwell waiting in their room with the white rabbit in his lap.

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<sup>25</sup> His bullying stance references the aggressiveness of 'punters' forcing prostitutes to act out their fantasies.

Pertinent to the violent altercation that follows is Russell Campbell's observation that, regarding their relationship with prostitutes, 'men have much invested in upholding and sustaining their system of control'. Campbell therefore suggests that physical punishment of such women on screen 'may serve to assuage male fears [which] the female as sexual being provokes' – a comment drawing on the Freudian notion of 'woman as castrator'.<sup>26</sup> Reiterating the prevailing power structures and reasserting his own masculine authority, Mortwell jumps up as they enter, slapping Simone across the face. Unencumbered by dialogue, the action articulates succinctly both Simone's inferior (female) status and her perceived transgression, but also the futility of her attempt to wrest Cathy from the omnipotent Mortwell's patriarchal control.

Simone grabs the gun George had given her earlier for protection and starts firing it wildly, killing both Mortwell and the sadistic Anderson – a fast-paced cinematic montage contributes to the sense of panic. It is a sequence bearing out Kaplan's identification of a motif that emerges in 1980s filmic narratives in which women who have been sexually abused and brutally treated by men take their revenge.<sup>27</sup> Kaplan observes that it is 'woman [who] now has the phallus, in the shape of a gun' – a remark which can be interpreted as expanding upon Campbell's argument, above.<sup>28</sup>

As previously suggested, Jordan's film provides a more expressionistic space for its subject matter than is the generic norm, and this is exemplified by the final scene in Thomas's workshop, where George discusses his relationship with Simone in the third person: 'She was trapped from the first time he met her ... like a bird in a cage, but he couldn't see it – he liked her too much ... he was soppy about her ... she was in love, she really was, but not with him...'. When George's daughter arrives, the three of them link arms and head off together down the path, the regular skip in their synchronised step recalling the journey of Dorothy and her companions along the 'Yellow Brick Road' in the fantasy tale *The Wizard of Oz* (1939). In conjunction with George's third person account, this sequence calls into question everything that has gone before: has it all been a fictionalised storyline for one of Thomas's novels?

Despite a recurrent emphasis on fantasy, the film's post-modern playfulness constitutes an effective foil, throwing the sordid realities of the narrative into relief and rendering the bullying, exploitative perversion and drug abuse of this male-dominated world even more horrific. More specifically, the way in which certain issues are portrayed by Jordan can be seen as reflecting the Thatcherite era in which

<sup>26</sup> Campbell, *Marked Women*, p.6. The concept of 'woman as castrator' or '*femme castratrice*' is discussed by Barbara Creed in *The Monstrous Feminine: Film, Feminism & Psychoanalysis* (London & New York: Routledge, 2003).

<sup>27</sup> Kaplan, *Women and Film*, p.74.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

*Mona Lisa* was produced: along with Thomas's individuality and entrepreneurialism, Simone's spatially-oriented upward mobility from lowly beginnings on the 'meat rack' to the elite upper echelons of her profession allows her to enjoy the material rewards of hard work and enterprise. However, young Cathy offers insight into the plight of those less fortunate, the 1980s witnessing a tragic increase in young runaways on the street who often resorted to prostitution as a means of survival and, inevitably, in order to fund a drug habit.<sup>29</sup>

### ***London to Brighton* (2006)**

Russell Campbell believes that whilst 'the figure of the prostitute in film, and the depiction of female prostitution generally, is predominantly attributable to the working of the male imagination', such fantasy is 'modified by [cinema's] requirement for a certain verisimilitude'.<sup>30</sup> Suggesting such narratives are shaped by patriarchal hegemony, his observation that they 'arise in response to changing social mores' also reinforces the temporal specificity of film and its role as cultural artefact.<sup>31</sup> Accordingly, through its graphic interpretation of the subject, Paul Williams' *London to Brighton* (2008) updates the filmic portrayal of the vulnerability and potential exploitation of runaways such as Gwen in *Good Time Girl* and Cathy in *Mona Lisa*. It is a narrative cataloguing the period of a few traumatic days in the life of eleven-year-old Joanne (Georgia Groome): like Gwen, she has run away from home to escape her abusive father.

In contrast to Jordan's expressionist approach to prostitution in *Mona Lisa*, Williams' film represents an inexorable realism.<sup>32</sup> This is achieved in part through the eponymous spatial dichotomy represented by London versus Brighton; however,

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<sup>29</sup> Juvenile prostitution is a subject discussed by Donald Thomas, who observes a link with the 'availability of drugs [which] had proliferated since the 1960s.' Thomas, *Villain's Paradise*, p.471. As Andrew Spicer observes, Jordan's attention to detail in *Mona Lisa* results in 'a truly noir world of underage prostitution, pornography, drug-dealing and heroin addiction'. Spicer, *European Film Noir*, p.122.

<sup>30</sup> Campbell, *Marked Women*, p.21.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> In his review for the *Guardian*, 1 December 2006, Peter Bradshaw recognises *London to Brighton* as a filmic homage to realist film-makers Ken Loach and Mike Hodges. As intimated by the discussion regarding its relationship with verisimilitude in Chapter One, the concept of filmic realism has been the subject of significant academic debate. One aim of realism is to bring characters, places and situations to the screen which have traditionally been marginalised both by society and mainstream cinema: in this sense, it can be regarded as a political art form. Key commentators on the subject include film critics André Bazin, *What is Cinema*, trans. by Hugh Gray (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967); Christian Metz, *Film Language: A Semiotics of Cinema*, trans. by Michael Taylor (London & New York: Oxford University Press, 1974); and Siegfried Kracauer, *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality* (London & New York: Oxford University Press, 1960); see also British Marxist cultural critic Raymond Williams, 'A Lecture on Realism' in *Screen*, Vol. 19, No. 1, Spring 1977, pp.61-74.

the trope is emphasised by Williams' juxtaposition of the dystopian specifics of an urban *demi-monde* with glimpses of the utopian otherness of the countryside.<sup>33</sup>

The squalid nature of the city is emphasised from the outset. Rather than a generically conventional opening shot establishing the narrative's location, the viewer is simply presented with a black screen stating 'London, 3.07am' and the explosive sound of a door crashing open. Visually this makes way for frantic, scrabbling action in the seedy surroundings of a ladies' toilet, a woman in her thirties attempting to comfort a sobbing, frightened young girl with smudged, clown-like make-up smeared over her tear-stained face. The older woman, Kelly (Lorraine Stanley), has a bruised and swollen eye, and is shaking uncontrollably. In a maternal gesture, she makes an attempt to clean the make-up off the girl's face, telling her to lock herself in the graffiti-covered cubicle whilst she goes to get them something to eat. Whereas in *Good Time Girl*, the ladies' toilet in the nightclub was spatially symbolic of what Gwen perceived to be the start of a new and glamorous lifestyle, a similar space here represents the physical and metaphorical squalor of the underworld that Kelly and the young Joanne are desperate to escape.

The scene cuts to Kelly in the neutral space and relative normality of a fast-food outlet, insisting that the staff include the free toy in Joanne's takeaway meal. Kelly returns with the food, which they eat in the fetid surroundings of the toilet cubicle. She tells Joanne they are not safe in London, but that she has a friend in Brighton who will put them up – once again offering the seaside town as a spatial sanctuary. However, they cannot afford the train fare, so Kelly instructs Joanne to lock herself in the cubicle again whilst she goes to 'get some money'. Outside, a car pulls over and Kelly bends down to speak to the driver: 'Hello mate, what you after?'. It is clear she is in familiar territory – like the sundry other women patrolling the pavement behind her, Kelly is a prostitute on the street.

After the requisite number of punters, Kelly returns to the ladies' toilet. A terrified Joanne asks where she has been. In the tone of a fraught mother, Kelly reminds her that she had to make some money, urging Joanne to hurry up as they need to catch the train. The scene cuts to a broad panning shot of Victoria Station before dawn: as the pair run through the almost deserted atrium towards the platform for Brighton, the scale of this monumental space is in complete opposition to the confined and relatively safe enclosure of the toilet cubicle, serving to reinforce their vulnerability.

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<sup>33</sup> A diminutive budget of £80,000 contributed significantly to the film's gritty realism, Anthony Quinn observing that the director 'borrowed the money from private investors and shot it over 19 days, using friends' houses and locations that mostly cost nothing.' 'High Art, Low Lives', *Independent*, 1 December 2006.

Kelly breathes a sigh of relief as they take their seats in the heterotopian space of the train: as in *Good Time Girl*, the railway carriage represents a means of escape, and therefore hope. Nonetheless, Joanne is still frightened, asking 'What about that man Derek?'. Kelly tries to reassure her; however, Joanne is clearly still disturbed by whatever has happened, asking 'Will we go to jail?'. In a further maternal gesture Kelly tells her to get some sleep, offering the girl her coat to use as a pillow. As they settle down for the hour-long journey, the film's title finally appears on the screen.

The first shot following the opening credits depicts a seated figure, Stuart Allen (Sam Spruell), a feared and respected player in the local Gangland hierarchy. The scene is short, with the hand-held camera (focusing on Allen's uncompromisingly-lit face) lending it immediacy. Allen is in his father's house; he is staring fixedly into the distance, speaking unnaturally calmly yet authoritatively to his two henchmen, whose presence in the room is represented by shadowy knee-to-shoulder shots of their bodies just visible in the background: it is a visual statement of their relative Gangland status. Without turning to look at them, and in carefully measured tones, Allen states: 'He's had a girl here. Find out who she is.'

From this point, the narrative is told through a series of flashbacks. In a belated establishing sequence, the scene cuts to the familiar tourist space of Piccadilly Circus; by contrast, this view is replaced, fleetingly, by the docks at first light, followed by a row of slightly dilapidated Edwardian houses. Despite their appearance of run-of-the-mill domesticity, one is the domain of 'that man Derek' (Johnny Harris) referred to by Joanne on the train: he is a pimp, running several prostitutes from the property, including Kelly.

The domesticity of this space is used to accentuate the squalid nature of Derek's trade. In the kitchen, he is coercing a tearful teenage prostitute to go into the room next door where two clients are awaiting her services; she clearly finds the prospect both repulsive and frightening. Derek's *modus operandi* mimics Pottinger's in *Good Time Girl*: initially aggressive, he yells 'I'm not a fuckin' charity'; however, he then begins cajoling, taking her hand and telling her 'you're the most beautiful girl I know, d'you know that?'. As the girl reluctantly leaves the communal domestic space of the kitchen for the specifically professional workplace represented by the bedroom, Derek orders his sidekick 'Chum' (Nathan Constance) to pass him the cornflakes - a demand that reinforces both his superiority and the apparent everyday, routine normality of the situation.

Derek eats his breakfast whilst watching television; although the TV screen is turned away from the camera, it becomes clear from its dialogue that he is watching

*Royalty*, a film short also directed by Williams.<sup>34</sup> Although only a few seconds long, this sequence represents a categorical statement regarding the hierarchical relationships involved in this particular subgenre, as *Royalty* offers a further Proppian analysis of a heterotopian underworld scenario identified through various characters involved in drugs and prostitution.<sup>35</sup>

Appropriately, given this narrative emphasis on hierarchy, it is at this point that Allen's henchmen burst into the kitchen. Indicating their loftier Gangland status, one of the men surveys Derek's lair with sneering distaste, a moment Anthony Quinn compares to 'a rat turning up its nose at a skunk'.<sup>36</sup> Indignantly, the startled Derek demands 'Who the fuck are you?', as the two apparent strangers invade his realm. They reply that Stuart Allen wants to see him. Immediately his arrogant demeanour changes: clearly unnerved by the prospect, he frantically instructs Chum to ring Kelly and find out where she is as he submissively follows the two intruders out of the house.

As Chum obeys Derek's command, the scene cuts to the interior of the train where Kelly's mobile phone starts to ring. Recognising Chum's number, Kelly looks concerned and switches the phone off. Joanne is watching her: as if to block out the trauma of their experiences, the young girl turns away from her companion's swollen and disfigured face. Looking instead at the rural landscape through the window, she states simply 'I love the countryside', echoing George's similar affection for the seaside in *Mona Lisa*: for both characters, these spaces represent an almost utopian alternative to the unpalatable reality of their lives. Whereas the menacing space of the city has been shot through a cold, blue filter, this landscape is therefore seen through warm and comforting, nostalgic golden-yellow hues.

Joanne's comment prompts Kelly to ask why she has run away from home. The question makes it clear for the first time that she is not the girl's mother, raising questions as to their relationship. Joanne's reply is graphic and to the point, echoing Gwen and Lyla's plight in *Good Time Girl*: 'Cos my life's shit. My Mum's dead, isn't she, and my Dad's a bastard - he beats me, he's always pissed.' After a brief

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<sup>34</sup> *Royalty* is included on the DVD version of *London to Brighton* (2007). It is a moment reiterating the heterotopian nature of Gangland film.

<sup>35</sup> Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*. The characters and their narrative function identified by Propp remain fundamental to the structure of many modern narratives. There is clearly a hierarchical relationship between them, which is exemplified in this case by Williams' film short being subdivided into sections entitled 'The Queen', 'The Maidens', 'The Fool', 'The King', and 'The Suitor'.

<sup>36</sup> Quinn, *Independent*, 1 December 2006.

exchange, she looks out of the window once again, emphatically qualifying her earlier observation: 'I *love* the fields.'<sup>37</sup>

The golden hues of the countryside cut to the cold, grey light of early morning in a rough suburb of the city in which Allen wields his hierarchical power. Allen is seated in the back of his car with Derek; the two henchmen are in the front. Derek is clearly terrified. Under duress, he eventually tells Allen what he wants to know: that he provided Allen's father with 'a twelve-year-old girl'. Allen tells Derek that he wants 'those two girls', and gives him an ultimatum. He then takes a cut-throat razor and slashes Derek's thigh, ordering him out of the car. Bleeding profusely and unable to walk, Derek rings Chum, screaming hysterically 'They've cut my fuckin' leg off!'; he orders Chum to come and pick him up and to find out where Kelly and Joanne are. This close-up is replaced by a wide-angled shot of Derek propped against the wall of an underpass. His slumped body, dwarfed by the vibrant graffiti that covers its brickwork, constitutes a powerful visual statement regarding the reality of his 'stature' within the world he inhabits: it is a hierarchical pecking order regulated by fear.

When Kelly and Joanne arrive in Brighton, the girl asks whether they can go to the beach – a clean, bright space emphasising the sordidness and sleaze they have left behind. Joanne races down to the water's edge, kicking off her shoes and rolling up her jeans. Kelly shouts to her 'What are you doing?' 'I'm playing!' she calls back, as she throws handfuls of pebbles into the sea. Together with a scene in an amusement arcade in which Joanne is determined to win a teddy bear for them both, and Kelly's insistence on a toy being included with the takeaway meal at the beginning of the film, this reinforces Joanne's status as a child. At only 11, she is even younger than Derek had claimed, and these scenes render the binary opposition between her innocence and the experiences she has been forced to endure even more horrific.

A further series of spatially significant flashbacks explains events leading up to the opening scene in the ladies' toilet. Derek has been paid by Allen's father to find him a young girl. Although Kelly is vehemently and vociferously opposed to the idea, Derek exerts his power and bullies her into find someone suitable. It is therefore she who finds Joanne, begging at the top of the steps to the underground at Waterloo Station. Spatially, this setting is symbolic, for in addition to the transitory nature of the station's environment, Joanne is poised precariously between 'overground' (safety) and 'underground' (depravity).

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<sup>37</sup> A later sequence on Brighton beach is intercut with Derek and Chum visiting the luxurious London flat of one of their contacts in order to borrow a shotgun. As they leave, Derek turns to Chum, observing wistfully 'I love this flat ... lucky cunt!', thus expressing similar emotions to those constituting Joanne's love of the countryside: for each character, their respective chosen space represents an alternative lifestyle that appears just out of reach.

Realising she is probably starving, Kelly persuades Joanne to come with her to meet Derek in the apparently safe public space of a nearby café, where the youngster devours a hot meal. Derek then offers her £100 if she will ‘spend an hour with a mate of mine’. Although in her innocence and naivety she is obviously confused about what is expected of her, she needs the money to survive and accepts his offer. That evening, Kelly helps Joanne to apply make-up (a procedure to which the child is clearly unaccustomed) and accompanies her to the opulent abode of Duncan Allen (Alexander Morton): although his rough Glaswegian accent betrays his origins, it appears he is now used to such luxury, and to paying for his pleasures.

The neat, ordered space of Duncan Allen’s home belies the horrors awaiting Joanne. The girls sit side by side on a pristine white sofa; Kelly’s face is devoid of make-up, Joanne’s significantly reminiscent of a painted doll. After offering them a drink, Allen senior asks Joanne to accompany him upstairs. Kelly helps herself to another vodka, but hearing Joanne becoming increasingly distressed she rushes upstairs to her aid. Joanne has been handcuffed to the bed, and Kelly sustains her black eye whilst trying to free the younger girl. In the fracas, Joanne takes a knife and stabs her captor, wounding him fatally. It is after this incident that they make their escape, taking refuge in the squalid surroundings of the graffiti-covered toilet.

On the train, Joanne had told Kelly that the only other place she could go was her grandmother’s in Devon – a further spatial sanctuary. Once in Brighton, Kelly therefore needs to work again in order to make the train fare. Giving Joanne a few pounds to spend in the arcade on the pier while she does so, Kelly heads for the oppositional, squalid spaces that define her profession: grimy doorways and the back seats of kerb-crawlers’ cars. However, when the pair return to collect their belongings from Kelly’s friend, they find Derek and Chum waiting for them with a shotgun.

Derek bundles the terrified girls into the boot of his car before driving to meet Stuart Allen. It is now night time, and their eventual destination is a deserted field, an ironic reference to Joanne’s earlier wistful statement when surveying the countryside through the train window. Derek and Chum are given spades and instructed to dig: they believe they are digging graves for Kelly and Joanne, who are both sobbing with fear. However, when they have dug deep enough, Allen shoots the two men and orders his henchmen to bury them.<sup>38</sup> Still clutching each other, Kelly comforts the tearful Joanne: ‘It’s alright darlin’, it’s all over now.’

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<sup>38</sup> Williams incorporates a number of intertextual references within the film. For example, the choice of a cut-throat razor to slash Derek’s leg alludes to the iconic weapon carried by Pinkie Brown in *Brighton Rock* (1947); Joanne’s delight with the amusement arcade recalls Rose on the pier in the same film; bundling the girls into the car boot refers to Glenda’s fate in *Get Carter* (1971), the



In the following sequence, the two girls travel by train through a rural landscape once again, this time on the way to Devon. When they reach their destination, Joanne runs up the road towards a picturesque whitewashed house; she walks up the path, leaving Kelly by the gate. When Joanne's grandmother comes to the door she seems not to recognise her granddaughter at first, but then takes her into her arms. In stark contrast to the cosy domesticity of this happy ending for Joanne, the final scene shows Kelly back in London: leaving the station behind her, she lights a cigarette and walks off into the night to resume her old life.

### Conclusion

All three films analysed within this chapter use the elements of space, gender and hierarchy effectively in their articulation of contemporary concerns. More specifically, *Mona Lisa* and *London to Brighton* demonstrate the inevitable effect of changes in legislation on the spaces in which prostitution operates. As discussed above, its increased presence on the streets was initiated by earlier attempts to eradicate illegal brothels; however, in a graphic example of Foucault's notion of the dynamics of oppression, this legislation was consequently responsible for establishing a burgeoning and hugely successful sex industry 'behind closed doors' (whether private or commercial), an issue demonstrated uncompromisingly in Jordan's *Mona Lisa* in particular.

Within MacDonald's *Good Time Girl*, gender and hierarchy are prime concerns. Gwen and Lyla embody general post-war anxieties regarding teenage delinquency and moral turpitude, but the film is also at pains to depict the judicial system as ultimately caring: a paternalistic body concerned with protecting such young girls rendered particularly vulnerable by their gender, class and youth – hence Gwen's incarceration in the approved school, for her 'own good'. Whereas the 1980s are portrayed in *Mona Lisa* as an era of potential plenty for those motivated to work hard enough, the post-war austerity exemplified by the pawn shops and a yearning for 'nice things' in *Good Time Girl* conversely reinforces the inevitable penalties of having ideas 'above one's station'. Nonetheless, both films articulate a hierarchical society in which spending power is closely related to quality of life.

To an extent, this concept is also present in Williams' *London to Brighton*, and certainly Duncan Allen's opulent mansion stands testament to that. However, of greater concern within the narrative is the concept of power. This includes the dynamics of gendered power relations between pimp and whore exemplified by Derek's relationship with Kelly; but also the inherent stratification of Gangland hierarchies within which Derek is ultimately exposed as small fry. In addition, a

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shotgun carried by Derek replicating that used by Jack Carter; and the scene in the field suggests that in *The Criminal* (1960) in which Bannion buries the spoils from the racetrack.

scene on Brighton Pier in which Kelly and Joanne allow their empty polystyrene cups to be taken by the wind, intimates their ultimate powerlessness in determining or controlling their individual circumstances. Whilst it is never made clear why Kelly is working on the streets, it is quite apparent that she does not enjoy the rewards of the higher class Simone and is there through necessity rather than choice.

Just as Simone's elegant appearance signifies her loftier position in life, and Gwen's 'rags to riches' story is evidenced by her change in wardrobe, so Kelly's cheap clothes, short skirt and bottle-blond hair confirm that at thirty she is unlikely to improve her status; furthermore, she will be lucky to maintain it. Nonetheless, she can atone for the damage wreaked upon the young Joanne, to whom she becomes a temporary surrogate mother, by ensuring the child's safe passage out of the sleaze and squalor which threaten to swallow her up.

In one sense, Kelly is a substitute for the paternalistic figures in *Good Time Girl*; however, her maternal bonding with Joanne represents far more, inasmuch as their strong union (echoing that of the earlier women's movement) takes a stance against their abuse at the hands of the men in their lives, whether fathers, pimps or punters. Whilst this chapter has looked generally at representations of female exploitation in Gangland film, Chapter Seven will consider the specific role of the female protagonist within the genre in order to determine whether such roles reflect the challenge of feminism to patriarchal discourse, or whether 'a woman's place' within this context is pre-ordained and non-negotiable.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

*'A Woman's Place':  
Charting her Progress  
through the Demi-Monde*

Building upon a study of the genre's 'good-time girl' in Chapter Six, this chapter will analyse three further examples of British Gangland film in which women constitute a primary focus. The relationship between space, hierarchy and gender will continue to reflect the concept of film as a heterotopian interpretation of its era of production; however, with specific regard to gender, it will nonetheless be demonstrated that throughout the six-and-a-half decades under discussion, films within the genre have consistently defined 'woman' through her difference to the male, both aesthetically and with regard to physical and hierarchical power.

### **'Woman': a Work in Progress**

Reinforcing the premise of representation through difference, feminist critic Claire Johnston suggests that 'in relation to herself she means no-thing', arguing that women are thus negatively represented on screen as 'not man'.<sup>1</sup> Rather than an apparently clear-cut male/female dichotomy, Johnston therefore perceives the binary opposition evidenced in narrative film as more definitively hierarchical, namely 'male/non-male'.<sup>2</sup> Particularly within Gangland film, women's position as 'other' is thus generally imbued with inferiority: as noted in Chapter Six, even elite and apparently autonomous call-girl Simone in Jordan's *Mona Lisa* is ultimately subordinate to her vicious and powerful pimp.

Despite such female portrayals constituting an inherent, almost mandatory compliance with the patriarchally-prescribed face of 'womanhood' within Gangland film, it will be argued that more recent portrayals nonetheless include stronger, more autonomous characterisation alongside the genre's enduring stereotypes. Mulvey's dual premise of narcissism and voyeurism within narrative cinema (discussed more fully in Chapter One) is consequently extended by these narratives, offering the female spectator greater opportunity for positive identification with the protagonist on screen (narcissism), whilst expanding the orientation and focus of the cinematic gaze, male heterosexual or otherwise (voyeurism).<sup>3</sup>

The sub-title of this chapter refers to the progress of the female protagonist through Gangland's filmic *demi-monde*, literally a 'half world' or twilight zone. Historically, it is a world which became synonymous with *les demi-mondaines*, the women plying their trade on its streets, subsequently incorporating the upper echelons of the profession such as the courtesan. In order to chart (and critically

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<sup>1</sup> Claire Johnston, 'Women's Cinema as Counter-Cinema' (1973) in Sue Thornham (ed.), *Feminist Film Theory, a Reader* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), p.32.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* This is a concept discussed by Simone de Beauvoir in her revolutionary feminist text, *The Second Sex*, first published in 1949. She suggests that the self requires 'otherness' in order to define itself as a subject; further, and more specifically, that 'woman' is perennially cast in the objectified role of 'other' by the male, who casts himself in the subjective role of 'self', thus rendering him superior. Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*.

<sup>3</sup> Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure in Narrative Cinema'.

assess) such progress over the decades, three texts will be examined here: Edmond T Gréville's *Beat Girl* (1959), John Mackenzie's *The Long Good Friday* (1980), and Don Boyd's *My Kingdom* (2001). This chapter will also consider in conclusion whether the female in these examples has developed what Anneke Smelik describes as a 'positive image of autonomous femininity' representative of her time, or remains simply 'a sign, a spectacle, a fetish'.<sup>4</sup>

Certainly, the texts analysed in this chapter evidence diversity in generic interpretations of such femininity. In Edmond Gréville's *Beat Girl* from 1959, the eponymous protagonist is sixteen-year-old Jennifer (Gillian Hills), the rebellious art-student daughter of wealthy and prestigious architect Paul Linden (David Farrar). Whilst the film examines a number of contemporary concerns, of particular relevance to this analysis of a woman's place within Gangland film is the past involvement in the vice trade of Linden's apparently respectable and wholesome new wife, together with his daughter's flirtation with the Soho sex industry.

Given the temporal setting of Thatcherite Britain for John Mackenzie's *The Long Good Friday* (1980), Helen Mirren's portrayal of female protagonist Victoria is suitably self-confident and independent, despite her role as an updated version of the gangster's moll on the arm of underworld king pin Harold Shand (Bob Hoskins). As discussed below, Mirren's interpretation represents something of a pinnacle within such roles, not least due to the fact that the aristocratic Victoria is with Harold through choice rather than the more generically conventional narrative constructs of coercion or necessity. Victoria's characterisation therefore reflects the decade's concerns with female equality and autonomy; unfortunately, however, this was to prove a fleeting moment within the genre.

Whilst Richard Harris's aging Gangland patriarch Sandeman constitutes the lynchpin around which the narrative revolves in *My Kingdom* (2001), Don Boyd's film nonetheless offers a number of variations on the archetypal female within the genre through Sandeman's wife Mandy (Lynn Redgrave) and their three daughters. Whilst faithful to the pervasive generic conventions of deviant sexuality and extreme violence, the film represents a more diverse interpretation of the female. Despite this, *My Kingdom* does not necessarily represent a positive development in its depiction of either 'woman' or 'a woman's place' within the relentlessly male-dominated Gangland hierarchy.

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<sup>4</sup> Anneke Smelik, 'Feminist Film Theory' in Pam Cook & Mieke Bernink (eds.) *The Cinema Book*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. (London: BFI Publishing, 2001), p.357 & p.363.

***Beat Girl (1959)***

This chapter's concern with a woman's place is rendered particularly relevant in Gréville's *Beat Girl* through the specific oppositional spaces in which the narrative is set, and which articulate the diametrically opposed worlds of Jennifer and her father. An example is an early scene in which Linden introduces his young French bride Nichole (Noëlle Adams) to his imposing Kensington home, complete with resident staff. On arriving, Linden goes upstairs to fetch an aloof and resentful Jennifer: as they look down at the elegant Nichole from their superior position on the landing, he asks his daughter 'Do you admire my taste?', a remark which renders Linden's new wife an objectified embellishment to his architectural creation. Similarly, whilst the scale and design of the space are impressive, as a home it is austere: Linden's glib observation that 'it needs the feminine touch' reinforces Nichole's role as superficial, and inferior to his own as creator of the physical space itself.

After dinner, they take coffee in the 'living room' – a play on words, as Jennifer has described the domestic space of the home designed by her father as 'a morgue'. Continuing this motif, Nichole notices a large, coffin-like box on a stand. She asks, 'What's in there? A body?', to which a petulant Jennifer responds 'No, a skeleton in the cupboard!'. It is a scale model of what Linden describes as his 'life's work': the futuristic 'City 2000', in which 'crime, filth, noise, hustle and bustle' – and presumably, therefore, prostitution – 'will be unknown.' Together with his observation that it will be 'an almost silent place' in which no citizen would have to interact with another unless they desired to do so, Linden's architectural utopia is rendered anathema to his beat girl daughter.

Later, determined to establish a relationship with Jennifer, Nichole breaches the territorial boundaries of the girl's bedroom; however, their exchange simply exacerbates Jennifer's blistering resentment towards her new stepmother. Subsequently changing out of her demure outfit and applying make-up (thereby 'embellishing' her own body), Jennifer sneaks out from the superior space of her father's Kensington home to join her friends at a Soho coffee bar, the 'Off-Beat'.<sup>5</sup>

Spatially, the 'Off-Beat' is significant to the narrative, not least for its location opposite 'Les Girls' – a strip club: its proximity makes the café a convenient venue for the club's (female) talent scout, Greta (Delphi Lawrence), to interview prospective performers. However, the 'Off-Beat' is also a space of which Jennifer and her beatnik friends have taken cultural ownership. On the ground floor, they congregate around a jukebox with their coffee and soft drinks (alcohol is 'for squares, man'); when 'the band's in', they jive in the cellar downstairs to live jazz and beat. The contrast between the brightly lit café upstairs and the shadowy

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<sup>5</sup> The establishment's name makes reference to its clientele's taste in music, thus defining the purpose of the space itself.

darkness of the cellar below renders the latter a transgressive space with which these musical genres are associated, not least by the disapproving Paul Linden.

In terms of social hierarchy, youth is the common denominator within this space, and their beatnik culture the benchmark by which others are measured.<sup>6</sup> Jennifer's group represents a diverse mix that includes her cockney guitar-toting boyfriend Dave (Adam Faith), and Tony (Peter McEnery), the aristocratic son of a crusty General decorated for bravery during the War. They share a love of jazz and beat, and a vehement disdain for the older generation; both are expressed through slang which is incomprehensible to Jennifer's father, reinforcing the group's cultural solidarity.

The following day, still determined to win Jennifer round, Nichole tracks the girl down to the 'Off-Beat'. She thus transgresses Jennifer's social and spatial boundaries once again, and infuriates her by demonstrating a knowledge of jazz in conversation with Dave. As Nichole leaves, the group is intrigued to see Greta from 'Les Girls' address Jennifer's stepmother by name; although Nichole walks off pretending not to recognise Greta, it subsequently transpires that the pair worked together in Paris. Despite leading her new husband to believe she had been a ballet dancer, Nichole will later admit that she and Greta 'danced' in what she euphemistically describes as 'cabaret', supplementing their income by sleeping with 'paying customers'.

Determined to find out more, Jennifer visits 'Les Girls' and asks for Greta. As she waits, she is transfixed by an accomplished and highly erotic performance on stage, the explicit nature of which exemplifies the fetishisation of the female body discussed by Bartky (cited in Chapter Six).<sup>7</sup> As Jennifer watches the performance, she is in turn observed by the suave but lascivious club-owner Kenny (Christopher Lee) through a two-way mirror. Presuming Jennifer to be a new recruit, he congratulates Greta, observing that 'You really know how to pick 'em!'. Kenny is so impressed that he suggests setting Greta up 'in a house'. 'I'm not ready for that kind of work yet!', she retorts, insulted by both her commodification and the inference that she is now past her prime for performing but could still return a good profit in the alternative space of a brothel.

Greta goes to talk to Jennifer in the public space front of house, but Kenny shepherds them into the privacy of his office – his seat of power. As they enter, he shows Jennifer the two-way mirror: 'Look! I can see out, but they can't see in. It's

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<sup>6</sup> In a later contretemps with a group of Teddy Boys, Adam Faith's Dave declares 'You think you own the bloody streets, don't you!' – a remark reaffirming a sense of cultural identity and its association with territorial/spatial ownership.

<sup>7</sup> This extended and explicit sequence was cut by the censors before they would permit the film's cinematic release with an X-certificate: the fact it is now included in VHS and DVD editions of *Beat Girl* currently available under a '12' rating offers further evidence of film as a reflection of its cultural moment.

the only way I can tell whether these girls are earning their money or not!' This is a classic example of Foucault's notion of panopticism, in which power is maintained through subjects believing themselves to be under potentially constant surveillance and conforming/performing accordingly.<sup>8</sup>

In a further sequence exemplifying the elements of voyeurism and narcissism in Mulvey's 'gaze', vice king Kenny encourages Jennifer to look again through the mirror at the performance on stage before she leaves.<sup>9</sup> Despite knowing she is underage, he offers her a job: as the girls on stage cannot see who is watching through the mirror, Kenny and Jennifer's gaze is voyeuristic; the prospect of Jennifer performing on stage herself renders her own gaze narcissistic. When he tells Jennifer how much she would be paid, she sneers 'I don't need the money!', to which Kenny replies 'Ah, but there's a *thrill* in the work: all the girls say so.' It is this which intrigues her, offering a parallel to a recurring contemporary theme throughout the narrative in which the teenagers' primary focus is 'living for kicks'.

The next evening, following a session of beat, jazz and jive at the Chislehurst Caves, Jennifer decides to throw an impromptu party, the group moving from the transgressive teen-cultural space of an underground beat venue to the staid respectability of her father's Kensington home. This latter space is about to be denigrated: its order and tranquillity are violently interrupted as beat music is played at full volume, the jiving and smooching teenagers taking temporary ownership. This transgression is not sufficient for Jennifer, however, who proceeds to embrace the 'thrill' of striptease to the encouragement of the assembled company (both male and female), before being interrupted by Nichole and the girl's furiously angry father.

Having had the pristine perfection of his domain violated, Linden yells at the collective 'jiving, drivelling scum' to 'get out of my house!', before ordering a semi-naked Jennifer to put her clothes on and 'take that muck off your face'. Reiterating this sense of spatial violation and contamination, he then exclaims 'Bringing that riff-raff in here - what sort of place d'you think you were turning this into?' to which Jennifer responds 'That's a laugh: why didn't you ask yourself that question when you brought *that woman* in here?' This insult to her step-mother is rewarded with a slap across the face from Linden. Nonetheless, it is a remark that topples the patriarchal figure from his superior pedestal, as it renders him on a par with the clients from whom Nichole earned her living in Paris. As Linden takes his wife into the living room to establish the realities of her past, Jennifer slips out to rejoin her

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<sup>8</sup> Foucault, *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison*.

<sup>9</sup> Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure in Narrative Cinema'.



friends at the 'Off-Beat'.<sup>10</sup> However, agreeing 'the joint' is so dead they should 'send in the body-snatchers', Jennifer declares herself bored and leaves them to go across to 'Les Girls'.

Having tried to prevent the sixteen-year-old Jennifer from entering, the doorman reluctantly lets the young girl into the strip club – the spatial arena for the final scene. Before entering Kenny's inner sanctum, Jennifer deliberately stands in front of the mirror outside, fully aware that he will be able to see her preening herself: it is a deliberate act of sexual provocation reinforced by Greta's striptease act on stage behind her. Once inside Kenny's office, he tells Jennifer how beautiful she is and begins to caress her. Producing two air tickets to Paris, he says she can 'forget about those cheap thrills now', adding that he will have her 'name up in lights on the Champs-Élysées, which will *really* mean something'. The offer is ironic, for despite the implication that spatially and hierarchically the Champs-Élysées is superior to the squalid surroundings of Soho, Paris is also the city in which her stepmother entered the vice trade.

Greta has now been replaced on stage by her young interviewee from the 'Off-Beat' the day before: this is symbolic of her replacement by the teenage Jennifer in Kenny's affections, and invokes a further hierarchy founded on age and male-oriented perceptions of sexuality. Suddenly, there is a blood-curdling howl as the camera cuts from the girl's performance to a shot of Kenny in the throes of death, having been stabbed with the paperknife from his desk. As an hysterical Jennifer repeatedly screams her innocence, Greta – a woman scorned – steps from behind a curtain, calmly admitting her culpability: 'I've done us all a favour!'.

The film concludes with Linden and Nichole arriving amidst the mayhem to search for the errant teenager. When the terrified girl sees the couple in the crowd outside, she screams to them for help; having rescued Jennifer, they walk away from the club, Linden flanked by his wife and daughter. In a gesture of *noblesse oblige* suggesting that he has magnanimously forgiven them both for their transgressions, Linden puts a protective arm round each of the women. As Jennifer rests her head on his shoulder in a submissive sign of reconciliation, it is clear that patriarchal order has been restored – for the time being at least.

Offering *Beat Girl* as an example, Michael Brooke notes that by the mid-1950s, teenagers 'wanted to see films that reflected their own lives and (often musical) interests', and that they had consequently been identified as a lucrative target market by the film industry.<sup>11</sup> Despite the perfunctory morality of this ending, Roger

<sup>10</sup> Taking a stand against Linden's sanctimonious patriarchal stance, Nichole reminds him that 'I never told you I was a virgin when we married, or that I'd never slept with another man before'. This is, in itself, an indication of changing post-war views on morality.

<sup>11</sup> Michael Brooke, 'Teen Terrors on Film' <<http://www.screenonline.org.uk>> [accessed 07.05.2010]

Mellor therefore argues that 'the 'up front' aspect of this exploitation means that traditional narrative's formal invisibility is often undermined', resulting in 'tensions within society [being] foregrounded'.<sup>12</sup> It is a comment that once again reinforces the capacity of film to reflect contemporary issues and concerns – a characteristic exemplified by all three analyses within this chapter.

### *The Long Good Friday* (1979)

Consequently, with regard to the 1980s, John Hill observes that 'the practice of filmmaking [in this decade] both grew out of, and responded to, the social, economic, and cultural circumstances characteristic of the period'; further, that meaning may therefore be elucidated through examining 'the specific circumstances in which [particular films] were first produced and circulated.'<sup>13</sup> Whilst Hill himself does not make reference to *The Long Good Friday* ('trickle-released' during 1980/81), Mackenzie's film nonetheless exemplifies Hill's observation that cinema at this time was 'engaged in an ongoing dialogue with Thatcherite ideas, meanings, and values', despite being produced in 1979, Margaret Thatcher's inaugural year in office.<sup>14</sup> Hill's comments are exemplified by Chibnall's belief that *The Long Good Friday* is 'proof positive that the crime genre [at this time] was still capable of offering cogent comment on the state of the nation.'<sup>15</sup>

Accordingly, *The Long Good Friday* embraces prevailing attitudes regarding female equality through Helen Mirren's portrayal of Victoria. In addition, the plot relies upon a contemporary spatial motif of the regeneration and gentrification of what has since become familiar as London's Docklands: Harold Shand has a visionary plan which involves securing a large-scale money laundering investment from the American Mafia as part of a project to transform what was by then a derelict area into accommodation for the forthcoming Olympic Games. Harold's desire to transform such dereliction into what will ostensibly become an identifiable heterotopia is influenced by his perception of the project as patriotic, rendering it both spatially and ideologically symbolic.

At a reception aboard his super-yacht on the Thames to welcome Mafia boss Charlie (Eddie Constantine), Harold stands in the prow of the cruising vessel, a parodic pastiche of the traditional ship's figurehead. Against the historical backdrop of Tower Bridge, Harold delivers his marketing pitch – a futuristic vision of space

<sup>12</sup> Roger Philip Mellor, 'Beat Girl', <<http://www.screenonline.org.uk>> [accessed 28.04.2010]

<sup>13</sup> John Hill, *British Cinema in the 1980s*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), p.xi.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> Chibnall, 'Travels in Ladland', p.282. Bob Hoskins concurs, observing 'What was extraordinary about it was that we were just on the verge of Thatcherism. It hit the nail so firmly on the head, of where the Eighties were gonna go.' Cited in James Mottram, 'The Long Good Friday: Vision of a Dark Future', *Independent*, 22 September 2006.

and place. In a speech brimming with Thatcherite *zeitgeist* simultaneously reinforcing the centrality of space to the narrative, he declares:

I'm not a politician. I'm a businessman with a sense of history ... I'm also a Londoner. Our country's not an island any more - we're a leading European state, and I believe this is the decade in which London will become Europe's capital.

Raising a toast to 'hands across the Ocean!', Harold presages the relationship between the Britain and the USA that would dominate the following decade.

Harold's yacht also represents a locus of semiotic meaning that is central to an understanding of the man and his world. For Foucault, the ship is the heterotopia 'par excellence [...] a floating piece of space, a place without a place, that exists by itself, that is closed in on itself': a floating micro-community that is detached from the 'real world' and allows Harold to indulge in delusions of omnipotence.<sup>16</sup> In this particular instance, it is also a material possession connoting Harold's status, his achievements, and his acquisition of wealth; at the same time, as a sailing vessel, it signifies his journey, his trajectory from the back streets of Stepney to a world of hierarchical power and opulent luxury. However, the one thing his money cannot buy is class, and this element is provided by Victoria.<sup>17</sup>

As demonstrated in previous analyses, within British Gangland film Victoria's character would traditionally have embodied the good-time girl - a glamorous accessory signifying the protagonist's male superiority, his material success, and his consequent sexual potency. In this instance, however, it becomes clear that not only does Harold value and respect Victoria, he considers her his equal and his partner. Nonetheless, the aesthetics of Victoria's designer clothes, furs, and jewellery feminise, sexualise, and fetishise her body, rendering it compliant with the generically conventional aspects of her role, reaffirming Harold's status in a similar way to his other material possessions. The difference here is that Victoria's character (for which Mirren insisted on significant revisions) exudes indubitable self-confidence in her autonomy.<sup>18</sup> Together with allusion to her independent financial status, this renders it entirely feasible that it is she rather than Harold who is responsible for the constituent elements of her appearance. Victoria therefore simultaneously challenges the Foucauldian notion of the 'passive body' inscribed by

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<sup>16</sup> Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces', p.27.

<sup>17</sup> Representing the epitome of female power and yet devoted to her husband, a number of critics have suggested that her name makes reference to Queen Victoria. See, for example, Michael Sagrow 'The Long Good Friday' <<http://www.criterion.com>> [accessed 21.11.2008]

<sup>18</sup> Duguid states that 'As Victoria, Helen Mirren is every inch Hoskins' equal, transforming the passive gangster's moll of genre convention', adding that 'Mirren demanded extensive rewrites of the character'. Mark Duguid <<http://www.screenonline.org.uk/film/id/480130/index.html>> [accessed 21.11.2008]

patriarchal power, whilst also appearing to collude with it by dressing to enhance her allure (and, therefore, her influence over the male).<sup>19</sup>

We are first introduced to Victoria prior to the reception as she steps off the yacht to wave goodbye to Harold's mother, who is being chauffeured in his personalised gold Rolls Royce to Good Friday Mass. As noted in Chapter Four, religion exemplifies Foucault's concept of heterotopia and, through its inherent hierarchies, his concern with the dynamic power relations that dominate institutionalised space. As a member of the Roman Catholic congregation, Harold's mother is seen waiting in line to kiss the feet of a statue of Christ. Furthering a heterotopian sense of ritual and hierarchy, an altar boy in cassock and surplice wipes the icon with a linen purificator prior to each ritualistic oblation. Within *The Long Good Friday*, the motif of Roman Catholicism is also embodied within the identity of Harold's nemesis – the IRA – thus raising questions regarding the hierarchical nature of 'good' and 'evil'.<sup>20</sup>

Back on board, Victoria and Harold discuss arrangements for the forthcoming reception. Furthering the themes of Harold's patriotism and a sense of hierarchical space and place, he urges Victoria to 'play up' the fact she attended Benenden with Princess Anne. This demonstrates that he shares with their American guests the esteem in which he believes they hold the hierarchical notion of British class and breeding, not to mention the monarchy: 'They love all that!', he observes. By implication, the theme of female strength within the narrative is consequently established early in the proceedings, the fictitious character of Victoria being complemented and contextualised through reference to the Princess Royal (also recognised for her outspoken independence).

This gender-oriented theme is further exploited by the centrality to the narrative in these scenes of Harold's luxurious yacht, all craft traditionally being regarded as female. A little later, Victoria herself appears to have reverted to a more stereotypically domestic role below deck as she oversees arrangements for the banquet. However, having placated the irate and temperamental (male) chef in fluent French, she then interrogates Harold's cocksure henchman, Jeff (Derek Thompson), to ensure he has carried out Harold's orders satisfactorily before issuing a peremptory dismissal: 'Then you may go and have a drink on deck!'. Whilst

<sup>19</sup> Michel Foucault, 'Body/Power' in Colin Gordon (ed.), *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980).

<sup>20</sup> Unbeknown to Harold, one of his henchmen has subcontracted a subordinate to deliver protection money to the IRA to ensure the predominantly Irish workforce continues labouring on a building project. When the subordinate decides to help himself to a cut of the consignment of cash, the IRA assume Harold has deliberately underpaid them; they decide to teach him a lesson, placing bombs in his car, his casino, and his pub. The film's title would seem to make reference to the Easter Uprising of 1916, itself an example of Foucault's notion of the dynamic relationship between power, oppression and revolution.

causing Jeff to raise an eyebrow, this exchange confirms unequivocally her superior status within the prevailing male-dominated hierarchy.

Due to Victoria's meticulous planning, the reception proves a great success, serving to reinforce Harold's profile within the Gangland hierarchy. However, as the guests are leaving, Harold is informed that his Rolls Royce has been destroyed by a car bomb outside the church; although his mother is safe, his chauffeur has been killed in the explosion. Describing this challenge to his dominance as 'a diabolical liberty', Harold's initial response is angry indignation rather than fear, declaring that 'you can't go round crucifying people outside a church on Good Friday!'. It is not until a subsequent unexploded bomb is found in his casino that Harold begins to suspect he is the target of a systematic campaign, although the identity of its perpetrators is to prove frustratingly elusive.

Equating power with an ownership of space, Harold holds an impressive portfolio, which in addition to his yacht, the casino, and a penthouse apartment, includes a public house. Entitled the 'Lion & Unicorn', its name reinforces Harold's trademark patriotism, thus invoking Benedict Anderson's concept of the nation as 'imagined community', a further heterotopian motif.<sup>21</sup> Harold has arranged to host a dinner at the pub for the American entourage. Prior to their arrival, the camera pans over the sumptuous interior of a private dining room above the public bar, in which a long table is laid for dinner. The fine silver, linen, crystal and china are complemented by elegant floral arrangements: given Victoria's earlier concern with such details for the reception aboard the yacht, this appears to represent a further example of her organisational skills and innate good taste.

Whilst this concern with domestically-oriented aesthetics conforms to a stereotypical portrayal of the female, the scene that follows nonetheless reiterates the esteem in which Harold holds Victoria. Suddenly, as the convoy transporting the party arrives outside, there is an enormous explosion which demolishes the upper floor of the building. Visibly shocked ('If we'd been five minutes earlier ...!'), and assuming it to be linked to the previous incidents, Harold asks Victoria to 'buy me some time'. She immediately assumes control, arranging for a table at an alternative exclusive restaurant and telling the Americans that the explosion has been caused by 'a gas leak'. Walking over to the car, she then instructs Jeff to stay behind to support Harold as she takes the driving seat, both literally and metaphorically.

Subverting traditional Gangland hierarchy, it is a measure of Harold's trust in, and respect for, his female partner that he does not hesitate in deploying Victoria to continue negotiations in his absence. It is therefore unsurprising that Mark Duguid describes her character as the 'genuine power behind the throne - a tough, shrewd

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<sup>21</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London & New York: Verso, 1991).

negotiator [...] whose ingenuity and resourcefulness crucially balance Harold's ruthlessness and discipline'.<sup>22</sup> This challenge to the generically conventional portrayal through an authoritative, intellectually astute and self-confident central female character exemplifies John Hill's belief that cinema in the 80s 'was an active participant in the defining and reworking of changing, and contested, versions of social and political identities'.<sup>23</sup>

Hill's observation reinforces the concept of the cinema screen as a site of cultural construction. Victoria's identity is therefore produced through difference, operating in counterpoint to the more generically faithful female characters also included within the narrative. In an earlier desperate attempt to establish who is behind the bombing campaign, Harold pays a visit to Errol (Paul Barber), a black drug dealer, small-time pimp, and police informant. Entering the house, Harold and his minder, Razors (P J Moriarty), find Errol in bed with one of his women, who appears to be under the influence of drink and/or drugs. Accordingly, when Razors drags a naked Errol from the bed, Harold grimaces in utter disgust as he picks up a used syringe from the bedside table, a gesture that reaffirms the enduring dystopian relationship between drugs, prostitution and Gangland cited in Chapter Six. As a matter of principle, Harold has always refused to involve himself in any way with narcotics, despising those who do so; tossing the syringe back at the girl, he spits derisively 'Ere, 'ave another prick!', before marching off to interrogate Errol.

Constituting the focus of the cinematic gaze, Errol's nakedness renders him all the more vulnerable as Razors brandishes his weapon of choice: a sabre. Through the aesthetics of his nudity, Errol constitutes the (black) body as spectacle, shots of his toned contours recalling the iconic, fetishistic photography of Robert Mapplethorpe.<sup>24</sup> In this sense, Errol usurps the female as the traditional focus of the filmic gaze, the presence of his naked body being far more powerful than that of the similarly unclad 'good-time girl' in his bed, who is reduced to a passive symbol of sordid - and deflated - eroticism. Rendering her status within the patriarchal hierarchy compliant with generic convention, the girl's passivity is emphasised by the fact she is given no lines to speak throughout the entire scene.

Following the explosion at the 'Lion & Unicorn', the Americans decide to pull out of the deal; Harold therefore pays them a visit in the suite organised by Victoria at the Savoy. Given the status of this hotel as a British institution, it constitutes another superior, specifically English space, further connoting Harold's sense of

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<sup>22</sup> Duguid, Screenonline.

<sup>23</sup> Hill, *British Cinema in the 1980s*, p.xii.

<sup>24</sup> During the 1980s, American photographer Mapplethorpe produced a series of iconic homoerotic images of the black male body, a selection of which were incorporated within two publications: *Black Males* (1980) and *Black Book* (1986). See <<http://www.mapplethorpe.org/>> [accessed 22.04.2008]

patriotism. Failing in his attempt to talk the Americans round, Harold takes the opportunity to deliver an indignant, retaliatory patriotic jibe: that [unlike the United States] Britain has given the world 'a bit more than an 'ot dog, know what I mean?'. As Harold leaves the hotel, he signals to a figure he mistakenly believes to be Razors at the wheel of his Jaguar. As he gets into the car, Harold is stunned when he suddenly realises Victoria is no longer in the back seat. His sudden recognition that she has been abducted is an almost oedipal moment.

As the Jaguar speeds away, a smiling figure in the passenger seat turns to face him, pointing a gun at his head: Harold has been captured by the IRA. In that split second, it seems his predicament is a direct result of Victoria's absence from the interior space of the Jaguar. She is no longer there to protect and support him: without her by his side, he is rendered impotent. Wordlessly, in a process that takes several minutes, Hoskins' face registers Harold's initial disbelief followed by each piece of the jigsaw falling into place.

Neil Young suggests that Hoskins' silent but eloquent expression during this closing sequence surpasses even Garbo's performance at the end of *Queen Christina* (1933).<sup>25</sup> Given the trans-gendering implicit within this comparison, it is an observation which replicates the blurring and reapportioning of generically conventional gender characteristics embodied by Harold and Victoria in *The Long Good Friday*. In *Queen Christina*, the Swedish monarch argues for peace and an end to the Thirty Years War: this is a theme which also finds resonance in Harold's pride that he has kept peace in his 'manor' for the past decade, rendering the IRA's explosive incursion all the more blasphemous.

### ***My Kingdom* (2001)**

This sense of territorial space and the power it represents is consistent with the concept of Gangland itself, and predominates in Don Boyd's *My Kingdom*. However, whereas Harold considers peace-keeping a priority, control over Sandeman's domain is often achieved through graphic violence. Further, whilst Harold's downfall was the unfortunate (and unintentional) consequence of a duplicitous individual's greed, the betrayal in *My Kingdom* is deliberate, intensely familial, and motivated by a lust for power over that territorial 'kingdom' as much as for money. Drawing on Shakespeare's *King Lear*, the narrative concerns the relationship between ageing dynastic patriarch and Gangland overlord Sandeman and his three daughters, two of whom in particular share a ferocious sibling rivalry.

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<sup>25</sup> Film Critic Neil Young is part of the programming team for the Edinburgh Film Festival: his review of *The Long Good Friday* is available at <<http://www.jigsawlounge.co.uk/film/longgoodfriday.html>> [accessed 28.11.2008] As this sequence depicts Christina standing like a figurehead at the prow of a ship, Young's observation is pertinent to the earlier shot of Harold delivering his speech to the assembled company at the prow of his super-yacht.

The film opens with an establishing shot across the River Mersey panning the skyline of Liverpool (the appropriated 'kingdom' of the Irish-born Sandeman); the city appears deceptively serene in the fading blue light of dusk. With its diegetic soundtrack of ships' horns and seagulls, this scene is intercut with a series of shots depicting young choristers in candlelit choir stalls singing an aria from Handel's *Messiah*, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace': an ironic observation, given the violent bloodshed that is about to ensue. Once again, the classic narrative dichotomy between the forces of good and evil is conveyed through religious imagery. The spatial semiotics are also significant, with the Cathedral interior and the Liverpool skyline respectively representing the 'kingdom of God' versus the 'kingdom of Sandeman', the sacred versus the profane.

This montage is succeeded by an exterior shot of Sandeman's baronial mansion. Whilst superficially the space connotes financial success and supremacy, it is also a façade which disguises a family in disarray. The camera cuts to Sandeman alone in his study playing solitaire; it is a resolutely male space set apart from the bustle of the family home. Feature films play silently on three wall-mounted screens – a triple portrayal of fictitious, heterotopian space which emphasises Sandeman's windowless retreat as literally 'dis-located' from reality and the outside world.

The surreal nature of this spatial invocation is emphasised as the scene continues. Although it is only September, Sandeman's young grandson Jamie (Reece Noi) enters the study dressed as a shepherd from the Nativity. He urges his grandfather to hurry, as Sandeman's much-loved wife Mandy is marshalling the family for a group photograph – a portrait to grace their annual Christmas card. There are suitably festive props for all, and a throne, a crown, and fake ermine-trimmed robes confirm Sandeman's status as monarch of all he surveys.<sup>26</sup> Nonetheless, within this brief sequence, Lynn Redgrave's physical stature and authoritative manner make it clear Mandy is a matriarchal force to be reckoned with. It also transpires that the disparate and feuding elements of the family are united only within the heterotopian space of the photograph, this contrived and distorted reflection (both out of place and out of time) representing a consciously-constructed communal example of Lacan's perfect self.

An earlier scene initiates this sense of familial hierarchy, also establishing the importance of gender to the narrative. One of the Sandemans' daughters, Kath (Louise Lombard), has complained to Mandy that her father refuses to listen to any of her business ideas, suggesting that despite being his eldest, 'he doesn't even notice I'm here'. Mandy refutes this, reminding her that 'He looks after your son!'

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<sup>26</sup> 'I am monarch of all I survey' is the first line of 'The Solitude of Alexander Selkirk' by William Cowper (1731-1800) – a poem which finds resonance with the desolation of Sandeman's ultimate plight.



(young Jamie). This is a telling response, emphasising that Mandy regards the family in general, and her own role as wife and mother in particular, as a priority: in contrast, Kath appears to have relinquished any responsibility for the boy, who lives with his grandparents. Mandy's brief retort consequently establishes her daughter as non-maternal and therefore dysfunctional as a woman by comparison.

Later that evening, in a sequence reiterating the relationship between space and power, the couple make their way to Liverpool's Anglican Cathedral to attend the concert shown in the opening montage. As they approach the building, the city's (Catholic) Metropolitan Cathedral is visible at the other end of Hope Street. Despite its apparently apposite name, this thoroughfare connecting the two sites of worship borders an area which is the dissolute haunt of prostitutes and drug addicts, and thus constitutes a reminder of the dystopian nature of the underworld over which Sandeman presides.

As they enter the Anglican Cathedral, the camera sweeps up over the magnificent gilded majesty of the high altar: whilst connoting the glory of God, the shot also provides a suitably grandiose backdrop to what Courtney Lehmann describes as Sandeman's 'egregious exercise of power'.<sup>27</sup> The concert has already started as the Sandemans make their way to their reserved seats in the front pew; however, no sooner are they seated than Sandeman's mobile phone rings. Despite the circumstances, he not only answers the phone but proceeds to make a subsequent call. Bellowing 'Can you hear me now?' to the recipient, he continues to broker what is later revealed as an international drugs deal at high volume, apparently oblivious to the hallowed surroundings.

On leaving the concert, in a scene reinforcing Sandeman's egotistical sense of superiority, the couple walk through neighbouring Toxteth – an area notorious for its drug-related violence.<sup>28</sup> A hooded black youth suddenly appears, holding them at gunpoint whilst demanding Mandy's bag. Such is Sandeman's arrogance that he appears almost amused, demanding 'Have you any idea who ... I ... *am*?'. At this point, the hoodie's gun is aimed at Mandy's head. Using just his finger, Sandeman

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<sup>27</sup> Courtney Lehmann, 'The Postnostalgic Renaissance: the 'Place' of Liverpool in Don Boyd's *My Kingdom*' in Mark Thornton Burnett & Ramona Wray (eds.) *Screening Shakespeare in the Twenty-First Century* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), p.72.

<sup>28</sup> In April 1981, Lord Scarman was commissioned to report on racial tension in impoverished inner city areas in the UK. Whilst initiated by race riots in Brixton earlier that month, Scarman's inquiry investigated similar areas of unrest throughout the UK including London's Southall, Manchester's Moss Side, and what he described as the 'ghetto situation' in Liverpool's Toxteth. Whilst measures were introduced in an attempt to improve relations between the police and local communities, the escalating drug culture on the streets resulted in an increase in related violence and gun crime, from individual muggings to organised territorial battles and reprisals. See, for example, Tony Bell, 'So, Who Does Run Toxteth?', *Independent*, 16 May 1995 and Jamie Doward, 'Raised Amid Guns and Gangs', *Observer*, 26 August 2007.

calmly guides the barrel towards himself: 'That's better ... be sure you don't miss!', he goads. After the mugger has fired two blanks, Sandeman is convinced he represents no danger; nonetheless, with a disparaging wave of his hand, he tells Mandy to give the boy her bag anyway. With this brief, patronising gesture, Sandeman inadvertently catches the end of the revolver, pushing it back towards Mandy. As he does so the gun goes off: the bullet enters Mandy's temple at point blank range, killing her instantly.

In an eloquent visual statement that questions prevailing hierarchies of power, Sandeman stoops to cradle his wife's body in the shadow of the Cathedral: this 'alpha male', slain by his grief, kneels in the presence of God. The man's colossal sense of loss following his initial disbelief is palpable. Just as Harold Shand's vulnerability was immediately exacerbated by Victoria's sudden absence from his side, so Mandy's demise marks the beginning of Sandeman's rapid decline. Despite the murder taking place only eleven minutes into the film, her consequent absence is felt throughout for, as Yvonne Griggs suggests, Mandy's death 'signals the onslaught of patriarchal disintegration'.<sup>29</sup> Indeed, her loss proves to be the catalyst that drives the narrative, and is responsible for the nihilistic anomie that will dominate Sandeman's life from hereon in.

The territorial significance of Gangland space is reasserted the following day as the family arrive for the reading of the Will. It is clear Sandeman is anxious to determine who was behind Mandy's death: whilst the general consensus is that it was 'just a mugging', Sandeman is convinced that due to his lofty Gangland status it is a conspiracy. Despite the family's doubts, Sandeman's son-in-law Dean (Paul McGann) reassures him that they have put 'a man on every door in Liverpool', reaffirming the territorial expanse of Sandeman's kingdom, but also demonstrating the influence of the Sandeman dynasty and the strength of the 'family firm'.

The scene also offers a further example of the inextricable relationship between power, hierarchy and gender within the narrative. As the family gathers in the dining room of the Sandemans' mansion, solicitor Merv (David Yip) drops a bombshell: Sandeman had transferred everything he owned into Mandy's name some years before, and youngest daughter Jo (Emma Catherwood) has subsequently been appointed trustee of Mandy's estate. Challenging generic convention, Sandeman's original conveyance demonstrated absolute trust in a female, and he has now repeated this by effectively placing all his 'worldly goods' in the hands of his youngest daughter. Everyone is stunned, not least Jo, who refuses to accept the inheritance; however, dictatorial patriarch Sandeman tells her she has no choice in the matter.

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<sup>29</sup> Yvonne Griggs, 'Humanity must perforce prey upon itself like monsters of the deep': King Lear and the Urban Gangster Movie' in *Adaptation*, Vol. 1, Issue 2, September 2008, p.135.

Following the reading, the camera cuts to the extended funeral cortege snaking its way through the streets to the crematorium accompanied by many mourners on foot, a symbolic affirmation of the hierarchical status of the family, but also the affection in which matriarch Mandy was held by the community at large. Afterwards, as Sandeman and Jo travel in the lead car to the banqueting hall for the wake, Sandeman gives his daughter a scarf he once gave her mother – a sentimental gesture which also symbolises his attempt to pass Mandy's estate (and the space and power it represents) onto their daughter. Jo is not moved by his ploy, however, and her determined response – 'It's not gonna work, Dad!' – once again confirms that, unlike her two bickering sisters, she wants nothing to do with Sandeman's empire. The comment reaffirms Jo's determined independence from the family obsession with power, wealth and status.

In a conspicuous demonstration of all three of these elements, Sandeman's henchmen are manning the doors at the venue for the ostentatious wake. In addition to monitoring admission, Sandeman's men maintain control of the space by herding guests into line behind rope cordons prior to allocating their seats. Opposite the banqueting hall, a trailer selling burgers and hot dogs provides a hidden vantage point for two customs officers on a surveillance operation. Such is the Gangland status of the extended Sandeman family that the senior of the two men, Quick (Tom Bell), has been trailing them for two years. He proceeds to regale the younger officer (Kieron O'Brien) with a biographical overview of each family member as they arrive. Both are using binoculars, enhancing the power of their surreptitious gaze and replicating that of the filmic spectator.

Quick's commentary begins with Dean, 'a good old fashioned villain', whom Kath married on the rebound from 'a black snapper in London' when she was trying to make a career as a model; Kath herself is now running a 'suck and fuck salon'. As Jo gets out of the car, Quick describes her as a 'Daddy's girl', who used to work the streets in order to 'support a smack habit the size of Kilimanjaro', but who, after a particularly vicious beating initiated by her pimp, put herself into rehab before turning her life around and embarking upon a degree in psychology. Quick's overview of middle daughter Tracy (Lorraine Pilkington) includes the fact that Sandeman bought her 'some poxy football club', and also that 'she *loves* to fuck: boxers, bouncers, policemen ...'.

The description of each daughter is thus spatially oriented: Kath is associated with her high-class brothel, Tracy with her 'poxy' football club, and Jo has made the transition from the streets (drugs and prostitution) to university, and thus from 'bad' to 'good', hence her nomination as sole beneficiary of Mandy's estate. However, each description also incorporates characteristics which are generically conventional, not least the sexually transgressive element common to all three.

A subsequent exchange between the two customs officers reinforces the narrative's concern with gendered hierarchy. When Quick's second in command spots Tracy's Sikh husband Jug (Jimi Mistry), he asks 'Who's the turban?'. Despite Jug's recent independent involvement in a huge heroin deal, his role in the family firm is to launder money for Sandeman through Tracy's football club. It also transpires that Kath's husband Dean runs a dubious security company which handles all Sandeman's 'protection'. It thus becomes clear that whilst each of the two girls runs her own business, not only have those businesses been bestowed upon them by their father for his own ends, it is their husbands whom Sandeman entrusts with active participation in the machinations of his 'kingdom'.

Inside the banqueting hall, the insidious power struggles within the family hierarchy intensify. Having squabbled with Tracy over who will make the speech paying tribute to Mandy, Kath stands by Sandeman's side to deliver an obsequious eulogy to their mother. This is followed by a sycophantic and totally hypocritical pledge to her father: 'It's you we honour, you we obey, you we love', thereby invoking generically conventional male superiority. Petulantly snatching the microphone from her sister, Tracy takes to the hall's stage which is adorned with golden palm trees - a parodic replication of the gilded high altar in the Cathedral. Tracy's offering in memory of her mother is a drunken karaoke rendition of Barry Manilow's 'Mandy'; although initiating embarrassed glances between the guests, she is ultimately rewarded with a warm round of applause.

Through binary opposition, Tracy's maudlin sentimentality also serves to accentuate scenes of graphic violence in the venue's kitchen, which are intercut with her performance; it is a sequence exemplifying the lust for power as intrinsic to the prevailing hierarchy. On entering the hall, Sandeman had been informed by Dean that they had found the boy responsible for Mandy's death: instructing Dean to 'deal with him', Sandeman emphasises that he does not want the boy harmed but insists 'I *must* find out who paid him' in order that he can mete out suitable punishment to the person responsible.

Nonetheless, in total defiance of Sandeman's orders, Jug is exacting his own grotesque punishment on the hapless boy. Naked save for the gold underwear in which he has been dressed for the occasion, the sacrificial victim is strapped to a stainless steel table. The spartan clinical surroundings of the commercial kitchen are reminiscent of an operating theatre; however, Jug invokes ritualistic rather than surgical practice as he ceremoniously lifts his turban, shaking loose a luxuriant mane of long black hair before removing his jewellery and carefully placing each item on a waiting tray.

His meticulous preparation renders the space as much shrine as torture chamber, the aesthetics of his cross-gendered appearance once again inviting a multi-oriented

cinematic gaze. Drawing a knife with a curved blade from its sheath, Jug is relentless in his measured brutality. Rather than extracting the information specified by Sandeman, the injuries inflicted through this extended torture achieve nothing but the terrified boy's ultimate death. Whilst Dean is appalled by the abhorrence of Jug's actions, Jug is more interested in fastidiously checking his appearance in the mirror as he dresses – the perfect self in a heterotopian reflection which displays the torturer as skilled master of his craft, rather than a psychotic, power-crazed gangster.

Whilst this depraved exhibition of power is in progress, Jo walks past the kitchen and looks on momentarily in appalled disbelief, putting her hands over her ears to block out the boy's screams. Under the impression her father is aware of what has happened, Jo turns to leave the hall, telling Sandeman she is ashamed to be his daughter. He responds that he will make it easier for her: 'From this moment on, you are *not* my daughter!'. After she has walked away, Sandeman catches sight of the torture on CCTV footage as he passes the security point, and is aghast. He returns to the hall, ordering everyone to leave before announcing to Kath and Tracy that 'the family has gone – broken'; he tells them the legacy is now theirs to share, and they have what they always wanted.

Furthering the dual theme of manipulative power and hierarchy, Kath is furious when she finds out from the solicitor that her 'share' consists merely of a house and some disused land, and sets about her revenge. Having acquired the CCTV tapes, she invites tame DS Barry Puttnam (Aiden Gillan) to her 'fuck boutique' to view the footage with the aim of having everyone concerned, including her father, arrested. As Foucault cites the brothel as an 'extreme' heterotopian space, this scene rewards further analysis.<sup>30</sup>

The brothel's receptionist (Sylvia Gatrill) sits at her desk in front of a vast mural of two naked lovers. As she will prove when she later prevents Sandeman from entering Kath's office, the receptionist is 'keeper of the gate', a female Janus with the power to restrict or allow access to this particular heterotopia.<sup>31</sup> As Puttnam is seated on a plush sofa, Kath's hostess (Leanne Burrows) parades a series of masked, semi-clad females before him, suggesting that within this fantasy world 'you can have anything you want, from anyone you see.' Like those associated with the Venetian *carnivale*, the masks and costumes sported by these women allow the wearer to preserve personal anonymity whilst observing their spectator.<sup>32</sup> Nonetheless, in a further manifestation of hierarchy, Puttnam is privileged as the

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<sup>30</sup> Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces', p.27.

<sup>31</sup> In Roman mythology, Janus was keeper of the gate to heaven – an apt allusion given the nature of the salon's business.

<sup>32</sup> Traditionally, the masked balls held during the Venice carnival allow individuals to take pleasure in acts of transgression without fear of identification.

archetypal male voyeur possessing the true power of the gaze, the female bodies exhibited before him constituting a spectacle of objectified sexuality.

Discussing the way in which Western artists have rendered 'woman as spectacle' resulting in her own awareness of this role, John Berger proposes that she consequently comes to embody the duality of the surveyor (male) and the surveyed (female),<sup>33</sup> such scrutiny resulting in self-regulation and compliance. As such, Berger's notion finds similarities with Foucault's panopticism, for as discussed in the analysis of *Beat Girl* (above), an individual who is subjected to the controlling power of another's gaze eventually becomes their own overseer.<sup>34</sup>

It is the power of Sandeman's gaze during her childhood that Kath subsequently recalls, asking her father whether he has any idea 'just how terrifying you can be with those eyes? How you scared me shitless all those years?'. In her bid to destroy the family hierarchy, she therefore continues her campaign of retribution, each act associated with specific space and place. Beginning with Sandeman, she takes great pleasure in putting the family residence on the market, rendering both her father and her own son Jamie homeless. As he opens his front door to an empty house, Kath informs him 'We've retired you!'. The callous ruthlessness of the act takes even Sandeman by surprise.

Resentful over Tracy's unseemly appropriation of their mother's expensive car immediately following Mandy's death, the next step in Kath's revenge is to arrange for one of Dean's men to destroy the vehicle in a spectacular explosion at the football ground, representing a deliberate incursion into Tracy's territory. However, Kath's actions are immediately avenged by Tracy's husband Jug: having meted out his trademark torture on the gang member responsible for the explosion, the victim's naked and mutilated body is delivered back to Kath in a bulldozer, which smashes through the entrance to her brothel, dumping the bloodied corpse in reception. Both atrocities are therefore used to violate each sister's territorial space, challenging the autonomous power it appears to represent.

The drugs deal at the centre of Sandeman's telephone negotiations in the Cathedral constitutes the final element within this family war of attrition. As Dean and Jug take their men to intercept the haul, all concerned are unaware that it is a set-up, and that Sandeman has furnished the police with the details. In the carnage that ensues between the rival factions intent on seizing the drugs, Dean is amongst those killed. Tracy is waiting with Kath in their father's empty mansion when she receives the call informing her of the set up: each sibling immediately suspects the

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<sup>33</sup> John Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, (London: BBC & Penguin Books: 1972), p.46.

<sup>34</sup> Foucault suggests that 'He who is subjected to a field of visibility [...] inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection.' Foucault, *Discipline & Punish*, p.211.

other of betrayal, and they begin to fight. Kath finally stabs Tracy through the heart and Tracy responds by slitting her sister's throat before they both fall to the ground: the image of their lifeblood seeping into the stone floor of the family home reiterates the narrative's Shakespearean roots.

Space is once again significant to the closing scenes of the film. Jug and his men are now in pursuit of the homeless Sandeman, who is accompanied by his grandson Jamie. They sit side by side on an abandoned rear car seat, fishing from wasteland adjacent to the docks. The water into which Jamie casts his line separates them from the familiar cityscape on the far bank. The desolation of this liminal space reinforces the material and emotional loss of their home and Mandy's loving presence within it. Their physical separation from the cityscape across the river also stands as a metaphor for Sandeman's alienation from his kingdom.

As they sit together, Sandeman reflects silently on the events of the past few days. He asks his grandson what he thinks of him, to which Jamie replies 'You're the Man, Grandad!'. Highly amused, he embraces the child and suggests getting them something to eat from the chip shop round the corner. As he leaves to do so, and in a rare moment of clarity, he offers the boy some advice: 'Listen to me, listen to an old fool. When you grow up, do *not* become 'the Man'!. The implication of this doctrine is that 'the Man' is nothing without his woman, and that it was Sandeman's determination to achieve and retain such status that cost him both his beloved wife and his family.

In a cruel and senseless display of power, two of Jug's men appear during Sandeman's brief absence, demanding to know his whereabouts. When Jamie refuses to tell them, they throw him over the retaining wall onto the rocks below before breaking his fishing rod in two, the latter action reinforcing their callous disregard for human life. On his return, a devastated Sandeman retrieves his grandson's lifeless body, which he then carries on foot to the only place left to him – the home of his estranged daughter, Jo.

The final scene shows a solitary Sandeman, a frail and broken man devoid of the power that once shaped his life. Staring out across the estuary to the skyline that opened the narrative, he appears to survey the ruins of his kingdom in the gathering dusk. Jo comes to meet him; no words are exchanged until he calls her name as she turns to leave. The subsequent embrace between father and daughter demonstrates his recognition that she wants (and will accept) nothing from him but his love; that his 'worldly goods' are meaningless, his supremacy an egotistic confection by comparison. This young woman thus represents his redemption.

Griggs believes that 'Women in this gangster film - dominant, in control, independent - play against generic convention'.<sup>35</sup> However, whilst Sandeman's youngest daughter undoubtedly remains steadfast and inviolable, upholding the qualities of truth, love and loyalty (replicating Cordelia's role as moral champion in *King Lear*), and his wife Mandy represents a 'matriarchal might' that, despite her brief appearance, 'reconfigures the power-base',<sup>36</sup> their challenge to generic convention is awarded little screen time in comparison with Kath and Tracy.

Although the two older girls' sibling rivalry is a powerful recurring theme throughout the narrative, with the exception of their final mutual murder it is their husbands' heavies who carry out reciprocal retribution on their behalf. Similarly, despite apparently challenging the patriarchal order as it is customarily men rather than women who oversee their particular professions (prostitution and football), both businesses were a gift to the girls from their father. Their image also contributes to generic convention through deliberately inviting the male gaze: whilst Kath maintains the meticulously groomed glamour of the *femme fatale*, Tracy's appearance provokes the derogatory question 'Who's the Spice Girl?' from Quick's sidekick during their surveillance from the burger van - a description evoking the genre's enduringly vacuous good-time girl.

Nonetheless, it is ironically by comparison with a weaker male character - DS Barry Puttnam - that both women's strength is revealed. Having seduced the tame detective sergeant with ease, and validating Quick's earlier assertion regarding her sexual proclivity, a rapacious Tracy is shown astride the submissive Puttnam who is handcuffed to her bed. Whilst the handcuffs make parodic reference to his profession, within the context of power they also serve to symbolise Tracy's superiority, as does her position above him on the bed: she has her slavering lap dog where she wants him.

In addition to Kath's peremptory 'retirement' of their bereft and grieving father, she also emasculates Puttnam. When he informs Kath that he cannot (dare not) arrest the psychotic Jug despite the evidence she has given him in the form of the CCTV tapes, her response is brief and to the point: referring to Puttnam's visit to her brothel (above), she reminds him that 'Jug's not the only person I've got on tape, Barry!', once again articulating the tripartite Foucauldian discourse of panopticism, knowledge and power.

Rather than Griggs' claim that these characters are playing against generic convention, it is perhaps more accurate to suggest that they are expanding the stereotype and pushing generic boundaries. Accordingly, Griselda Pollock believes

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<sup>35</sup> Griggs, *Adaptation*, p.135.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*



'it is necessary to recognise that the text is itself constructing a notion of WOMAN across a fictive map of urban spaces – the spaces of modernity'.<sup>37</sup> Whilst Pollock refers specifically to Baudelaire's essay on 'Women and Prostitutes' within the context of modern art, she nonetheless echoes the general concept cited above regarding the cinema screen (and the narratives it facilitates) as a site for the construction of cultural identity. It is also useful to read Pollock's statement within the dual context of generic orientation and spatial location, Gangland film being inextricably linked to an urban environment and a specific sociological profile.

Similarly, in addition to illustrating film's capacity to articulate contemporary themes, Elizabeth Wilson illustrates the relationship between genre, urban space, and the female protagonist, as she observes that:

[Within film] urban space became a powerful metaphor for the angst and paranoia of the 1940s. Then the male figure was at hand to restore patriarchal control and punish the woman who had tried to usurp power [...] Today, the city with no boundary, which goes on forever, has become a metaphor for confusion as a condition of existence. [...] The contemporary urban woman is both consumer and consumed.<sup>38</sup>

Whilst Tracy is certainly notable for her conspicuous consumption, not least the unseemly appropriation of her late mother's new car, Kath is actively responsible for the commercial exploitation of the females she employs for 'consumption' by her male clients, notwithstanding the fact that as a former model Kath has experienced her own commodification as the object of the camera's devouring gaze.

With society's persistent objectification and fetishisation of the female body in particular, Kath's own collusion with this culture demonstrates a proactive hegemonic alliance with selected elements of patriarchal discourse. In the scene in which DS Puttnam visits her brothel, she offers him an aperitif, calling 'Yolanda' to bring their drinks. When Puttnam remarks on the girl's name, Kath replies that she is 'fresh from the Balkans' – a response evoking the sales pitch of an auctioneer or market trader. The girl's ethnic origins also reference the continuing flow of Eastern European immigrants into Britain, the vaguely ambiguous 'Balkans' constituting a heterotopian space, a 'no place', somewhere 'out there', whose otherness facilitates such commodification.

*My Kingdom* is interesting not least for its dual perspective: despite its apparent millennial articulation of female autonomy, as an adaptation of a Shakespearean text

<sup>37</sup> Griselda Pollock, 'Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity' in *Vision & Difference: Femininity, Feminism and the Histories of Art* (London & New York: Routledge, 1994), p.72. Pollock cites Baudelaire's essay as charting 'a journey across Paris for the *flâneur*/artist, where women appear to be there merely as spontaneously visible objects.'

<sup>38</sup> Elizabeth Wilson, 'Beyond Good and Evil' in *The Sphinx in the City: Urban Life, the Control of Disorder, and Women* (Berkeley, Los Angeles & Oxford: University of California Press, 1992), p.139.

it relies upon narrative structures, characterisation, and male/female relationships which are centuries old. Nonetheless, Boyd's interpretation exemplifies contemporary concerns regarding the disintegration of the family unit, together with blatant female sexuality – the coyly-named 'glamour' or 'page three' girl seemingly constituting a role model for the masses. It is the gangster's moll from the previous generation – Sandeman's wife Mandy – who exemplifies the 'real' (as opposed to cosmetically constructed) woman within the narrative, and it is her demise which, despite the brevity of her appearance, represents the catalyst in the inexorable avalanche of disaster. In addition, the Sandemans' youngest daughter, Jo, represents the reformed character whose rejection of constructed femininity empowers her. Enhanced by a uniform of jeans, donkey jacket and woolly hat, Jo's gamine appearance renders her almost sexless. She now has the 'luxury' of choice: she can accept her father's legacy and the material wealth it represents, or continue her life as a student, thus exchanging the underworld for the real world, not to mention a positive future.

### Conclusion

The films discussed here together with those analysed in Chapter Six span almost six decades (from 1948 to 2006), each example being characterised by females who form a key narrative focus. Perhaps more than any other, the genre of Gangland film conventionally interprets these women in direct relation to the narrative's male characters (fathers, husbands, lovers, policemen, pimps, etc.). In *Good Time Girl*, for example, Gwen evolves through her relationship with a series of men: her father, Max, Red Farrell, and Danny. Almost six decades later in *London to Brighton*, eleven-year-old Joanne's plight replicates Gwen's, in that it is the direct result of ill-treatment at the hands of her father. Having run away to escape him, she is preyed upon by small-time pimp Derek, just as Gwen is preyed upon by Danny and the GIs: in both cases, the manipulation of these young girls by a male character results in tragedy.

Whilst *Beat Girl* offers a more affirmative (albeit somewhat dated) interpretation of paternalism, Jennifer's own foray into the Soho *demi-monde* is also depicted as the result of alienation from her father. Nonetheless, he is the patriarchal figure responsible for rescuing not only his daughter, but his previously errant wife. Despite *Beat Girl's* emphasis on youth culture and rebellion against the status quo, this narrative device ultimately serves to reinforce women's place within a male-dominated hierarchy.

Conversely, Victoria's 'difference' from Harold in *The Long Good Friday* is portrayed positively and thus appears to challenge such male dominance (she is physically taller than Harold, she has the class that his money cannot buy, and possesses superior social skills). Helen Mirren's characterisation consequently

suggests that a woman's place within British Gangland film has the capacity to embody both Smelik's apparently divergent roles (cited in the introduction to this chapter), representing a 'positive image of autonomous femininity' as well as 'a sign, a spectacle, a fetish'.<sup>39</sup> Nonetheless, Mirren's generic interpretation stands as an exceptional high point which serves to emphasise the more conventional portrayals of women in British Gangland film, many of which are predicated solely on the sexualisation of the female body.

In terms of dramatic depth, however, the analysed texts stand testament to an identifiable progression of the female protagonist within Gangland film. In *London to Brighton*, for example, Kelly's appearance (complete with black eye) offers stark contrast to the aesthetics of the elegant Simone in *Mona Lisa* (1986), or Kath and Tracy's fetishised sexuality in *My Kingdom* (2001), and yet her role graphically articulates the realities of a woman's place within the underworld. It would therefore appear that the strictures of the genre impose definable parameters in characterisation which are in turn dictated by the spatial and hierarchical arenas in which they are played out. Therefore, whilst recent texts may offer more satisfying characters for the female lead, they confirm that in reality the circumstances and experiences of such women have changed little over the decades constituting the focus of this thesis.

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<sup>39</sup> Smelik, 'Feminist Film Theory'.

## *Conclusion*

The aim of this thesis has been to identify recurring themes within British Gangland film produced between 1945 and the present in order to investigate the significance of space, gender and hierarchy to the construction of meaning within the genre. Further, the thesis has endeavoured to establish the contribution of these three elements to a reading of British Gangland film as cultural artefact, a concept which finds resonance in Mikhail Bakhtin's work on the chronotope (literally 'time-space'). Bakhtin proposes the study of literary tropes and genres as a means of accessing the contextual and historical circumstances of a novel's conception and production: following Robert Stam, it has been argued here that the concept can prove equally productive when applied to film.

Rather than attempting to review the British Gangland genre as a whole, this research has constituted a more focused study of space, gender and hierarchy through a number of representative texts. Having instituted a theoretical framework for the investigation in the opening chapter, Chapters Two and Three introduced a range of Gangland narratives from the period under discussion. Whereas these introductory examples were intentionally diverse in order to offer insight into the scope of the genre, their analyses were followed by two further pairs of chapters in which the choice of film was more specifically focused, each pair examining British Gangland film through the male and female protagonist respectively.

Whilst films which subsequently become iconic benchmarks within a particular genre are habitually deemed representative of their time (albeit often in retrospect), this thesis has demonstrated that the same can be said of lesser-known examples. Accordingly, alongside celebrated classics such as *Brighton Rock* and *Get Carter* which constitute the focus of Chapter Five, a number of less-venerated films have also been analysed. Rather than including a film due to its iconic status or success at the box office, the texts analysed here have therefore been selected on the basis of recurring generic motifs which reflect the three core elements of the thesis within the context of their temporal and cultural circumstance.

As illustrated in Chapter One, the theoretical structure underpinning this research has been wide-ranging. It was felt this plurality of approaches would enable a more comprehensive examination of the selected film texts, with the aim of establishing the analysis of space, gender and hierarchy as a valid means of investigating a generic capacity to articulate prevailing issues and concerns. Michel Foucault's notion of heterotopia has therefore proved fruitful, offering insight into the way in which the seemingly abstract concept of space can be read as a highly ordered, hierarchical construct within society. Consequently, it has been argued here that the concept of Gangland is a prime heterotopian example: its existence in reality (to which the 'turf wars' between rival gangs stand testament) is heightened

by its simultaneous existence within the imagination, including the constructed world of film.

Robert Warshow's essay regarding the filmic interpretation of the gangster and his urban environment ('that dangerous, sad city of the imagination') has complemented analysis of Gangland film as heterotopia, enabling a more specific reading of space and place within the genre. Whilst Warshow's premise has proved relevant throughout, it was cited as particularly so with regard to Chapter Four, 'The Spiv and the City', in which four analyses revealed the dynamic relationship between this central character and his spatial surroundings: Fabian's frenetic interaction with nocturnal post-war London in *Night and the City*; Ted Purvis' territorial domination of space in *Waterloo Road*; Sugiani's articulation of power through his opulent headquarters in *Noose*; and in *They Made me a Fugitive*, Narcy's gothic tenure of the Valhalla funeral parlour is juxtaposed with Clem Morgan's expressionist bid for freedom on Dartmoor's wild expanse.

In addition to space and place, the concept of hierarchy has also been identified as intrinsic to heterotopia. The relationship between these elements has been exemplified by the narratives discussed throughout the thesis: in *Brighton Rock*, the recurring motif of the staircase was recognised as a metonym for the stratification inherent within Gangland power structures. Other spaces used to connote rank and position include Freddie Mays' opulent penthouse suite in *Gangster No. 1* and the super-yacht belonging to Harold Shand in *The Long Good Friday*, but also the luxury hotels and sumptuous residences constituting the domain of elite call-girl Simone in *Mona Lisa*.

Analysis of representative generic texts has therefore revealed the dynamic relationship between space and hierarchical power as a recurrent trope within British Gangland film, such space incorporating the notion of territory. In *Brighton Rock*, the racetrack instigates territorial conflict as Colleoni wrests control of the track's bookmakers from fledgling gang boss Pinkie Brown. In *Night and the City*, Harry Fabian's attempt to establish a wrestling emporium within the terrain of Gangland chief Kristo costs him his life: the film's closing sequence depicts Kristo towering over Fabian's lifeless body as he views the murder from the symbolic heights of Hammersmith Bridge. In *Get Carter*, space also connotes pecuniary status and social standing, as Carter travels from a penthouse apartment in London to the back-to-back terraces of his working class roots in the North East. However, reaffirming the gang's territorial interests, Carter's boss has previously informed him that 'we don't want you going up the North, Jack': as with Harry Fabian, Carter's transgression of these territorial boundaries will prove fatal.

Two specific spaces can themselves be interpreted as both victim and victor in *Villain*. As Gangland protagonist Vic Dakin expands his established boundaries to

execute a payroll heist on a bland industrial estate, it seems this particular place itself merits punishment for its banality – a quality derided by Dakin in his assessment of it. However, the spatial majesty represented by the bleak, anomic landscape of the derelict gasworks in whose splendour this egocentric megalomaniac is finally cowed, appears to exact retribution for Dakin's incursion into the unfamiliar territory of the industrial estate and his violent disruption of its automated predictability. A similar spatial motif articulates the fragile and mercurial nature of power in *Gangster No. 1*: having taken control of Freddy Mays' territory and appropriated his sovereignty, Gangster finally ends his life by jumping from the towering apartment block whose penthouse suite had epitomised Mays' vertiginous supremacy.

In addition to the semiotics of power inherent within motifs such as these, the example of spatial juxtaposition in *Brighton Rock* (cited above) illustrates the way in which the relationship between space and hierarchy within Gangland film is often articulated through binary opposition. Similarly, in *Mona Lisa*, the aesthetics of Simone's refined working environment reinforce the squalor of 'the meat rack' – the sordid red light district around King's Cross in which she searches for teenage prostitute Cathy. It is a device which emphasises graphically the powerlessness of the common prostitutes compelled to work within the confines of this environment.

As this particular example demonstrates, it has also been observed that generic representations of gender are intrinsic to the relationship between space, place and hierarchies of power within British Gangland film. In Chapter Six, 'Good Time Girl', it was consequently argued that changes in legislation had dictated the spatial boundaries within which prostitution operates – a situation interpreted through a number of generic texts. This chapter cited such legislation as an example of Foucault's notion of the dynamics of oppression for, in their various attempts to remove prostitution from the streets, these amendments were ironically responsible for establishing a successful sex industry 'behind closed doors'. Spatially, this included not only private rooms and flats used by individual prostitutes, but a range of commercial enterprises such as revue bars, massage parlours and brothels. Collectively, this thesis has identified such spaces as contributing to the *demi-monde* of Soho, a further heterotopian construct repeatedly portrayed in Gangland film: examples analysed here included *Beat Girl*, *The Small World of Sammy Lee*, and *Mona Lisa*.

Given this emphasis on gendered space and sexuality within Gangland narratives, selected elements of feminist theory have also been incorporated. Simone de Beauvoir suggests that the self requires 'otherness' in order to define itself as subject: it has been argued here that this concept is exemplified by the hierarchies implicit within such gendered space, in which the female is perennially cast in the

objectified role of 'other' by the male, rendering him superior. Similarly, the implications of hierarchical power within Laura Mulvey's discussion of the 'male gaze' have proved productive, the notion having been expanded within these chapters to incorporate a multi-oriented 'bearer of the look', both on the cinema screen and within the audience. In addition, Sandra Bartky's Foucauldian reading of the patriarchally-inscribed body has stimulated analysis of the fetishisation and commodification of the female form, a concept which is in itself representative of the male-oriented power implicit within gendered Gangland hierarchies.

Whilst these elements were considered in greater depth in relation to the narratives analysed in Chapters Six and Seven, it has been demonstrated throughout the thesis that the concept of a woman's place within the patriarchal order is a theme intrinsic to British Gangland film in general. Filmic interpretation of the female protagonist within the analysed texts has therefore been identified as an articulation of prevailing ideologies of power and gender (the pimp and the whore, the gangster and the good-time girl, etc.), once again played out within the context of specific space and place: in addition to the portrayal of full-blown prostitution on the street in narratives such as *The Flesh is Weak* and *London to Brighton*, the services provided by hostesses working in the ostensibly legitimate spaces of the dance hall and the nightclub are enduringly depicted as simply another commodity on sale to the male clientele; examples discussed here include *Appointment with Crime*, *Night and the City*, and *Gangster No. 1*.

Significant to these portrayals is the fetishisation of the female body: in *Good Time Girl*, Gwen exemplifies Beauvoir's assertion (cited in Chapter One) that 'one is not born, but rather becomes a woman', as she is transformed from a gauche teenage runaway into a confident, sexualised appendage on the arm of a wealthy black-marketeer. Naive young tourist Marissa undergoes a similar transformation in *The Flesh is Weak* as she exchanges her dowdy appearance for the glamorous persona of a gangster's mistress, subsequently becoming a fully-fledged prostitute. These women typify Bartky's notion of the patriarchally-inscribed body, for in each case it is a dominant male who is directly responsible for their sexualisation. This trope is expanded in *My Kingdom* as brothel proprietress Kath Sandeman presents an array of females to her prospective client, encouraging him to take 'anything you want, from anyone you see'. However, despite Kath's influence over the appearance of her employees, her choices are nonetheless dictated by the desires of patriarchy and the male gaze.

Evoking Bakhtin's notion of the chronotope (referred to above), it has also been argued that such generic portrayals of a woman's place within Gangland hierarchies have the capacity to interpret the era in which the narratives were conceived, produced and consumed - a concept supported by the observation in Chapter One



that genre analysis is an historical process which reveals temporally-specific cultural hegemonies. Films exemplifying this reflexive capacity include *Beat Girl*, in which teenage Jennifer's rebellious immersion in the Beat culture of the late 1950s is complemented by her self-willed transgression among the seedy strip clubs of Soho. It was suggested that *Beat Girl's* theme of contemporary popular culture as a challenge to the status quo situates the film firmly within its era of production. At the same time, Jennifer's rescue by her father from the clutches of the predatory Soho club owner represents a classic narrative motif, as it takes the dominant male to restore patriarchal order following its disruption by the subversive, transgressive female.

Evolving from the ethos of 'free love' in the late 1960s, the blatant depiction of sexual permissiveness in *Get Carter* was cited as a further articulation of prevailing social mores. In addition to bedding his landlady following telephone sex with the wife of his boss, Jack Carter enjoys a further sexual encounter with Glenda, the mistress of both Gangland kingpin Kinnear and corrupt businessman Brumby. Whilst knowingly exploiting her own sexuality in order to reap the benefits of being 'kept' by two different men, Glenda's untimely demise nonetheless reveals her consequent sense of power as delusional: the free-spirited Glenda is ultimately exposed as nothing more than the genre's archetypal (and perennially expendable) good-time girl.

Challenging such generic convention almost a decade later, Helen Mirren's reinvention of the gangster's moll in *The Long Good Friday* was consequently cited as similarly representative of its time, the self-confident, intelligent and autonomous Victoria embracing the power of her female allure. Rather than a transient good-time girl, Victoria is regarded as an equal by Gangland boss Harold Shand, and fundamental to his territorial power. Consequently, Mirren's character (for whom she demanded extensive revisions) anticipated elements of third-wave feminism in the mid-1980s, not least through Victoria's celebration of her own potent sexuality. It was noted, however, that this characterisation stands as a high point within British Gangland film, later narratives frequently returning the female protagonist to her generically conventional place as inferior to the male.

The preceding examples have focused on the notion of gender and the portrayal of a woman's place within Gangland hierarchies. However, as outlined above, a principal aim of this research has been to establish the relationship between these elements and the spatial arenas in which they are played out. In British Gangland film, generic convention has traditionally dictated an urban, male-oriented environment evoked through back streets and red light districts, betting shops and casinos, night clubs and strip clubs, sex shops and brothels. Whilst such places are often portrayed as the focus of territorial battles for their control, analyses in the

preceding chapters have also demonstrated the way in which many of these spaces consistently represent and reinforce the dynamics of gendered power relations. Consequently, Warshaw's observation regarding the bond between the male protagonist and his environment is expanded to incorporate the female as a significant constituent within his relationship with Gangland space and place.

In addition to this urban milieu, narratives which breach the boundaries of the city have been recognised here as exploiting the oppositional qualities of such alternative spaces in order to generate symbolic meaning. It has been observed that these qualities serve to intensify the dialogic relationship between the narrative and its spatial setting: for example, the juxtaposition of the classic heterotopian space of the prison with the wild expanse of Dartmoor in *They Made me a Fugitive* evokes the oppositional aspects of incarceration and freedom, but it also reinforces the almost feral qualities of the relationship between Morgan and this particular non-urban environment. Similarly, the cinematic elision of space has been identified as contributing to the construction of meaning: in *Night and the City*, Jules Dassin articulates Fabian's London through a montage of evocative spaces, both inside and outside the city, and the merging of disparate places in *Get Carter* produces a semiotically-charged coastal backdrop to the final showdown.

With regard to these analyses, liminal space has been cited as a further generic motif. Examples recognised here have included the seaside pier in *Brighton Rock*, *Mona Lisa* and *London to Brighton*, together with docklands and riverscapes in *Night and the City*, *The Long Good Friday*, *Brannigan* and *My Kingdom*, and wasteland and dereliction in *Waterloo Road*, *Hue & Cry*, *Night and the City* and *Villain*. Such liminality is frequently used to articulate alienation: following the appropriation of his realm in *My Kingdom*, erstwhile overlord Sandeman is separated from the cityscape he once commanded by the murky River Mersey as he fishes from some wasteland on its banks, and in *Brannigan*, the kidnapped fugitive is taken out of London and kept hostage in a derelict building on desolate mudflats outside the city. However, liminality also represents a threshold, a limbo – the 'other-place' of Foucault's heterotopia: in the first three narratives cited above, for example, Brighton's West Pier stands as a micro-world situated between land and sea, but also between the tourist space of a holiday town and the squalid machinations of a Gangland underworld disguised beneath its surface.

The preceding discussion has summarised the various categories of space and place intrinsic to British Gangland film, and has illustrated their role in the construction of meaning through reference to specific generic examples. Further, textual analyses throughout the thesis have demonstrated that the organic relationship between space, gender and hierarchy within the genre results in a cohesive whole which is greater than the sum of its parts. The generic texts analysed

within these chapters span six-and-a-half decades, from the immediate post-war years to the present. It has therefore also been argued that these three core elements contribute to a generic capacity for articulating a film's circumstances of production: from rationing and the black market portrayed by the British Spiv Cycle in the late 1940s to drug trafficking and gun crime in the new millennium in narratives such as *My Kingdom* (2001) and *Bullet Boy* (2004).

Whilst highlighting the reflexive nature of the genre, this thesis has nonetheless established that the specific spaces and places in which these narratives unfold have remained consistent in constructing and maintaining a generically familiar interpretation of 'Gangland'. Similarly, whilst the exact nature of criminal activities constituting the focus of individual storylines may differ from film to film and from decade to decade in accordance with prevailing social and moral anxieties, more generally the concept of hierarchy has been shown as concerned with territorial battles for spatial control and supremacy, together with generically conventional gendered power relations.

Consequently, although Mirren's interpretation of a gangster's moll for the feminist eighties appeared at the time to herald a new dawn with regard to female autonomy within the genre, it has been acknowledged here that the strictures of generic convention impose definable narrative constraints with regard to gender and hierarchy, as well as space and place. Chapter Seven therefore concluded that whilst recent narratives may have offered more satisfying female roles in terms of dramatic depth, the circumstances and experiences of the women they portray have changed little over the past sixty-five years.

Despite the prescriptive dynamics governing the interpretation of women within British Gangland film, the diversity of the genre as a whole has been cited here as a particular strength. This was exemplified by the texts discussed in Chapters Two and Three, which incorporated elements of comedy, black humour, *film noir*, social commentary, surrealism and Greek tragedy. An aim of this thesis has therefore been to demonstrate the way in which the core components of space, gender and hierarchy in Gangland narratives produced over the past sixty-five years have contributed to robust generic parameters, irrespective of the dramatic style and content of individual texts. Further, it has been recognised that to study one of these three components without recourse to the other two would result in a limited, if not distorted, interpretation of the genre.

In conclusion, whilst it is acknowledged that filmic space and place is an established area of academic study, there has been little written about its specific relationship with gender and hierarchy within British Gangland film. Indeed, during research for this thesis, it became clear that scholarly interest in the genre as a whole has not traditionally been as comprehensive or cohesive as that concerned

with other British genres such as the costume drama or the war film, for example. This has resulted in a fragmented body of writing on British Gangland film, rendering the genre something of a poor relation in academic terms.

The confines of a doctoral thesis preclude the preceding chapters from representing anything more than a small step towards addressing this disparity. Nonetheless, the plurality of theoretical approaches underpinning this investigation has established the significance of three key factors characterising the analysed texts: the role of space and place in the generation of meaning; the generic articulation of gender, sexuality and sexual orientation as a reflection of contemporary circumstance; and hierarchical power relations (gendered or otherwise) as essential to the heterotopian construct of Gangland. Whilst the limitations inherent within a study of this length have been noted, it is nonetheless anticipated that the analysis of space, gender and hierarchy within British Gangland film which constitute this thesis will make a positive contribution to existing academic writing on the genre, and represent a basis for further research.

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- A Clockwork Orange*. Dir. Stanley Kubrick. Warner Bros. 1971.  
*A Hard Day's Night*. Dir. Richard Lester. United Artists. 1964.  
*A Very British Gangster*. Dir. Donal MacIntyre. Strategic Film Partners. 2007.  
*Appointment With Crime*. Dir. John Harlow. British National Films. 1946.  
*Beat Girl*. Dir. Edmund T. Gréville. Renown Pictures Corporation. 1959.  
*Blow Up*. Dir. Michelangelo Antonioni. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. 1966.  
*Brannigan*. Dir. Douglas Hickox. United Artists. 1975.  
*Brighton Rock*. Dir. John Boulting. Pathé. 1947.  
*Bullet Boy*. Dir. Saul Dibb. BBC Films. 2004.  
*Bullitt*. Dir. Peter Yates. Warner Bros. 1968.  
*Dancing With Crime*. Dir. John Paddy Carstairs. Paramount. 1947.  
*Darling*. Dir. John Schlessinger. Anglo-Amalgamated Film Distributors. 1965.  
*Double Indemnity*. Dir. Billy Wilder. Paramount Films. 1944.  
*Empire State*. Dir. Ron Peck. Miracle Films. 1987.  
*Face*. Dir. Antonia Bird. BBC Films. 1997.  
*Gang War*. Dir. Frank Marshall. Danziger Productions. 1962.  
*Gangster No. 1*. Dir. Paul McGuigan. FilmFour. 2000.  
*Get Carter*. Dir. Mike Hodges. MGM-EMI. 1971.  
*Good Time Girl*. Dir. David MacDonald. General Film Distributors. 1948.

- Hell is a City*. Dir. Val Guest. Hammer Film Productions Ltd. 1959.
- Help!* Dir. Richard Lester. United Artists. 1965.
- Hue and Cry*. Dir. Michael Balcon. Ealing Studios. 1947.
- I'll Sleep When I'm Dead*. Dir. Mike Hodges. Paramount. 2003.
- It Always Rains on Sunday*. Dir. Robert Hamer. Ealing Studios. 1947.
- Lock, Stock & Two Smoking Barrels*. Dir. Guy Ritchie. HandMade Films. 1998.
- London Boulevard*. Dir. William Monahan. GK Films. 2011.
- London to Brighton*. Dir. Paul Andrew Williams. Independent. 2006.
- McVicar*. Dir. Tom Clegg. The Who Films. 1980.
- Metropolis*. Dir. Fritz Lang. UFA. 1927.
- Mona Lisa*. Dir. Neil Jordan. Cannon Screen Entertainment. 1986.
- My Kingdom*. Dir. Don Boyd. Sky Pictures. 2001.
- Night & the City*. Dir. Jules Dassin. 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox. 1950.
- Noose*. Dir. Edmond T. Gréville. Pathé Pictures. 1948.
- Nosferatu*. Dir. F.W. Murnau. Prana-Film GmbH. 1921.
- Passport to Shame*. Dir. Alvin Rakoff. British Lion Film Corporation. 1958.
- Payroll*. Dir. Sydney Hayers. Anglo-Amalgamated Film Distributors. 1961.
- Performance*. Dir. Donald Cammell & Nicolas Roeg. Warner Bros. 1970.
- Piccadilly Third Stop*. Dir. Wolf Rilla. J. Arthur Rank. 1960.
- Pool of London*. Dir. Basil Dearden. Ealing Studios. 1951.
- Queen Christina*. Dir. Rouben Mamoulian. MGM. 1933.
- Robbery*. Dir. Peter Yates. Oakhurst Productions. 1967.
- Scum*. Dir. Alan Clarke. Berwick Street Productions. 1979.
- Sexy Beast*. Dir. Jonathan Glazer. FilmFour. 2000.
- Shallow Grave*. Dir. Don Boyd. Channel Four Films. 1994.
- Stella Does Tricks*. Dir. Coky Giedroyc. BFI. 1996.
- Stormy Monday*. Dir. Mike Figgis. Palace Pictures. 1988.
- The Criminal*. Dir. Joseph Losey. Merton Park Studios. 1960.
- The End*. Dir. Nicola Collins. Duckin' & Divin' Productions. 2008.
- The Flesh is Weak*. Dir. Don Chaffey. Eros Films. 1957.
- The Frightened City*. Dir. John Lemont. Zodiac Productions. 1961.
- The Good Die Young*. Dir. Lewis Gilbert. Romulus Films. 1954.
- The Krays*. Dir. Peter Medak. J. Arthur Rank. 1990.
- The Life of Charles Peace*. Dir. William Hagger (independent film-maker). 1905.
- The Long Good Friday*. Dir. John MacKenzie. Paramount. 1980.
- The Small World of Sammy Lee*. Dir. Ken Hughes. British Lion Film Corporation. 1963.
- The Violent Playground*. Dir. Basil Dearden. J. Arthur Rank. 1958.
- They Made Me a Fugitive*. Dir. Alberto Cavalcanti. Warner Bros. 1947.
- Three Fingered Kate and Her Victim, the Banker*. Dir. H.O. Martinek. British & Colonial Kinematograph Company. 1910.
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- Tread Softly, Stranger*. Dir. Gordon Parry. Renown Picture Corporation. 1958.
- Villain*. Dir. Michael Tuchner. Atlantic Productions Ltd. 1971.
- Waterloo Road*. Dir. Sydney Gilliat. General Film Distributors. 1945.
- 44 Inch Chest*. Dir. Malcom Venville. Anonymous Content *et al.* 2010.

### *Filmography: Chronological*

- The Life of Charles Peace*. Dir. William Hagger (independent film-maker). 1905....
- Three Fingered Kate and Her Victim, the Banker*. Dir. H.O. Martinek. British & Colonial Kinematograph Company. 1910.
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